

**Coldwater Resources Steering Committee Meeting
via MS Teams, 5/18/2021**

Attendees: Dave Borgeson Sr., Jim Bos, Bryan Burroughs, Bryan Darland, Ian FitzGerald, Bill LaBelle, Tess Nelkie, Steve Mondrella, Jay Wesley, Seth Herbst, Joe Molnar, Mark Tonello, Scott Heintzelman, Bernie Campos, Dennis Eade, Walt Grau, James Dexter, Cory Kovacs, Jan-Michael Hessenauer, Jeffery Jolley, Mark Tonello, Randy Claramunt, Don Wright, Mike Verhamme, Dave Peterson, Jonathan Durtka (Michigan Spearfishing Association), Christian LeSage, Bill Ziegler, John Karakashian (Baldwin Bait and Tackle), Nikunj Agarwal (MUCC Intern), Patrick Hanchin, and Troy Zorn (chair, notes). **Great turnout for a Teams meeting!!**

Welcome

- Troy welcomed everyone and explained the updated agenda.

Info: Predicting brown trout occurrence in MI streams using Status and Trends data- Jan-Michael Hessenauer

- Model predicts occurrence of brown trout >8", which would include streams with natural reproduction and those where stocked brown trout (stocking size ~6") had likely survived at least a year.
- 4% of segments statewide predicted to be suitable.
- Model is 80% accurate, "excellent" at predicting absence (3-8% error rate), but "poor" at predicting presence (51-53% error rate).
- Uses include 1) prioritizing stocking sites for evaluation; 2) assessing suitability of potential stocking sites; 3) adding to existing management tools such as publicly-available Stream Fish Population Trend Viewer and Stream Evaluator, and Fish Division's in-house Aquatic Habitat Viewer.
- Bryan B- Such tools are useful for determining where to invest resources. Would it be better to use August low flow, since it is typically the lowest flow month in MI streams? Model is a useful screening tool but will often need local data for on-the-ground decisions, especially in stocked systems.
- Tess N- How were stocking effects considered?
- Dave B- Were groundwater flow rates and predicted base-flow yields two different measures of the same thing?
- Jim D- This is the type of tool envisioned from the Status and Trends data.
- Jan H- Will be incorporated into Aquatic Habitat Viewer after manuscript goes through peer-review publication process.

Input: Proposed regulation changes on inland coldwater systems- Christian Lesage

- Fisheries Order (FO) 200 includes trout and salmon regulations statewide, and is being split into four FO's which generally include the following.
 - FO 200- stream regs
 - FO 252- whitefish, cisco, smelt, Arctic grayling regs
 - FO 253- Trout and salmon in the Great Lakes
 - FO 254- Trout and salmon in inland lakes

- Christian L- provided an overview of changes by the 4 FO categories, after which questions and discussion ensued.
- Dave P- Any steelhead limit changes? None are being proposed, but Jay W is leading discussions on this topic.
- Proposed change of stream regulations in the Jordan River (i.e., changing Type 4 to 3; Type 1 to 2; and upstream movement of location on the river where the regulation change occurs) resulted in the most discussion (below).
 - Don W.- Opposed to it. It doesn't make sense.
 - Scott H.- Over several years, the management unit negotiated with the Friends of the Jordan group towards regulations they thought could be tried. They seemed to be initially supported ("on the surface"), but have recently been opposed by others, including general anglers, Inland Waters Guide Alliance (please correct name if it's incorrect), and local conservation officers.
 - Dave B.- Thinks regulation should be Type 1 down to vicinity of Pinney Bridge.
 - Bill Z.- Type 2 regulations were removed on a number of U.P. streams and they are likely inappropriate here.
 - Jim D.- Reiterated that this is not Fisheries Division's proposal.
 - Jim D.- Proposed coldwater regulation changes should be included as a standing agenda item for future spring CRSC meetings and that proposals be sent to the CRSC prior to that meeting.
 - Bryan B.- Was not providing TU's position, but he was more concerned than supportive. Moving the boundary upstream is not a good idea, and it could be downstream from its current location. Changing the Type 4 to Type 3 may be something that could be "moved on".
 - Steve M.- Current designation is "out of line" with current fishery and management plan. It would be "crazy" to make the proposed changes. Large-scale beaver dam removals conducted by Friends of the Jordan really hurt the river due to extensive mobilization of sediment held behind dams.

Input: Spearfishing proposal- Seth Herbst, with Jonathan Durka, leader of the Michigan Spearfishing group

- Seth provided a detailed presentation providing background on the proposal to expand spearfishing to include harvest of northern pike, walleye, and lake trout in Great Lakes waters. Comments and responses follow:
- Bill Z.- Confirmed proposal was for Great Lakes waters only, then asked why these species were added. Jon- To get more table-worthy game fish. Bill- Why not other species? Jon- Moving forward in "small steps". Bill- U.P. Sportsman's Alliance opposes it. Bill mentioned that there were past abuses, noting previous experience indicating the ease at which walleyes laying in weed beds could be speared. Thought allowing this on Great Lakes was a slippery slope to inland waters.
- Don W.- Also concerned that allowing it may be going down a slippery slope.
- Steve M.- As an avid darkhouse spearer, he indicated that data suggested hook and line fishing was more effective than darkhouse spearing because hook and line anglers could actively pursue fishes they were targeting. What is the success rate of spearfishers for

these species elsewhere? Jon- Doesn't know, but success is often site and situation specific, analogous to hook and line angling though chasing fish with a spear may be different.

- Tess N.- How can you honor the size limit when shooting a spear from 15-20 ft away from the fish, knowing that spearing is an inherently lethal way to catch fish? Jon- The spearfisher has to take proper steps and is responsible for their actions, acknowledging that there are wanton waste laws.
- Bryan B.- It is ok to encourage new fisheries, but what can be expected from a totally new type of fishery? Unlike hook and line anglers, spearers just need to find fish and don't need to make them bite. It would be important to incorporate learning in the process of opening such a fishery if it occurs.
- Modifications to fishing regulations to better tailor them to the spear fishery may be appropriate (e.g., for walleye have a smaller bag limit and no minimum size limit (MSL)).
- Dave B.- Agrees with no MSL. Fishery could be opened as a 5-year experiment, to enable fishery to sunset if it was not deemed viable. More supportive of spearing fisheries when fish are consumed as opposed to those where rough fish are shot (sometimes in very large quantities) and disposed of.
 - Bill Z.- Suckers and whitefishes are highly desired for consumption in the UP.
- Bryan D. (chat)- Agrees with Bryan B and Dave B ideas- limited harvest, open on a trial basis, with reporting and evaluation.
- Mike V.- Could spearfishery occur at night? Seth- No, the night fishery option was dismissed because of numerous safety concerns.
- Jim D.- What is your best estimate of participants in MI? Jon- about 500 in Facebook group, about 150 active (i.e., they spearfish twice per month) participants. Most spearfishing occurs around structure (e.g., breakwalls), and most dive with a buddy. Most divers don't go deeper than 20-30 ft and can hold their breath for about a minute.
- Tally of committee member opinions: 7 people in favor of moving spearfishing proposal forward to NRC "as is", 4 against.

Input: Definition of a fly- Joe Molnar

- Joe initiated the discussion of the definition of a "commonly accepted fly" and who determines what one is. After looking at pictures of several flies that may or may not qualify as artificial flies, the discussion focused on what qualifies as an artificial fly with respect to trout angling in Michigan. Jim Dexter said the definition of an artificial fly is not in statute and can be changed. So, from a regulatory perspective MDNR determines what an acceptable artificial fly is.
- Mark T.- This is not a new issue and mostly deals with the PM River, which is the only flies-only reach with salmon and steelhead runs. Artificial lures only would solve the problem immediately, with glue eggs not being allowed.
- Dave B.- Fisheries Division has used the same definition since 1970 when he wrote it. Thinks it could be clarified to allow single hook lures without a spinner, spoon, etc.

- Jim B.- In favor of a single hook (no double/stinger hook), and no glue eggs or beads. Suggest we look at New York's definition, specifically language indicating items be "tied onto the hook with thread". British Columbia has similar language.
- Dave P.- Agrees with Jim B, material must be tied onto a single hook. Opposed to artificial only regulation.
- Walt G.- Guides on PM and agrees with Jim B. Enforce the single hook/point rule (especially on PM) and look to NY and BC definitions.
- Don W.- Could move PM to artificials only, which would be very understandable.
- Bryan B.- It's a complicated issue. Jim B's definition seems useful, and language regarding attachment to hook would be good to include. With fly fishing the line provides the weight and the weight of the fly should not be substantial. Even an "artificials only" rule can be a slippery slope, considering scented lures like Berkley Gulp.
- Tess N.- Artificials only would not be a good idea. Likes hook attachment lingo.
- Mark T.- Is a Mr. Twister tied on a hook legal then?
- Steve M.- Agrees with Mark and Joe. Thinks artificials only would be ok based on hooking mortality studies which show little difference between artificial flies and lures.
- Dave B.- Have a fly definition re-write contest. 😊 Keep it simple but concise.
- Dave P.- Their group would be vehemently opposed to artificials only.
- Jim D.- There are tons of synthetics in use now.
- Tess N.- Agrees with Dave P., materials should be tied onto hook.
- Dave B.- Yes, lots of synthetics in use in Montana too.
- Bernie C. (commented via email)- "I liked the idea of "material attached with thread" as that is pretty straightforward and an element to every commonly accepted fly under the current definition. I'd also consider a phrase like "excluding man made material designed to act as a lure without modifications or additions". This would eliminate any plastic grubs, worms, jerk baits, swim baits etc. but allow the addition of tied in beads, rubber legs and the other synthetic materials commonly used on many flies today. Plastics today are so soft I don't believe you could tie them to a hook anyway. I know they don't stick on hair jigs if you cover the bait keeper with thread and maybe this would eliminate the headache of dealing with people who try. I don't envy you the task of finding a definition that won't be nit-picked and I hope my suggestion can help the conversation."
- Jim D.- This was a good start to a conversation that is just beginning. You gave us a lot of good input. MDNR may have a new definition to bring out for review in 2023.

Roundtable (voluntary contributions since we used up our time)

- Mark T.- Kudos to Jim B., Steve M., and Dave B. for providing fishing report updates!!
- Jay W.- Steelhead bag limit discussions ongoing and he's getting a lot of comments, especially in Lake Michigan. Lacking catch rate and harvest information on many rivers. Most all steelhead are marked and coded-wire tagged. Most concerns regarding bag limits are for Lake Michigan. Many social questions, and is interested in doing a social survey.
 - Tess N.- Will Great Lakes be involved in steelhead bag limit discussion? Yes, part of the discussion.
 - Bryan B.- TU supports Jay's efforts on steelhead. Think more about catch rates and how they might drive suggestions to change bag limits.

- Steve M.- How much can you recycle steelhead? Every catch and release event exerts a toll on the fish.
- Jim B.- Yes, released fish are harmed, but not as bad as if all were put in a cooler. Would like to consider different management approaches for wild vs. stocked fish.
- Mike V.- Note that steelhead life history and fisheries differ between Lake Superior and Lakes Michigan and Huron, such that some statewide regs may not make sense for Lake Superior tribes. Take this into consideration when considering statewide regulation changes.
- Don W.- Would like continued discussion of habitat or non-fishery regulation based work. For example, work happening on Dowagiac. (future meeting presentation)
- Troy Z.- Please provide future meeting topic suggestions to Troy Zorn at zornt@michigan.gov. Thanks!!