

Lake Michigan Fisheries Team
9 am – 3 pm, Thursday, July 31, 2008
Sturgeon Bay Service Center

Draft Notes –prepared by Bill Horns and Pradeep Hirethota

Team Members: Policy Committee: Bill Horns, Paul Peeters, Brad Eggold. Other Members: Tammie Paoli, Steve Hogler, Dave Rowe, Scott Hansen, Chris Groth, Mike Donofrio, Pradeep Hirethota, Ron Preder, Steve Fajfer, Pete Flaherty.

Attendance: Eggold, Fajfer, Hogler, Donofrio, Schumacher, Hansen, Peeters, Paoli, Rowe, Horns, Groth.

1. Review/revise agenda

2. Review/approve meeting notes from May 29, 2008

Not yet completed tasks:

- 1) Hogler and Link will outline a steelhead proposal.
- 2) Donofrio, Paoli, and Fajfer will outline a brown trout proposal.

3. Brief updates

- Highlights of recent Lake Michigan Tech Committee meeting
 - Salmonid working group is expanding red flags per charge from LMC, but is punting the problem of developing management options.
- Lakewide OTC chinook salmon marking study
 - Paul is looking into reasons for poor marks on the '07 year class.
 - Tail collections are going well, but should continue through August 15.
- Planned rule-making regarding minimum catch requirements
 - A rule will be drafted calling for use of a 5-year running average and freezing the number of licenses.
- Great Lakes Sturgeon Conference, December 3-4
 - We would like to send Brad, Tom Burzynski, Mike Donofrio, Steve Hogler, and Steve Fajfer to the conference. **Bill will initiate** an out-of-state travel request for that group.
 - The draft “Genetic Guidelines for the stocking of Lake Sturgeon in the Great Lakes” has been reviewed widely. WDNR, through Hewett, Boronow, and Schumacher has written to the LMC and LSC stating that hatchery-reared lake sturgeon should remain an option for Lake Superior and Lake Michigan.
- Proposed NOAA shipwreck sanctuary
- Healing our waters conference, September 10-12
- First annual Great Lakes monitoring meeting organized by the Office of the Great Lakes
- Lake trout mortality workshop, October 2-3
- Great Lakes Urban Habitat Restoration Symposium, January 22-23
- National Fish Habitat Action Plan
 - Bill will be the WDNR representative on the steering committee for the Great Lakes Partnership under this program.
 - Scott pointed out the relevance of the Great Lakes GIS developed at the Univ. of Michigan.
- 2008-09 stocking plans
 - Steve Fajfer pointed out that it has recently become possible to count on 175,000 fall fingerling cohos going out this year, in addition to 350,000 yearlings for 2009.
- Michigan coho production
 - Michigan stocked 1,215,000 yearlings in 2008 and has 670,000 on “inventory” for 2009. Full production of 1,600,000 is expected for 2010.
- Lake Michigan Management Reports
- Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum, August 11

- Statewide training conference, January 20-22
 - The group agreed that training could include boat safety for LM, LS, and Winnebago, with a session possibly starting a day early or running a day late.
- Offshore wind power development on Lake Michigan
- OTC marking of walleye at KMSFH
- Dave Rowe's musky proposal
 - Full proposal was requested for GLFWRA funding.
- Review of effect on WRSFH production capacity for other salmonines of reducing chinook production – Steve
 - Fajfer and others have initiated discussions, but the analysis is incomplete.
- Manitowoc sturgeon trailer – Randy
 - The FM Board has reviewed the LMFT request for a higher-level Water Division review of placement of a streamside rearing facility on the Branch River. Mike Staggs will sign a memo to Russ Rasmussen, if **Horns and Scheiddegger will draft it.**

4. Net Pens

Background. We have discussed formalizing our policy regarding the use of net pens. At the last LMFT meeting I was asked to revise the draft issue brief on this topic. I have done so.

Action. Consider formally approving the issue brief as a recommendation to the LMFT sponsors for consideration by the FM Board.

Meeting Action:

- Discussion. The discussion centered around wording to keep options open for Lake Superior and to accommodate necessary permitting.
- Action. The LMFT endorsed the issue brief as drafted, but with the language of the approved alternative changed to read: “The Department will not participate in net pen projects unless 1) fish are held no more than 2 days, 2) fish are not fed while in the net pen, and 3) all necessary permits are obtained by the participating entity”. **Bill will forward** the adopted issue brief to the FM Board through Steve Hewett.

5. Cooperative agreements for egg/fish collections

Background. At the last meeting we discussed a draft issue brief regarding cooperative agreements for egg and/or fish collections. I was asked to prepare a revised draft, and I have done so.

Action. Consider formally approving the issue brief as a recommendation to the LMFT sponsors for consideration by the FM Board.

Meeting Action:

- Discussion. Several questions and issues were raised.
- Action. The issue was tabled until a later meeting.

6. Green Bay yellow perch harvest limits

Background. We have an updated yellow perch population model in hand, along with a yield-per-recruit analysis. At our last meeting the LMFT agreed that no changes should be made to the daily sport bag limit or annual commercial harvest limit. Because of the importance of this recommendation, we agreed to review it at the July meeting.

Action: Consider reaffirming the recommendation to hold the line on yellow perch harvest limits.

Meeting Action:

- Discussion. Tammie stated that observations since the last meeting reinforce her view that increased harvest is not appropriate at this time.
- Action. The LMFT reaffirmed the earlier recommendation.

7. Yellow perch decision analysis workshop

Background: Several LMFT members attended a yellow perch decision analysis workshop, held in conjunction with the summer Lake Michigan Technical Committee meeting. It will be useful to review what they got out of that and discuss what it means for our management strategies.

Action: Tammie, Scott, and Brad will lead a discussion.

Meeting Action:

- Discussion. The workshop was summarized. Notable points included the following: 1) Fishing mortality is very low today, compared with natural mortality. 2) Bill's proposal to peg commercial harvest limits in any year to the estimated harvest the preceding year did not fair well in the analyses comparing harvest policies. However, during the LMFT discussion Bill raised cogent and penetrating arguments justifying further consideration of using creel survey results in setting commercial harvest limits.
- Action. None. A winter follow-up meeting of the Yellow Perch Task Group is expected, and some specific recommendations may arise from that meeting.

8. Cost cutting

Background. We will be facing substantial fleet rate increases and possibly some reduction in GPR funding in FY08-09 and later years. Statewide, the added fleet charges to the Fisheries program will exceed \$850,000 in FY08-09. This will not only affect our funded projects, but may also affect the ability of our propagation system to produce the fish we need for stocking. This does not include increased costs for boat fuel. In addition, some GPR funding now dedicated to commercial fishing may be targeted for cuts (we have \$127,000 of GPR -- \$78,000 for commercial fishing projects and \$49,000 for the joint position at the WATER Institute. At this time we are not asked to make specific recommendations for spending cuts, but we soon will be. We should assume that these budget cuts will not be restored.

Action. Discuss.

Meeting Action:

- Discussion. In addition, Salmon Stamp revenues are expected to be down and there is some question for future years about funding for the new research boat.
- Action. We will wait for direction from the FM Board, and meet later in August if needed to adjust budgets.

9. Skamania

Background. No Skamania were taken for stocking in 2009 because we have no facility in which to hold them outside of a hatchery but within the Lake Michigan drainage basin. Can and should any action be taken to provide a facility for this fall?

Action. Discuss.

Meeting Action:

- Discussion. There are presently no plans or prospects for building a suitable holding facility. Brad noted that Indiana plans to bring Skamania adults into one of their hatcheries. There was a discussion about whether and under what circumstances existing USDA and state rules and policies would allow WDNR to import disinfected eggs from Indiana into one of our hatcheries. A holding facility for Seeforellen is also needed.
- Action. **Bill will discuss** this with Kaas and Marcquenski, and find out whether it is possible for us to request Skamania eggs from Indiana.

10. Commercial fishing issues

Background. 1) Dennis Hickey has requested rule changes to allow the use of small-mesh trap nets for yellow perch in Green Bay. This has been discussed by the LMFT in the past, without resolution. 2) The

issue of whitefish harvest limits in Zone 3 remains high in the minds of commercial fishers. Mike LeClair has appealed to the Commercial Fishing Board for support. Senator Leibham has expressed interest in the issue. 3) One new suggestion has surfaced regarding whitefish. It is to allow established whitefish harvesters in Zone 3 to temporarily import quotas (same fishing year) from willing sellers in Zone 2.

Action. 1) Critically review the question of small-mesh trap nets for yellow perch. 2) Review issues raised by Senator Leibham. 3) Discuss the new suggestion.

Meeting Action:

- Discussion. In addition to the issues mentioned above, a request by Jeff Weborg for the elimination of trap net lifting requirements was mentioned. The discussion was wide-ranging over the general topic of when and how to respond to informal requests for rule changes.
- **Chris will draft** a general letter for Mike Stagg's signature to all commercial fishers stating that in order for us to properly review and consider suggestions for rule changes, we would like to have requests in writing, and that they may also present ideas to the Commercial Fishing Board for possible endorsement. We will review this at the next meeting.

11. Walleyes and the Green Bay food web

Background. This issue demands some discussion. Dennis Hickey's repeated arguments to the effect that there are too many walleyes in Green Bay has struck a chord with Mike Staggs, who would like us to discuss developing meaningful research.

Action. Discuss.

Meeting Action: No action -- issue deferred to a later meeting.

12. Coho size-at-stocking

Background. We have not been able yet to develop a specific recommendation about how large cohos should be when stocked as yearlings. Dave Giehtbrock has asked us to look at this question.

Action. Discuss.

Meeting Action:

- Discussion.
- Action. The LMFT recommends that yearling coho be stocked out at 12-15/pound.

13. Conservation Congress advisory questions

Background. The WCC Executive Council has asked the Department to consider advancing two advisory questions related to Lake Michigan as Department rule proposals.

1) #58. "Do you support a permanent closure of commercial fishing for yellow perch on Lake Michigan waters?"

2) #70. "Do you support a lower daily bag limit from five walleye to one walleye on the Milwaukee River upstream to the HWY 60 Grafton Dam . . .?"

I think SER has resolved to advance #70, but we have to discuss #58,

Action: Discuss and develop a recommendation for #58.

Meeting Action:

- Discussion. The LM yellow perch fishery is as permanently closed as we can make it within existing authority; there is no open season. It would be possible to amend Ch NR 25 to take LM yellow perch off the list of commercial species or to reduce the harvest limit to zero, but either of those steps would only be symbolic. The LMFT notes that, with the re-write of NR 25 now being promulgated, we will have better enforcement tools than before and that we operate under legislative and NRB direction to support and sustain commercial fisheries.
- Action. #70 will be advanced as a rule proposal. Regarding #58 the LMFT agreed to not recommend advancing a rule proposal. **Bill will prepare** the appropriate issue summary for Steve Hewett.

14. Next meeting date and location

August 25 (if rapid action is requested regarding budgets) or September 30.
Lakeshore Technical College