

**Lake Michigan Fisheries Team
Tuesday, May 15, 2007
DNR Service Center
Plymouth, WI**

Draft Notes –prepared by Bill Horns

Present: Mark Opgenorth, Randy Schumacher, Matt Coffaro, Mike Baumgartner, John Komassa, Brad Eggold, Ron Preder, Pradeep Hirethota, Steve Fajfer, Dave Giehtbrock, Bill Horns, Paul Peeters, Chris Groth, Mike Donofrio, George Boronow, Steve Hogler, Steve Galarneau, John Netto

- 1. Review/revise agenda**
- 2. Review/approve meeting notes from February 15, 2007**
- 3. Brief updates**

Time was allowed for short updates and reminders of regarding the following topics of interest.

- Challenges to minimum catch requirement
- Net pen policy
- Jason Vandehay's thesis on whitefish population structure
- Skamania holding facility
 - The LMFT supports installing circular tanks at the Kewaunee coho pond to hold Skamania.
 - Randy Schumacher raised the question of whether or not the Skamania program should be sustained. There is not consensus on this issue, but the Policy Committee voted 4 to 1 to support sustaining the program.
- Status of Chapter 25 re-write and electronic reporting (EFHRS)
 - The need to retain a qualified programmer to assist in the implementation of the electronic reporting program was discussed. Chris Groth and Al Blizel will draft a short briefing paper describing the need and cost, for review by Randy Stark.
- Reserving fin clips using the new web-based system
 - Paul will take care of reserving clips for Strawberry Creek chinooks, Steve Fajfer will do the same for Seeforellen brown trout, and Steve Hogler will review the steelhead problem and bring a recommendation back to the Team.
- Status of sturgeon stream-side rearing
- Plans for cormorant control in 2007
- Status of spotted musky importation arrangements
- Status of vacancies
 - Concern was expressed about the statewide exam being used to screen applicants. It was felt that the questions would be ineffective at identifying strong candidates.
- Stocking quotas
 - For steelhead and chinooks, base quotas should be submitted. Brad will provide new base quotas and reallocation rules for coho, pursuant to the revised inter-regional stocking plan.
- Walleyes for Tomorrow hatchery
- Lake trout restoration plan

4. VHS

Background. Emergency rules to control the spread of VHS are under revision following the discovery of the disease in Little Lake Butte des Morts. A permanent order is under development.

Action. Discuss.

5. Green Bay yellow perch commercial harvest and recreational bag limits

Background. Analysis of data from 2006 has been completed. Commercial fishers expect an increase in their harvest limit. Some sport fishers will want a higher bag limit if we increase the commercial harvest limit. If we initiate a change now, it would be possible to have it in effect before the end of the 2007-08 commercial fishing year. We can think about two ways of developing a new commercial harvest limit: 1) Match the 2006 recreational harvest by weight. The estimated combined recreational harvest from Green Bay was 757,242 fish. At 3.31 fish/pound, the commercial harvest required to yield that many fish would be 229,774 pounds. 2) "Maximize" yield per recruit. When commercial harvest limits were increased last time, we used a yield-per-recruit analysis performed by John Netto. That approach estimates the harvest that would almost maximize the yield per recruit (YPR) from the estimated existing spawning stock. By accepted convention that harvest corresponds to a fishing mortality rate ($F_{0.1}$) such that the slope of the YPR vs F curve is 10% of the slope when F equals zero. When John performed the same analysis this spring using the updated statistical catch-at-age model, he derived a combined harvest (sport plus commercial) corresponding to $F_{0.1}$ of 195,000 pounds for calendar year 2007. Since the recreational harvest exceeded that in 2006 and is likely to do so again in 2007, this method suggests either a commercial harvest of, well . . .hmm . . . let me get out the old calculator.

Action. The Team recommended increasing the total allowable commercial harvest from 60,000 to 100,000 pounds.

6. Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum

Background. I would like the LMFT to consider recommending a change in how we run the LMFF. Despite Phil Moy's persistence and leadership, I think that it has lost a little of its old spark. Maybe it just needs a new hot issue, but I wonder if a different format would work a little better. My suggestion is to disband the structure as it now exists and replace that with a quarterly open public forum, migrating among sites along the lake shore, in which DNR staff present information, take questions, and facilitate discussion. This could be publicized with a planned quarterly release of my news memo (which I have not been good about producing recently), and maybe move to quarterly LMFT meetings scheduled just before or after the Forum meeting.

Action. The foregoing suggestion was discussed, without resolution. It was suggested that sustaining the present Forum, but supplementing it along the lines described above might be a good approach. Bill will draft a proposal for review at the next LMFT meeting.

7. Early stocking of fingerling brown trout

Background. Steve Fajfer has told us that Wild Rose will need to stock out approximately 50,000 brown trout fall fingerlings before fall. He suggested apportioning them to the two regions in proportion to total fingerling stocking quotas, which is about 82% to SER and 18% to NER. Brad has suggested, alternatively, splitting them 50/50 between regions.

Action. The Team recommended allocating 30,000 to NER and 20,000 to SER.

8. What is happening in Lake Huron and implications for Lake Michigan

Background. Lake Huron has experienced several presumably inter-related ecological changes, including declines in the benthic community, reduced condition and depletion of alewives, a collapse in the chinook salmon fishery, and some evidence for increased natural reproduction by lake trout.

Action. Discussion.

9. Steelhead production quotas

Background. Randy Link was asked how many yearling steelhead no smaller than 11.5/pound he could produce for stocking during the first half of April. Those size and stocking date requirements were taken

from the steelhead plan. His answer was 106,000 of each of the three strains. This means that 61,000 of each strain will be available for stocking before September 30 as fall fingerlings.

Action. Discuss. The Team believes that the small fall fingerlings will contribute little to the fishery. The Team agreed that the fall fingerlings should be distributed as follows: Ganaraska to Oconto, Chambers Creek to Manitowoc, and Skamania to Milwaukee.

10. Next meeting date and location

The next meeting of the LMFT will be July 9-10 in Sturgeon Bay.