

Lake Michigan Citizen Fishery Advisory Committee

October 23, 2012
Grand Haven

Meeting Minutes

Meeting called to order at 10:00 AM by Chair Grinold.

Attendees by signup sheet Denny Grinold (Chair), Paul Jensen (Secretary), Tom Hamilton, Frank Krist, Scott Carey, Ed Emery, Chip Klein, George Freeman, Al Dood, Jessica Mistak, Jim Bos, Ken Lee, Keith Wils, Bill Winowiecki, Jim Fenner, Chuck Pistis, John Stegmeier, Dennis Eade, Jim Vandermaas, Dan O'Keefe, Jay Wesley, Ron Westrate, Jim Schramm, Donna Wesander, Steve Huff, John Robertson, Mike Ryan, and Joe Mitchell.

Requested self –introductions

Advisor reports

- Paul Jensen – commercial fishery continues to experience no bloater chub catch, which the pattern is continuing around the entire Lake. Whitefish not liking with warmer water and have been scarce most of the summer.
- Tom Hamilton - White River running at the lowest level he has seen. Work continues on removing fish passage barriers on the North Branch by replacing and repairing culverts.
- Frank Krist - Steelhead fishery good for 3rd year in a row. Lake Trout in huge numbers- ranging 10 to 13 inches with no clips all “wild” natural reproduction. Seeing 2 to 3 pound unclipped Chinook. Appears there is a steady increase in the number of Coho being caught, again attributed to natural reproduction since the collapse of the alewife population.
- Scott Carey - Manistique area Salmon started early. Low water issues continue. No big fish. Catch was very good. Lots of Pinks and Steelhead in river this fall.
- Ed Emery - fishing out of Pentwater. Steelhead strong early spring. From September on the offshore Steelhead/lake Trout was good but had to run to get fish. Most trips “boxed out” with 4 people in about 4.5 hours.
- Chip Klein - Started the year early fishing in January out of friend’s outboard boat. Started big boat fishing in April and limited every trip. May fishing was good. June had a couple of weeks that “sucked”. Caught Skamania that were really large. Water temperatures were really warm. No salmon run at Grand Haven this fall. Fishers limited out for a week straight at the Grand Rapids dam. Been fishing 45 years and only caught 41 Lake Trout up till September. Taxidermy business slow only 15 fish mounts for season. Season produced more catfish caught than Brown Trout. Caught only three Chinook over 20 pounds.
- George Freeman - Brown Trout fishing at Ludington down. Caught some 4/6 pounds. Salmon took offshore in May. June was good. 12 /15 pounds was the average catch fish size. Not many Coho. Warm water. No 3-4 year old fishery.
- Al Dood- Fishing Walleye mostly on the East side of the State. Saginaw Bay was pretty good. Erie was good. Little Bay de Noc was good with limits every night. Anticipates the pier heads should be picking up soon.

- Jim Bos - Pere Marquette River salmon run started late (after Labor Day) with no huge push.
- Ken Lee - Bay de Noc walleye spotty and perch fishing good.
- Keith Wils - Bay de Noc had few Walleye limits.
- Bill Winowiecki - Salmon good in Manitou's from 2nd week of May to 3rd week of August with a 12 /14 pound average. Two Brown Trout at 19 and 20 pounds caught in same week. Salmon returns were average. Whitefish non –existent. Catching an average of 3 or 4 Cisco per trip in the 4/5 pound size range.
- Jim Fenner - no real fall fishery at Ludington. Au Sable River had a handful of salmon returns.
- Dennis Eade - had a nice season, Fish averaged 12 /15 pounds. Late evening fishing was good.
- Jim Vandermaas - Whitehall area fishing mirrored Pentwater. It was a “scary” good year. Lot of boats caught a lot of fish.
- Ron Westrate - Best fishing June /July---slowed in August. Perch was good till mid –July.
- Joe Mitchell - low water problems in the St. Joe.
- Mike Ryan - south end of Lake good, disappeared by end of July. Fall Salmon run delayed, seems to be happening now. There was a 37 pounder caught. Indiana DNR passed 2,300 across Trail Creek lamprey barrier. Lamprey seems to be there year round, not just April / May.
- John Robertson- Chip said it all!!!! Catch rates were up to the point of feeling guilty about effect on future fishery.
- Denny Grinold-Wind was a big issue. Caught five Lake Trout 16/17 inches in a three day period with no clips. Half the Chinook catch in April / May was unclipped. Mentioned that brown trout was expensive. (Jay indicated that the Lake Huron advanced yearling brown trout return to creel was estimated at \$48.00 /fish).
- Jim Schramm - Reported on the Boardman Dam removal problems with the failure of a retaining wall causing major issues with downstream properties. Brown Bridge Dam should be completed end of December. Muskegon River at Croton and and Manistee River at Tipee dam bubblers working. Could help Steelhead recruitment and reproduction by lowering water temperature 1 to 11/2 degrees.

Agenda Item 1-Meeting Minutes

The goal is to provide our meeting minutes in a shorter time frame and make them available on the DNR website. Another goal is to provide transparency and allow meeting information to be shared. Approval of draft minutes to be done utilizing email via the internet allowing them to be posted much sooner than our next scheduled meeting.

Posted April minutes draft was approved.

Agenda Item 2-Fish Division Updates

Jay Wesley provided an overview of the new personnel structure.

Todd Kalish is now the acting Lake Michigan and Lake Erie Basin Coordinator.

Jay Wesley is the Southern Lake Michigan Unit Manager.

Scott Heintzelman has replaced Rich O'Neal as the acting Central lake Michigan Manager

Budget is better than what was projected to happen with an uptick in license sales adding \$1.3 million to the Game and Fish Fund. A bond sale by the Game and Fish Trust fund produced \$3.0 million to be divided up internally. Indirect funds from the Federal Government added another \$200 K.

Strategic Planning has been undertaken to set new plans and goals for the Division utilizing on-line surveys as well as Jim Dexter’s interviews of leaders of several groups and organizations. Writing team should have a draft out by early December.

Egg takes - Chinook went well with 12,300 at Little Manistee weir. Fish were late with 1st eggs taken by Oct 1. Platte weir Coho 12,000 adults with 3,000 jacks. Recent vandalism stress event caused the loss of 5,700 Coho due to crowding against gate.

Charlevoix newsletter- Donna Wesander handed out copies of a newsletter on the operations and activities of the station.

Award Recognition-Jessica Mistak announced that the Little Bay de Noc Walleye Club had been given recognition by the DNR.

Agenda Item 3-Lake Michigan Chinook Stocking Strategy

Background was detailed on the work of a group made up of the representatives of the four states surrounding Lake Michigan to develop options on how the stocking program should proceed. That group developed four options that could provide fishery managers with direction on how the stakeholders felt the stocking should change. After much discussion and option exploration, this group (LMCFAC) at their April meeting, unanimously recommended that the stocking be stopped for the next two years. Fishery managers carefully weighed constituent recommendations and the fish community data to determine the options that need to be put in place to best preserve the fishery. Michigan has multiple river systems contributing to natural reproduction which is the main balance factor in determining that our Chinook stocking levels will be cut by 67%. The following breakdown shows 2012 compared to 2013 between States:

	2012 Stocking Numbers	2013 Stocking Numbers	Percent Reduction
Michigan	1,688,500	558,500	67%
Wisconsin	1,164,000	724,000	38%
Illinois	250,000	230,000	8%
Indiana	225,000	200,000	11%

Returns of age 3 female salmon to the Wisconsin Strawberry Creek facility will be the trend indicator in a feedback policy. If weight is greater than 19.8 LB or larger - increase stocking by 30%. If less than 15.4 LB - decrease stocking by 30%.

Dennis Eade asked what happens next year if returns are below the 15.4 LB indicator?

Jay responded--

unless catastrophic events occur a one year drop or increase would not trigger an immediate change. More likely we would wait to see another years worth of data. Logistically, it is hard to make changes year to year, so trends will be evaluated to determine how soon a change is needed. It is anticipated that a stocking reduction will be made in 2013 and will be followed for a two to three year period. Monitoring (Red Flags

analysis) will be in place to track the multiple trends that could affect this stocking allocation decision.

Michigan stocking numbers by port were proposed based on the criteria of the need to protect future returns to our broodstock facility, utilization of net pens, proximity to natural reproduction, maximizing fishing opportunities, and hatchery logistics. Below are the 2013 proposed stocking numbers by location:

Port	Current Stocking	Proposed Stocking	Percent Reduction	Justification/Comments
<i>1836 Treaty Waters</i>				
Ford River	27,500	12,000	56.4%	Maximize fishing opportunities by maintaining local fisheries in the U.P.; Eliminates Fairport based on an open lake fishery that is less dependent on stocking and maintains Ford and Manistique.
Fairport	21,000	0	100%	
Manistique	45,000	34,000	24.4%	
Medusa	220,000	72,000	67.3%	Maximize fishing opportunities-this site contributes significantly to the open lake fishery.
Boardman	75,000	24,000	68.0%	Maintain net pen commitments
Kids Creek	150,000	36,000	76.0%	Reduce a direct stocking site; natural reproduction
Manistee River	70,000	22,000	68.6%	Maintain net pen commitments; Maximize fishing opportunities
Little Manistee River	375,000	150,000	60.0%	Maintain broodstock; Natural reproduction may offset reductions.
Big Sable River	120,000	38,000	68.3%	Maintain net pen commitments; Maximize fishing opportunities – popular fall fishery.
Muskegon River	60,000	18,000	70%	Maintain net pen commitments; Natural reproduction present
<i>Non-Treaty Waters</i>				
Grand Haven	175,000	59,000	66.3%	Maintain net pen commitments
Grand River	75,000	0	100%	Reduce a direct stocking site; Maximize fishing opportunities in other locations; Grand River is also stocked with steelhead and coho for fall fisheries.
Holland	45,000	15,000	66.7%	Maintain net pen commitments
Black River	45,000	15,000	66.7%	Maintain net pen commitments
Saugatuck	45,000	16,000	64.4%	Maximize fishing opportunities- Kalamazoo River provides fall fishery with good access. Maintain net pen commitments
St. Joseph	140,000	48,000	65.7%	Maximize fishing opportunities- St. Joseph River provides fall fishery with good access. Maintain net pen commitments
Total	1,688,500	559,000	66.9%	

Chip Klein noted that the Grand Haven net pens were stocked with clipped fish that did not seem to return to the area. Catching lots of wild fish. Why are we being hit again??—cuts are questionable!!!

Jay responded: mass marking should give us a better indication and answers to the percentage of wild fish and how hatchery fish contribute to each ports fishery. We expect to make more changes to the stocking numbers once this data is available.

Frank Krist noted that in Lake Huron once Alewife dropped in quantity level there appeared to be no affect on reproduction. Not seeing “old” alewife---adult population dropping—lots of small fish.

Chuck Pistis – speak to stocked fish availability to the local fishery.

Jay responded: focus of stocking is to maintain the big lake Chinook fishery with a secondary focus on the fall/river fishery. River fisheries are better suited for steelhead.

Mike Ryan noted that the Indiana DNR was passing fish over Trail Creek lamprey barrier and indicated that they were seeing fish from all over and not seeing many clips.

Tom Hamilton asked if the reduced hatchery requirements would free up raceways or reduce density.

Jay responded: Less density is the current plan with the added concern of not having them smolt to soon.

Dennis Eade asked when will we know Strawberry Creek results?

Jay responded:--Strawberry Creek results should be available for the Lake Michigan Technical Committee in January.

Frank Krist asked about a coded wire tag distribution chart that shows the stocked fish in relation to a location.

Jay respond: a figure was presented at a previous meeting, which we can view again. The Southern Lake Michigan ports will have the same code, so differentiation will be difficult. The coding issue is that reduced quantities make separation in hatchery raceways difficult if not impossible to keep tagged fish from intermingling.

Chuck Pistis—asked if Wisconsin would be following the same protocol?

Jay responded: Wisconsin cuts are at 38%, however I am unaware of their protocol for port by port reductions.

Denny Grinold - inquired as to what future implications for river systems with higher natural recruitment vs. those with lower?

Jay responded: We hope to learn a lot about natural reproduction with mass marking. Systems such as the Boardman, Manistee, PM, White, and Muskegon are expected to produce good numbers of natural fish. Once confirmed, these Chinook could be redistributed to the U.P. and southern Michigan where there is less natural reproduction. John Robertson asked if any thought had been given to the effect of current low water on natural recruitment?

Jay responded: I am not aware of any relationships for Michigan. The OTC marking study is the basis for most current conclusions on natural reproduction and that has been fairly consistent from year to year. It does not take many adults to saturate the habitat in a

stream system. Discussion followed citing fish in Alaska returning to spawn in 3 inches of water.

Chip Klein asked about the head collection program requirements and shared the difficulty of documenting required data and pondered how the feedback results system is structured.

Jay responded: Currently, the most reliable data is collected by head hunters at fishing tournaments. This provides us with good data comparing marked vs. unmarked fish. Knowing what fish are contributing to the fishery and movements of fish are also important, so anglers are encouraged to keep heads. There are concerns that too many heads may clog the system. Our Charlevoix station processes some heads; however, the new program will be located in Green Bay. For now, anglers should turn in a few heads per month just, so we get some data on fish movement and contribution to the fishery. More specific directions are forthcoming and will be presented at winter meetings and on our website. Presently no formal return program exists for collection of heads from the river systems. Data that would prove most helpful is the number of clipped fish compared to the number of natural fish found in a system.

Donna Weslander talked with Dave Clapp Charlevoix station manager, who indicated that efforts will be made to keep the letters “happening” for the head returns. Lure reward program might have to become a lottery system. Denny Grinold also suggested that the charter boat captains could report on the number of clipped vs. natural they catch and hopefully a system could be implemented to collect this information. Donna and Denny are going to team up on the form modification.

Jim Vandermaas commented that he thought he could get Steelhead chapters to participate in a program to collect the data concerning the ratio of clipped to naturals and report it for rivers.

Dan O’Keefe shared that he had been working on this program concept and that he would work with interested groups to develop a website that could be accessed on line. Appeared that Jim and Dan were going to move forward on implementing a data collection plan.

Chip Klein asked what (Chinook) are we planting in Lake Huron and what hatcheries are utilized?

Jay Responded: 600,000 and that he had conversation with the Lake Huron Basin Coordinator that the Lake Huron plant was now larger than Lake Michigan plant. Hatchery closest to the planting site will most likely provide the fish. Thomson Hatchery stocks the U.P., Platte northern lower Michigan, and Wolf Lake southern Michigan.

Paul Jensen asked how many of the 600,000 were mandated by the Consent Decree? Frank Krist indicated that 250,000 were mandated by the decree. Discussion continued indicating none planted south of Rodgers City. Bigger influence Canadian natural reproduction and some fishing clubs planting in the southern regions.

Lunch Break

Thanks to Denny Grinold and John Robertson for providing the fish and Old Boys in Spring Lake presenting them in the Catcher & Cook format.

Agenda Item 4—Salmon Bag Limit

The method for evaluating salmon bag limits was explained and the reasons for moving from 3 to 5. No change planned for 2013. Catch rates were high in 2012.

Agenda Item 5-WFM-08 New Tribal Commercial Fisher

DNR received a letter from CORA indicating they had issued a license to a fisher to operate in the WFM-08 management unit. Previously the fisher had been involved operating a vessel licensed to another fisher by the Little River Band in violation of the license provisions. The new license could add another 12 nets in the area. The Tribal and State commercial fish quotas will remain the same as stated below:

Mgt Unit	State	Tribal
WFM-00	597,000	Not 1836
WFM-01	200,000	3,444,000
WFM-06	65,000	185,000
WFM-08	500,000	800,200

The 2011 harvest for WFM-08 was 250,728 for the State and 59,129 for the Tribal fishers, which is way below the existing quotas. The additional fisher and nets should not cause any biological impact. There is some concern that there could be some social issues such as net marking and locations that will have to be addressed.

Agenda Item 6-MDNR Law Enforcement Division Report

Steve Huff reviewed activity with the commercial fishery. Warm water conditions and cladophora caused many operations to pull nets and cease fishing. Tribal fisheries were cited for net markings and use as well as for the sale of subsistence caught fish. This summer a SSM Band subsistence fisher in the Bay de Noc area received 32 citations for the sale of subsistence caught perch and walleye, net use and markings. The case is in SSM Tribal court and more citations may be issued. Little River Band Sgt. Szynski and Officer Cook issued 18 citations along with numerous written warning to a tribal fisher operating between White Lake and Ludington. This fisher has 10 /11 nets in use although some were reported to be “sunk” to the bottom with questionable marking.

Aquatic Invasive Species issues are another area in which LED officers are busy. Invasive species training is being provided by MDNR Commercial Fish Unit to United States Coast Guard, Michigan State Police Motor Carrier Officers and USFW agents and inspectors. The training is ongoing and is being offered to any law enforcement agency interested. The training focused on transportation/ importation requirements of live fish (minnows, etc.) required health certificates certifying VHS and disease free. Transportation of prohibited species of carp across into states that prohibits the fish is a violation of the federal Lacey act.

Officers working on a tip apprehended a semi-truck and driver selling prohibited Grass Carp in the parking lot of a Tractor Supply store in Midland. There were 112 Grass Carp

seized along with the tractor /trailer. The Attorney General charged the driver with 12 felony counts.

Paul Jensen related that he, Denny Grinold, and Chuck Pistis serve as Advisors to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) and that the Midland incident reflects the validity of concern. At the GLFC June meeting in Buffalo, Canadian officers indicated a need for Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) to be generated which would allow the open transfer of information between U.S. Federal, state, local agencies and Canadian agencies. Advisors presented a unanimous resolution to the Commissioners asking that they direct the GLFC Secretariat in conjunction with the GLFC Law Enforcement Committee to facilitate and coordinate the transfer of information. The number of trucks stopped at the Canadian border and the Midland arrest only emphasize the fact that we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg on this issue. Jay noted that Indiana allows only triploid grass carp, however a number of samples caught on the St. Joe (which connects to Indiana water sheds) indicated to be diploid which means that they could reproduce. Evidently there is another possible vector that needs to be closed.

Agenda Item 7—Walleye-Ken Lee

Ken related problems with Walleye fry not reaching the fingerling stage with good survival. After doing some research he discovered that the State of Vermont had generated a successful program by feeding fry brine shrimp for a 5 to 7 day period. Jay indicated that Walleye are raised at Thompson and Wolf Lake hatcheries and that he would be forwarding this information to them and will report back at the spring meeting.

Agenda Item 8—Salmon Health

Jay presented photos of Salmon fillets that appeared to have a black mass in the flesh. The MSU Fish Health Lab has evaluated the samples and is not sure whether the problem is parasitic, bacteria, or possibly botulism. One Salmon sample was from the Traverse City area. Another Steelhead sample was from the Rogue River. Anyone seeing similar conditions is encouraged to leave the sample in the fresh state and contact their local DNR biologist. If feasible, samples will be collected and sent to the MSU lab for analysis.

Agenda Item 9—Muskegon Fisherman's Landing—Tom Hamilton

Tom has been very active in his support of Fisherman's Landing. He has worked to add improvement's and keep the facility operational. He shared his concerns that the City of Muskegon (which owns the facility) has been having discussion with private interests, some of which have proposed a property swap, along with other options. Tom wants the City of Muskegon to tell the developers no.

Agenda Item 10—Next Meeting Agenda

Brown Trout (dollars & sense), Walleye planting (Programs & Plans and report back on advanced fry), and Grand Rapids Dam (John Stegmeier expressed concerns with the proposal to modify or remove the dam opening the State's longest river to sea lamprey. Fishery interests need to become proactive).

Agenda Item 11-Next Meeting Location / Date

Scott Carey asked if there was a possibility of moving the location north. Site options were discussed. Jessica Mistak offered that the RAM center is connected to the DNR video conferencing capability. Tentative plan is a meeting at the RAM Center in the 3rd week of April 2013- on either the 16th, 17th, or 18th. Jay is checking and coordinating.

Meeting Adjourned 2:30 PM