

Coldwater Regulations Committee Meeting
Grayling DNR Field Office, 6/21/11

Attendees: Jim Bedford, Joe Boomgaard, Dave Borgeson Sr., Tom Buhr, Bryan Burroughs, Jim Dexter, Linn Duling, Dennis Eade, Brian Gunderman, Steve Hutchins, Todd Kalish, Tracy Kolb, Terry Lyons, Dean Molnar, Steve Mondrella, Tammy Newcomb, Jim Schramm, Mark Tonello, Miriam Weiss, Don Wright

Terms of Reference (Jim Dexter)- Jim would like the committee to be able to discuss a wide range of topics regarding coldwater streams, not just regulations. Jim would like to have the committee renamed the “Michigan Coldwater Resources Steering Committee”. Jim passed out an updated terms of reference sheet. Some discussion ensued, with all comments being in favor of the proposed changes and the new terms of reference.

ACTION: The Terms of Reference as drafted are adopted by the Steering Committee.

Upper Manistee River Use Survey (Todd Kalish)- The group met in April, and this has been a good collaborative effort. The survey area will consist of two State Forest Campgrounds. The goal of the survey will be to assess the effects of gear restriction on campground usage and attendance. “In person” interviews will be conducted, along with a mail survey. We want to make sure that the questions are appropriate and not leading in any way. The survey questions currently are being reviewed by Dr. Frank Lupi from MSU. The survey is tentatively scheduled to begin in early July. Volunteers (including Marv Roberson and John Bebow) will conduct the in-person interviews. Because FMFM manages these campgrounds, it is important to have someone from FMFM (e.g., Sue Thiel) directly involved in the process. John Bebow put together some fliers to be posted around the campgrounds that explain the fishing opportunities present nearby. Bryan Burroughs mentioned that TU is doing a creel survey on the Upper Manistee and Pigeon Rivers. Jim Schramm asked if anything similar is being done on the Pere Marquette River. Todd responded that the Division is conducting a creel survey there (from M-37 to Old US-31 –daylight hours only), and the creel clerks are asking additional questions related to the gear restriction issue.

Gear Restricted Signs (Terry Lyons)- The groups are making progress on this project. The language for the signs has been approved by all parties. In Crawford County, the angler groups will work with FMFM to install the signs, while in Kalkaska County volunteers will install them. Including the posts, the cost is approximately \$30 per sign. The groups are purchasing 87 signs to be placed on newly designated gear restricted waters and historic gear restricted waters where the regulations were recently changed. Extra signs were ordered to replace signs that become damaged or stolen.

DNR Fishing Regulations Guidebooks (Jim Dexter)- The 2011 Fishing Guide does not list the website for accessing trout stream maps. That issue will be resolved for the 2012 Fishing Guide. The Division also has also clarified the language for regulations on non-designated streams. Bryan Burroughs asked if the Division will resume printing the maps in the future. Jim Dexter replied that at this point, we have no plans to do so. Bryan

Burroughs commented that the NRC had promised to look into restoring the funding for printing the maps. Don Wright suggested that we use different colors for artificials only vs. flies only. Steve Mondrella reminded the group that we worked for the last two years to simplify regulations and make the maps easier to interpret. Adding another color would make the maps more complex. **ACTION: Jim Dexter stated that the Division would investigate options for discriminating between artificials only and flies only waters without making the maps more complicated.**

Steelhead 101

Presentations:

-Steelhead biology – Tammy Newcomb

-Stocking and regulations (past and present) – Mark Tonello.

Our hatcheries can currently raise 1.25 million yearling steelhead, but no more than that. There was some discussion on the large number of fish stocked into the Au Sable River and the amount of fish stocked in Lake MI vs. Lake Huron. As far as regulations are concerned, Mark stated that the 3 fish/day limit has been in place since 1989, and that our Division is comfortable with the amount of protection that this regulation affords to natural reproducing populations. Stream anglers are far more likely to release fish than GL anglers.

-Statewide creel data – Tracy Kolb

Tracy Kolb presented data on the percentage of anglers who harvested or caught their steelhead bag from all the Great Lakes (2008-2010) and: the Manistee River-below Tippy Dam, Rogue River - 10 Mile to W. River Dr., Grand River – 6th Street Dam area, Kalamazoo River – Allegan Dam to New Richmond Boat Launch, Escanaba River, St. Joe River – Berrien Springs to Jasper Dairy, Dowagiac River, Boardman River – below Sable Dam, Betsie River – Betsie Lake to Fred’s Landing, and the Muskegon River – below Croton Dam. In all cases, the percentage of anglers that either harvested or caught their steelhead bag was ~3%.

-Goals and objectives – Jim Dexter

Tammy Newcomb commented that the recent License Sales Report showed that less people are fishing now than in recent years. This decline has been particularly noticeable for people in their early 20’s to early 40’s. Steve Hutchins asked why the DNR cannot increase fishing license fees. A lengthy explanation and discussion followed. **ACTION: Tammy Newcomb mentioned that she will bring the License Sales Report to the next meeting.** Bryan Burroughs asked “Where do we go from here?” Jim Dexter responded that there will be some modeling that will occur. This will evaluate what regulations may be able to accomplish, and that steelhead regulations will be a topic of discussion at the Fall Biologists Conference.

Brook Trout Bag Limits

Presentations:

-Brook trout biology, stocking, and regulations – Todd Wills

-Creel data – Tracy Kolb and Todd Wills

Tracy Kolb presented current creel data on brook trout bag limits. In the Great Lakes there have been no recorded limits since 2000, there has been low harvest recorded since

2000, and no harvest recorded after 2007. In inland areas there have only been 5 recorded limits since 2000 (in the Au Sable and in the Menominee Rivers), low harvest since 2000 and no harvest after 2007.

-Goals and objectives – Brian Gunderman

Dave Borgeson Sr. commented that he does not agree with Fisheries Division's current approach to preserving and enhancing brook trout habitat. Bryan Burroughs mentioned that he is struggling to understand the biological implications that might occur if we went to a 10 fish/day bag limit in the Upper Peninsula. Others concurred. Specifically, Bryan wondered if it would change population densities, size structure, and natural recruitment. Todd Wills responded that we would need to look at statewide data to answer those questions, but our fixed site data is not representative of the range of streams that the 10 fish bag limit might affect. Some modeling also could be done.

Bryan Burroughs asked "Who has been requesting the 10 fish/day bag limit?" Jim Dexter mentioned that the Fisheries Division Unit Managers and Section leaders have received requests from Upper Peninsula anglers to increase the bag limit. Fisheries Division did not pursue this change during the last review cycle because our goal was to simplify regulations. The NRC may not consider simplification as a primary goal anymore. Linn Duling noted that an MUCC club has filed a resolution for the upcoming MUCC board meeting in favor of changing to a 10 fish/day bag limit for brook trout in Upper Peninsula streams. He mentioned that it might be helpful for the MUCC board to see some of these presentations before they consider the issue. **ACTION: Brian Gunderman will give the brook trout presentations at the August or October MUCC board meeting.**

Dave Borgeson Sr. mentioned that he does not see anyone brook trout fishing anymore. Others agreed that brook trout fishing pressure seems to have declined, especially in the U.P. Bryan Burroughs cautioned against relying on anecdotal information, and said that creel surveys should be done to answer such questions. Others agreed that creel survey data would be beneficial.

Tammy Newcomb reminded the group that Fisheries Division invested a substantial amount of effort to demonstrate that the adfluvial (coaster) brook trout should not be listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act. One of the Division's arguments against listing was that we already have instituted fishing regulations that provide sufficient protection for brook trout populations. Liberalizing the bag limit for brook trout may result in a renewed effort to list adfluvial brook trout as an endangered species. Tammy Newcomb cautioned that if adfluvial brook trout were to become a federally listed species, it would create a lot of additional paperwork and would make many of our management activities more difficult.

One of the slides from Todd Wills' summary of Wagner's creel survey indicated that the anglers who harvested 6-10 brook trout in a trip accounted for nearly 30% of the harvest. Brian Gunderman clarified that this does not mean that reducing the bag limit from 10 fish to 5 fish would reduce harvest by 30%. The first 5 fish harvested by each angler during each trip would still be legal. Thus, reducing the bag limit would have reduced harvest by no more than 15% and probably less than 10%.

Tom Buhr mentioned that he's been asking for an angler opinion/behavior survey for many years. Tammy Newcomb stated that we still do not have a Human Dimensions person in Fisheries Division. A study would cost \$80,000 to \$100,000. Would the trout fishing groups support the Division if we asked Minnesota and Wisconsin to collaborate with us? The CRSC members indicated that they would support this collaborative effort. Bryan Burroughs mentioned that TU also is working with Dr. Frank Lupi at MSU to do a study with a graduate student.

Fisheries Order 245 (Jim Dexter) - The Division is trying to simplify the order, but we need to maintain certain key elements of it. We will be evaluating the order and looking towards removing unnecessary items such as the "eggs attached to a hook" clause and the requirement for anglers to have receipts that detail certification from bait shops. We are pleased that VHSV has not caused as many fish kills as initially feared. We should have a draft order prepared before the October CRSC meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 pm.