

Lake Michigan Citizen's Fishery Advisory Committee

Jay's Sporting Goods Clare

October 6th, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Present in Room:, Jay Wesley, Mike Radcliffe, Dean Jessup, Dan Getting, Marc Traver, John Stegmeier, Jim Fenner, Denny Grinold, Bill Winowiecki, Ed Blissick, George Freeman, Tom Andris, Kevin Hughes, Dan O'Keefe, Mark Williams, Bob Reider, Nick Torsky, Scott Heintzelman, Mike Verhamme, Blaise Pewinski, Tim Hossack, Bryan Darland, Brian Gunderman, and Justin Vanderlinde

Present via TEAMS: Dennis Eade, Edward Erdelac, Clark Allen, Frank Krist, Ben Turschak, Lawrence Atkin, Dave Clapp, Paul Jensen, Ed Eisch, Darren Kramer, Seth Herbst, Gregg Mariuz, David Staniszewski, Chuck Pistis, Craig Milkowski, Michael Feagan, and Frank Pearson

Agenda:

Advisor Reports:

- New Buffalo had average coho salmon and very poor Chinook salmon this spring with endless lake trout all season long. Offshore steelhead better than years past and mostly Skamania. Fall salmon run slow to start in Grand, Kalamazoo, and St. Joseph rivers – water is low and warm.
- Indiana waters seemed to warm very early this spring, so the salmon were not around for very long. Portage had the first king run in approximately 6 to 8 years. Michigan City saw some age 1 and age 2 go up Trail Creek.
- St. Joseph was good for lake trout most of the year. Kings seemed to move out earlier.
- Pentwater numbers were down for Chinook salmon, but the quality of fish was great. Coho numbers were better and wondering if that has to do with new Ludington stocking sites. Steelhead numbers picked up late summer into fall. The fishery overall seems to be improving.
- Fairport had a good Chinook and steelhead fishery. Manistique had a few good weeks in the summer and a decent run this fall of nice sized Chinook.
- Ford River has some Chinooks and pink salmon.
- Leland had good lake trout most the year. There were some young kings hanging around the Manitou Islands this summer, which is a good sign for years to come. Seemed to be like a nursery area for them.
- Arcadia had big kings this year and the coho numbers were decent.
- Frankfort was poor for kings until August. Steelhead showed up in the fall in good numbers.
- Grand Traverse Bays were good all year for lake trout and had a decent showing of chinooks this fall.

- Ludington had a good lake trout in the spring, which seemed to end early. Chinook and coho fishing were average to good for the summer and great this fall. Marked pods of bait higher in the water column this year.
- Lake Huron anglers are getting more coho salmon. Steelhead were down for most ports except Tawas was good. King numbers and size were good this fall. Lake trout fishing to the north was super all year.
- Green Bay steelhead were good this spring. Brown trout are doing well especially around Menominee where there is concentrated stocking. The Little Bay de Noc walleye are showing better recruitment with younger fish hanging around. The Bay De Noc Great Lakes Sport Fishermen raised and stocked 220,000 spring fingerlings this year and are now putting in 7-8 inch fall fingerlings.
- Grand Haven was ok to slow when could get out. There were several thunderstorms and blow days this season. Lots of small craft advisories.
- Not much to report on commercial fishing

Review of Chinook Salmon Stocking Subcommittee Recommendations

- The anglers that participated included Ed Blissick, Tom Andris, Mike Verhamme, Frank Krist, Dennis Kuenzer, Gary Smith, George Freeman, Clark Allen, Mark Tonello, Bill Winowiecki, and Denny Grinold
- The group in short order provided recommendations that considered the following criteria:
 - Maintain good broodstock returns to the Little Manistee River
 - Consider areas of the lake that have less natural reproduction
 - What sites provide best return to the lake-wide fishery based on tag returns
 - Consider a minimum stocking level of 100,000 to increase survival from predation
 - Consider rivers with good access and connectivity
 - Sites that traditionally and currently have good fishing effort should be considered
 - Hatchery logistics and transportation
- In general, the group agreed that bait numbers are up, fish condition is good, and that there should be consideration to go up to 1,000,000 for Michigan. A few cautioned that it took a long-time for management to get bait and predator balance in the lake.
- There was general agreement to increase Medusa Creek (Charlevoix) and add Sable River (Ludington) back with 125,000 each annually because they contribute well to the lake-wide fishery.
- There was interest to increase stocking in the U.P., so Fairport was added with the thought that these Chinook would stray to various UP streams in the fall.
- Areas marked in yellow below are sites that the group would like to see stocked in the future with recommendations for numbers per port with 1,000,000 Chinooks available.

Site	2011 Stocking levels	2013 - 2016 Stocking Level	2017	Previous Odd Years	Previous Even Years	Current Odd Years	Current Even Years	2021 - no steelhead	Odd Years	Even Years
Ford River	27,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Escanaba	0	12,000	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Fairport	21,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	75,000	
Manistique*	45,000	34,000	0	0	69,000	0	130,000	9,146		150,000
Medusa*	220,000	72,000	50,500	72,000	0	92,000	0	99,737	125,000	125,000
Boardman*	75,000	60,000	0	0	62,306	0	71,306	0		100,000
Kids Creek*	150,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Manistee River*	70,000	22,000	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Little Manistee River*	275,000	150,000	181,274	228,000	208,000	228,000	228,000	227,911	250,000	250,000
Big Sable River*	120,000	38,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	125,000	125,000
Muskegon River*	60,000	18,000	0	25,000	0	75,000	0	74,541	125,000	
Grand River	75,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Grand Haven	175,000	59,000	50,503	89,306	0	129,306	0	240,595	150,000	
Holland	45,000	15,000	0	0	35,000	0	50,000	0		0
Black River	45,000	15,000	0	0	55,000	0	75,000	0		125,000
Saugatuck	45,000	16,000	0	0	75,000	0	100,000	0		125,000
St. Joseph	140,000	48,000	49,956	90,000	0	130,000	0	239,902	150,000	
Total	1,588,500	559,000	332,233	504,306	504,306	654,306	654,306	891,832	1,000,000	1,000,000
* 1836 Waters										
Yellow Highlight = Sites that the Subcommittee would like to stocked again										

- What is the full Citizen’s Fishery Advisory Committee’s opinion about stocking 1,000,000 Chinook?
 - This is the time to do it.
 - There are plenty of big alewives in Ludington.
 - Yes, comfortable with the increase
 - Outstanding proposal! Let’s move forward to get approved by LMC
 - Were other species considered?
 - Previous stocking changes included reducing other species (Lake Trout, Brown Trout, and Coho salmon) to increase Chinook. This proposal did not discuss adding back species and only considered adding more Chinook because anglers continue to ask for more Chinook.
 - What is the process of approval? Citizen Advisors recommendation, Basin Team approval, Lake Michigan Committee Approval, and finally Chief approval.
 - When will the Lake Michigan Committee decide? They have met a couple of times and specifically discussed Chinook stocking this week. The Lake Michigan Committee decision is to wait until 2022 to decide because we are still determining how the 2020 and 2021 stocking increases are doing.
 - Why wait 2 or 3 years? Can’t we just do it?
 - It would be best to maintain and improve relations with our state and tribal partners and management the lake in unison rather than each state doing what they want.
 - We are in the middle of 1836 Treaty negotiations and this could distract from that process or have unintentional consequences if moved on right now.
 - We have a working treaty right now so take it to the Technical Fisheries Committee and let them decide.

- Process is to get Lake Michigan Committee approval first and then to TFC. Currently, there is not consensus with LMC.
 - As a committee, we should establish that any stocking sites must receive 110k, due to predation. I don't think that this has been established by the committee.
 - We should as a committee always follow the science and give recommendations based on the biology and let the Director sort out the politics.
 - If wild fish are so important, why not close down rivers like the Betsie and PM that produce most of the wild Chinook?
 - We prefer not limit angler use of our resources. If the system/lake can handle more predators, we prefer to stock more than limit our anglers.
 - Disagree with limiting harvest in rivers or closing off systems. It takes few fish to provide reproduction to match the carrying capacity of the smaller rivers like Betsie, PM, Bear, etc.
 - So what is the timeline?
 - We took enough eggs for 1 million and would like a decision in a few weeks so eggs can be culled before much investment has been put in them.
- Discussion opened regarding stocking sites and numbers per site
 - DNR staff recommended considering Manistee River to take some pressure off Betsie and PM. They also recommended reducing South Haven (Black River) and adding more to Saugatuck (Kalamazoo River).
 - Are all sites net penned?
 - Currently yes except some at the Little Manistee River due to space in recovery pond.
 - Why isn't Fairport 100,000 if that is the goal?
 - Just ran out of fish and there were higher priorities at Medusa and Sable River.
 - Couldn't you take some from Medusa?
 - Subcommittee agreed to make Medusa a priority because it contributes best to the lake-wide fishery.
 - We could consider adding more to Fairport when numbers are above 1,000,000.
 - There are not many options for the west U.P.
 - What about Whitehall? It is a big harbor and has good access. Might be good for economic return.
 - Not aware of White Lake or White River ever being stocked with Chinook salmon. More than likely wild fish.
 - Perhaps this could be considered as stocking increases occur in the future.

- Many thanks to Randy Claramunt for working on this topic for many years and completing the state permit application.
- Public Resource Depredation Order from 2003 to 2016. Vacated in 2016 based on Federal Judge Order
- Environmental Impact Statement complete 2020
- Special cormorant permit system established March 2021
- Authorizes take for Health and Human Safety, T&E Species, Protect Property, and for Wild and Public Stocked Fish.
- 78,000 take allowed in our region
- Non-lethal controls are hazing, passive deterrents, habitat management
- Here are Michigan’s current take areas and numbers:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Adult Take</u>	<u>% Take</u>	<u>Nest Take</u>	<u>APN</u>
Great Lakes Colony	Reduce conflict	Beaver Island (Gull, Hat, St. James, Geneserath #, ile Aux Galets)*	850	16	0	No
Great Lakes Colony	Reduce conflict	Les Cheneaux Islands (Crow, Goose, St Martin, Green)*	2000	59	500	No
Great Lakes Colony	Reduce conflict	Little Bay and Big bays de Noc (Round, Fishermans, Big & Little Gull)*	2400	24	50	No
Great Lakes Colony	Reduce conflict	Ludington Pump Storage Facility	1800	NA	850	No
Great Lakes Colony	Reduce conflict	Saginaw Bay (Little Charity & CDF)	1800	43	0	No
Fish Stocking Site	Support harassment	Harbor Beach	100	NA	0	Yes
Fish Stocking Site	Support harassment	Au Sable River below Foote #	100	NA	0	Yes
Fish Stocking Site	Support harassment	Thunder Bay River and Bay *#	100	NA	0	Yes
Fish Stocking Site	Support harassment	EB Au Gres River - Whitney Drain	100	NA	0	Yes
Fish Stocking Site	Support harassment	Harrisville Harbor	100	NA	0	Yes
Fish Stocking Site	Support harassment	Drummond Island – Potagannissing Bay	100	NA	0	No
Inland Lake Mitigation	Support harassment	Brevort Lake #	100	NA	0	No
Inland Lake Mitigation	Support harassment	Indian Lake #	100	NA	0	No
Total			9650		1400	
Grand Total			11050			

- Long-term funding and support is needed.
- Avian Predator Notification volunteers needed.
- Can a schedule be posted so volunteers can be at the stocking site?
 - Signed up volunteers get a notice a week of and the morning of a stocking event.
- Zone contacts are available in the handout
 - We need multiple contacts in some areas because some leave for winter – need alternate for Dave Westerberg
 - Northwest Michigan Anglers are interested in helping
- Here are the current Avian Predator Notification sites:

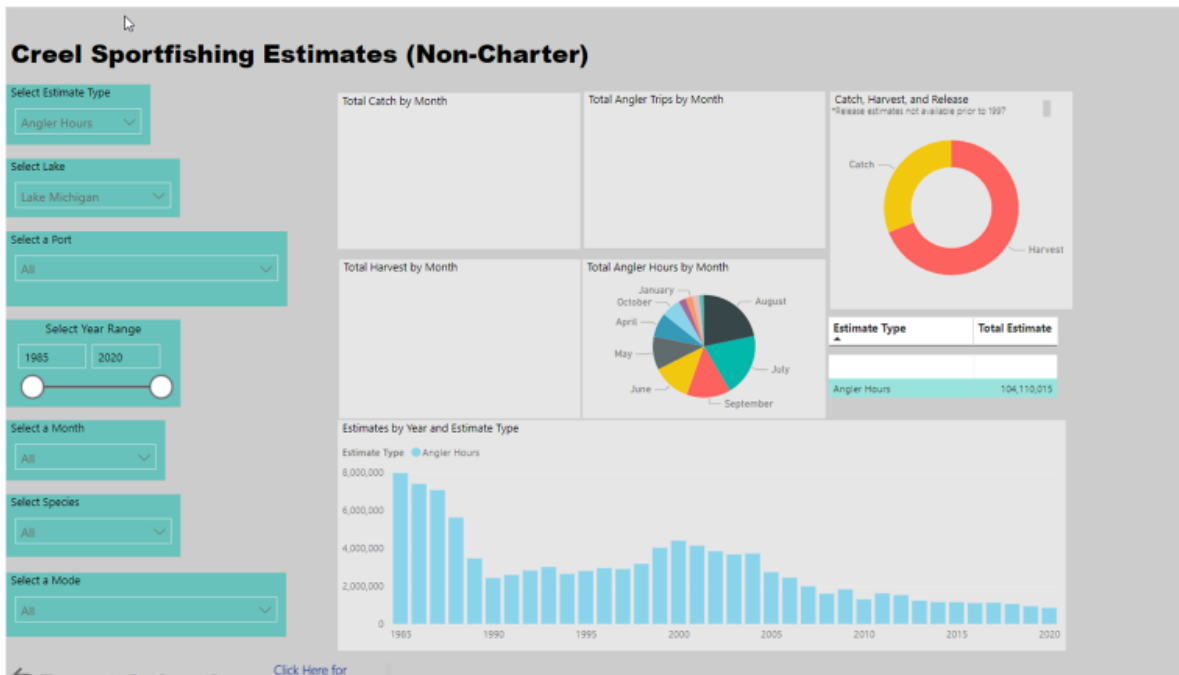
Avian Predation Notification Sites - Anticipated for 2021				
Unit	County	Water	Stocking Site	Species of Concern
NLM	Schoolcraft	Manistique River	City of Manistique PAS	Chinook Salmon and Steelhead
CLM	Mason	Lake Michigan	Ludington Coast Guard Sta	Brown Trout
CLM	Benzie	Lake Michigan	Frankfort	Brown Trout
CLM	Benzie	Lake Michigan	Platte Bay	Coho Salmon, Brown Trout
CLM	Grand Traverse	Grand Traverse Bay	Boardman River	Chinook & Coho Salmon, Steelhead
CLM	Leelanau	Lake Michigan	Glen Arbor	Brown Trout
CLM	Roscommon	Higgins Lake	Higgins Lake West Road ending	Rainbow & Brown Trout
CLM	Manistee	Manistee River	Woodpecker Creek Access	Rainbow & Brown Trout
CLM	Mason	Lake Michigan	Ludington - Big Sable River	Coho Salmon
CLM	Mason	Lake Michigan	Ludington	Lake Trout (Federal Hatchery)
LEMU	St. Clair	Black River	Port Huron/I-94 PAS	Brown Trout
LEMU	St. Clair	St. Clair River	City of Algonac Boat Ramp	Brown Trout
LEMU	Wayne	Huron River	Flat Rock/South Huron Drive	Steelhead
SLH	Huron	Harbor Beach	Detroit Edison/ Sensient Plant	Steelhead
SLH	Huron	Pinnebog River	Port Crescent State Park	Steelhead
SLH	Huron	Pigeon River	Caseville, Harbor	Steelhead
SLH	Sanilac	Lake Huron	Lexington Harbor	Atlantic Salmon
SLH	Sanilac	Lake Huron	Port Sanilac	Coho Salmon & Steelhead
SLH	Arenac	EB Au Gres River	Lower Whitney Drain	Coho and Steelhead
SLH	Iosco	Tawas River	Tawas River	Steelhead
NLH	Iosco	Au Sable River	Below Foote Dam - Rea Rd	Atlantic Salmon, Steelhead
NLH	Alcona	Lake Huron	Harrisville Harbor	Steelhead
NLH	Alpena	Lake Huron	Alpena - Thunder Bay	Atlantic Salmon, Steelhead

- Consider adding Grand Haven to the list of stocking sites.

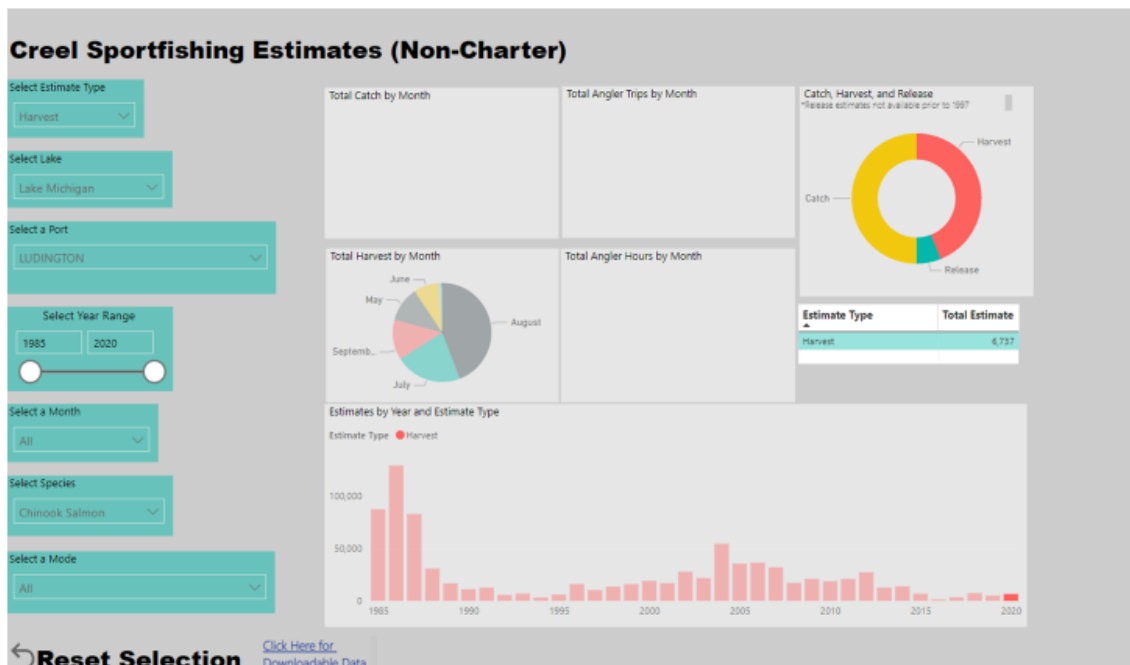
New creel dashboard at link below:

<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjojOWQ5NjQxMmItYjFkYi00YzI2LTkxMTAtMjMwNjEzOWE5YjM3IiwidCI6ImQ1ZmI3MDg3LTM3NzctNDJhZC05NjZhLTg5MmVmNDcyMjVkbMSJ9>

- You can summarize catch, harvest, and effort data by lake, port, or river and by species.
- Here is an example of Lake Michigan effort:



- Here is an example of Lake Michigan harvest of Chinook salmon at Ludington with 2020 highlighted:



- What is catch? Combination of harvest and released fish.
- Catch is not adding up with full time series. Only harvest was measured early in time series and then catch was added later with the addition of released fish.

- There is a lack of creel in many areas especially in southern Green Bay.
 - Unfortunately, several sites were discontinued due to the budget. We are mainly only surveying enough sites to get lake-wide harvest and effort estimates and to evaluate harvest in 1836 waters.
 - How can we get more data? Volunteer to use Angler Diary App.

Sea Grant Report

- You can help collect data by using the Angler Diary App and by assisting with the MSU diet study.
 - Link to Angler Diary: <https://www.michiganseagrant.org/topics/fisheries-and-aquaculture/angler-citizen-science/great-lakes-angler-diary/>
 - It is best if you use it for the entire year and do complete reports that include skunks.
 - In need of more anglers to use App to record steelhead data on rivers. Need to know river, species, date, how long fished, fish size, and any clips.
- During our year long steelhead seminar series, a Fishing Guide Survey indicated that there is support for a 1 fish daily bag limit for river caught steelhead.
- Continue to work with constituents on a multi-species Structure Decision Making process and model to inform stocking decision on all predator species (i.e. lake trout, steelhead, brown trout, coho, and Chinook).

DNR Reports

- While on the topic of steelhead, Jory Jonas and Ben Turschak have a steelhead statistical catch at age model for Lake Michigan that will help us track abundance, year class strength, harvest, and mortality. The model indicates that steelhead are doing well in the lake despite poor or sporadic returns to some of our rivers.
- Weirs – Medusa has not been in operation for two years now. Having issues with blocking fish and with illegal angling activity inside the weir facility. Looking at options to put Medusa back on harvest contract. Platte Weir has passed 14,442 coho upstream and harvested 4,293. There are issues at Platte with kayakers and swimmers harassing fish behind the weir and forcing them downstream. Boardman has seen 1,819 coho and only 533 chinook. They have seen a few steelhead, brown trout, and a couple pink salmon.
- Little Manistee weir has had an early and decent run. About 1,348 harvested and there have been enough eggs taken for Michigan and Indiana. They hope to finish this week with Illinois, so it will be an early ending to the egg take. Fish look good.
- Pucker Street Dam on the Dowagiac has been removed opening 159 miles of river and creeks for trout and salmon access. Losensky Park in open and there is a temporary launch for canoes and drift boats. Saw some steelhead parr already in Pokagon Creek this summer.

- Fish ladders are open, and staff have seen good numbers of coho at 6th street dam on the Grand and at Berrien Springs on the St. Joe.
- Law Enforcement Division is involved with many activities on the Great Lakes including recreation angler and commercial enforcement, Aquatic Invasive Species inspections, marine safety, and marine event detail.
 - Lots of retirements and officers acting in other positions. We are four officers short right now.
 - There is an academy in session, so we anticipate filling these vacancies.
 - There is a new Great Lake Law vessel in Ludington with special equipment to handle nets.
- Charlevoix Research has been busy finishing their acoustic surveys along with saildrones. They have been involved with steelhead modeling and conducting surveys on 20-30 reefs. Smallmouth bass that have been collected with wounds may have Largemouth Bass virus. The acoustic surveys saw more bait in terms of alewife, bloater, smelt, and even yellow perch. Telemetry study is looking at movements of whitefish and cisco in Grand Traverse Bay and northern portion of the lake. Working on diet data using isotopes to see how Chinook respond to changes in alewife numbers.
- The Tribal Unit is busy with negotiations, and field staff have been working on fall walleye recruitment surveys and commercial fisher sampling. Staff continue to work on whitefish and lake trout harvest and allocation models.
- The Escanaba Office is looking at ways to get creel data from rivers in southern Green Bay. They are also seeing a lot of Pink Salmon this year with over 1,000 captured in the Menominee fish lift. Replacement of the Manistique Dam with a low head sea lamprey barrier is on-going with some land issues and land acquisition finally being resolved. Possible construction of sea lamprey barrier in 2023.

Next Meeting – TBD and probably mid to late April

Adjourn