

# Lake Superior Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee



## Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams)

Date: September 29, 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 call [+1 248-509-0316](#) Phone Conference ID: 804 110 839#
  
- II. Welcome and Roll Call (Markham) - Patrick Hanchin (DNR), George Madison (DNR), Cory Kovacs (DNR), Dan Sampson (DNR), Ed Baker (DNR), Kevin Postma (DNR-LED), Tom Peterson (DNR-LED), Benjamin Rook (DNR), Kendra Kozlauskos (DNR), Rodney Markham, Lauren Jescovitch (Sea Grant), Tim Gasperich, Alex Pera (guest), Steven Amsler (guest)
  
- III. Basin Coordinator update (Hanchin)
  - a. Recognition of Larry Argall's Passing. Larry represented the Central U.P. Sportfishing Association on the LSCFAC for over ten years and always advocated strongly for the protection of the anadromous fisheries. He will be missed.
  
  - b. Trout Unlimited (TU) presented at September Michigan Natural Resources Commission (NRC) meeting regarding splake stocking in Lake Superior

with recommended changes to the program. At the October NRC meeting, Hanchin will be presenting information regarding Michigan's splake program.

- c. Buffalo Reef update. The final report detailing possible remediation plans has been delayed and likely will be available this fall. Michigan Department of Environment Great Lakes and Energy has obtained \$10M toward site remediation.
- d. The development of the Lake Superior Management Plan has taken more time than we had planned. Slow in developing due to schedules of different authors and fieldwork priorities. Hopes are to have a draft this winter, public comment, and a final report by April 2023.
- e. Questions: Markham asked about TU's NRC presentation and what concerns they had. Hanchin responded that TU has concerns about introgression and physical competition with Lake Trout and Brook Trout as well as identification issues. TU noted that their position was largely drawn from the Lake Superior Technical Committee white paper. The presentation is available on MUCC's Facebook page as they livestream and record NRC meetings.

IV. Carp and Chocolay River Steelhead stocking (Kovacs and Madison)

- a. Topic arose from questions by the public regarding the stocking of steelhead at the Carp River and anglers not seeing clipped fish returns and not seeing the spring runs as they had in the past. Kovacs shared slides discussing allocations for the Carp River and creel survey results. Michigan steelhead have been adipose clipped since 2018. Additionally, according to anglers, the Chocolay River steelhead runs have been poor in

the past decade. Michigan DNR Status and Trends surveys on the Chocolay River show declining numbers of steelhead smolts, suggesting a lower number of fish using the river. Proposal is to move Carp River steelhead (or some portion) to the Chocolay River. It would be possible to evaluate this action through the Michigan Great Lakes Angler Diary program established by Michigan Sea Grant.

- b. Questions: Jescovitch asked if stocking levels have been consistent, Madison indicated the management prescription and request has remained consistent for the Carp River. There is some thought that low survival in the Carp may be due to the high spring flows and turbulent conditions when they are stocked.

V. Review of potential regulations (Hanchin)

- a. Combined Splake and Lake Trout Daily Possession Limit: Splake and lake trout daily possession limits are confusing to some anglers. Size limits have been aligned for splake and lake trout due to law enforcement issues, so it makes sense to align daily possession limits as well. A proposal under consideration is to combine the daily possession limit for lake trout and splake across Lake Superior to match the current daily possession limit for lake trout. In doing so, this could limit some harvest opportunity in the west units where anglers can currently take 3 lake trout and 2 splake in each day. However, it would allow more opportunity to harvest splake in the east units where anglers can currently only harvest 3 fish and would potentially be able to harvest 5. Gasperich in favor of the proposal. Commented there are times when anglers cannot tell the difference, so it makes sense. Markham noted that there are areas west of the Keweenaw where anglers can catch 3 lake trout and then go after 2 splake to fill out their 5-fish limit. Markham indicated he is not dead set either way but would like to maintain current opportunity in west units or increase combined daily possession limit to 5 fish. Jescovitch had no comment on the proposal. Hanchin will reach out to other LSCFAC members for thoughts and the topic will be discussed at spring Coffee & Conversation meetings. Comments provided via email following the meeting: Ron Kinnunen (former LSCFAC member and guest) is in favor of 5-fish DPL for eastern units. John Highlen is in favor of the proposal. Travis White had no issue with the proposal but

supports splake fin clipping which could eliminate need for regulation.

- b. Stannard Rock and Big Reef: Hanchin provided a brief background of our understanding of these populations. DNR surveyed Stannard Rock for 5 years in a row to get a baseline and plan to go back at some point at regular intervals. The lake trout population appeared healthy in terms of catch rates, size and age structure. Charter and creel effort are relatively constant. Our plan is to keep an eye on the fishery. There is currently no biological need to enact more restrictive regulations. We are in the middle of the 5-year survey of Big Reef and will provide a summary to the Committee when finished. The Committee has talked about more restrictive regulations to protect these unique fisheries, so we wanted to continue the discussion. With our knowledge of release mortality, we know that size limits are less effective as an option though it is unknown whether fishing methods and water temperatures at Stannard may result in lower release mortality. Lower possession limits are more likely though anglers generally do not venture to offshore reefs to catch 2 or 3 fish so lower daily possession limits still have the issue of catch and release mortality. No comments from group on this item.
- c. Catch and immediate release (CIR) fishing for lake sturgeon on the Ontonagon River: Rehabilitation efforts since late 1990s. Current prescription for up to 5,000 lake sturgeon (Sturgeon River strain). United States Fish and Wildlife Service index netting surveys in 2021 showing lake sturgeon to be meeting fish community objectives. Creel survey shows sturgeon catches are becoming more common. Currently it is illegal to target lake sturgeon on the Ontonagon River. Our internal LSBT has discussed the issue and is in favor of moving a regulation proposal forward that would allow for targeted catch and immediate release fishing for lake sturgeon in the Ontonagon River from July 16 to March 15. We discussed an upstream boundary for this proposal, and it would either be the M-64 bridge or Victoria Dam Road by Rockland. There is no biological reason for one versus the other. Earliest this would be enacted is April 2024. Madison mentioned CIR has been allowed on the Portage/Torch system for the past few years with no apparent issues. Markham hearing reports of more lake sturgeon being caught and supports proposal. Gasperich agreed with the proposal. Comments provided via email following the meeting: John Highlen is in favor of the proposal.

VI. GLFC Fish Stocking Visualization Tool (Hanchin)

- a. Another way anglers can look at stocking summaries for their waters. Hanchin displayed the Great Lakes Fishery Commission LFC stocking tool. <http://fsis.glfc.org/stocking/events/2021/>

VII. Methods to deter predation at stocking and increase survival

- a. Observations of avian predation on splake in Keweenaw Bay in May 2022. There are some means to deter Avian predation. Michigan DNR has an avian predation notification trigger in the management prescription process for hatchery staff to contact stakeholder group or local contact to arrive and harass. Hatchery staff makes contact 1 week in advance of stocking as well as the day before stocking. Do not need a permit but need to abide by any local ordinances. If culling, need to work through the Permit for Cormorant control through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Recognized that not many problem sites on Lake Superior. Staff happy to work with folks on any of these issues and encourage contact with the local fisheries manager if there are issues at specific sites. Jescovitch suggested automatic deterrents work well for 2-3 days (i.e., cannons) in aquaculture settings.

VIII. Law Enforcement Division update (DeLonge)

- a. Pulled some abandoned nets from Big Bay and Lac LaBelle areas. Reports came from anglers. Anglers can call the Report All Poaching Line to report ghost nets. Please share a GPS coordinate, description of lost gear if any, and contact information. Great Lakes Enforcement Unit conducting trainings for new officers. Department is holding an academy for new officers currently.

IX. Advisor roundtable reports

- a. Isle Royale Boaters Association: West side of Keweenaw was great for lake trout in May-July nearshore and up to Eagle Harbor, from north entry. May and early June good for splake and browns. Walleye in Portage system was very good this year especially compared to last year. Eastern side of Keweenaw, July and August, no cohos to be found. Lake trout were small and barely legal. Isle Royale, June water temps 36°F, around island was 44-46°F. Low 50's typically the best. Ciscoes seem to be doing well out at Isle Royale with them now a normal occurrence near Snug Harbor area. Gasoline was being rationed and ran out at different times of the summer. \$8.68 for gas and \$4.50 for diesel. Trying to work with the park on some projects, electric power at the pavilion at Windigo and power at Snug Harbor.
- b. Keweenaw Splake Anglers: Splake in Copper Harbor were caught, many undersized.
- c. Michigan Sea Grant: Working on consumer education with seafood, facilitation of CARES act funding, will be hosting a HACCP training conference in Brimley in December for seafood processors.

X. 2023 Meeting Dates and Locations

- a. Looking at first week of April. In-person meeting in spring. Work with Rodney on date. Marquette most likely to meet the needs of membership.