



Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

Established by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to improve and maintain fishery resources through better communication and partnership.

Approved Minutes Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee Tuscarora Township Hall, Indian River, MI Thursday, April 12, 2012

Attendees: Brenda Archambo, Mike Beuerle, Wayne Blomberg, David Bock, Dawn Bodnar, Tim Cwalinski, Jim Dexter, Ron Dulak, Maxwell Field, Neal Godby, Todd Grischke, Patrick Hanchin, Dan Hayes, Lindsey Henski, Seth Herbst, Rick Johnson, David Kolar, Frank Krist, Theresa Krist, Ryan MacWilliams, Erin McLean, Dan Myers, Bill Parsons, Kevin Prediger, Dave Roberts, Dustin Saker, Morgan Sherburne, Virgil Smith, Tracy Swem, Roy Tassava, Jared Thompson, Alan Terry

Committee Chairs: Frank Krist and Tim Cwalinski

Frank Krist called the meeting to order. Attendees introduced themselves.

Minutes: The minutes from the October 31, 2011 meeting were acknowledged and approved as is.

Posting Minutes on the DNR Website:

In an effort to be more transparent, Fisheries Division would like to post committee meeting minutes online well in advance of the committee's next meeting. Thus, meeting minutes will need to be approved much sooner and through email. As soon as the draft minutes are completed they will be sent by email to the members. One week will be provided for comments, additions, or changes and if the minutes can be approved at the end of one week then they will be posted on the DNR website. Member names would not be posted (if topic is contentious) and no personal data including addresses and phone numbers will be shared. An exception will be made and the contact information of the Chairs will be posted. The handouts will not be available on the website initially but a note will be placed in the minutes that they can be obtained by emailing Frank Krist at krist@speednetllc.com.

An Update on the Inland Waterway Walleye Data by MSU – Ryan MacWilliams & Seth Herbst, Michigan State University:

MSU conducted over 300 larval tows from May through June. The goal was to identify larval fish and determine the locations where walleye are effectively reproducing.

2011 Larval Catch Results:

Burt Lake larval walleye numbers were overwhelming compared to Crooked and Mullett, while none were harvested in Pickerel Lake. The Black and Cheboygan rivers had fair numbers but that is to be expected at

constricted sampling locations (rivers), while the Sturgeon River had the highest numbers. Protocol for 2012 is the same as last year, with the potential of adding additional drift locations.

Forage Study

A Forage Study was also conducted to determine species composition and numbers of prey/forage fish in the Waterway. The nets were 12 feet wide with 4 different panels of very small mesh sizes (3/8, 1/2, 5/8, 3/4 inch bar mesh) and were long enough to be fished the entire water column in waters ranging from 4 to 103 feet in depth. In 2012, forage gill nets will be used late June through early July and late July through early August on all four lakes. Nets will be set in varying depths with each net having a soak time of approximately 20 hours.

The 2011 netting results were dominated by yellow perch. Burt and Mullett Lakes had higher catches than Crooked and Pickerel Lakes. Species composition was slightly different among the lakes, but perch were a big component. Exotics were present including goby, alewife and smelt. Shoreline seining was conducted to supplement the forage sampling and shiners were often found.

The goal of the diet study was to determine what walleye are feeding on throughout the waterway. This part of the project was added on and is supplemental, but the data is important. MSU conducted stomach analysis on all four lakes. However, sample sizes from Crooked Lake, Mullett Lake and Pickerel Lake were low and in order to obtain reliable information many more stomach samples are needed from these 3 lakes.

Additional samples are also needed from Burt Lake. We need stomachs from all legal size walleyes from spring through the winter whether the fish are tagged or untagged. Each stomach needs to be individually placed in a plastic bag with the date caught, the fish length, the lake name and location on the lake. Drop sites include Indian River DNR, Cheboygan DNR, Charlevoix DNR, Tribal Office outside of Harbor Springs, and the Gaylord DNR. Continue to notify Seth at sethherbst5@gmail.com of any walleye tournaments so MSU can sub-sample these events.

The preliminary results are showing that the walleye are eating a variety of items depending on the lake. Some items found are crayfish, round goby, yellow perch, mayflies and minnows.

Attached is the presentation that Seth and Ryan provided*.

An Update on the Work Being Conducted in the Inland Waterway by Little Traverse Bay Band (LTBB) – Maxwell Field:

The Tribe received a Federal grant in FY12 to continue the walleye work for the statewide regression model that will more efficiently predict inland Michigan walleye populations in lakes. The goal is to hit smaller lakes in the near future to contribute to the equation. The more “true” population estimates we use to populate the model, the more accurate it will be for predicting walleye estimates at lakes where there is no population data. LTBB was the only tribe in Michigan this year to receive any federal grant monies.

LTBB was on the Waterway this year by mid-March thanks to the weather. Crooked Lake was electrofished at multiple locations for the Inland Waterway walleye study. Some sites in the other lakes in the Waterway were also surveyed. . LTBB is currently back out on Crooked and Burt Lakes marking walleye catches with jaw tags. In seven nights of electrofishing over 400 new walleye were tagged in both of these lakes for the Inland Waterway study. Long Lake in Cheboygan County was surveyed the last week of March in order to get a population estimate (independent of Waterway study) of the walleye population again to assist in building the Michigan walleye regression model.

An Update on the Current Walleye Work Being Conducted in the Waterway by the DNR – Patrick Hanchin:

DNR Fisheries crews are also in their 4th week of electrofishing. The DNR Tribal Coordination unit has led most sampling efforts this year with some assistance from the local management unit out of Gaylord. 2012 marked the 2nd year of the three-year tagging process. Tagging fish is beneficial since it provides an original capture location and later another potential capture location but it is not known what happens during the time between the first and second capture. Therefore, to determine detailed movement information we are inserting transmitters in 10 females and 10 males. These transmitters in the fish send signals to passive receivers that are located under water and actively record data while the fish move back and forth. Efforts are concentrating on the Lower Black River below Alverno. Overall, one goal is to determine where walleye that spawn near the Alverno Dam spend the rest of their life stages (e.g. Mullett Lake, Cheboygan, River, etc).

Recent Yellow Perch and Walleye Age and Growth Data – Tim Cwalinski/Patrick Hanchin

The DNR asked MSU to gathered scales for aging of yellow perch while conducting their 2011 forage sampling. This is not a species we know a great deal about in the Waterway, so the information is beneficial.

Yellow Perch Growth Rate Results:

Crooked Lake: the growth rate is -0.3 inches slower than the statewide average which is considered normal

Burt Lake: the growth rate is -0.7 inches slower than the statewide average which is considered normal

Mullett Lake: the growth rate is -1.9 slower than the statewide average which is considered slow, thus it takes over 10 years for a Mullett Lake perch to get over 10 inches long!

Growth for young perch in the Waterway lakes is slow, but gets faster as fish get older.

Walleye Growth Rate Results:

Pickrel Lake: the growth rate is -2.4 inches slower than the statewide average

Burt Lake: the growth rate is -0.6 inches slower than the statewide average

Mullett Lake: the growth rate is +1.0 inches faster than the statewide average reaching legal size by age 2-3

These walleye growth data are right on par with what DNR has observed in past decades. Lower densities but excellent growth of fish in Mullett Lake and slower growth the further upstream one goes toward Pickrel Lake. High densities in Crooked-Pickrel lakes simply leads to very slow growth, with fish attaining legal size at age 5-6 on average.

The presentation is attached*.

Overview of the Proposed Statewide Muskellunge and Northern Pike Regulation changes – Tim Cwalinski/Patrick Hanchin:

Proposals were put together which are now out for public comment. Public meetings are currently scheduled throughout the state with an online survey available from March 26-May 26.

Research Being Conducted to Control Zebra and Quagga Mussels – Dave Roberts, Marrone Bio Innovations:

Marrone Bio Innovations has been EPA approved for treating closed water systems with a Pseudomonas toxin that kills zebra and quagga mussels. Open water trials are beginning, conducted under an experimental use permit at isolated locations. Zequanox has been proven not to produce harmful byproducts and it is a safe alternative to currently used chemicals such as Chlorine bleach. Zequanox is bringing well established technology from the pharmaceutical and agricultural industries to water industries. The product is delivered as a powder and comprised completely of dead bacterial cells which are not genetically modified. In addition the product is highly selective (does not kill native mussel species) and is safe for the operator.

Zequanox is a six hour treatment with minimal public health and safety concern and no harm to the environment and water quality. Test results at current commercial treatment locations show 90% plus mortality of the zebra and quagga mussels. Multi use treatments are recommended for 100% eradication. Periodic treatments at low concentration can be used at regular intervals.

The efficiencies of open water application are being researched but are in the early stages. There is no reason to disperse the product throughout the entire water column so efforts are made to concentrate the material near the bottom near the mussels. Field trials in open water systems have been started on Deep Quarry Lake, in Illinois, which is less than 50 acres in size. There are no current applications for such large lakes like those located in the Inland Waterway.

The Zequanox presentation is attached*.

Discussion to Encourage Anglers and Others to Increase Interest in Tag and Stomach Sampling Participating – Open Discussion:

MSU placed signs at all the access sites they launched from (at least two locations per lake) last year and will check on locations again this year. Last year the DNR contacted newspapers within the area and provided news releases. However, participation was still very low.

A few suggestions to increase participation included a YouTube video, Boy Scout involvement and local groups organized with an action plan. It was emphasized that the public constituents who are part of this committee need to become more active in recruiting anglers to participate in the project (tag returns and diet assistance). It is especially important to educate anglers and visitors that are not associated with local organizations and have little or no knowledge of the Study. It was suggested that a few labels and plastic freezer bags be placed in a plastic storage bag along with stomach sample directions and the kits be handed out at stores, parks and other locations to encourage anglers to participate in the study.

Attached are the walleye diet stomach sample directions and labels along with the tag return form and a short version of a placard describing the Study*.

LSSU Walleye Undergraduate Projects in Black Lake – Virgil Smith, Black Lake Association:

The Black Lake Fish Committee (BLFC) was established in 2008 with a concern about the declining Black Lake walleye fishery. Therefore, they undertook two strategies; one was cooperative walleye stocking with the DNR and the other was to investigate walleye declining population.

Since 2008, BLFC has stocked 344,000 walleye in Black Lake between private fall fingerling stocking efforts and DNR spring fingerling efforts. Survival of stocked walleye has been good based on angler reports in recent years, as well as fall assessments by DNR.

BLFC formed a partnership with the Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association and Lake Superior State University to study declining walleye populations. A number of undergraduate studies have been conducted, including trying to examine egg deposition and diet studies. Preliminary results show walleye are spawning in the lake but it is unknown how many are spawning in the rivers. Eggs of sturgeon and suckers have been found in the river, but no walleye eggs. Significant catches of sublegal walleye have occurred the last few years, forage fish have increased, and there has been a significant decline in zebra mussel populations according to Virgil. Official results will be presented in May at the Black Lake Association meeting.

Going forward BLFC hopes to address physical issues with the lake and they are considering spawning reefs and fish shelters. They have spoken with the DNR Parks Division to address issues with the state park ramp and parking area. Stocking may continue at Black Lake for spring fingerlings by DNR (pending pond results), but fall fingerling private stocking efforts are on hold for now.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Installing Fish Structure – Neal Godby, MDNR:

Before structures are installed legal requirements must be addressed. The Department of Environmental Quality may require a permit, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers review may be needed near the Great Lakes and structures always need to be placed so navigation is not impeded.

Structure can be GOOD:

It can concentrate fish so fish are more available to the anglers, it can increase spawning habitat, it can provide cover for better protection and food production, and it can be most effective in water bodies with flat homogeneous bottoms that lack cover.

Structure can be BAD:

It can concentrate fish resulting in overharvest in unproductive lakes, it can cause unrealistic expectations by increasing fishing success for a short period until overharvest results, and it can be hazardous to boating and other activities if built too close to the water surface or near areas where people swim or wade.

DNR Kids Fishing Pond Program - Neal Godby:

Kids fishing ponds increase opportunities for the youth. The DNR has traditionally been approached by communities asking for guidance on the size of a pond, the number of fish to stock, the number of fish to catch, etc. Therefore, Fisheries has created an issue statement. Please review this document and send any comments you may have to Neal as soon as possible! We will want to promote these fishing ponds and this policy will create a regulatory framework. Keep in mind that any establish policy will be optional since it is designed more guidance

Attached is the Kids Fishing Pond issue statement*.

Fisheries Division and Tribal updates:

Maxwell Field, LTBB: We will continue to mark fish until the walleye opener. If you wish to experience the survey or tagging process please contact us! We would enjoy taking you out. LTBB is interested in conducting a gill-net recapture survey in the inland waterway in 2013. We would try to collaborate this with MDNR and MSU. These would be short-term sets in an effort to minimize fatalities of fish and the focus would be to capture more females in the deeper parts of the lake.

Jim Dexter, DNR Fisheries Division Chief: It is great seeing the variety of participation and interest here. Collaborative discussions are great which enable much to be accomplished.

Our budget situation is dire. This year is the worse we have seen in 25 years! We had to reduce the Fish Division budget by 2.2 million dollars this year, and we expect that there will be further reductions needed next fiscal year beginning October 1. This is a direct result of continued and increasing declines in license sales, both fishing and hunting. Fisheries Division is undertaking a Strategic Planning Process and there will be 24 staff, meeting from April through November. It is time to refocus and re-plan.

Todd Grischke, Lake Huron Basin Coordinator: Rodney Stokes, Director, created implementation teams that aligned with his four major priorities; recreation passport, customer service, increase participation in outdoor recreation, and fostering growth in the economy. Each implementation team submitted reports to the Director. The Department has recognized a change in trends and shifts in outdoor interest. Kelley Smith retired as Acting Deputy Director and long time Fisheries Chief. Bill Moritz, former Wildlife Division Chief, accepted the position of Deputy Director and starts on Monday.

Meeting Adjourned.

*** The handouts may be obtained by emailing Frank Krist at krists@speednetllc.com**

Next meeting: Monday October 22, 2012