

## **DRAFT**

### **Lake Michigan Citizen Fishery Advisory Committee MUCC, Lansing, MI November 24, 2014 Meeting Notes**

#### **Fishing Reports**

Grand Haven: salmon fishing was worse than in BKD years, very few coho or lake trout, but the steelhead fishing was good.

Lake Huron: Walleye fishing in Saginaw Bay was very good and saw a lot of pink salmon this year.

White River: Coho fishing was very good.

Pere Marquette River: Steelhead run was down about 50% and the salmon run was down.

Saugatuck/Holland: Very good brown trout fishing in the spring, salmon fishing was normal in May, and a fantastic lake trout fishery all year.

Ludington: Late May was good for steelhead and salmon, but the cold weather kept a lot of anglers away. The offshore fishery for lake trout and steelhead was very good, and the best fishing for salmon was offshore.

Manistee: Good spring brown trout fishery, but the salmon run was down.

MSU Extension Salmon Ambassadors Program: Had 120 volunteers and 57 people returned data.

South Haven: Good spring brown trout fishery, lake trout fishing was very good, but the Chinook fishery was down and the yellow perch fishing was very poor.

Whitehall: Effort was very low. More than 50% of catch was steelhead, not much for Chinook, coho, or lake trout.

Leelanau: Lake trout fishing was very good in the spring, and Grand Traverse Bay was good as usual.

Holland: Brown trout fishing was really good in the spring, got a few coho early in the year but they were gone by mid-June. When bait was around you could catch Chinook and the lake trout fishing was very good.

Frankfort: Brown trout fishing was really good in the spring and Chinook fishing was good in May and June. Lake trout fishing was very good and had good steelhead fishing late into the fall.

### **Chair Report**

Denny gave a summary of a meeting he attended with Enbridge to discuss the Mackinaw pipeline. Highlights from the meeting were:

- Pipelines are the safest way to transport oil. There is a greater risk of spills with rail or truck transport.
- The structural integrity of the pipeline is assessed twice as often as they are required to do using a “pig.”
- Enbridge is not considering doubling the amount of material transported through the Mackinaw pipeline.
- A potential problem is if a freighter has to release anchor in an emergency situation above the pipeline. The anchor could rupture the pipeline.
- A Great Lakes Pipeline Task Force has been established to review existing pipelines.

Denny summarized the sustainable small harbor management strategy which has a primary goal of preventing privatization of small public harbors. It is a two year project to provide assistance to small public harbors if they are at risk of folding.

### **Fish Division Updates**

Jim Dexter provided the Fish Division updates:

- There was a positive eDNA hit for silver carp in the Kalamazoo River in October. One out of 200 samples was positive. The US Fish and Wildlife service collected another 200 samples from the area where the positive was collected, and none were positive for silver or big head carp. The identification of positive eDNA does not necessarily mean that a live fish is or was present in the area.
- The 2015 fishing guide will only be for one year because the Director and NRC will not review proposed regulation changes for 2015 until April or May 2015. Any changes approved by the NRC will take effect in 2015, but the guide will already be printed, so anglers are encouraged to check the DNR website for updates.
- We are in the process of filling a Fisheries Management Biologist position based out of Crystal Falls. Their anticipated start date will be in January, 2015. Scott Heintzelman has been selected as the new Central Lake Michigan Unit Manager based out of the Cadillac office. He will start his position on Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **Law Division Updates**

Steve Huff provided the Law Division updates:

- Future plans are for staffing in the Great Lakes Enforcement Unit (GLEU) to be increased to nine positions if funding allows for it
- Recruit school scheduled to start in January, 2015 with 44 recruits

- The second phase of 2012 investigation involving a Sault tribe substance fisher marketing his catch to a retail market owned by a tribal commercial fisher concluded.
  - In a two month time frame over #200 of perch and walleye fillets were purchased by the market.
  - Sault Tribe prosecutor authorized 21 violation counts against the market owner
  - \$1,175.00 fines and costs
- GLEU and area officers along with Sault Tribe Law Enforcement removed approximately 10,000 feet of abandoned gill net east of the Garden Peninsula.
- Sault Tribe Law Enforcement followed up with prosecution and issued a total of 6 citations to the two fishers. The case has been scheduled for a 2014 trial.
- GLEU sits on the Asian Carp Task Force coordinated by the USFWS (comprised of state, federal & provincial law enforcement agencies)
  - Information exchange and combined enforcement has enhanced detection and prosecuting to stop illegal shipments of Asian Carp from reaching Michigan
- Conducted a sweep through the Detroit area inspecting 40 retail fish markets for invasive species.
  - No violations were observed
- Statewide Bait Industry Initiative
  - Inspect all bait wholesalers
  - Inspect as many bait catchers as possible
  - Inspect at least 1 bait retailer in each county of the state
  - Inspect ALL retail bait dealers in the UP
  - 3 citations / 27 verbal warnings
- Numerous complaints on vessel entanglement regarding approximately 14 abandoned trap nets off of Ludington/Whitehall belonging to two fishers from Little River Band (LRB).
  - A USCG vessel was entangled in one of these nets while responding to a boater in distress call
  - Sport angler entanglement
  - 2 confirmed charter boat entanglements with passengers on board
- A GLEU Officer worked with LRB authorities on the unmarked/abandoned net situation off of Whitehall where the nets were marked as abandoned and the process for removal is resting with the tribe.
  - An agreement was worked out by the owner of the nets off of Ludington to have another fisher pull the nets. Only one net has been removed.
  - Fisher will not be returning to remove remaining nets.
- Whitefish snaggers were targeted and ticketed in Lake MI drowned river mouth areas during spawning runs.

### **Great Lakes Aquaculture Update**

Gary Whelan from Fisheries Division presented a summary of potential aquaculture expansion in the Great Lakes.

- The Michigan Aquaculture plan is to grow the industry from the current \$5 million to \$1 billion by 2025.
- There are three primary types of facilities: recirculating, flow through, and net pen
  - Recirculating facilities are closed systems that have little impact on natural aquatic systems.
  - Flow through facilities can have detrimental impacts to natural aquatic systems, but they can be mitigated and escapees are more likely than recirculating facilities.
  - Net pen facilities can have detrimental impacts to natural aquatic systems, and it's unclear if they can be mitigated. Escapees are very likely in this system.
  - There are a variety of proposed locations for net pen facilities in the Great Lakes, but they would have to obtain permits from appropriate sources such as the Dept. of Ag and Rural Development, and potentially the DNR or DEQ.

### **2014 Weir Return Summary**

Mark Tonello from Fisheries Division provided this update:

- Chinook salmon runs were at record lows for some weirs. Total # of Chinook harvested at all weirs was 12,581. This is compared to 20,332 in 2013 and 25,745 in 2012.
- Chinooks were much smaller than last year. Largest weir fish in 2014 was 22.5 lbs, vs. 31.2 lbs in 2013.
- Very few jack Chinooks (age-1, 2013 year class) at most weirs. Also very few coho jacks at Platte Weir.
- Higher percentage of females than normal; one theory is that the males matured at age 2 and ran last year.
- Little Manistee Weir was breached during record high water levels in the spring, but was repaired and all the needed steelhead eggs were collected.
  - The return to the LMW was the lowest on record, but all the needed Chinook eggs were collected
  - Educational and outreach enhancements have been completed including a new viewing deck.
- Boardman Weir Chinook return numbers were the lowest on record. Coho was below average
- Medusa Creek Chinook returns were below average but not the lowest on record.
- Swan River Chinook returns were about average since the early 2000s.
- Platte Hatchery coho returns were the lowest on record.

### **Chinook and Coho Bag Limit and Predator/prey Model Discussion**

Randy Claramunt from Fisheries Division provided a summary of the predator prey ratio.

- Randy presented the preliminary results of the current model used to inform the Chinook and coho bag limit. Both indicators (Charter success and catch rate were below their respective thresholds indicating that the bag limit could be lowered from five to three. However, Fisheries Division is not going to change the Chinook and coho bag limit for 2015 because we are going to evaluate whether or

not the existing model is still an appropriate primary informant of the bag limits. An alternate model that could potentially be used to inform bag limits is the predator prey ratio.

- The predator prey ratio was developed collaboratively among State, Federal, and Tribal Biologists as well as Academics from Michigan State University. It was developed as a result of a critical review of the “Red Flags” analysis that was historically used to inform salmonid management in the Lake Michigan. The predator prey ratio was officially adopted as the primary informant of salmonid stocking levels in Lake Michigan by the Lake Michigan Committee during the summer of 2014.
- The predator prey ratio informs fisheries managers of the status of salmon stocks relative to prey fish levels. If the predator prey ratio were high (approaching 0.1 or 10% predator to prey biomass), then stocking policies should be low and harvest regulations should be liberal reflectly high predator levels in the lake. In contrast, if the predator prey ratio is low, such as well below 0.05, then stocking policies may reflecting a rebuilding of salmon stocks and harvest regulations should be conservative. The predator prey ratio can serve to inform both stocking and harvest policies and should also receive input and feedback from constituent groups prior to modification of management policies.
- Randy also presented the 2014 results from the Chinook salmon diet study.
  - The percent of empty stomachs increased from 36% in 2013 to 47% in 2014 overall, but the increase was substantial for small Chinook suggesting a low availability of small alewives (weak 2013 and 2014 year classes of alewives).

Todd Kalish from Fisheries Division facilitated a discussion regarding what model we should use to inform the Chinook and coho bag limit. An issue statement was distributed that summarizes the history of the current model, and a process to evaluate it. Fisheries Division will seek comments on this issue from all the Citizen Fishery Advisory Committees as well as internal Basin Teams. Once all the comments have been received, the Fisheries Division Basin Coordinators and Fisheries Chief will make a determination of what model will be used and it will be used to inform the 2016 Chinook and coho bag limits.

This Committee was asked to provide their comments on whether or not they think we should continue using the existing model or switch to the predator prey ratio as the primary informant of determining Chinook and coho bag limits in Michigan jurisdictional waters. Discussion on this topic was limited and the Committee did not provide a single recommendation primarily because there wasn't enough time to thoroughly discuss this issue. Therefore, the Committee members were asked to contact Fisheries Division Biologists if they had any questions about the existing model or predator prey ratio and provide their thoughts on what model we should use to primarily inform bag limits via e-mail or phone to Denny. Denny will collate all the comments received and provide a LMCFAC recommendation to Fisheries Division.

## **Lake Michigan Lake Trout Regulations**

Todd Kalish provided a summary of the stakeholder engagement process and outcome.

- Lake trout regulations for Lake Michigan were last reviewed in 2010, and we indicated that we would revisit the regulations in five years. Therefore, a lake trout working group was established and a variety of avenues were developed to gather stakeholder opinions.
- Public meetings were held in Charlevoix, Frankfort, Leland, Traverse City, Kalamazoo, and South Haven to gather stakeholder opinions. Based on the feedback from these meetings, draft regulations were developed and disseminated to stakeholders via the DNR webpage, spring 2014 LMCFAC meeting, direct e-mail to stakeholders, and other sportsman web pages.
- Based on internal and external comments received, the recommended lake trout regulations are:
  - MM123: 2 fish bag limit, 15-27", with one fish over 34"
  - MM4: 2 fish bag limit, 15-27", with one fish over 34"
  - MM5: 2 fish bag limit, 15" MSL
  - MM6-8: 3 fish bag limit, 15" MSL
  - Fallback regulations: If the combined recreational and charter harvest of lake trout exceeds the established harvest limit in a management unit (MM123, MM4, or MM5) by 10% or more in any one year, or 5% or more in any two consecutive years, the daily bag limit of lake trout will be reduced by 1 fish. Or, once the combined recreational and charter harvest of lake trout is lower than the established harvest limits (TAC) in a management unit, the daily bag limit of lake trout can be increased by 1 fish, assuming it is in balance with the projected fish community for the upcoming year.
  - Removal of the lake trout regulations language for MM123, MM4, and MM5 from the fishing guide. Anglers will be responsible for calling a phone number or visiting the DNR webpage to get the current regulations for lake trout in their area.

## **Next Meeting Date**

The Committee will determine a date for the spring 2015 meeting via e-mail.

## **Potential Spring 2015 Meeting Agenda Items**

2014 recreational creel and charter reports

Coded wire tag summary

2014 trawl and acoustic survey results

Law and Fisheries Updates

Fishing reports