

Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee



Meeting Summary

Location: Jay's Sporting Goods, Clare, MI

Date: May 7, 2024

Attendees: Frank Krist, Randy Claramunt, Blaise Pewinski, Scott Lutz Randy Terrian, April Simmons, Judy Ogden, Julie Shafto, Steve Shafto, Tom Keerl, Bryan Darland, Tess Nelkie, Nick Torsky, Nick Atkin, Tim Cwalinski, Tom Frontjes, Jeff Jolley, Laura Ogar, Mike Veine, Dana Serafin, Dennis Eade, Doug Schultz, David Fielder, LaKon Williams, Michael Kelly, Ed Blissick, Paul Nienaltowski, Scott Szafranski, Dale Megic, Mark Ebener, Cameron McMurry, Mike Latimer, Ken Glupker, Samuel McMurry, Andrew Hendrickson, Henry Walters, Leo Mrozinski, Brent Napolney, Ron Morgan, Todd Wills, Brad Dupuie, Joe Raymer, Ernie Plant, Larry Gorske, Jim Hiveley, Ron Christie, Makenzie Smith, Elvita Eglite, Scott Everett, Jim De Clerck, Aaron Switzer, Gene Kirvan, Dan Needham, Jason Gostiaux, George Brown, Jerry Brown, Ed Beckley, Brian Weber.

Status of Michigan House Bills 5108 and 5553 (Claramunt)

- There are currently two competing bills in the Michigan State Legislature to rewrite Part 473 of PA 451 of 1994 which contains the commercial fishing statute.
- The revision of the commercial fishing statute is a difficult issue that has been going on for several decades, is necessary and is long overdue.
- DNR staff will refrain from commercial fishing policy discussions with the general public and engage directly with the legislators when and where appropriate.
- Most of the current statute language dates to 1929 with no reviews, amendments or updates since 1970 – the statute is archaic and contains antiquated language. License fees have not been modified since 1968, fines and penalties have not changed since 1929.
- Annual administration of the commercial fish program is almost fully subsidized from recreational angler license fees.
- Positive potential statute revisions:
 - Regulations that are easier to understand and enforce.
 - Regulations that meet the needs of the resource, industry, and recreational public.
 - Simplified fee structure that supports program administration
 - Penalties and fines that are effective and can be prosecuted effectively.
- Some proposed revisions in both bills were highlighted.
- Advisor and participant questions ranged from policy setting process (legislative, Fisheries Orders) to allocation. As the bills have been legislatively proposed it must, at this time, be addressed through the legislative process.

- An Advisor motion was made and seconded: "Recommend to the DNR that stakeholders from both sides of HB5108 and HB5133 come together and work on a compromise." There was 1 of 15 Advisors who did not support the motion; this resulted in a Consulting Decision.

Increased funding for MDNR's Fisheries Division (Claramunt)

- Many fishing-related fees have not been raised in decades with no built-in inflationary adjustments; inflation has significantly increased operating costs and current funding is not sustainable.
- Stakeholder outreach at the start of 2024 showed >80% support for redoing the funding structure with several excellent ideas proposed by groups for restructure. The approach is separating into three phases:
 - Phase 1: Modest increase to base license fee with no changes in structure.
 - Phase 2: Work with stakeholders to incorporate some of the restructuring ideas proposed.
 - Phase 3: Educating legislators and the public on how undervalued Michigan's fisheries are, including long-term solutions to inflationary pressures.

Draft Saginaw Bay Walleye and Yellow Perch Recreational Fisheries Management Plan (Jolley)

- Public comment period is open until the end of June, encourage folks to submit their comments.
- Some questions related to the status of yellow perch. The current status of perch is DNR continues to observe high production of age-0 fish but poor survival to age-1 and older ages and this is reflected of lower abundance of adults targeted for harvest.
- Some discussion on the relatively new year-round walleye season on the Saginaw River; a creel update with this information will be provided at the next CAC meeting.

Lake Huron Predator Diet Study (Eglite).

- From 2017 through 2023 samples have been collected in both Lake Huron and Lake Michigan for Brown Trout, Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, Lake Trout, Rainbow Trout, Atlantic Salmon, and Walleye. During that period a total of 11,364 samples were collected from Lake Michigan and 8,547 were collected from Lake Huron.
- Lake Michigan Trends:
 - Chinook and Coho (diets) are both eating mostly alewife.
 - Lake Trout consumed more Round Gobies than any other predator
 - Steelhead consume the most bugs
- Lake Huron Trends:
 - Diets are more diverse than in Lake Michigan

- Smelt are important and appear to be substituted for alewife in Lake Huron, need more data
 - Round goby a second important prey (especially Lake Trout and Walleye)
 - Steelhead still likes bugs (a lot!) like Lake Michigan
 - Walleye eat yellow perch
 - Chinook find alewives in Lake Huron
 - Other species are being eaten by predators including stocked/wild juvenile trout and salmon
- Seasonal Trends of each species in Lake Huron were also shared. Walleye and Lake Trout in particular prey heavily on round goby.
 - For persons interested, Diet Study stomach sample collection instructions and Tags for labeling the samples may be obtained by clicking this link, <https://www.rothlabmsu.com/predator-diet-study.html> The tags are available by clicking the download button at the bottom of the page.

Brief update on MDNR hatchery production for 2024 (Switzer).

- Experiencing some staffing turnover with retirements which is spreading staff thin at times.
- Regarding budget, a major factor is the cost of fish food that has doubled and tripled in the last couple of years. Without additional funding, the number of fish raised will have to be reduced.
- New solar arrays installed at hatcheries are saving approximately \$90,000 per year.
- Hatcheries and their equipment are becoming dated (40-60 years old, except Oden which is approximately 20 years old). Modernization and repair of these facilities over the next several years is necessary to successfully and more efficiently rear fish for stocking in the future.
- The introduction of Grayling is doing well: So far 3 year classes have been produced, 2019, 2021 and 2022 and they passed the health inspections at the Oden Hatchery special isolation facility and are approved disease free and have been moved to the Marquette Hatchery where the broodstock will be maintained. Any extra broodstock that is produced will be stocked in catch and release lakes. Currently there are three lakes that provide fishing opportunities for grayling.
- Stocking update: Coho Salmon: several eggs were lost during disease prevention treatments, there will be no fall fingerlings available this coming fall. Steelhead: stocking is complete. Rainbow Trout: stocking is continuing. Brook Trout: stocking is complete. Chinook Salmon: stocking is continuing. Splake: stocking is complete. Walleye: fry have been moved to ponds. Atlantic Salmon: the fish at Harrietta experienced an outbreak of Bacterial Kidney Disease; fish showing clinical signs of a Level-1 disease cannot be stocked and must be properly disposed of. The Atlantic program is fortunately split between

hatcheries, with a total of 115,000 Atlantic Salmon distributed amongst the four stocking sites from Platte hatchery this spring.

Next meeting will be August 26, hybrid format, at Jay's Sporting Goods in Clare, MI.

Detailed meeting minutes can be obtained directly from Frank Krist, Advisor Chair (frankkrist6@gmail.com).