

Lake Superior Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee



Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams)

Date: Apr. 6, 2022

Time: 6:30 p.m.

The Lake Superior Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee is 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. In response to the COVID-19 emergency, the September meeting will be held in an online format with the opportunity for committee members and the public to view the meeting online and attend by telephone.

- I. Online Meeting Link: [Click here to join the meeting](#) OR [+1 248-509-0316](#) Phone Conference ID: 244 039 042#
- II. Welcome and Roll Call (Markham) - Patrick Hanchin, Cory Kovacs, Dan Sampson, George Madison, Brett DeLonge, Stephanie Swart, Rodney Markham, Ross Rinkinen, Larry Argall, Larry Brown, Dan Talkowski, Travis White, Martha Gerig, Lauren Jescovich, Floyd Dropps, Roger Greil, Dennis VanLandschoot, Tim Gasperich, Nicholas Torsky, Chris Adams, Jim LaBeske.
- III. Basin Coordinator update (Hanchin)
 - a. There was an overview provided by Patrick of the progress occurring on the Lake Superior Management Plan. Public input has been gathered via a social survey and more recently via one-on-one meetings with fishing groups. Currently the species chapters are being drafted and we hope to have draft by Fall. Will go out for public review.
 - b. Buffalo Reef – Nearing completion of Long-Term Adaptive Management Plan and will most likely pursue upland placement of stamp sands and possibly a jetty north of Buffalo Reef to stop southward migration and serve as a means for offload. There is a public meeting planned for July 12 in Lake Linden. Difficult part will be obtaining funding. Legislator trying for funds in current budget.

- c. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission Lake Superior Committee is working on establishing metrics to determine if Fish Community Objectives (FCOs) are being met. FCOs are broad goals for cooperative management of the fishery on Superior shared by states, provinces, and tribes. Example for lake trout is the CPUE of wild lean lake trout in summer gill net surveys. Is it stable, increasing? These will be used in state of the lake reports and in a public-facing dashboard so the status of the fishery can be easily disseminated.
- d. The Governor's draft budget (yet to be approved) has \$34 million dollars in one-time capital outlay. The budget recommendations for Fisheries Division are a result of past requests to address hatchery infrastructure improvements and a many-year backlog of necessary maintenance needs. Possible projects include:
 - i. Upgrading water supplies, upgrading electrical systems, replacing roofs, replacing asphalt, upgrading aeration systems, incorporate energy efficiencies. Funds would improve working conditions for staff and improve rearing conditions for fish, reduce likelihood of catastrophic loss. Not intended to increase production.
 - ii. Cool-water infrastructure upgrade at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery. Currently, walleyes are incubated in same building as steelhead and chinook and muskies are incubated, hatch, and early life rearing in retrofitted basement of old fish health building. Situation creates a biosecurity risk for both groups of fish so funds would construct a dedicated cool water production facility.
 - iii. Replacement of 54-year-old research vessel for Lake Michigan, \$12.6 M DNR-wide equipment replacement, and \$650K Tribal Coordination Unit staffing.
 - iv. Floyd Dropps commented that it would be great if some of the money could be used to create additional walleye ponds in the U.P. to help meet production needs.

IV. Creel and Charter data overview (Hanchin)

- a. Summaries of creel graphs were sent to LSCFAC members prior to this meeting. Patrick highlighted angler effort and major species. Angler effort was well above average in 2021. Lake Trout and Siscowet (fats) harvest is holding steady. While whitefish harvest is near long-term average, there is a modest downward trend over last 15 years. Splake harvest was near average in 2021 and overall increasing since 2000. High Brown Trout harvest in 2018 and 2019 did not continue in 2021. Note that Brown Trout harvest can be missed in some years if significant fishery develops prior to April. Coho harvest is good and overall increasing trend over 20 years. Chinook harvest remains a small component of the fishery. If members ever have questions on creel trends, we can dive deeper for a given species and/or site. As part of developing the Lake Superior Management Plan, will be examining trends by Unit and will look at both CPUE, catch, and harvest to determine if any are showing a trend.
- b. Charter effort is approximately 5% of total angler effort on Michigan waters of Lake Superior. Effort was up in 2021 which reflects what captains were telling us. Lake trout are the primary species targeted by charters and harvest is holding steady. Steelhead and Brown Trout are only a small component of charter fishery and with small numbers should not be considered indicative of relative abundance. Coho and Chinook are also minor components of the charter fishery and both holding steady at low levels.
- c. Floyd Dropps asked how catch rates for Chinook and Coho Salmon have responded to cessation of stocking. Coho Salmon catches have been increasing since the cessation of stocking. Likely not enough years post-cessation to evaluate Chinook but it is something we are going to evaluate.
- d. Travis White indicated that he also noted Brown Trout catch being down in 2021 and thought it might be due to poor runoff in spring of 2021. Also noted that Brown Trout, Coho, Chinook are prized when encountered by people on Charter excursions.
- e. There were mixed comments about variations of Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, and Brown Trout catches based on droughts, winter weather, and spring river conditions.

V. 2022 Stocking plans (Kovacs and Madison)

- a. A stocking plan document was shared with members. Cory commented regarding splake stocking, which now includes the addition of Keweenaw Bay along with fin clipping of all stocked fish. Surplus Brown Trout and Steelhead are stocked in western UP waters when available. Splake will be clipped through 2025 and evaluated through 2030. No Steelhead were stocked in 2021 due to covid preventing a 2020 spring egg take, but Steelhead will be stocked annually in 2022 and beyond.
- b. Dan Sampson introduced himself and explained how the early stocking season is going. Dan oversees the Marquette, Thompson, and Oden hatcheries as well as the electronics program. Dan provided a summary of 2021 being the first year of operation for the Thompson walleye ponds.
- c. Ross Rinkinen asked whether groups could potentially assist with fin clipping. Patrick thanked him for the suggestion and will check into this.
- d. Another member inquired whether the Falls River would be receiving Brown Trout and whether Wisconsin Seeforellen Brown Trout would be stocked.
- e. Larry Argall indicated that he has not noticed much change in Brook Trout harvest since the restrictive regulations were enacted. Said that Brook Trout essentially can't be harvested since they rarely get over legal size. Would favor a 1 over 15-inch regulation for Brook Trout in Lake Superior (not in research streams). Hanchin and Madison provided information about how the protective regulations for Brook Trout were part of the Brook Trout regulation liberalization program (10-fish daily bag limit) through the NRC.
- f. Floyd Dropps reminded Committee that Thompson hatchery reared 20K fall fingerling muskellunge fingerlings in first year.

VI. New regulations in 2022 (Kovacs and Madison)

- a. A Power Point presentation was shown, covering the 2022 regulation changes for Great Lake waters. Also, a 2022 update reminded attendees that the Hurricane

River sportfishing regulations changed from Type-4 to Type-3 to protect lake-run Brook Trout.

- b. Question: For anglers participating in underwater spearing, they will be required to get a spearing license, but will they need a regular fishing license? There was additional concern that folks will get a free spearing license when purchasing their traditional license, but many of these folks may not actually spear. Folks might get a spear license just to inflate the perception of how many spearers there are signed up for this sport each year. There was another comment that spearers could use weights, such as anchors, to propel them into deep water faster and maybe the use of these plunge weights should not be allowed.

VII. Law Enforcement Division update (DeLonge)

- a. Brett DeLonge gave an overview of recent hires to the Great Lakes Enforcement Unit, including Tom Peterson for the west portion of Lake Superior. Just completed a recruit class that graduated 28 new officers. The UP is now well staffed, but with retirements there are a few vacancies. Brett provided a summary of net complaints for 2022 season. Law Division has worked on other enforcement programs such as fish transport inspections, pet shop inspections, and they deployed weather buoys in the Marquette area of Lake Superior. Brett encouraged people to report all net complaints, call RAP line asap. With reporting net complaints, documenting a GPS location and approximate depth is good, mark the net with a flotation if possible.

VIII. Advisor roundtable reports

- a. Black River Harbor Boating Club (Dan Talkowski) – Met with DNR during a club meeting and enjoyed interaction. USFS is having lottery system for slips at marina. Planning on having open around Memorial Day.
- b. CUPSFA (Larry Argall) – Appreciated today's virtual meeting. Club members are getting older but trying to recruit younger members this summer. Proponent of Chinook stocking. Folks are

- paying for salmon to be stocked, but they are only stocked in lower lakes and not into Superior.
- c. CCTU (Chris Adams) – Working on proposals to do sediment removals at sites affected by Father’s Day flood. Helped put acoustics tags in some adult brook trout for array in western Lake Superior. Could be good to tag other species such as splake since array is out.
 - d. CCWA (Ross Rinkinen) – Mentioned partnership with VFW, and young angler tourney scheduled for Portage in July. Appreciate anything we can do to get fish in that system. Asked about proposal for pike management on Otter Lake.
 - e. Stephanie Swart – nothing to report.
 - f. IRBA (Rodney Markham) – With fuel prices it is difficult to say how many people will be getting out to Isle Royale with personal vessels – trips may be down. Effort has been up recently. Fishing was quite good last summer and saw more herring than normal. Coasters are doing well out there as well.
 - g. Travis White – Found a few brown trout already from rowboat. Noted Traverse Harbor work and material on Township ramp. Any word on Eagle Harbor work and whether it would affect access? MTU this fall working with partners on pilot of acoustic tagging sea lamprey and detection using autonomous vehicle and when out-migrating. Charter effort for Stannard Rock appears to be underestimated based on observations. Interested in QA/QC on charter data or ways to improve it. MUCC policy board discussion on ways to designate Stannard Rock as special area or something to preserve quality. People are keeping their 5 fish and then still releasing 10+ other fish so release mortality is a concern. Suggestion to add splake fin clipping to charter reporting.
 - h. VanLandschoot Fisheries: Dennis introduced himself to the Committee. Commercial trap net business has been in operation for 109 years in Munising. Also fish in Houghton, Ontonagon, and Bete Grise. Have retail and wholesale operation. His family set nets in the fall to collect lake trout eggs for spawning as part of the initial lake trout re-stocking effort. Also partner for sampling of catch and looking at other ways to partner. Would be good to identify a fish species for recreational anglers to catch in summer when they come to the town to fish – most fish are deeper by that time.

- i. Keweenaw Splake Anglers (Tim Gasperich) – Some fishing in Copper Harbor and Eagle harbor but many under-sized. Anglers were seeing fish but nothing exciting about catches.
- j. Roger Greil – Still ice fishing near mouths of smaller streams. Fish rainbow falls and Montreal River in west UP and seeing more splake in that area near the dam and Rainbow Falls.
- k. Jim La Beske – not on during round tables
- l. Michigan Sea Grant (Lauren Jescovitch) – working with Wisconsin Sea grant to survey commercial fishers regarding potential apprenticeship. N = 46 responses mostly from families involved in commercial fishing. Also teaching public about aquaculture, fishing, eating fish, filleting, and overall education about seafood through workshops. Considering outreach on goal of eating fish as opposed to limiting fish consumption.
- m. Upper Peninsula Sportsmen's Alliance (Floyd Dropps) – Small northern pike are excellent if you know how to fillet y-bones out. Encourage DNR to model to get more lakes in no-MSL or entire U.P. Seen good things with Seeforellen brown trout and would like to see MDNR to switch to Seeforellen and offshore stocking. Would like to see more walleye rearing for UP stocking.

Persons with disabilities needing accommodations should contact Patrick Hanchin at 231-330-5290 or hanchinp@michigan.gov.