

Lake Michigan Fisheries Team
9 am – 3 pm, Thursday, May 14, 2009
Room P113, Public Safety Building, Lakeshore Technical College

Draft Notes – prepared by Steve Hogler and Bill Horns

Present: Rowe, Schumacher, Peeters, Hansen, Eggold, Donofrio, Hogler, Horns, Fajfer, Groth, Paoli, Jerich

1. Review/revise agenda

-No revisions made

2. Review/approve meeting notes from March 11, 2009

-Approved

3. Designation of note-taker

-Hogler was selected

4. Updates

Time will be allowed for short updates and reminders of topics of interest. The following will be mentioned. Any of these could be elevated to discussion or action items if needed and if time permits.

a) Pending tasks

i) Net pen issue brief for FM Board – Bill

Policy has been approved by the Fish Board. **Bill will write an update for the Fish Management handbook.**

ii) Cooperative research agreements issue brief for FM Board – Bill

Bill shared his latest email on this subject. He believes that the latest draft is a statement of current policy and no further work on this is anticipated. No other comments.

iii) SCAA modeling – Bill

Upcoming meeting at Point on June 23 with Ted Treska. Bill, Tammie, Scott, Brad and Dave will attend

iv) Arrangements for creel analysis project – Bill/Brad

(a) Have met with Paul Rasmussen, Bureau of Science Services, who will analyze past creel data to assess feasibility and implications of periodically substituting reduced surveys for full surveys to save money.

(b) There was discussion of what the current budget situation would have on the creel survey this year.

v) Updated (May 4) Lake Michigan stocking summary – Bill

Discussion of the stocking summary table provided by Dave G. It is likely we will stock very close to 1 million chinook fingerling this year. All coho will be stocked as yearlings in 2010. Brown trout yearlings are close in number to what was requested. Fall fingerling brown trout may need to be stocked out early this fall to accommodate VHS testing requirements.

vi) Lake trout rehabilitation strategy/Red Flags – Bill

(a) Discussed LMC responses to SWG report. Bill reported there seems to be general support for development of a trigger to stop Lake Trout stocking at 2.75 million if a “critical” value is reached. If the trigger was not activated (because terminology has proven confusing, the LMC has adopted the word “activated” to mean the thing being measured to provide the trigger has a value that that is not consistent with increased stocking) then Lake Trout above the 2.75 million level would be stocked as outlined in the draft Implementation Strategy.

(b) What the trigger and activation threshold would be has NOT been decided upon, and issues remain regarding stocking allocations if the trigger is activated.

(c) Further discussion about lake trout stocking in 2012 and beyond occurred. Fish chiefs are discussing the options.

vii) Skamania – Bill

The LMFT requested that Wisconsin position itself to ask Indiana to collect *Skamania* eggs for us in 2009 for so we could resume *Skamania* stocking in 2011. **Bill will pursue this with Al Kaas.**

- b) Review of Lake Committee Meetings- Paul/Brad
 - (1) Paul shared his report on the Lake Meetings with the group.
 - (2) Brad placed as many of the reports/talks from the Meeting as he could on the FHCOMMON drive for those who would like to view them.
- c) Management reports – Bill
 - (1) Discussion on our Management reports occurred. Bill identified who had delinquent reports.
 - (2) It was agreed that all reports (and revisions) must be to Bill by June 30.
- d) Whitefish modeling and quota development – Scott
 - (1) Scott reported on the status of the whitefish model. He and Ted are cleaning up some files and he should be able to run the model soon.
 - (2) A short discussion on various model parameters ensued.
- e) GB yellow perch modeling – Tammie
 - Tammie reported on the yellow perch model. A similar discussion as in 4d occurred.
- f) Lake sturgeon genetic guidelines – Brad/Bill
 - The guidelines have been approved and are moving forward.
- g) LMFF vacancy – Bill
 - Send names of candidates to Bill.
- h) Lake Michigan Stakeholder meeting, May 15 – Bill
 - Meeting canceled. Will likely be held in October
- i) Sampling request from Amanda Haponski – Bill
 - FYI. Samples (walleye, perch and SMB) have been collected.
- j) Summer LMTC meeting plans – Brad
 - Meeting will be in Peshtigo on July 21-22. An evening meeting of one of the work groups will be held during the evening of July 20.
- k) Spring brood river reports – Brad/Steve
 - (1) Steve and Brad gave brief updates. The spring steelhead run in 2009 appeared to be above average.
 - (2) It was suggested that we discuss steelhead management as it relates to the **feral broodstock protocol at a later meeting.**
- l) Declining salmonine egg sizes – John
 - It was noted that steelhead eggs have decreased about 50% in size and Chinook eggs about 25-30% over the last several years. Discussion ensued.
- m) Great Lakes Regional Marking Committee – Steve
 - (1) Steve F. shared a letter regarding lakewide marking with the group.
 - (2) Money has been spent to buy infrastructure, but none was allotted for operation or for data collection and analysis.
 - (3) A conference call is upcoming to discuss operation of the marking trailers.
- n) Need for review of fish passage policy at BAFF – Paul
 - (1) Paul summarized the need for changing the current method of operation of passing no fish above BAFF, with steelhead trucked back to the harbor in spring and all fish being harvested in fall. These operational procedures were necessitated by VHS.
 - (2) He noted that Chinook have been seen above BAFF and that the state owns lots of land above BAFF that was purchased to provide fishing access to Lake Michigan trout and salmon. Also that the Kewaunee River is already considered VHS positive.
 - (3) **Paul will write a memo to the Fish Board** requesting that spring steelhead be passed above BAFF, while still harvesting all salmon in the fall.
- o) OTC sample collections – Paul
 - (1) Paul described the 2009 sampling procedures for collecting OTC samples.

- (2) All age groups will be collected in 2009
- (3) Wisconsin needs to collect 1200 samples (600 North and 600 South of Manitowoc). They should be skin on if possible. Sample should be taken from the adipose fin back. If the skin is not on, wrap in tin foil and if possible collect a scale sample. Samples should be taken in July, but collect when possible. Collect all ages, but focus on jacks (1/3 of sample). Paul would like us to collect stomach samples if possible. Place in another bag but use the code number from OTC bag to link samples. Would like as many as possible by the Tech Committee Meeting in July.
- p) Cormorant egg oiling opportunities – Paul
 - (1) Continuing this year. 3 maybe 4 trips are scheduled for this year. Paul has enough volunteers to cover data collection for the 3 scheduled trips. He is taking names for those interested if a 4th trip is required.
- q) M&M Club letter walleye bag limit – Mike/Tammie
 - (1) Discussion on the letter requesting a higher spring walleye bag limited occurred.
 - (2) Mike/Tammie didn't know if Michigan would support this proposal because they are still trying to restore walleye in several UP streams.
 - (3) Dave Rowe will look back at past walleye harvest data for Green Bay with relation to past harvest regulations.
- r) Great Lakes spotted musky update – Dave
 - (1) Dave gave us a summary of this springs musky netting and on the status of his spawning location study. 20 transmitters have been planted in musky ranging from 39 ¾ to 50 ½” and several have been shed. He is continuing to track the fish that have transmitters in them.
 - (2) Dave also told the group that 1100 musky that were raised by Ontario were recently stocked into Big Elkart, Anderson and Archibald Lakes in numbers proportional to their surface acreage.
- s) Need for review of stocking rationale model – George (in absentia)
 - (1) The model was discussed as it relates to stocking quotas. It was noted that steelhead and coho numbers were not derived from the model but are set by another method.
 - (2) Tammie related her findings of poor returns from several species of trout and salmon stocked into Green Bay
 - (3) Further discussions will be required to determine the next steps.
- t) Recognition of DNR by Manitowoc County Conservationists Hall of Fame – Bill
Mike Staggs accepted the award on behalf of the Department.
- u) FAF/NOAA RFP – note June 22 deadline
FYI. Applications due by June 22.
- v) Point Beach alewife reports – see FH/Common/LMFT
Steve summarized several of the documents that look at the status of the Lake Michigan fish community and on the impact of power plants on alewife. Documents are posted on FHCOMMON under LMFT/Point Beach alewife reports.
- w) \$475 Million Restoration Initiative
This significant commitment of federal money for the Great Lakes in FY 2010 could include funding for sea lamprey control, mass marking of stocked salmonines, and habitat improvements.
- x) Sturgeon Trailers update
 - (1) Peshtigo assisted Ed Baker collecting eggs from 4 females for his trailers on the Whitefish and Cedar Rivers.
 - (2) Eggs from 5 females were initially collected from the Wolf River for Wisconsin's trailers on the Milwaukee and Kewaunee Rivers. One family was later discarded. Sturgeon are hatching at both trailers, but have not yet begun to feed.

5. Conservation Congress advisory questions

Background. Three advisory questions of interest to us won statewide majorities and were approved by a majority of counties: 1) “Restrict Lake Michigan commercial fishing harvest in select grids”. 2) “Increased size limit on muskellunge, Green Bay and related waters”. 3) “Creating a size limit on northern pike in waters of Green Bay”.

Action. Discussion occurred on all three questions. The LMFT agreed by consensus that the Department should not advance rule changes pursuant to any of the three advisories.

1. **Restrict Lake Michigan Commercial Fishing.** Harvest reports indicate only minimal effort in the named grids around Milwaukee. It does not appear that incidental harvest of yellow perch is common despite the incident in 2002. Brad will map the 25 fathom line in the grids off Milwaukee to determine how much of the area would be affected by closure of the grids to commercial fishing and Bill look into data regarding incidental kill of yellow perch in chub nets.
2. **54” size minimum for Musky on Green Bay.** Discussion on the status of the musky fishery on the bay. Growth potentials were described. We are starting to move beyond the initial stages of restoration. Dave Rowe suggested that a management plan should be developed by all stakeholder groups to guide the program in the future. The LMFT agreed with this recommendation.
3. **NP slot limit on Green Bay.** It was pointed out that despite approval in statewide voting, the proposal was defeated in 4 of 5 counties that surround Green Bay. Discussion ensued about our lack of data on the northern pike population in Green Bay. Creel data indicates that size structure is improving for harvested fish. Changes in regulation would have to go through the pike team which hasn’t met lately.

6. Green Bay brown trout stocking

Background. Last meeting we tabled a brown trout discussion due to lack of time and we should make sure we get to it for this meeting, before we all enter in stocking quotas in June. Tammie has heard from several members from a local club on brown trout in the last few weeks and is promising them some decisions soon on stocking numbers and other management strategies to counter a less than 1% return we are getting in Green Bay.

Action. Tammie gave a power point presentation about brown trout in Green Bay.

1. She described historic stocking levels and the decline in harvest of brown trout in Green Bay since 1986.
2. She further identified issues that could be contributing to the decline in brown trout harvest in Green Bay including (1) decline in preferred forage species- alewife and smelt, (2) increasing lamprey populations, (3) the increasing cormorant population, and (4) increasing walleye numbers in Green Bay
3. Discussion ensued on the changing Green Bay environment, how lower alewife number may be causing predators (walleye) to shift to brown trout.
4. Management options including; reduced stocking, stocking only yearling or fingerling brown trout, shifting stocking locations to the east side of the bay, doing a food web analysis to find out who is eating who and changing predator bag limits were discussed.
5. It was recommended that NER Lake Michigan fish staff get together to discuss these options further and to decide what to do about quotas for the upcoming cycle.

7. Commercial quota setting

Background. Later this summer I will give the NRB my annual review of commercial fishing harvest limits. By then we will have reached a decision regarding whitefish. This presentation is also an opportunity to communicate a rationale for not increasing the Green Bay yellow perch harvest limit on

Green Bay and not re-opening the harvest on Lake Michigan. I want to describe for the NRB 1) our slowly improving capabilities to use SCAA models and 2) how we make harvest limit decisions based on those models.

Action. Bill provided a paper on Improving Fish Stock Assessment. He would like to use these considerations for his annual update on Commercial Fishing to the NRB. It was also agreed that further discussion at a later meeting is recommended to discuss sport harvest as it relates to commercial fishing quotas.

8. Fall fingerling steelhead

Background. Kettle Moraine Springs can produce 60K fingerling Ganaraska and Chambers Creek steelhead for stocking this fall, or cull them. John can review these options.

Action. KMS indicates that they have the potential to stock 60,000 fall fingerling Chambers Creek and Ganaraska strain steelhead. They can not convert any of these fish to yearling steelhead. The LMFT recommended the following: 1) To stock 60,000 fall fingerling steelhead (all of one strain) into the Milwaukee River and 60,000 fall fingerling steelhead (all of the other strain) into the Branch/Manitowoc River. 2) That a policy be developed at the next production meeting on how to handle small loads of fish.

9. Yellow perch recruitment

Background. Time permitting, I would like to review yellow perch recruitment hypotheses for Lake Michigan (zooplankton limited) and b) Green Bay (cormorant limited).

Action. Deferred to another meeting.

10. Next meeting date and location

JULY 8, 2009. Site to be determined.