

Coldwater Resources Steering Committee Meeting
MS Teams meeting, 9/17/2020

Attendees: Dave Borgeson Sr., Jim Bos, Bryan Burroughs, Bryan Darland, Ray Danders, Ian FitzGerald, Bill LaBelle, Tess Nelkie, Steve Mondrella, Jim Bedford, Jay Wesley, Seth Herbst, Jason Wicklund, Mark Tonello, Scott Heintzleman, Lucas Nathan, Gary Whelan, Tim Cwalinski, James Dexter, Cory Kovacs, Daniel Hayes, Mark Tonello, Craig Gosen, Don Wright, Mike Verhamme, Dave Peterson, Dave Shaw, Christian LeSage, Patrick Hanchin, and Troy Zorn (chair, notes).

Welcome and Intros

- After a roll call, Troy welcomed everyone. A roundtable of reports from CRSC members generally suggested average to above average trout fishing (with nice brook trout) for those who could get out, and a Hex hatch that lasted longer than average on some rivers and larger.

Steelhead evaluation opportunities given the lack of stocking in 2020- Wesley

- Jay Wesley started discussion of the topic. Stocked steelhead have been adipose clipped since 2018 via USFWS' mass marking trailers. Volunteers are needed to collect data from steelhead in rivers. One opportunity for them to collect this information is being coordinated via the Michigan River Steelhead Project which is being coordinated by Dan O'Keefe of Michigan Sea Grant, with introductory kickoff Zoom meeting for the project on September 24, 2020.
- Jim Bos asked if steelhead produced in other states could be sought to make up for the lack of steelhead stocking in Michigan in 2020. Jay Wesley indicated that most other states were in the same situation and did not rear steelhead.
- Stream biosampling and logs of charter captains and river guides were determined to not be viable evaluation opportunities, and no other options were suggested. There was some discussion of potentially filling in 2020 steelhead stocking void at some locations with fall fingerlings, though all acknowledged that fall fingerlings typically show considerably poorer survival than yearlings. The recent CMU-DNR study finding that 40% of Lake Michigan steelhead was highlighted to note that wild fish should fill a portion of the stocking gap.

Issue: losing angler access to trout water- Danders

- Ray introduced the issue, pointing out that losing access to their traditional fish spots may lead anglers to quit fishing. Examples where access has been lost include blocking of roads on federal lands and elimination of camping at Tippy and Stronach dams due to trash. Illegal posting of properties and erection of fences at right-of-way access locations to prevent anglers from reaching streams (e.g., Dewitt's Bridge on Manistee River).
- Legality of access to waters that haven't been legally designated navigable or non-navigable was discussed with differing opinions being provided. Lt. Shaw mentioned that issues of riparian rights and navigability are awaiting clarification from the Attorney General's office. DNR has not taken a position on navigability but would prefer statute

over legal opinion. LED worked with landowner to address illegal fencing issue on Hersey River. Lt. Shaw also noted that prosecutors utilize navigability in trespass cases but each County prosecutor handles things a bit differently.

- Hanchin noted that recent legislation allows ATV use on State forest roads unless they are posted as closed (used to be closed unless posted as open). Fisheries Division comments on which roads to open/close so need input from anglers.
- Cwalinski noted that riparian access issues on state-owned land should be brought to the attention of the local DNR fisheries biologist. DNR is reviewing them and fighting for angler access. Sometimes walk-in access is established on newly acquired parcels.
- Dexter mentioned that access issues are a problem for many anglers (and hunters); USFS is not interested in discussing re-opening access roads for anglers; and that the Office of the Attorney General currently says that waters should be assumed “non-navigable until determined navigable”, so anglers would have to push the issue on individual waters. Borgeson and Mondrella noted that such an opinion on navigability was opposite of public trust doctrine and waters should be considered navigable unless determined to be non-navigable.
- Labelle mentioned that platted roads on USFS land are still roads and that USFS could not legally block them. Bill also provided the name of Jim Olson, a water rights attorney in Traverse City as a resource on water access issues.

Update on New Zealand mudsnail (NZM) and BMP’s for preventing its establishment- Zorn

- MDNR Fisheries Biologist Lucas Nathan presented an overview of collaborative efforts on this topic, with assistance from Seth Herbst and Daniel Hayes. Some highlights follow:
 - Background: NZMs were introduced primarily via commercial shipping and angling pathways. NZMs can spread via asexual reproduction. They can achieve very high densities, having the potential to outcompete invertebrates. There are currently no effective options for eradicating them.
 - Michigan timeline and early responses: They showed up in Michigan in the 1990’s likely via shipping, by 2015 were in Michigan trout streams being documented in the Au Sable, Manistee, Boardman, and Pere Marquette rivers, likely transported by trout anglers fishing western US rivers. Methods to detect them in Michigan include visual surveys which have an 80% detection probability, which is comparable to eDNA techniques. Surveillance work for NZMs is ongoing via Fisheries Division’s Status and Trends surveys and efforts by EGLE (e.g., Quality of Life agency’s “Clean, drain, dry” policy).
 - Ongoing work is focused in improving outreach effectiveness. Signage has been used to raise awareness and wader wash stations have been installed at key locations, but follow-up surveys indicated that increased awareness by anglers did not lead to any change in behavior to limit the spread of NZMs. Current projects by MSU and Oakland University are focusing on:
 - NZM decontamination method evaluations
 - Effectiveness of NZM outreach efforts
 - NZM perceptions via a survey of others working on NZM issues around the U.S. to learn about the effectiveness of strategies they are using.

Future meeting topics

- Please provide suggestions to Troy Zorn at zornt@michigan.gov