



## Lake Erie / Lake St. Clair Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

Established by the Department of Natural Resources to improve and maintain the fishery resources of Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, and the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers through better communication and partnership.

### **Meeting Notes Belle Isle Nature Center 176 Lakeside Drive, Detroit, MI 48207 October 16, 2023**

**Attendees:** Dan Boileau, Jim Francis, Andrew Gaul (Michigan Bass Federation), Sara Thomas, Todd Wills, Andrew Briggs, Alison Bressler (University of Michigan Water Center), Mark Davis, Gerry Sickon, Blair Hughes, John Bacarella, Andrew Bahrou, Bruce Yinger, Henry Walters, Angela Scapini (Michigan Sea Grant), Bob Neely, Mike Grodi (Erie Twp Supervisor), Ted Meyer, Dave Caroffino, CO Martin Lawrence, Mike Terrell, Tom Bissett

#### **Welcome and introductions (Dan Boileau, Chair and Jim Francis, DNR-Fisheries)**

#### **2023 Great Lakes Fishing Decree (Dave Caroffino, DNR-Fisheries)**

Dave provided a history of past decrees, and an overview of the 2023 Decree:



LECFAC

Meeting-2023 Decree

- The decree focuses on co-management of a shared resource
- Since the last decree – sport anglers have lost harvest opportunities with reduced numbers of Chinook salmon and tribal fishers lost harvest opportunities with reduced numbers of lake whitefish (population is 80% lower than 2000)
- The process for the current decree began in 2014
- Some benefits of the new decree include extending the population modeling time from one year to three years and requiring bi-monthly electronic reporting
- Chinook salmon, coho salmon, and steelhead are the primary state species and these are not allocated in the decree – that means there is no harvest limit cap
- Questions following Dave’s presentation included:
  - Is a 3-year stock assessment cycle frequent enough? Yes, it allows the parties to do a much better review of the data and models and prevents them from chasing annual ups/downs in populations.
  - Do tribal biologists concur with DNR biologists during fisheries management discussions? Yes, the committees organized by the Decree operates by consensus.
  - Are DNR research vessels equipped to provide data for models? Yes, they are crucial and provide fishery independent data for the modeling process.

Dave also answered questions regarding the geographic extent of the 1836 Treaty and the transparent reporting requirements of tribal commercial fishers.

## **Lake Erie Nutrients / Harmful Algal Blooms (Jim Francis, DNR-Fisheries and Andrew Bahrou, EGLE)**

There continue to be Harmful Algal Blooms (western basin) and dead zones (central basin) in Lake Erie

- The cause of the problem is too much phosphorous entering the lake

The policy mechanism to reduce nutrients and their negative effects is the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

- Michigan is addressing the issue through the Domestic Action Plan
  - Goal is to reduce total phosphorous inputs by 40% by 2025 (from 2008 baseline)
  - Improvements at wastewater treatment plants have reduced inputs from point sources
  - Efforts to reduce nonpoint sources have not been successful in meeting the 2025 goal
    - Looking to focus conservation efforts in the right places
- A number of efforts are underway to increase stakeholder engagement
  - Erb Foundation grant to the University of Michigan Water Center to facilitate a Western Lake Erie Basin Advisory Group (Bob Neely and Eric Clites participate) and an independent Science Panel
    - Allison Bressler provided a good overview of the Advisory Group and Science Panel
    - Bob Neely participated in the first meeting of the Advisory Group and said it was a very positive experience. He hopes it leads to a clearly defined action plan to be implemented immediately.

## **Lunch-provided by DNR**

### **Update on Boating Access Sites (Mike Terrell and Tom Bissett, DNR-Parks and Rec)**

Mike provided the following updates on boating access sites that are of interest to the audience:

- Clinton River Cut-Off (aka Crocker Rd) – substantial completion date is still set for October 27, 2023.
  - Original estimate was \$3.7M and final costs will be \$5M
- Harley Ensign – ramp and paving work is delayed a couple of years due to extra funds needed for completing Crocker.
  - The site will be repaired and maintained until the renovations can occur
  - When this project gets ready to go – they will reach out to get input on the best times to do the work
- Selfridge – railing to be taken out before winter to provide better access to Lake St Clair for ice anglers. They are looking to add this to the Memorandum of Understanding with Fisheries Division.

Tom Bissett also shared updates on the proposed Greyhaven access site on the Detroit River:

- Target is 75 parking spots
- A deed issue is currently holding up the planning process; the deed was never recorded when the property was acquired by DNR around 2010-2011
- Plans are also dependent upon right-of-way issues
- Timeframe for moving forward with planning: Not included in 2024 capital outlay budget because of deed issue, earliest option for requesting funds is now 2025

Tom also added that the Detroit Riverwalk connector to MacArthur Bridge will open next weekend, and DNR Parks and Rec submitted a 2025 budget request to remediate 2 fishing piers at Belle Isle.

### **Fisheries Division Updates (Jim Francis, DNR-Fisheries)**

Yellow perch harvest in Michigan waters of Lake Erie is pretty consistent from year to year – averaging right around 100,000 pounds annually. 2016 was an exception when about 400,000 of perch were harvested.

- The fishery started early that year and remained strong all summer. As word spread – fishing effort increased.
  - The effort doubled and catch rate doubled – resulting in a quadrupling of the annual catch
  - This resulted in Michigan being 100% over quota for perch in 2016
- The fishery started strong this year – showing similarities to the 2016 fishery
- The creel data is not available until January, but we were able to look at some preliminary numbers.
  - Although fishing effort appears higher than normal (data through September), catch rates are lower than 2016. Anticipate being under our quota this year

A new 2-year study has been initiated by Macomb County and the US Army Corps of Engineers to investigate the “muck” issue.

- There are several locations along the shoreline where homeowners are dealing with deposition of a nuisance algae (Microseira)
  - Feel the problem has worsened over past 10-15 years
  - Concerned about odors and possible health effects
  - Seeking answers to the cause and potential risks and solutions

Don't forget to download the DNR Hunt/Fish app

- Buy licenses
- Access to regulation guides
- Mapping features

In SE Michigan, we stock steelhead into Mill Creek, Belle River, Clinton River, and Huron River

- Current daily possession limit is 3
- NRC Commissioner Nyberg introduced an amendment that would reduce the possession limit to one fish on 13 tributaries (none in SE Michigan), and a daily possession limit of zero for naturalized steelhead (intact adipose fin) on the Pere Marquette
  - A statewide angler preference survey was conducted in 2022
  - Creel surveys were conducted on Muskegon and Manistee rivers in fall 2022/spring 2023

### **Fisheries Survey Data Summary (Todd Wills and Andrew Briggs, DNR-Fisheries)**

Todd and Andrew gave an update on recent fishery surveys completed by the Lake St. Clair Fisheries Research Station:



### **Committee Member Round Table (All)**

Fishing reports, organization updates or announcements, and issues.

- Bob Neely/Mike Grodi (Erie Township Supervisor) – private road into DNR property/access site at Halfway Creek deteriorating due to traffic; looking for assistance from DNR for solution
- Dan Boileau – Downriver Walleye Federation has been carrying on with its usual activities
- Andrew Gaul – cormorant and pelican concerns
- Mark Davis – Metro-West Steelheaders is re-assessing what club is and what it is doing post covid, it's hard to find youth to send to MUCC camps
- Gerry Sickon – Steelhead regulations/Nyberg amendment is a high priority for Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association - it is being pushed by charters/guides without consultation from anglers. Group also concern with commercial fishing legislation (HB 5108)
- Blair Hughes – St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrow actively promoting its mission related to conservation/preservation/ethical fishing for sturgeon
- Bruce Yinger – Downriver Bass Association has continued interest in condition of public boating access sites
- Henry Walters – Michigan Charter Boat Association concern with commercial fishing legislation (HB 5108)
- Ted Myers – Atlantic Salmon fishing is picking up in Port Huron

### **Summary of meeting and future meeting topics (Dan Boileau, Chair)**

Dan asked the committee if there is a need for a virtual attendance option in the future. Little interest was expressed.

Next Meeting will be scheduled for early April 2024.