



Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

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

Minutes

Draft

Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee Tuesday, November 09, 2010 Cheboygan Chamber of Commerce, Cheboygan, MI

Attendees: Brenda Archambo, Wayne Blomberg, David Bock, Dawn Bodnar, Mary Bremigan, Tim Cwalinski, Doug Dingey, Ron Dulak, Max Field, Wallace Gemignani, Neal Godby, Patrick Hanchin, Liz Hay-Chmielewski, Daniel Hayes, Kevin Haynes, Lindsey Henski, Steve Hewett, Rick Johnson, Frank Krist, Erin McLean, Kim Pappas, Bill Parsons, Nick Popoff, George Rowe, Steve Schnell, Julie Shafto, Steve Shafto, Kelley Smith, Virgil Smith, Roy Tassava, Bob Wagner

Call to Order: Frank Krist called the meeting to order at 11:59 a.m. Introductions were made.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the April 29, 2010 meeting were reviewed with two changes: Page 3 states 'partnership with undergrad research on Black Lake' which should read 'Black Lake Association and Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association'; last sentence on page 2 states 'a goal of 2012', which should state 'significant progress by 2012'. Minutes approved and accepted with two modifications.

2010 Spring Walleye Stocking Logistics and Results of Fall Juvenile Walleye Surveys – Tim Cwalinski, MDNRE and Max Field, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB):

2010 Walleye Stockings – Tim Cwalinski,

Black Lake received 192,000 spring fingerlings; 70,000 stocked at the State Park, 24,000 stocked at Corbett Road with the remaining 98,000 stocked at the Upper Black River Mouth. These fish were reared in Bay City, intensively tested for VHS, not OTC marked and stocked in June.

Mullett Lake received 101,000 spring fingerlings; stocked at Dodge Point, Jewell Road and Topinabee. These fish were reared in the eastern Upper Peninsula by the Tribal hatchery and, intensively tested for Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Disease (VHS), Oxytetracycline (OTC) marked and stocked in June. The quality of the OTC mark has been questioned however.

Mullett Lake also received 7,500 fall fingerlings. This was a result of a private fish stocking by Sault St Marie Tribal members and the Mullett Lake Preservation Society. The walleye were stocked in mid-October at Dodge Point and Topinabee.

Recruitment Surveys – Tim Cwalinski

Recruitment surveys are useful tools and are conducted in the evening in only 2 to 4 feet of water. They evaluate the number of juvenile walleye at the end of the growing season providing a useful index when comparing multiple years. The more intensively a shoreline is surveyed (multiple dates and weather patterns), the more reliable the data will be. Time is often a factor so surveys are usually limited to 1 or 2 nights.

Black Lake – Catch per hour for age 0 walleye indicated that 2010 is one of the highest years when compared to more recent fall evaluations. Audience members asked how the MDNRE distinguished between wild and stocked fish during this survey. That could not be determined since during 2010 stocked fish were not marked due to hatchery logistics.

Mullett Lake – Catch per hour for age 0 walleye indicated 1996 as very high with 2000, 2001 and 2010 as average. Fish from this survey have not been aged as of yet so the 2010 results may change. Eight young walleye were sampled for OTC and three came back marked. However, marking was of low quality so there is a possibility of a higher number of fish in the sample being from the stocking event.

Burt Lake – Catch per hour for age 0 walleye in 1995, 1997, 2001 and 2010 was good. These are the only years when this lake was evaluated in the fall for juvenile walleye production. Burt Lake appears to be a consistent walleye producer.

Crooked Lake – Catch rates are high some years; however, they do not coincide with stocking years.

Recruitment Surveys –Max Field

In Fiscal Year 2009, a wildlife grant was obtained providing funding for walleye projects for 2010-2012. Walleye recruitment surveys were conducted this fall on Black Lake, Pickerel Lake, Crooked Lake, Mullett Lake, Big Lake, Long Lake (Montmorency County) and Lake Geneserath.

The 2010 fall walleye recruitment surveys provided the following results: Black Lake 2.1 hours shocking, 21 fish per hour, Mullett Lake 2.1 hours shocking 3.8 fish per hour, Crooked Lake 8.3 hours shocking, 22.6 fish per hour, Pickerel Lake 4.4 hours shocking, 25 fish per hour.

Work plans for 2011 include creating Bathymetric maps for Crooked and Pickerel Lakes, spring walleye population estimates on Crooked and Pickerel Lakes, fall walleye recruitment surveys on Crooked Lake, Pickerel Lake, Big Lake and Lake Twenty-Seven.

Mullett Lake Winter Creel Survey: Mullett Lake will have winter creel this season (but is subject to change). A DNRE staff person will be present, please help by reporting your catches.

Lake Sturgeon Update for Burt and Mullett Lakes – Tim Cwalinski, MDNRE:

All sturgeon stocked from the Black River Streamside Hatchery are fin clipped or marked with a coded wire tag (CWT), mostly the latter. In 2009 the DNRE expanded in-lake sturgeon survey efforts to include Burt and Mullett lakes to gain baseline data on hatchery fish survival and wild fish dynamics. Large mesh gill nets measuring 1200 feet were used. Mullett Lake was surveyed July 8-16 using four nets, capturing 16 juvenile hatchery reared sturgeon. Burt Lake was surveyed July 21-30 using four nets, capturing 20 juvenile hatchery reared sturgeon. Virtually no adults were captured in these brief surveys.

In 2010, the effort on Mullett Lake was expanded to three weeks. One adult sturgeon was caught, with all younger fish being hatchery reared. In 2011, Burt Lake will be surveyed for a three week period in July. Based on current population estimates, these lakes will remain closed to lake sturgeon fishing.

Management Updates:

Kelley Smith, Fisheries Division Chief, MDNRE

Mindy Koch is retiring February 1, 2011. Rebecca Humphries is retiring December 31, 2010. Governor elect will be appointing the next Director. With the early out retirement, the Department is losing approximately 1/3 of its workforce. Fisheries Division will be losing about 20 of 60 employees. Fisheries Division is down 50% of the intended workforce.

Fisheries Orders are up for action at the December NRC meeting. Black Lake sturgeon season will be set so that a quota can be announced in real-time.

Frank Krist commended Kelley Smith for his efforts in mentoring.

Steve Hewitt, Lake Huron Basin Coordinator, MDNRE

Currently Steve is playing catch up from a six week absence due to back surgery. The Division will be losing a number of technicians with the early out. Nearly the entire Inland Waterway is scheduled for a walleye population estimate in spring 2011; with employee numbers reduced, staff and volunteers will be pulled from the entire Fisheries Division.

Lake Huron Regional Director – Bob Wagner, MDNRE:

Organizationally, the Regional Directors report to the Director. There are currently three Regional Directors: Stacy Welling, Upper Peninsula Regional Director; Rebecca Patrick, Lake Michigan Regional Director; and Bob Wagner, Lake Huron Regional Director. A fourth position, Lake Erie Regional Director will be filled in the future. The role of the position is to act as a liaison between stakeholders and the Department.

There will be two Lake Huron Citizen Advisory Councils. The councils will provide input and suggestions on all Department issues. The application process is complete; notification letters to successful and unsuccessful applications will be going out this week. With the first organizational meeting scheduled for Saturday, December 11, 2010 at the RAM Center in Roscommon.

The Citizen Advisory Councils will not be replacing any existing councils the Department has. They will be self-governed and meet every other month. Their role will be to discuss and review current issues and provide recommendations to the Department and disseminate that information back to their constituent groups.

Overview of Past and Current Fisheries Division Walleye Stocking Program and Possible Implications on the Waterway – Steve Hewett, MDNRE:

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Disease (VHS) is still a threat. We are continuing to gather information and must solve some concerns before walleye stocking efforts will be increased throughout the State. We need clarification that egg disinfection procedures work on walleye and a reliable faster Polymerase Chain Reaction test (PCR) is needed. Such a test would allow us to determine virus status in a fish within 24 hours, compared to 28 days. That has a large impact on the placement of freshly acquired fertilized eggs in a State hatchery with other species. Contaminating a hatchery with VHS could require destroying all the fish in the facility. Currently VHS affects 25+ different species, including cold water game species. The Department is comfortable enough to potentially start moving forward. Small steps were taken to increase the walleye stocking program in spring 2010, and more steps might occur in 2011.

Discussion and Update of the 2011 Comprehensive Walleye Survey of the Inland Waterway – Patrick Hanchin, MDNRE, Tim Cwalinski, MDNRE and Daniel Hayes, Michigan State University:

The upcoming comprehensive walleye survey of the Inland Waterway is a monumental undertaking, including 4 lakes, 36,000 acres, and 7 major rivers. Black Lake will not be a part of this survey due to Alverno Dam. Estimates of walleye in Black Lake are independent from the estimates in the rest of the Inland Waterway. This is a cooperative effort between the MDNRE, LTBB and MSU requiring ten crews (3 people per crew), seven boats, three electrofishing boats and 70-100 nets. With the upcoming retirements and reduced workforce, this task is going to be very complex and challenging.

Objectives for this survey include walleye abundance estimates for all the inland lakes in the same year, gauging seasonal distribution and pre/post spawning movement. Adult walleye 13" and above will receive a jaw tag with a portion of those tags being reward tags. An enormous amount of assistance and cooperation will be required for this initiative to be successful. There will be signs and press releases, contact with gas stations, bait shops, tournament organizers, lake associations, etc. Other species will also be tagged (e.g. pike), and crews will note the catches of all fish. The purpose of the survey is to determine walleye habits and dynamics in the entire Waterway.

MSU will also be dedicating three teachers and two students to this project for multiple years. They will be conducting additional nettings in the spring and summer, along with larval walleye drift surveys. MSU has different policies than the MDNRE; donations and volunteers are welcome and encouraged.

At the March 7, 2011 meeting of the Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee, survey logistics will continue to be discussed. Handouts, place cards, and additional material will be available at that time.

Fishing Reports – All Members:

Doug Dingey – Mullett Lake, Lower Cheboygan River and Lower Black River: He has been fishing this area for over 30 years. Originally, fish could be caught anywhere anytime. Things have definitely changed because currently, when, where and how you fish really matters now. Some concerns include wild fish production and zebra mussel impacts.

Rick Johnson – Burt Lake: Walleye fishing has been good with plenty of keepers and undersized fish. Definitely seems to be a heavily fished lake. A local walleye tournament hosted 23 boats, catching 88 fish, releasing all but three. Some concerns include the slower fishery on Black and Mullett Lakes resulting in added fishing pressure on Burt Lake.

Dave Bock – Mullett Lake: In August and September he was perch fishing off Dodge Point and caught 45 perch and threw back twice that many under 8 inches.

Burt Lake: – Maple Bay, Colonial Point and the river mouth: Real nice perch in 15-18 feet of water averaging 9-14". Caught one steelhead, two walleye and over 35 perch between two anglers in under six hours.

Roy Tassava – South end of Mullett Lake: Pike fishing this summer was the worse it has been in years, only caught two keepers. Small pike were hitting on minnows or perch and lures including little cloes also worked.

Brenda Archambo – Black Lake: Pike are hitting on Black Lake pretty well. Sturgeon For Tomorrow is developing an interpretive program at the hatchery. Looking forward to a sturgeon workgroup between LTBB, MDNRE, and Sturgeon For Tomorrow to create a lake sturgeon recovery plan for the watershed.

Virgil Smith – Black Lake: A partnership has been formed between the Black Lake Association, the Hammond Bay Area Anglers Association and Lake Superior State University to better understand walleye recruitment on Black Lake using spawning mats to collect and analyze eggs. There are also plans to hatch some eggs in an incubator. Zooplankton trawls and analysis will be done weekly until fingerlings have switched to another food source, then these activities will continue on less frequent basis.

Erin McLean – Black Lake: Walleyes are being caught, however, this is the first year since 1994 that he hasn't caught any musky. Some are being speared by pike anglers, but the numbers have tanked. He would like to see a season adjustment since musky appear to be heavily targeted while spawning. The Fisheries Chief encourages his representation on the Coolwater Committee (public citizens and Fisheries Division) to further discuss such recommendations.

George Rowe– Crooked and Pickerel Lakes: Fishes once or twice per week and always catches a dinner. Last year was poor, this year is better. More often than not limits are harvested.

Future Meeting Dates – Frank Krist:

Monday, March 7, 2011

Tuesday November 8, 2011

Meetings will start at noon and adjourn by 4 p.m.

Adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

DRAFT