

Lake Michigan Citizen's Fishery Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Jay's Sporting Goods

September 29th, 2022 - 10:30 AM to 3:00 PM

Attendees:

Denny Grinold, Jay Wesley, Scott Lutz, Jim Fenner, Richard Haslett, Eric Andersen, Jim Bos, Tim Hossack, Mike Radcliffe, Bill Winowiecki, Mark Williams, Kevin Hughes, Eric Braden, Tom Andris, Frank Krist, Scott Heintzelman, Dave Clapp, Mike Verhamme, Gregg Mariuz, Dean Jessup, CT Shuman, Dave Peterson, John Stegmeier, Tony Radjenovich. Via TEAMS - Chuck Pistis, David Cozad, Dennis Eade, Kendra Kozlauskos, Mike Ryan, Ed Erdelac, Darren Kramer, Bob Reider, Christian LeSage, Paul Jensen, Mark Tonello, Todd Grischke

Advisor Reports:

- Lake Huron coho salmon doing well and good king fishing in the spring and again in August.
- Frankfort was tough for lake trout fishing probably because of all the alewife. Some kings early in the season but not good rest of the year. Not good at all for mature kings. We need more fish stocked in the north.
- Onekema had more and consistent kings throughout the year. Some lake trout and 2 to 3 weeks of coho salmon that were of good size. Adult kings seem to be mostly wild. The number of cancellations due to wind seems to be increasing and has been costly for business.
- Glen Arbor and Leland have had one of the worst years for catching fish. Lake trout fishing was terrible. There were major issues with nets. Both tribal and state commercial nets caused issues. Trip numbers went down when gas prices went up as people did not travel north. There were some kings around the Manitou Islands.
- Spring brown trout fishing in Frankfort was non-existent with only a couple caught. The May to June salmon fishery was good with many 5 to 15-pound fish. July was tough as fish were gone. August was a little better with some salmon.
- In East and West Grand Traverse Bay no brown trout were caught. Steelhead fishing was better. West Bay lake trout fishing was better than East Bay but things got better as the year went on. Salmon fishing was ok but not great.
- Salmon fishing was off the hook from Whitehall to Big Sable Point for most of the year. The water set up and the bait stayed around. Both kings and coho were good. Lake trout fishing was poor. They never came in shallow in the spring. Good offshore steelhead fishing for two to three weeks. Trips have been up with more corporate clients than tourists. Managed to land a 36-pound king.
- Appreciate the citizen advisor committee process and how you listen to angler input. We need this for Consent Decree negotiations too.
- MUCC's 85th Convention coming up and there are four fisheries resolutions. We caught some nice king salmon in Ludington.

- The Upper Peninsula around Fairport was decent this year. Alewife were plentiful in the north compared to past 5 years. Coho salmon are showing up in good numbers in the Escanaba River this year. The best fishing was in July and then it dropped off.
- March and April were average in St. Joe for Coho with some larger fish mixed with smaller fish. Muskegon area produced some of the best fishing ever in the month of May. Whitehall was good from May through August. There was a lot of bait deep and on the bottom. We caught less steelhead this year.
- Pentwater king fishing was very good, and lake trout were down. We had good coho salmon most of the year. There was a substantial alewife die off in Pentwater Lake. Wind was tough through July. The August king fishing was great. The N.B. of the Pentwater River is pumping out natural kings, coho, and steelhead.
- The PM River is loaded with Chinook salmon.
- Trips were down in Petoskey, and the lake trout fishing was slow. The king size was good with several 20 plus pounders, but the bite was inconsistent. Started to catch a lot of young kings. Coho were better than average and saw more bait than ever.
- There have been some good summer run steelhead in southern rivers. Little Manistee had a strong July run of kings. Betsie and PM runs of kings have been solid.
- Boardman Weir has been operating and mostly seeing coho salmon and a couple hundred kings with steelhead and a few surprise pink salmon mixed in. We have seen more pink salmon in the catches this year. Little Manistee Weir is ready for egg take. There are probably 1,500 in the facility with lots of jack males. There seem to be a good number of coho salmon with some steelhead too and a couple lake run brown trout.
- Manistee had the best fishing in 8 years with a lot of mature and immature salmon.
- Holland lake trout stayed out deep and were tough to catch. We did catch a lot of younger Chinook salmon – probably 2-year olds. Blow days were way too common this year.
- The bait seemed to leave early in Indiana, which took the spring kings north. Coho salmon did come back later in the spring. Michigan City has some of the best fall run of kings seen in last 6 years.
- Grand Haven was good in the month of May for kings. Lake trout were tough to find. Weather made it tough to get out with a lot of blow days. The water set up weird with no 50-degree water even below the thermocline with the surface too warm and the bottom too cold.

Survey Vessel Steelhead History and Plans for Replacement:

- Dave Clapp (Charlevoix Research Station Manager) gave an informative presentation of various activities that the station has participated in and the role of the S.V. Steelhead.
- The Great Lakes Research Program for the State of Michigan began with the transition from a commercial fishery to a recreational (salmon and trout) fishery.
- The station is in a former USFWS lake trout hatchery.
- The S.V. Steelhead has spent 50 plus years in service and is in need for major overhauls. It was decided to build a new boat using the steelhead platform design.

- The vessel is involved with salmon, lake trout, nearshore/yellow perch, fish health, and habitat management and research studies.
- Data collected on the S.V. Steelhead feeds the Predator Prey Ratio model used to inform stocking decisions by collecting valuable hydro-acoustic prey estimates along with USGS.
- Spring assessments inform lake trout and whitefish management.
- Yellow perch and smallmouth bass assessments help in our understanding of nearshore fisheries.
- The S.V. Steelhead collects multiple species that are used in both fish health assessments and fish contaminant studies.
- More recently, habitat assessments on major reef systems in Lake Michigan have been conducted to inform managers on future protection and restoration.
- The vessel and staff at Charlevoix Research Station are also involved with various SCUBA diving, fish marking, remote vessel, fish movement, cisco, and steelhead projects.
- Design work on the new vessel should be complete by the Summer of 2023 with sea trials expected the summer of 2024.
- Discussion:
 - Do you interact with Sea Grant? Yes. Through outreach at the annual Fishery Workshops. Ben Turschak also involved with the SDM Predator/prey modeling.
 - Can we do more spring surveys? USGS did a survey last year and this spring to compare to fall surveys. Fall surveys give us a better idea of year class strength and what prey is left after spring and summer feeding by salmon and trout.
 - Are you able to determine what percent of the alewife population died off? We are not aware of any calculations. More than likely a fraction of the 100 kiloton biomass estimate of alewife.
 - Do you work with others for reef work? Yes. We work with other federal agencies, the Nature Conservancy, tribes and some state commercial fishers.

Lake Trout Release Technique Study in Grand Traverse Bay:

- Jory Jonas is writing a proposal for a study to evaluate fishing techniques and resulting mortality of Lake Trout in Grand Traverse Bay.
- The project idea came from the Spring citizen's advisor meeting with interest from Bill Winowiecki, Frank Krist, and Tim Hossack.
- A draft proposal is available and funding as well as angler volunteers are still needed.
- The study will focus on jig fishing and will test various means of release to see if there is a difference in mortality.
- Methods to review include drop with weight, gas bladder deflation, and release to surface.

How are stocking decisions made in Lake Michigan?

- There is an annual review of all data to determine the state of the lake.
- The Lake Michigan Committee, Lake Michigan Basin Team, Lake Michigan Citizen's Fishery Advisory Committee, or any group may make a stocking change recommendation.

- Major changes to stocking numbers in Lake Michigan go to the Lake Michigan Committee where consensus is sought by all four states and CORA.
- Proposals are vetted within the Lake Michigan Basin Team and the Lake Michigan Citizen’s Fishery Advisory Committee for their recommendations.
- Final decision is made by the Fisheries Division Chief
- The Technical Fisheries Committee approves changes within 1836 Treaty Ceded Waters
- The 2022 proposal to increase Chinook salmon to 1 million did not have Lake Michigan Committee consensus, so the basin coordinator did not bring it to the Chief for decision.

Chinook Salmon Stocking Proposal Review – Public comments regarding locations with interest in the U.P., Frankfort, Muskegon River, Manistee, and ports to the south:

- Background info was given like the Sept. 19th public meeting.
- Approximately 84 people attended public meeting with most supportive of the stocking increase. Most comments concerned stocking locations.
- The Predator Prey Ratio is at 0.023. Average weight of a age-3 female Chinook salmon is at about 18 pounds and has been at that weight or above for 5 years indicating good balance and support for a modest stocking increase.
- Michigan stocked as many as 3 million in 1998 and reduced to 330,000 in 2017. Over 650,000 chinook salmon have been stocked annually for the past three years.
- Other states are expected to consider smaller increases and are reaching both their historic numbers and their hatchery capacities.
- Wild Chinook salmon abundance is variable hitting a low in 2017 but has increased to near 4.5 million in 2021.
- Stocking criteria used for Chinook salmon in Lake Michigan:
 - Maintain good broodstock returns at the Little Manistee Weir
 - Prioritize areas with no or less natural reproduction
 - Return to creel based on coded-wire tag returns
 - Minimum stocking levels of 100,000
 - Rivers that have good access and connectivity
 - Sites/Ports with high fishing effort
 - Hatchery logistics
- Tag returns historically were good for Medusa/Charlevoix and Big Sable sites
- In general, southern sites provide average returns.
- Northern sites are variable or consistently low.
- Proposed numbers by site
 - Odd Years

▪ Fairport	75,000
▪ Medusa	125,000
▪ Little Manistee	275,000
▪ Big Sable	100,000
▪ Muskegon	125,000
▪ Grand Haven	150,000
▪ St. Joe	<u>150,000</u>

- Total 1,000,000
 - Even Years
 - Manistique 150,000
 - Medusa 150,000
 - Boardman 100,000
 - Little Manistee 275,000
 - Big Sable 100,000
 - South Haven 125,000
 - Saugatuck 125,000
 - Total 1,000,000
- Discussion:
 - We need more fish in the north.
 - What about taking some from Medusa or Big Sable and put in Fairport to get numbers up to 100,000.
 - Should we be stocking Big Sable if the PM is all natural?
 - We need to close down fishing on wild rivers like the Betsie
 - There is no evidence that the number of adults returning is limiting natural recruitment. The limitation are more than likely stream habitat, weather, and conditions in the lake (i.e. is there bait around when outmigrate).
 - What about moving 25,000 from the Little Manistee River to Fairport.
 - There seemed to be good support for this.
 - Lake Michigan Citizen's Fishery Advisory voted and approved the proposed stocking locations and numbers with an amendment to move 25,000 from Little Manistee River to Fairport. Odd years Fairport would get 100,000 and Little Manistee would get 250,000.

Next Meeting:

- April 11th, 2023 at Jay's Sporting Goods in Clare.

Adjourned at 3:00 PM