



Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

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

Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee Minutes

Approved

Tuesday October 14, 2014

Tuscarora Township Hall

3546 S Straits Hwy, Indian River MI

12:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Attendees: Brenda Archambo, Mike Beuerle, Wayne Blomberg, David Bock, Dawn Bodnar, Paul Borg, Dave Borgeson, Dave Caroffino, Tim Cwalinski, Irv Dedow, Maxwell Field, Tom Goniea, Patrick Hanchin, Lindsey Henski, Nick Johnson, Rick Johnson, Frank Krist, Theresa Krist, Erin McLean, Dan Myers, Bill Parson, Virgil Smith, Roy Tassava, Terry Weber, Rick Weidenhamer.

Welcome and Introductions: Frank Krist called the meeting to order. Attendees introduced themselves.

Review of Tribal inland fishing rights and how the 2007 Inland Hunting, Fishing and Gathering Agreement was developed (Patrick Hanchin, DNR and Maxwell Field, LTBB).

An Overview – The 2007 Consent Decree defines the extent of Inland Article 13 rights; it provides details on where, when and how the Tribes will exercise their personal subsistence rights. The Decree provides for protection and biological management of the state's natural resources, offering stability and predictability. The Decree does not affect private land except for large tracts of commercial forest lands already open to public hunting and fishing.

Basic Principles – There are many basic fisheries principles addressed in the decree. Tribal harvest is for subsistence use only, and gill netting and snagging are prohibited. There are agreements to limit the use of impoundment nets, large seines and open water spearing for walleye. Harvest and reporting under special permit is required for Chinook salmon, steelhead and walleye. Special rules regulate a very limited sturgeon harvest. In addition, the Tribes establish and enforce fishing seasons, size limits and bag limits. Because of the very limited harvest by the Tribes, there is essentially no effect on harvest by State licensed recreational users. A few examples of other issues addressed in the 2007 Consent Decree are the number of lines allowed while fishing, spawning closures, prohibition of spearing Atlantic salmon and a smelt bag limit.

Special Fishing Regulations – The Tribes agreed to recognize existing special regulations for trout streams types 5, 6, and 7 (gear restricted), brook trout and brown trout seasons, Type D trout lakes, quality lakes, and special coolwater pike and musky lakes.

Information Sharing and Cooperation – The 2007 Consent Decree established protocol for sharing information, consulting on management options, establishing committees and special consultation on work plans. This cooperation eliminates duplication of efforts allowing more surveys and other work to be accomplished. Tribal and DNR Fisheries coordination efforts include assessments, restoration and enhancement activities. Specific issues and locations are also addressed including research area restrictions/closures, fishing restrictions around egg collection weirs, and the protection of threatened and endangered species.

Dispute Resolution – If disputes occur, informal and formal processes have been developed for resolving issues.

Walleye Restrictions Overview – Because the walleye fishery is of much interest to both the Tribes and State recreational users two biological procedures were agreed upon to maintain exploitation of walleyes at a safe level, protect species other than walleyes and avoid complex management of the fisheries. The **Threshold Procedure** is currently used and includes permits, strict limits on harvest, bag and possession limits, and size limits. The **Allocation Based Procedure** is available to implement but is not in use at this time. This Procedure allows for additional safe harvest but the monitoring is much more intense. For a detailed discussion of both of these Procedures see the Appendixes B1 and B2 of the attached [2007 Inland Consent Decree](#).

Notification and Reporting – The Tribes must provide notice of spearing and netting under the 2007 Consent Decree. The notice must include the waterbody, date, bag limit and number of fishers at least 7 hours prior to spearing and 24 hours prior to netting. Tribal members must report to their Tribe within 7 days of the harvest and the DNR and Tribes must share the harvest data with each other by January 31 of each year. Since signing the decree in 2008, Tribal walleye harvest has been very minimal.

General Law Enforcement Principles – Michigan Conservation Officers may enforce the provisions of the Consent Decree, however, issues and citations are only heard in Tribal court. A Tribal Conservation Officer must be able to identify tribal members, therefore, Tribal Conservation Officers have the authority to stop and check non-tribal members, but can only issue citations to Tribal members. If Tribal Officers are deputized by local or county Law Enforcement Agencies under applicable law then Tribal Officers may enforce State regulations with respect to non-Tribal members.

How have things worked out?

- Much progress has been made
- Many Committees have been established
- There are regular meeting and timelines
- Protocols have been established and refined
- Coordinating of field work has improved
- Data sharing has been upgraded

Examples of projects undertaken with collaboration between the Tribes and DNR:

- Inland Waterway walleye study
- Black Lake sturgeon survey
- Walleye and sturgeon rearing
- Arcadia Marsh Restoration Project
- Boardman River Dams Project

Progress in determining the extent of a landlocked population of sea lamprey living in the Inland Waterway and future implications (Nick Johnson, U.S. Geological Survey Great Lakes Science Center).

The Maple River, Sturgeon River, Pigeon River are treated with lampricide every three years at a cost of \$500,000-\$600,000 per treatment. Identifying where the lamprey are originating from and treating that source could potentially lead to our eliminating the need for treatment.

2011 Telemetry Study – 148 lampreys were digitally tagged and released below the Cheboygan Dam and none were recorded migrating upstream beyond the dam and lock. These results suggested that sea lamprey may complete their life cycle within the river system above the Cheboygan Dam and never

migrate into Lake Huron. Since the tagged lamprey were a small percentage of the total number of lamprey below the Dam there is a reasonable chance that some sea lamprey do move from the lower River to above the dam. It is estimated that approximately 25,000 lamprey annually run up to the Cheboygan Dam, which is more than any other stream flowing into the Great Lakes.

2013 and 2014 upstream sea lamprey netting – Two trap nets were set upstream in each river including the Pigeon, Sturgeon and Maple from late April through July. Male lampreys obtained from a trap located below the Cheboygan Dam were marked and released weekly upstream in these streams to determine if lamprey captured from the upper river were different from lamprey known to come from Lake Huron. During 2013 and 2014, only 4 and 2 unmarked sea lampreys were captured in the trap nets upstream, respectively. Recapture rates in all the upstream nets combined of marked adult sea lampreys obtained from the lower Cheboygan River and released in the upper rivers, ranged from only 2% to 13%.

2014 tagged sea lamprey released below Cheboygan Dam – During 2014, 4,183 sea lampreys were marked and released below the Cheboygan Dam and none were captured upstream in the trap nets indicating that few or possibly none migrated past the Dam and Locks into the Waterway.

Conclusions:

- The upper river sea lamprey populations are very small.
- Evidence is increasing that the upper river sea lampreys complete their life cycle in the upper river.
- Evidence for persistent and chronic escapement through the lock is lacking.
- Funding has been secured for 2015.

Is it possible to prevent sea lamprey from migrating past the Cheboygan Dam and eliminate the upper river sea lamprey population? Discussions regarding possible ways to eliminate the need to treat the upper Cheboygan River took place. Modifications to the lock and dam may not solve the problem; however, male sterilization has potential and could be cost effective in eliminating the upstream population. Alternative controls including pheromones, alarm cues and electrical guidance trapping were also discussed.

Angler reports of sea lamprey and wounded fish in the Waterway – In 2013 and 2014 combined, 22 reports (photos) of wounding were received from Burt and Mullett Lakes and 3 lampreys were recovered. This information was extremely helpful.

Sea lamprey captured in the Waterway and photos of wounded fish are needed! USGS is tracking sea lamprey and wounding encounters. Please turn in (preferred) or photograph any lampreys that are encountered in the Waterway in the coming years. In addition, photos of fish with lamprey wounding marks along with the date and location are extremely important. This information will add to the knowledge base in terms of origin and the likelihood of understanding if a land-locked population exists, and if so, the magnitude of that population. A sea lamprey collection form is attached*. Please email the photos to either, Nick Johnson, njohnson@usgs.gov or Tim Cwalinski, cwalinski@michigan.gov.

Research Progression:

- **2015-2016** – Continue assessing the sea lamprey population in the Inland Waterway
- **2016** – Lampricide treatments in the Pigeon River, Sturgeon River and Maple Rivers
- **2017-2020?** Test sterile male release techniques as an alternative to lampricide
- **2020+** – Expand sterile male releases to other “leaky barriers”, focusing effort to develop onsite sterilization

A review of commercial netting of baitfish in the Waterway and other regional waters by State licensed bait dealers. The amount of baitfish harvested annually will be provided and the rules will be discussed (Thomas Goniea, DNR).

From 2008-2013 there were 676 to 717 Retail Minnow Dealer licenses, 35 to 46 resident Wholesale Minnow Dealer licenses, 9-11 non-resident Wholesale Minnow Dealer licenses, and 77 to 87 Minnow Catchers licenses (Minnow Catchers licenses must be accompanied with a Retail or Wholesale license).

Minnow Catchers licenses are issued and tracked by county, but licenses are good for the entire state. Catchers are required to report harvest every month. Over the last 6 years, compliance has ranged from 85 to 95%, which is very good from a historical perspective.

Harvest Summary of Minnow Catchers

Year	Total Gallons Reported	# of Licenses	Highest Inland Lake Harvest	Basin with Majority Harvest
2011	32,330.5 Gallons	41	Crooked and Walloon Lakes 600 Gallons	SLHMU 81% of Total Harvest 26,071 Gallons
2012	26,794.7 Gallons	42	Houghton Lake 505 Gallons	SLHMU 63% of Total Harvest 16,988 Gallons
2013	22,033.2 Gallons	42	Houghton Lake 693 Gallons	SLHMU 84% of Total Harvest 18,480 Gallons

The table above shows the annual harvest of minnows from 2011 through 2013. The majority of harvest was taken from the Southern Lake Huron Management Unit zone (SLHMU) and has ranged from 63% to 84% of the total State harvest. In the last 6 years 87.3% of reported minnow harvest was taken in the Great Lakes and connecting Tributaries while only 12.7% was taken from inland sources.

During 2013, 82.3% of the minnows harvested were emerald shiners, 6.4% were spottail shiners, 1.8% were suckers and 9.4% were other species. The majority of the harvest occurs in November when the wholesalers are catching the winter supply of minnows that are placed in ponds until resale. Most of the November catch is taken from Saginaw Bay. The minnows harvested in the summer are sold immediately since minnows are difficult to keep alive during the warmer months.

Inland Waterway Regulations – Mullett, Burt, Crooked, and Pickerel Lakes as well as Crooked and Indian Rivers are open to harvest as non-designated trout waters. Harvest methods include seine net, hand/dip nets, hook and line, and wire, plastic and glass traps. The Cheboygan River and upstream tributaries are open designated trout streams. This limits harvest methods to hook and line, or wire, plastic, or grass traps only. Black Lake is closed to all commercial harvest.

The DNR has authority to close waters to commercial bait harvest. The process is initiated by the local biologist and then discussed by the Basin Team. The proposal is then sent to the Fisheries Chief and if approved it is routed to the Natural Resource Commission for their review. Closures must be based on measurable biology including decreased predator growth rates, lower predator survival due to lack of forage or lower than average lake productivity.

Bait Catchers and minnow dealers perform an important service for anglers since without them there would not be a regular supply of bait available at the bait shops throughout the year.

Walleye stocking and fall juvenile assessment updates for the Waterway lakes in 2014 (Tim Cwalinski, DNR and Maxwell Field, Little Traverse Bay Band)

Both Black and Mullett Lakes were stocked with walleyes again this year. Below are the stocking summaries since 2010

Black Lake walleye stocking

- 2010 – 192,000 spring fingerlings (not marked) (1.9")
- 2011 – 119,983 spring fingerlings (marked) (1.8")
- 2012 – 192,541 spring fingerlings (marked) (2.1")
- 2014 – 204,688 spring fingerlings (marked) by state and CORA; (1.2 – 1.4")
- Lake Association stocking fall fingerlings:
 - 2008 – 2,950 at 8"
 - 2009 – 10,000 at 6"
 - 2011 – 10,160 at 6-8"
 - 2012 – 10,000 at 6-8"

Mullett Lake Walleye stocking

- 2010 – 101,000 spring fingerlings (1.8") *DNR/tribal*
- 2011 – 97,951 spring fingerlings (1.8") *DNR*
- 2013 – 466,000 spring fingerlings (1.7") *DNR*
- 2014 – 20,000 spring fingerlings (1.3"), OTC marked, CORA
- MAPS and tribal plant of fall fingerlings:
 - 2010 – 10,392 at 6-8"
 - 2011 – 7,500 at 6-8"
 - 2012 – 7,500 at 6-8"

Fall juvenile walleye recruitment surveys are completed at night using DC electrical current. The fish are stunned, measured and released unharmed. This evaluation of juvenile walleye is completed at the end of the growing season and used to measure the success of the walleye population hatched that year and the year before. The index is best when used as a relative index of the strength of year classes within the same lake over a period of years. Much variation in year class strength is seen in most natural walleye lakes.

In many lakes across the north this fall, surveys showed that walleye wild reproduction was unusually successful. **Mullett Lake** had the largest catch of juvenile walleye per hour ever recorded in a fall survey! This 2014 year class is composed of primarily wild fish and is extremely strong. There were early indications of this strong walleye year class when large numbers of small walleyes were appearing in the stomachs of steelhead and pike during the summer. Some long time anglers on Mullett Lake indicated that this was the first year that they saw this trend.

Black, Crooked and Pickerel Lake assessments were completed as well. Black Lake has low levels of natural recruitment with stocked years being dominant.

Round table discussion including fishing reports, projects, questions, comments and suggestions from attendees:

Donna Bodnar, Indian River Chamber of Commerce – The **Veterans Pier on Burt Lake** is almost complete. They are putting in sidewalks and there are reports that anglers are already catching walleyes fishing from the structure.

Terry Weber– Mullett Lake steelhead were down this summer. Last year very few smaller trout were caught which may be why trout numbers seemed to be down this year. Walleye fishing was very good with at least 4 to 5 year classes present so the fishing in future years should be good. Pike fishing was very good with most caught fish being legal size. Spiny water fleas appeared to be increasing. Yellow perch fishing was a challenge but that might have been the result of poor weather conditions.

Steve Phillips out of Topinabee – Tim Cwalinski reviewed a write-up in Steve's absence. During a season of fishing in **Mullett Lake**, over 550 pike, 12 smallmouth bass, 159 walleye, 42 steelhead, 3 white bass, and 1 largemouth bass were reported. This was the best pike fishing in 21 years but steelhead fishing was down.

Rick Weidenhamer, Michigan Bait Dealer Association –East winds during the spring appeared to affect **minnow production** the following year. Wind and waves also seem to reduce egg survival.

Maxwell Field, LTBB – **Crooked Lake** perch numbers were higher along with nice smallmouth bass, and healthy rock bass. Gar pike numbers were up and **Pickerel Lake** has large bluegills.

Rick Johnson – **Burt Lake** walleye fishing was down 20% to 30% due to a slow winter fishery. Perch numbers have been good all year. Smallmouth bass, rainbow trout, and brown trout were incidental catches, but the fish were very healthy looking.

Nick Johnson – Fishing in **Hammond Bay** for lake trout was good but steelhead and Chinook salmon fishing was down. The persistent windy weather this year was a challenge.

Wayne Blomberg – Pan fish were plentiful in **Crooked and Pickerel Lakes**. Early in spring a significant increase in cormorant numbers were observed.

Dan Myers, Tip of the Mitt – Completed field work on **Black Lake** and a section of the **Crooked River**. The staff surveyed aquatic plant communities, potential walleye gravel habitat in Black Lake, and aquatic invasive species. **Crooked and Pickerel Lakes** will be surveyed next summer.

Roy Tassava – Roy, Jill Lynch and Kevin Prediger have been surveying summer residents and businesses and there has been good support for moving forward with the **Topinabee Fishing Pier Project**. They are exploring various design scenarios including using concrete, blocks, rocks and other materials. They have met with planners of the Veterans Pier that is nearly completed in Burt Lake at the beginning of the Indian River. Anglers are already using the structure and catching fish. After the spring ice break-up there will be an inspection to determine how well the Veterans Pier tolerated the winter ice. They are looking for a fundraiser to be on their Committee.

Fishing this season on **Mullett Lake** was good for pike but Roy did not see any small walleyes in stomachs of the fish he cleaned.

Paul Borg – Fishing in **Grand Lake** was very good for smallmouth bass along with many small walleyes and yellow perch.

Virgil Smith – The **Black Lake vegetation survey** showed no invasive plants in the lake except for a few invasive Phragmites plants.

The Black Lake Association and the Friends of Onaway State Park are working together with the DNR Parks and Recreation Division to rebuild the **boat launch** at the Park to increase the boat and vehicle flow effectiveness along with expanding the launch capacity. Currently, there are long delays both launching and loading because only one boat can be launched at time. Boaters often become

discouraged and leave the area instead of launching after long delays. It is not usual to have several boats on the lake waiting to load while several boats are in line to launch.

Phase I of a two phase improvement project was completed this fall but many of the users and several Black Lake Association members were unhappy because the capacity was not improved and maneuvering a vehicle into position to launch is more difficult. Instead of installing a larger pad, the new cement pad was smaller than the original pad that was removed. The goal is to implement **Phase II** during 2016 and then the pad installed this fall, will have to be replaced with a larger pad so 2 boats can be launched or loaded at once. In addition, trees in front of the launch will need to be removed and the backing area increased in size so that it is easier to maneuver the vehicles when approaching and backing. Larger boats and pontoons are launched regularly and the angle and lack of space are a major challenge, which the improvements this fall did not address.

Black Lake is the eighth largest lake in Michigan and the current launches on the lake are much too small to accommodate the needs of the boaters, anglers and others. There are significant funds that the Black Lake Association is willing to provide to assist with the improvements and other funds may be available. The Black Lake Association and the Friends of Onaway State Park plan to continue to work hard and move this project forward. Visiting Black Lake and the State Park should be enjoyable instead of an exasperating experience.

Dave Bock – Yellow perch fishing was good on **Mullett Lake** this fall but the fish were not in the usual fall locations and with much experimentation good catches resulted. Instead of the Dodge Point area, there was better fishing along the north shore toward Aloha State Park in 19 to 21 feet of water. The perch fishing in **Burt Lake** was also good during the fall but similar to Mullett Lake much experimenting was needed to locate the fish.

Erin McLean – Ten years ago there were no bluegills in Black Lake but today bluegills and crappies can be caught.

Mike Beuerle – There was a large number of small walleyes caught in Black Lake this year. Some were as small as 5 inches and often moving the boat was necessary to avoid catching large numbers of sublegal fish.

DNR Fisheries Division and Tribal updates

Dave Borgeson – DNR Northern Lake Huron Management Unit Supervisor – Huron Pines has secured a major grant to do work in the Cheboygan River Watershed. The drawdown of the Golden Lotus Pond has been successful and the dry bottom of the old pond is covered with vegetation. Some organic debris entered the Pigeon River when the dam failed but most of the material remained in the pond and is secured under the vegetation. Since the drawdown was completed, the temperatures in the River have been lower.

Maxwell Field – Fisheries Biologist, Little Traverse Bay Band – The Tribe's Aquatic Invasive Plan is being implemented and is working well. The 690 sturgeon raised in the new Tribal hatchery were stocked in the Sturgeon River this fall.

Adjourned 3:25 pm.

Meeting Dates for 2015

Friday April 10, 2015
Monday October 12, 2015

Tuscarora Township Hall in Indian River
Tuscarora Township Hall in Indian River

