

Lake Michigan Citizen Fisheries Advisory Committee
October 20,2011
Old Boys
Spring Lake, Michigan

Attendees: Denny Grinold Chair-Paul Jensen –Secretary (roll by seating)
Jay Wesley, Eric Petersen, Dennis Eade, Frank Krist, Tom Hamilton, George Freeman,
Jim Fenner, Bill Winowiecki, Keith Wils, Al Dood, John Robertson, Ron Westrate,
Howard Meyerson, Chris Hettinger, Heather Hettinger, Darren Kramer, Scott Carey,
Chuck Bronte, Chuck Pistis, Chip Klein, Jim Dexter, Joe Mitchell, Mike Ryan, Dan
O’keefe, Linn Duling, Jim Bedford, John Stegmeier, Ed Emery, Kory Groetsch, Greg
Barry, and Jim Vander Mass

Minutes: Chair called for review of minutes of last meeting. No additions or correction were made, and minutes were accepted as written.

Reports from stakeholders:

- Eric Petersen –Commercial Fisherman in Muskegon. Pretty fair season –started good –warmer weather fish dropped off—fish have picked up for the fall. Stocks look good.
- Dennis Eade- Holland-had a very good year - Chinook ranged from 7 to 12 pounds-August brought excellent fishing- marked a lot of bait - Holland tourney 27.9 lb King in the Big Red tournament
- Frank Krist-Lake Huron steelhead important part of catch-Walleye fishing active.
- Tom Hamilton-White River-excellent fishing-has no direct stocking- current project was facilitating 3 culverts replacements providing fish passage.
- George Freeman-Ludington- slow start-Brown trout non –existent-May kings slow-June was excellent off the point-had to run south to catch kings-had a 37 lb King landed-great September-saw 3yr olds averaging 15lbs.
- Jim Fenner-charter business was slowest ever for 1st 2/3 of season. Last of August good fishing- too few charters.
- Bill Winowiecki-Glen Arbor- Traverse bay was fantastic-good lake Trout fishery –seeing some LT getting skinny - Manitou’s producing good LT fishery.
- Keith Wils-Bay de Noc-average at best-good perch comeback—Fines accessed by tribal courts small for tribal violators disappointing many.
- Al Dood-Lake Michigan night walleye fishing –3 guys –15 fish –averaged 8 lbs. (#18 rapala) sworn to secrecy on where they were fishing.
- John Robertson-had normal catch season 150 fish-averaged 8 fish per trip—lake trout were excellent- fishing overall –spectacular—observed charter boat effort down.
- Ron Westrate-reported that his season pretty much mirrored Dennis Eade and the Holland fishery. Lots of big perch off the clay banks
- Scott Carey-Manistique –slow start –lots of bait –few fish caught were big- numbers were way / way down!! —Marked fish –few bites-good river return— not there during summer.

- Chip Kline-really good fishery- this spring went to 180ft wire with 10 lb weight-catching limits- fishers from dock caught 2 29lbs-1 30lb- last year had 14 mounts- - this year 42 for the taxidermy business. —Lots of big fish.
- Dan O’keefe-on the PM river- saw lots of fish-also lots of snagging activity.
- Jim Bedford-saw good King run—good Coho run-fish all the way up to Lansing-good start on fall Steelhead –very encouraged about Steelhead.
- Darren Kramer-been working streams last 10 years- this year seemed to be best for seeing lots of fish everywhere.
- Ed Emery- good spring- planting of walleye smolts very successful—he started in July with lots of “boxed” trips. All fish fat and healthy –good year. Trip numbers down.
- Chris Hettinger-Frankfort slow start—Lake trout fishing was off the hook- Betsie River showed big pushes several times. Coho in Platte Bay non existent- thinking good sign for next years fish. Did not see any bait late in year.
- Greg Barry-Holland—same report as Dennis and Ron
- Joe Mitchell-St Joe River-average fish—water level low—lower good –upper slim-
- Mike Ryan-Trail Creek –spring fishery phenomenal—20Lb fish-summer steelhead-best in 10 years Offshore—(Illinois / Michigan) waters-Coho in spring 11/12 Lbs-Kings stayed –120ft water. Fall fishery still good –lots of fish.
- Paul Jensen- saw same results as other stakeholders—seeing fall fishery reports encouraging fishers for next year.
- Scott Carey---In the UP-Cedar River-salmon –non-existent –northern end way down—struggling to catch fish-No show in fall. Struggling to catch fish.
- Denny Grinold---Well ----what a difference a year makes!!!! -His reminder was that this could be the calm before the storm-what happened in 86 best ever – followed by 88 always brings him apprehension on what lies ahead.

General Discussion:

- Denny asked Chuck Bronte on how the forage for alewife showed up—no real data that he could share. Lakes are changing rapidly—new data may shed some light.
- Ed Emery—noticed dramatic reduction in Lamprey scarring.
- Chuck Pistis –asked about 4 year old fish. Still some controversy on whether we are seeing 3 or 4 year old spawners
- Chip Kline-asked again about aging fish---3 or 4 yr old controversy—Dexter introduced the concept of age zero fish which appears to be the answer to the question. Hatched in January –stocked in April-
- Jay Wesley-fast grower’s mature earlier. Will come back as 2 to 3 years old and not always as 4 year olds.
- Denny Grinold- mass marking will provide the answers!!!!!!!!!!

MDNR Management Updates

Denny Grinold—asked Jim Dexter to explain the current structure for MDNR Fisheries.

- Kelley staying on as acting Deputy Director.
- Jim Dexter remains acting Fisheries Division Chief.
- Jay Wesley remains acting Lake Michigan Basin Coordinator.
- Rich O’Neal is the new acting Central Lake Michigan Manager.
- Todd Grischke is the new Lake Huron Basin Coordinator.
- Todd Kalish is the new Lake Erie Basin Coordinator.
- Phil Schneeberger is the new Lake Superior Basin Coordinator.
- John Robertson mentioned that the coalition had a meeting the week before and Stokes indicated that the search for a new deputy director was on the back burner due to lack on candidate pool.
- Jim Dexter indicated that his understanding was that the search was to be reposted to a larger base and would be longer.
- Jay Wesley stated that the Department and Division expect budget issues for FY 2012. License sales are down and projected to continue to decline. This reduces the amount of funds available in the Game and Fish Protection Fund and also reduces the available Federal funds through the Sportfish Restoration Act.

Issue Statement for LMFCAC Outside Observers

Denny Grinold reviewed the issue statement to add observers to the committee from each jurisdiction (Indiana –Illinois-Wisconsin-and tribal). These would be a stakeholder representative and not a government agency. Frank Krist, LHCFAC Chair, indicated that the Lake Huron committee adopted the observer concept at their meeting. Show of hands vote was unanimous.

LMFCAC-Terms of Reference

Jay Wesley - introduced discussion on the Terms of Reference and how making “decisions” is handled by the advisory committee. The committee makes recommendations to the Fisheries Division but does make decisions within the committee. Frank Krist noted 15/16 references to “decision” in the terms of reference. He also provided wording changes the Lake Huron Committee recommended. The LMFCAC will adopt the same wording.

Fish Consumption Advisories – Kory Groetsch

Chair Grinold introduced Kory Groetsch of the Michigan Dept of Community Health, who spoke about the Fish Consumption Advisory. Kory asked the group when was the last time that this group had been involved in any discussion with MDOCH. Consensus was “never” to at least 20 years. He explained that the agency is a Public health agency and works with a public health code. They have a mission to keep the public informed so using the Fish Advisory provides an informed choice. Michigan Fish Advisory is not mandatory. Studies showed higher levels of contaminants in Great lakes fish. Dioxin like chemicals since 1980 established screening values, which were set in 1986. Values established at 10 parts per trillion. Lake trout in Grand Traverse area exceed guidelines—Torch Lake –even higher. If 10% of samples exceed the guideline the advisory is triggered. Higher concentrations trigger the “do not eat advisory”. Charter Captains study showed that this group, which typically ate more Great Lakes fish, had higher rates of disease compared to the general population.

Jim Fenner questioned why the levels keep lowering and what used to be acceptable no longer is?

Chuck Pistis pointed out need for discussion to avoid issues. Torch Lake had no identified point sources. Caution needs to be taken as science translates data and causes impacts on other people.

Kory recognizes the need for a more carefully coordinate message. In the future, a working group should provide a more sensitive approach to messaging and communication.

Denny Grinold pointed out that the Charter Industry discovered that the health advisory was coming out before MDNR and that communications need to be better.

Dan O'Keefe questions how the science relates and are the fish safe for his family to eat. The charter boat study did not show any greater risk.

Kory pointed out that the charter boat study was mainly men. They still need to work out the messaging. Trimming and cooking methods important to risk reduction.

Chuck Pistis mentioned that there are few people in the susceptible population

Jin Fenner made the point that the Skin On / Skin Off protocol makes a 50% reduction in the contaminant levels. Important that the Fish Advisory correlates with harvestable size limits.

Tom Hamilton raised concerns about fish donated to fish boils—need to separate fish. Do we worry about Lake Trout in pot??

John Robertson commented that the message needs to be believable information. People need to be able to put message into some form of context.

Jay Wesley explained that need a coordinated message among states. We are all eating the same fish, but Michigan is the only one with an advisory.

Hook & Cook Program

Denny Grinold—we now have the opportunity to sample the initiative of the Hook & Cook program that he and other Grand Haven fishers have been doing with Old Boys. There are about 35 restaurants presently doing this around the lake. We are sending message that fish is really good to eat. Gov. Snyder and Director Stokes are behind the program.

Enjoy the Whitefish donated for lunch by Petersen Fisheries of Muskegon and delivered fresh to the door by his “ trusty” scribe with all the aforementioned contaminants removed.

Lunch is served!!!!

Mass Marking - Chuck Bronte of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The USFWS provides a coordinated tagging program that allows the tracking of planted fish and gives managers necessary data to produce management decisions. The vision remains that every fish that goes in the Great Lakes will have a tag. This idea came out of the Council of Lake Committees (CLC) under the umbrella of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC). This tagging effort will help us understand what fish are contributing to each fishery. Marking will also tell us what year class we are dealing. Mass marking provides the potential for evaluating the survival of fish based on stocking location. Coded-wire tags are laser etched with identifying numbers. We are using marking systems by Autofish Technologies. A trailer contains six lines that sort fish by automated vision systems integrated with computer technology. Rates are close to 8,000 fish per hour. Trailers cost about \$1.4 million each, and we currently have 4 in the system. There are currently 30 million fish produced at 49 hatcheries across the basin. MDNR produces most of the fish at 6 facilities currently producing 7.7 million fish. USFWS produces the 2nd largest number. Estimating that it costs Michigan about \$.26 cents to raise a king salmon and about a \$1.00 to raise a Coho. The coded-wire tags cost \$.10 cents each.

Howard Meyerson-Is this intended to be an on going project? Chuck answered yes, however funding uncertainties are a factor in the not too distant future.

Bill Winowiecki so we marking 100% lake Trout and Chinook salmon for Lakes Michigan and Huron on the US side.

Chip Kline- I caught 3 little fish –all 11 3/8 inches long-2 clipped –one not. So two would be headhunter candidates.

Howard Meyerson-how quick is Michigan able to supply data? —Chuck answered depends on “head hunter” returns / weir returns and how quickly the processing facility can convert collected heads to information. Jay Wesley pointed out Michigan has limited funding for a head hunter program, which may effect data collected.

Chuck Pistis- we had programs in past –use head hunters at tournaments

Howard Meyerson-Asked Wesley if we need additional resources? —Jay answered that we should be fine. Agencies will collected heads during regional assessments and at tournaments. It is important to know the ratio of clipped to non-clipped Chinook salmon when determining natural reproduction rates. These data are more reliable if collected by agency staff.

Jim Dexter commented that we don't need every single fish—broad concepts can be derived from limited samples. For example OTC study showed a point of diminishing return.

Jim Vandermass-Since the headhunters / creel clerk budget is limited can't sport fishing groups supplement the collection. How about scanners over fish? Chuck Bronte indicated scanners were in the mix and should arrive yet this year.

Bill Winowiecki-Lake Trout only have adipose clip? -Bronte –all Lake Trout planted in lakes Michigan and Huron will be clipped.

Chip Kline-data collection for 3 or 4 fish wasn't bad –when you boat 20 the collection task becomes formidable. Takes time to collect the length / weight data.

Howard Meyerson-How sustainable is this program from the \$\$ standpoint? Bronte-good for 2012—2013 provides some uncertainty. Congressman Dicks from Washington State has engaged the USFWS and is working on base funding for the program in congress. GLERI funding provided \$1.5 million for this year.

Jim Dexter-the ideal goal is to budget all lakes –all fish-20/30 year program'' Chipping away will not give big picture results in our lifetimes. Fishery managers need data and answers to provide and add value to the fishery.

Dan O'Keefe—Returning heads marked vs. unmarked added to charter reporting? — Seemed the consensus of the charters around the table was don't add anything more to report.

Jay Wesley –reported that the coated wire tags for Lake Huron would be specific.

Jim Dexter-we need to get the word back out that we are looking for heads. Suggested that Steelheaders, MCBA, and others try to get notice into their newsletters and publications.

Chuck Pistis-suggested that website could be used—he will work with them.

John Robertson—noted that Howard Meyerson asked a good question. How will change over time be measured? Permanent basis collecting data overtime measures change.

Denny Grinold- noted that the OTC study showed planted fish return at an earlier age than natural reproduced fish.

Salmon Bag Limit -Jay Wesley

The 5 fish bag limit statewide will remain based on data showing that both harvest (number of charters reaching bag limit) and Catch per Effort both remained above the

established bench mark. If they both declined below the bench mark, the bag limit would be dropped to 3 salmon per day.

Future Salmon Stocking Strategy- Jay Wesley

Lake Huron is on a faster track for changes due to absence of alewife and collapse of salmon fishery. Lake Michigan continues to see some alewife production, so we can afford the time to conduct more analysis and to work with our stakeholders. Mike Jones is incorporating the goals and objectives identified by the LMCFAC and incorporating those into a stocking decision analysis model. There will be a meeting Nov 5, 2011 with the representatives of the other states to discuss the options. Denny Grinold, John Robertson, Dennis Eade will represent Michigan. Goal is to identify some stocking options that can be provided for public comment during summer of 2012 with a decision made by fall of 2012. Any changes in stocking would take effect in 2013.

Jim Fenner –asked if the trawl data for the fall survey assessment done by USGS had been compiled. Dexter explained that it usually takes till spring to get it all together for the GLFC March meetings. Anecdotal info--- they were down-

Chip Kline-questioned trawl data collection procedure and timing—seems they miss fish. Perch were on beach –then moved out.

Dexter replied that the repetitive procedure builds a data set –even if they don't catch fish. Jay Wesley also mentioned that hydro acoustics are providing data that supplements the trawl catch.

Chuck Pistis-noted we have a phenomenal Chinook fishery with total salmonid catch varying over the year. Chinook predominate-what do other species contribute? Would be interesting to develop that picture.

Weir Salmon Harvest Contract –Jay Wesley

Jay presented an overview of the operation as handled by American Canadian Fisheries. The state pays them approximately \$200,000 to handle the fish disposal from all operating weirs. They pay the electrical costs and return \$.01 cent a pound for harvested fish. Dexter reported that they paid approximately \$15,000 to state for last years harvest operation. State estimates it would cost them \$400,000 and utilize all staff for 2 months.

- Next meeting 2nd week of April.

Denny noted that we should thank Melissa (Old Boys owner) for the Hook and Cook presentation.

Meeting notes- draft compiled by Paul Jensen