

Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum
Lakeshore Technical College, Cleveland, WI
Wells Fargo Room
6 to 9 PM
August 30, 2017

AGENDA

6:00-6:10 Welcome and introduction

6:10-6:20 LMFF Terms of Reference

Brief discussion of status of proposed changes. Although a vote following the last meeting generally supported the changes, there was some opposition from a group to the proposed recommendation making steps. Because not all groups could “live with” the changes, we will need to revisit the TOR in the future.

6:20-6:40 ~~Coho Salmon and Bloody Red Shrimp (Janssen, UWM)~~ Trawl Study Update (Seilheimer, WISG)

Because of AV issues, Dr. Janssen went later in the program.

Summary of first two years of cooperative whitefish trawling bycatch study by Wisconsin Sea Grant and Susie Q Fish Company. Goal of study is to quantify the number of bycatch (non-target species) at different times of year and depths. Overall the bycatch has been mainly small whitefish and lake trout, which only make up about 2% of the total catch. Tagged whitefish and lake trout have been recovered in different parts of Lake Michigan, as well as Lake Huron. Because whitefish are being harvest as part of the study, there have been fewer trap nets in the water. This reduces the risk of gear entanglement by anglers and charter boats.

6:40-7:40 Salmon and trout stocking numbers 2018 and beyond (All)

Brief update on the forage fish status and stocking question for Lake Michigan by Cheryl Masterson (WI DNR). Forage surveys from 2017 won't be available until March 2018 because there is a lot of data to analyze. WDNR asking the LMFF members for a recommendation about stocking, especially some guidance so we don't have to meet about this topic every year.

Discussion notes (Cheryl Masterson):

Stocking numbers discussion

- More alewife out there than we've ever seen; 30lb fish being caught. How do I discuss this with charter captains and others who are seeing a disparity with the data?

- MI is marking big clouds of bait at the same time we are. Can the big clouds be something other than alewives?
- All sizes of alewives are being seen in fish stomachs.
- Focus on catch rates of Chinooks and how many are caught rather than the alewife surveys.
- Fish weight tells the story better than catch rates.
- How many years of data does it take to make a trend?
- PPR – In the last two years, you’ve seen an increase in predators and decrease in prey. I disagree with that based on the health of the Chinooks being seen this year. PPR numbers contradict what we’re seeing.
- Multiple folds to the health of the fishery – overlooking the excitement for anglers, which is discouraging. We are a two month fishery in WI – half of May, June, and half of July. We’ve taken away the August Chinook fishery. Can’t count on any consistent fishing, which does not draw anglers to the lakefront. Competing with Winnebago and Green Bay walleye fisheries – we need to generate excitement in order to get the anglers here. We need to get on track with the Chinook fishery, and if that means decreasing other species that’s okay. Anglers don’t drive to Lake Michigan to catch coho or a couple of rainbows. People want something that will pull out their line that they will remember for the rest of their lives.
- We need to get fresh eggs from Seattle for the next four years.
- Spring alewife netting behind The Wharf – caught big numbers of alewives. Measured some 8 inch alewives, multiple year classes represented. Alewives were in the river as far up as the Calumet bridge. What are the alewives eating? We heard years ago that there was no food for alewives. No die off because the water temps were stable this spring.
- Fall bottom trawls were 5 minute tows back in the day. The back deck of the boat would be flooded with alewives back then, and we don’t see that anymore.
- Was the Sheboygan River alewife phenomenon an isolated incident?
- How can we make an informed decision when we won’t have this year’s analysis until next March?
- The alewife distribution is now very patchy. Why? We don’t have that answer. Where you find the patches, they are in there thick. A characteristic of a fishery that collapses is that there is high variation from year to year. We are seeing this now – how do we avoid a collapse other than to be conservative?
- Scientists need a better way to present the facts to the angling public.
- How are the alewife numbers in GB? We see bait all over the Bay from June-Sept. They must be alewives because we are catching them on crankbaits. Those alewives are probably moving into the northern end of the lake.
 - Or, the alewives have moved into GB because there is no food left in the middle of the lake, and the Bay is more fertile.
- No fish have been caught in front of Gills Rock in months. The alewives have been nearshore, but anglers have to go out to 300 feet of water to catch Chinooks.
- Been told of a danger of a crash for 15 years. Certainly less alewives, and conservative is a good approach. Sporting community wants Chinooks – 2.3 LKT/CHK, cut 230,000 lake trout and add

100,000 kings. LKT being stocked offshore on purpose to reproduce and not be caught. When fishing was slow off Algoma, the charters were targeting lake trout and catching 15-20+ pounders. Get active on the fish that people want to catch.

- 450,000 LKT cut last year; LKT live 3 times longer, so there should be a significant impact from that cut.
- Alewives are living more nearshore than they have ever before. Their food is nearshore near the “dirty” rivers. Janssen hypothesis – can’t be proven at this point due to lack of funding. Anglers are also seeing massive numbers of alewives nearshore. We cut brown trout last year that come near shore to feed. BRT is the number one nearshore fish. Kings also come near shore when the conditions are right. Coho and rainbows don’t come nearshore. We should be stocking the fish that live in the same nearshore areas as the alewives – BRT and CHK.
- Kings going to MI in August because they are going home to spawn, not because the alewives move out due to warm water. We aren’t putting in enough fish to have an August fishery. Not advocating for increasing stocking overall – willing to decrease lake trout, rainbows, and coho. We should be focusing on Chinooks and browns.
- What about the winter fishery in Milwaukee? Can now catch/keep lake trout that are accessible in the Milwaukee harbor in the winter. Brown trout also there.
- We don’t want Lake trout in the lake!
- Others using wands are detecting CWTs but the fish has all of their fins. The % wild estimates must not be accurate.
- [Side comment to CM during the break] Gills Rock gets coho stocked every year, but we never catch any. It would be preferred to move the coho out to somewhere where they have an opportunity to catch them. Then increase the chinook stocking numbers in Gills Rock accordingly.
- What is the natural reproduction on lake trout?
 - Depends where you are – MI ~ less than 10%, IL ~ 50%, Milwaukee ~ 25%, lakewide ~ 15-18%
- Lake trout numbers stocked by FWS have been reduced every year for the last two years. 3 million to 2.75 million, and down to 2.5 million in 2018. Once the cuts are made, FWS will be looking at raising cisco.
- Comments submitted via Skype
 - lake huron had large fish just before the crash
 - the mussels have created havoc on the food chain... why would risk even further damage by INCREASING chinook salmon what do they suggest if it crashes from over stocking?
 - why is the fact of the invasive species the main culprit ignored?
 - we have to rely on the science and data supplied by scientists, the lake has changed, every one involved have to change with it. if it means tackle shop owners, marina owners, charter boats and rec fishermen have to adapt to different species or methods etc. its our position we err on the side of caution and try at all costs to avoid a crash
 - still haven't heard a word about invasive species and mussels

- i've been a forum member for a long time and the data presented by the scientists involved is questioned, ignored or not believed at all by some stake holders. big mistake
- Marinette GLSF has seen similar results in alewives as the Gills rock gentleman talking
- We have 4 major river systems to keep water somewhat fertile

7:40-7:50 Break

7:50-8:10 ~~Trawl Study Update (Seilheimer, WISG)~~ Charter captain electronic reporting system

There will be a new system for charter fishing catch reporting based on the system developed for the commercial fishing industry. Catch will be reported on smartphones and eliminate the need for paper reporting.

Charter reporting comments

- Angelo has a flip phone.
- May be hard to have data entered before they hit the dock, especially if the lake is rough. Safety concern, especially with clients onboard.
- Charlie H. – will be set up to use the commercial version of the system tomorrow. It has been 20 years in the making.
- Spend the money on chinooks instead of charter EFHRS web/app development.

8:10-8:20 ~~Charter captain electronic reporting system~~ Coho Salmon and Bloody Red Shrimp (Janssen, UWM)

John Janssen reported on the presence of Hemimysis (Bloody Red Shrimp), an invasive species similar to the native Opossum Shrimp. Hemimysis live in shallower than Mysis and may be a more accessible food source for some species. Hemimysis like caves, so they are found near structure, like rock piles and break walls. Found alewives and smelt in the Milwaukee harbor later in the summer than expected and feeding heavily on Hemimysis.

John showed several videos showing Hemimysis. Here's a clip from Eric Geisthardt UWM SFS
<https://youtu.be/y7uDrl0eX1o>

Another video of interest showing juvenile salmon in Michigan (also from Eric):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xY3d3a_8m6M&t=34s

8:20-8:30 Next Steps

Attendance

Chris Strege
Angelo Trentadue
Jeff Hack
Don Grasse
Carl Rasmussen
Jerry Fetterer
Russell Gahagan
Chuck Bronte
John Pollock
Russ Kleinert
Charlie Henriksen
Lee Haasch
Jerrad Kalmerton
Mike LeClair
Scott Habermann
Michael Dilulio
Mark Holey
Fritz Peterson
Wayne Utterstedt
Thom Gulash
Chuck Weier
Matt Demmin
Cindy G____ (Geiger??? Illegible)
Ahbram Ventura
Richard Jones
Jake Gajewski
Dale Maas
Kevin Naze
Cody Lukes

Also in attendance, but not on the list:

Titus Seilheimer
John Janssen
Todd Kalish
Willie Fetzer
Brad Eggold
Tom Meronek
Nick Legler
Mike Donofrio
Cheryl Masterson
Juan Gomez (DNR Warden)

Attending via Skype:

Matt Kornis
Keith Waloway