

Lake Superior Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

A citizen-based committee charged to review and provide input and advice relative to fishery goals, objectives and management plans for Lake Superior. Members assist Fisheries Division in charting the future course of fisheries management by providing voice to and for the diversity of citizens' interests in the Lake Superior basin.

March 31, 2021 (6:30 PM – 8:30 PM) Meeting Minutes

Meeting conducted via Microsoft Teams

Meeting minutes were recorded by George Madison. The minutes of each LSCFAC will be posted on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website (https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79137_79763_79903_84849---,00.html).

Welcome and roll call - Attendees: Patrick Hanchin, Brett DeLonge, Donna Wesander, Cory Kovacs, Kevin Postma, Stephanie Swart, Dave Shaw, George Madison, Rodney Markham, Ross Rinkinen, Larry Argall, Larry Brown, Dan Talkowski, John Highlen, Tim Gasperich, Travis White, Martha Gerig, Lauren Jescovich, Frank Krist, George Lindquist, Dave Johnson, Floyd Dropps, Roger Greil, Barb Gajewski, Troy Zorn, Martha Gerig, Terry Short, Nick Torsky, George Lindquist, Lawrence Atkin.

1. Terms of Reference - Terms of Reference were approved at our September 2021 meeting, but some small changes have been proposed by other CACs, such as election of vice chair (we already approved this), language change for removal of inappropriate behavior (changed to “if fail to follow member responsibilities), deletion of language about 3-minute comment opportunities (we believe the TOR already allow for this), and clarification that decision making is for recommendations. TOR’s are mostly similar to what was reviewed at the September LSCFAC meeting. Advisors unanimously reaffirmed adopting TOR as attached (Attachment #2).
2. Nominations and selection of Chair - The committee chair and vice chair positions are for 3-year terms, of which Rodney and Ross have been serving as co-chairs for around 3 years. Nominations for chair were solicited. George Lindquist nominated John Highlen. John indicated willingness but inquired whether others were interested. Rodney indicated willingness to serve as Chair. Dave Johnson nominated Rodney Markham and John Highlen supported this nomination. All advisors were in favor of Rodney being elected as Chair. Nominations were solicited for vice chair. Rodney Markham nominated Ross Rinkinen and John Highlen supported this nomination. Ross indicated he would be willing to serve as vice chair. All advisors supported electing Ross as vice-chair. Hanchin indicated that in the future we will have the ability to hold anonymous elections, if desired.
3. Membership changes – Hanchin noted some membership changes due to attendance and retirements. Alger County Fish and Game Alliance no longer exists and Doug Scheuneman indicated they could be removed. Duncan Price from Fisher Price Charters retired and said he could be removed. Bay Mills Indian Community representatives have never attended meetings nor responded to emails and will be removed. BMIC will still be consulted on issues through various government to government consultation. Grand Marais Sportsmans Club has not attended for 5 years but will remain as Mark Steinke took over for Dave Pool and wishes to stay involved. Commercial fisher Dan Thill has not attended for more than 5 years and did not respond to communications. Hanchin suggested we seek other commercial fishers and will work with Sea Grant to reach out. Criteria for new members

are described in the Terms of Reference. Highlen suggested VanLandschoot as possible to contact regarding commercial fisher representation. Markham suggested representation from Keweenaw Bay Indian Community. Larry Brown, a guest for several years, asked to be considered for the committee. Hanchin will work with Markham per the TOR regarding official changes.

4. Creel data overview – Hanchin provided 2020 creel data prior to the meeting and highlighted major species. The creel program was highly affected by pandemic restriction in 2020. A hiring freeze prevented filling of 2 clerk positions on Superior and the months of April and May were not surveyed. Also unable to make expansions non-surveyed ports. All this resulted in man low lake wide estimates. Effort declined in 2020 but difficult to determine if due to missing months/ports or true decline as some ports were busy in the summer. Both lake trout and siscowet harvest were down from previous years but still near long-term average. Harvest of whitefish was low which was almost entirely due to not surveying Grand Marais which usually accounts for 95% of lake wide harvest. Brown trout harvest declined significantly but was largely due to not surveying Black River Harbor and Ontonagon which each had harvest > 2,000 fish in recent years. Harvest at other ports declined but likely in proportion to the absence of April/May estimates. Splake harvest was down but still near the long-term average. Coho decline was due to combination of not surveying Black River Harbor, Grand Marais, and Ontonagon. Harvest at Marquette and Munising was also affected by not surveying April/May. For example, in 2019 60% of the Coho salmon harvested in Munising were from April and May. In contrast, despite not surveying April/May, Coho harvest at Traverse Bay was double the estimate from 2019. Comments were made that boating restrictions likely hurt effort as well.
5. Charter data overview – Donna Wesander gave a summary of the Michigan DNR charter reporting program. Statewide data is shown as stable over last 20 years. It was pointed out that the system reports 550 operators, 650 boats, with an on-line reporting system. The year showed a 2020 decrease in fishing effort due to Covid. Statewide charter reporting showed 367K angler hours, 65K anglers, and 17K excursions. Most charter trips occur on Lake Michigan. Reporting for Lake Superior showed 700 excursions in 2020, and a long-term stable trend. Reporting for Lake Superior showed 2600 anglers in 2020, many from residences outside of the Lake Superior area. Angler catches are mostly salmonids and trout. Lake trout is the dominant catch in Lk Superior.
6. 2021 Stocking Plans - A summary of 2021 stocking plans was sent to attendees prior to the meeting. We discussed the upcoming Ontonagon River Wisconsin strain brown trout stocking (will not be marked), and the improved size of 2020 splake that will be stocked. Stocking levels are relatively stable from year to year. There was discussion of what level 1,2,3 stocking requests mean and what a number-0 request means. The Wisconsin strain brown trout scheduled for Ontonagon River will not be marked with any fin clips. There are no splake scheduled for stocking for 2020 in Keweenaw Bay, however this site will receive approximately 20K in 2022 and beyond. Splake scheduled for Munising and Copper Harbor will have unique fin clips this year, to distinguish them from their stocking location. Both Rinkinen and Highlen offered assistance with marking projects, if needed.
7. Smelt consumption advisory and sampling plan - Michigan Department of Health and Human Services decided to match MN and WI guidance in recommending consumption of no more than 1 serving per month of smelt from Lake Superior due to PFAS/PFOS levels. There will be expanded testing of smelt this spring to look for levels of the compounds. It is not yet clear why a species so low in the food chain would have high levels and these chemicals have different characteristics than mercury or PCBs.

8. Summary of Lake Superior Technical Committee splake white paper - The Great Lakes Fishery Commission's Lake Superior Technical Committee developed a white paper on splake, which brought together existing literature and knowledge to understand the extent that splake may affect lake trout and brook trout populations via interspecific competition and genetic introgression. If approved by the LSC for public dissemination (all members voting by early April), the GLFC will complete some final editing and post to their website. A brief summary of the main points are as follows:
 - a. Probability of introgression is high given that splake are fertile and capable of breeding with both parental species.
 - b. Ripe and spent splake have been found on both lake trout and brook trout spawning sites.
 - c. Limited evidence of introgression but have not looked for it much. Further research is warranted.
9. New Regulations in 2021 - A quick 2021 Conversations and Coffee presentation summary of minor sportfishing regulation changes for 2021 was presented to the group.
10. Potential Regulations for 2022 - Northern pike sportfishing regulations and a proposal for enrolling three western UP lakes into the no-minimum-size limit (MSL) category were discussed. The three west UP no MSL candidate lakes are Perch Lake (Iron County), Sunday Lake (Gogebic County), and the Prickett Impoundment (Baraga-Houghton County). There was some discussion about reviewing more candidate lakes on an annual basis, with additional conversation about following the metric recommendations of Michigan's Northern Pike Management Plan.

Underwater spear fishing - A group known as the Michigan Spear Fishing Association submitted a request to the Michigan Natural Resource Commission to review a proposal to allow underwater spear fishing for pike, lake trout, walleye, from the last Sat in April – Sept 30 on Great Lakes (not inland). George Lindquist made a motion for a resolution/statement in opposition to the proposal which was seconded by Dave Johnson. Discussion ensued regarding pros and cons of the proposal with 8 members supporting the resolution/statement in opposition to the spearfishing proposal, 3 opposing the resolution/statement, and 1 abstaining. To clarify the voting in other words, 3 members were in favor of the spearfishing proposal, 8 were opposed to the spearfishing proposal, and 1 abstained.

11. Law Enforcement Division update - Law Division provided a staffing update, mentioned the new academy with 26 recruits, reviewed an AIS issue of mothball plants in pet shop aquariums contaminated with zebra mussels of which many shops were searched, and the target plants were seized. The Great Lakes Enforcement Unit assisted a non-profit group with working with weather buoys on Lake Superior and with battery maintenance, etc. The 40 ft vessel (Smith) will enter the water soon at Marquette. We had a Law Division patrol vessel update regarding new electronics, new technology and underwater ROV's. Also, there was a summary of pulling abandoned fishing nets and the pulling of 2 ghost nets Grand Marais, and 1 at Marquette. There was a reminder to the group that if they spot net issues, get a GPS location, and tie a float to the net if possible.
12. Draft Inland Walleye Management Plan - We had an update about this draft plan, which addresses potential and existing walleye lakes classified by natural reproduction and lake characteristics, stocking rates, strategies, and broad goals. 6,000 people took the survey that helped inform the development of part of the plan. Hanchin explained the broad goals and encourage people to

read the plan. Public comments were due March 31. The final plan document will address all the public comments.

13. Lake Superior Management Plan Survey and Input - A public survey about social desires will be out soon. People are encouraged to take the survey and share, but please only take once. Fisheries Division discussed a random mail survey that would avoid bias, but it was cost prohibitive at this point. There will be other opportunities to comment beyond this stakeholder survey period as development of the plan will take some discourse, especially where conflicts in management goals may exist. Hanchin will be reaching out to angler groups and the draft will come back to the LSCFAC.

14. Advisor member roundtable reports

- a. Isle Royale Boaters Association represented by Rodney Markham. The National Park Service will open Isle Royale to visitor ferry service this summer and have new superintendent. No meetings recently due to COVID.
- b. Copper Country Walleye Association, represented by Ross Rinkinen: Ice fishing was fairly good with lots of under-sized walleye, which is a good sign for the fishery ahead.
- c. Black River boating club, Dan Talkowski: Construction of the boat launch at Black River Harbor will hopefully be concluded soon. This site was not accessible to boaters last year, nor now while final construction work is occurring. The site and ramp are fully closed right now. Boaters are using Saxon Harbor and Oman Creek launches. Anglers were seeing good numbers of Coho and brown trout this past winter/spring.
- d. Central Upper Peninsula Sport Fishing Association, represented by Larry Argall: The Club has been locked down all last year due to COVID but hope meetings will continue in June. Would like Chinook Salmon stocking resume. The Huron River will have its second year of being missed with steelhead stocking. At the Au Train River Lake Superior launch, there are some problematic rocks out from dock. It was noted that this US Forest Service launch is being run by Onota Township. Thanked DNR for Lake Angeline stocking as the fishery is heavily used. Noted good brown trout in Keweenaw Bay.
- e. Upper Peninsula Sportsmen's Alliance, represented by Dave Johnson. Dave pointed out that the Lake Michigan and Lake and Lk Superior Conversations and Coffee dates overlap.
- f. Fred Waara Chapter, Michigan Trout Unlimited, represented by John Highlen. The group is waiting to hear from grant submissions to see if they are successful. The group's participation with the Partnering for Watershed Restoration association has focused on goals to expand education and outreach. Noted that they have three tanks that can be used for salmon in the classroom.
- g. Keweenaw Charters, represented by Travis White. Travis says that the spring boating season has begun on Keweenaw Bay and has had some good fishing already. Buoys going out soon from MTU Great Lakes Research Center. Big Traverse buoy was damaged. Charter fishing reservation interest is up for April/May 10-fold.
- h. Keweenaw Splake Angers, Tim Gasperich. Splake fishing has been good in Copper Harbor though ice came and went which was tough. Would like to know that splake stocking will continue.
- i. Lake Superior State University, represented by Roger Greil: Steelhead fishing just getting started and not much new to report.
- j. Sea Grant, represented by Lauren Jescovich. The Sea Grant program is working on COVID impacts to commercial fisheries and processors and the CARES act for commercial and

- aquaculture. As a highlight for this summer, the Sea Grant program is working with the Inland Seas® tall ship for a summer visit to Lake Superior at Houghton, Marquette, and Sault Ste Marie. Martha Gerig discussed the upcoming Lake Superior Fisheries Workshop scheduled for April 8th, along with a Michigan DNR Conversations and Coffee meeting tied with the same Zoom meeting.
- k. Michigan United Conservation Clubs, represented by George Lindquist. Resolutions for June MUCC conference include legislation on use trot lines, set lines, jug lines, and a recommendation for northern pike no-msl regulations for UP for all lakes. This group would also recommend that yellow perch fishing season close season March 14th – April 1 to allow the fish to rest.
 - l. Office of Gt Lks, Stephanie Swart: Nothing to report.
15. Next LSCFAC meeting date is September 29, 2021 from 6:30-8:30. This is planned as a virtual meeting but will consider in-person if allowable. Hanchin reminded group that the WLSMU Coffee & Conversations meeting is April 6 and a Michigan Sea Grant workshop, followed by another C&C meeting is on April 8.