



Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

Established by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, to improve and maintain fishery resources through better communication and partnership.

Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee Meeting Friday, April 15, 2022 Tuscarora Township Hall Indian River MI

Approved

Attendees: Frank Krist (Chair), Tim Cwalinski (DNR Fisheries, facilitator), Neal Godby (DNR Fisheries), David Steenstra (BLPA), Jim Burke (BLPA), Brad Kessel (Mullett Lake), Gil Archambo (Sturgeon For Tomorrow and Black Lake), Mike Supernault (BLPA), Tyler Bruning (USGS Hammond Bay), Carol Rose (UBRC, NRC), Tom Ludwig (Long Lake), Paul Borg (Grand Lake), Lauren Dey (Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council), Ron Dulak (BLA), Roger Selvig (BLA), Roger Bergstedt (BLA), Nick Torsky (DNR LED), Paul Fox (DNR LED), Matt Theunick (DNR-LED), Pat Mousseau (Wolverine), Randy Claramunt (DNR Fisheries), Roger Jacobs (Fisherman), Ed Boyer (Carp Lake), Wayne Blomberg (PCLA), Gary Michaud (LTBB), Seth Herbst (DNR Fisheries), Emily Martin (DNR Fisheries), John Kolar (Mullett Lake), David Kolar (Mullett Lake), Irvin Dedow, Mike Vigneau, Bob Rentz (Mullett Lake), Randy Claramunt (DNR Fisheries)

Welcome, Introductions.

Frank and Tim opened the meeting, and the attendees each introduced themselves and their affiliation (see above).

Statewide cormorant management update (Randy Claramunt, DNR Lake Huron Basin Coordinator)



2021 State Permit System

- Input from biologists and stakeholders is obtained
- Three types of sites are addressed: fish stocking locations, inland waterbodies, and Great Lakes colonies
- Justification for control was required.
- Permitted to take 11,050 birds – Michigan was the only state to get a permit.
- Permit system worked, and we were able to amend the permit 3 times throughout the year.
- USDA Wildlife Services was able to control the largest Great Lakes colonies as the DNR sub-permittee. Wildlife Services is the only agency authorized to provide lethal control. Volunteers can no longer take birds.
- No state funding was available to implement management.
- Inland lakes issues were not addressed
- Overall only 3,220 birds were taken which is well below the 11,050 birds requested in the permit.

2022 State Permit

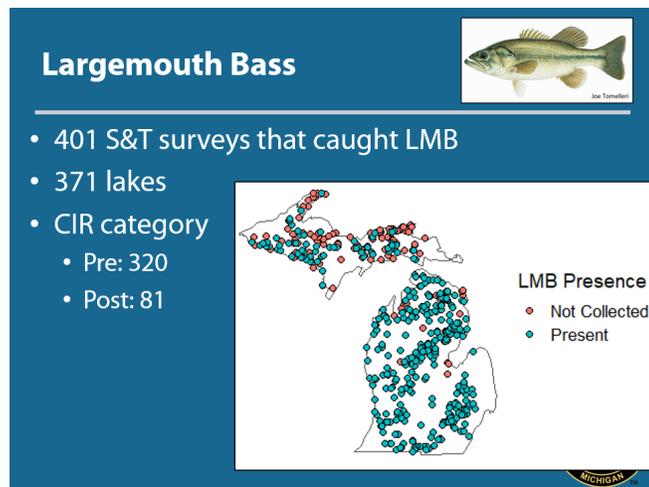
- The taking of 9,650 birds has been approved.

Note: Stakeholder input is needed to put locations on the list for control action. If you notice large numbers of cormorants and are concerned, the following information needs to be gathered and shared with Randy Claramunt or the local DNR biologist:

- When do the birds arrive?
- When do they leave?
- How many birds are there? Photos are very helpful.

A review of statewide bass regulations, tournament fishing, and other related topics (Seth Herbst, DNR Aquatic Species & Regulatory Affairs Unit Manager).

- Largemouth bass and smallmouth bass are priority species. They are a popular sport fish caught by:
 - General anglers.
 - Tournament participants
 - Professional Guides
- A *history* of bass regulations in Michigan beginning from 1865 was presented.
- Early in the 2000s, the Smallmouth and Largemouth Bass Regulations Committee (SALBRC) process was established to review bass biology in Michigan compared to other areas and develop regulation scenarios.
- **Current Regulations:** Possession is May 28 – December 31, 14-inch minimum size limit, daily possession limit of 5. Catch and Immediate Release year-round, has been the law since 2016.
- **2014-** A *statewide angler survey* was done online and mailed to 1,000 anglers (random) to quantify Catch and Immediate Release and gather angler opinions. Results:
 - ~80% of anglers fish for bass
 - ~77% rated bass experience as excellent, very good, or good
 - 62% release all bass caught
 - Current regulations were favored the most by 63% of the respondents
- During **2020-Biologists were surveyed.** A number of reasons for concern were identified. Most biologists believed that bass fishing has increased over the last 10 years.
 - Reasons for concern among biologists included Catch and Immediate Release, increased fishing pressure (including tournaments), harvest/exploitation, invasive species, diseases and pathogens, and habitat loss (shoreline modifications and vegetation treatments)
- An overview of **Status and Trends (S&T) survey** data was given for Largemouth Bass.
 - Adult Catch per Unit of Effort, size structure, etc., have not changed from the pre- Catch and Immediate Release regulations (CIR) to post- Catch and Immediate Release regulations though comparisons from individual lakes were not available yet due to the infrequency of surveys within a lake over time, see slide below.



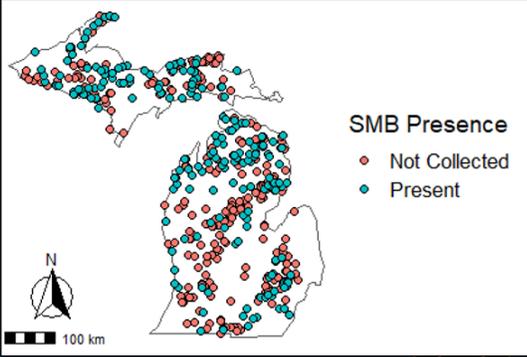
- The same trends were found for measures of the Smallmouth Bass populations/survey data, see slide below.

Smallmouth Bass



Joe Tomelleri

- 217 S&T surveys that caught SMB
- 203 lakes
- CIR category
 - Pre: 170
 - Post: 47

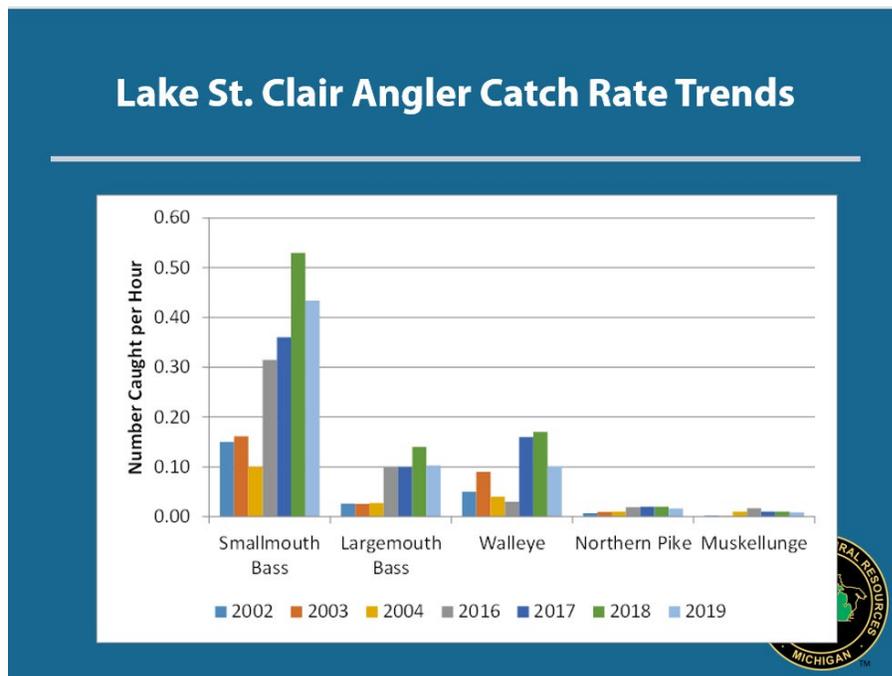


SMB Presence

- Not Collected
- Present



- In Lake St. Clair, where the vast majority of bass tournaments are held each year in the state, the populations of largemouth bass and smallmouth bass are actually increasing, see slide below. The data from this heavily fished lake and the surveys around the state show that Catch and Immediate Release of bass is not reducing the successful reproduction of bass populations. Even though bass fry may be lost from goby predation and other predators when a bass is temporarily not protecting the nest after being caught, the surveys show that enough fry are produced overall to ensure successful reproduction.



- **Tournaments:** Approximately 2,500 statewide tournaments are registered per year through the Fishing Tournament Information System (FTIS).

Fishing Tournaments

- Approx. 2,500 tournaments registered annually
- Mandatory registration and reporting requirements
 - Fishing Tournament Information System (FTIS)



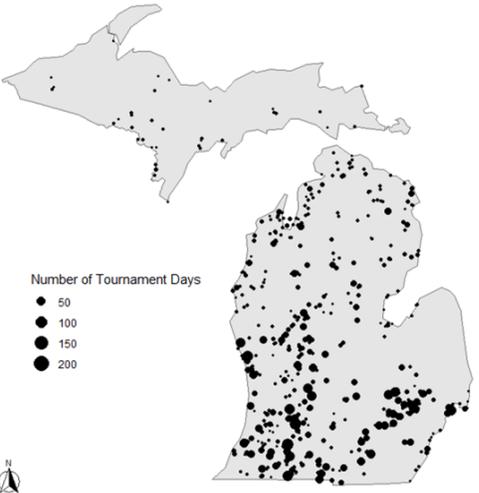

- Fishing pressure is higher in the southern portion of the state. Tournament season is mostly June-September.

Fishing Tournament Pressure

- Has generated concerns, but biological impacts have not been detected
- Creel surveys indicate general angling pressure is higher

Number of Tournament Days

- 50
- 100
- 150
- 200



Discussion

- Fish Division has a **new internal bass committee** to formalize statewide discussions on management issues
- Frank encouraged anyone that had issues with the bass tournaments to provide an overview and ask for clarification since three Conservation Officers were present.
- **Burt Lake property owners are very concerned** with problems caused the by tournament anglers. A survey of 1,000 residents was completed around the lake and 70% of responses indicated abuses such as walking on the docks, getting tangled in the **canvass**, hooking the docks, losing hooks and lures in the swimming area next to the docks.

- **Response to boaters on docks:** It is not legal for boaters to get on the dock or damage property including the dock, covers, boats and other private property. If you witness property being damaged that needs to be reported through the 911 system. Angers can come up to the dock and even fish under the dock including right up to the shoreline. Do not confront the violators but use binoculars to obtain the MC numbers. Sometimes the MC numbers are hard to see so taking a photo helps.
- **Response swimming areas:** Designated swimming areas are required to be permitted and fishing inside a designated swimming area is a violation. Other areas of lakes are open to fishing. Fisheries Division works through news releases and other education media to educate anglers on the proper care around private property along the lake shore. If there is ongoing issue on a lake, the DNR communication section will work with the property associations to help get the message out.
- **Response harassing anglers:** It is illegal to interfere or harass an angler.
- If additional restrictions on fishing near docks and other private structures in water bodies are to be implemented changes in the law will be needed through the legislature.

Conservation Officer Roundtable (DNR Law Enforcement Officers, Nick Torsky, Paut Fox, and Matt Theunick.

CO Paul Fox (Presque Isle County)

- Grand Lake fishing pressure has increased over the last few years, especially through the ice.
- More walleye were caught in Black Lake this winter than in recent years
- Sturgeon season went well. Sturgeon patrols during the spawning season continue along the Black River, with no known poaching in recent years.

CO Matt Theunick (Cheboygan County)

- Mullett Lake had normal fishing pressure over the winter
- Burt Lake had significantly less pressure over winter. Very few limits caught.
- Cheboygan Dam – some steelhead and walleye being caught.
- Lancaster Lake – more fishing pressure than in the past
- Sturgeon River – COs keep an eye out for sturgeon and walleye. There's a potential to partner with Big Bear Adventures to monitor the river.
- Access to Burt Lake was difficult this winter – Frontinac Rd. was closed, State Park was closed.
- Because the snow conditions were poor in the Lower Peninsula that seemed to keep the fishing effort down in our area because many snowmobilers were going to the Upper Peninsula.

CO Nick Torsky, Great Lakes Enforcement Unit

- Great Lakes Enforcement Unit staff patrol the Great Lakes commercial fishing activities including working with the Tribal COs. In addition, our unit augments local COs, and we do aquatic species investigations, commercial bait inspections, and work with fish wholesalers. I attend the advisory committee meeting to better understand the fishery and issues that may develop.
- Saginaw Bay wasn't frozen over the previous two years, this year it was. Combined with fewer snowmobilers, and access difficulties, there was a decrease in fishing pressure in northern lakes this year.

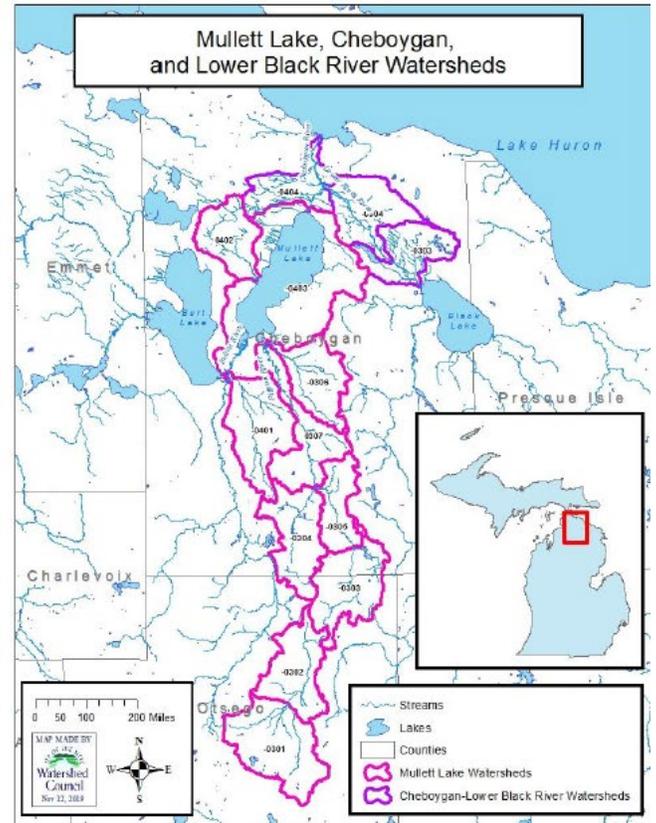
Lower Black/Cheboygan Rivers, Mullett Lake Watershed Plan Update (Lauren Dev, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

- Lauren gave an overview of the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council service area
- Older plans exist for these waterbodies, but aren't approved for state funding
- There is a watershed advisory committee formed to provide input into this new plan
- Goal is to have an approved watershed management plan – approved by EGLE and EPA
- Watershed management plans include:
 - Restore impaired waters
 - Protect high quality waters from Nonpoint Source (NPS) pollution
 - Facilitate communication and partnerships (Watershed Advisory Committees)
 - Encourage Sound Science (Quality Assured Project Plan (QAPP), identification of the source and cause of NPS)

- Provide means of cost-effective management
- Focus is on environmental results.
- The Plan will describe the watershed, list the water quality standards and designated uses, and characterize the water quality of the watershed
- Inventories will be included in the plan: Road Stream Crossings, forestry and agriculture, streambank erosion, shoreline surveys, and stormwater.
- A slide of the of the Lower Black/Cheboygan Rivers, Mullett Lake Watersheds is below.

Planning for Protection

- Older plans
 - Mullett Lake Watershed Protection Plan (2002)
 - Mullett Creek Watershed Management Plan (2011/2012)
 - Cheboygan River/Lower Black River Watershed Initiative (2003)
- State Funding
 - Coordinate a watershed advisory committee
 - Watershed Management Plan
 - Characterize
 - Resource Inventory
 - Determine Critical & Priority Areas
 - Monitoring & Evaluation
 - Implementation Strategy
 - Goal: to have an approved WMP
 - EGLE criteria: CMI
 - EPA Criteria: 9 elements for achieving water quality improvements



- Data collection status for the various surveys was listed: 2016 Mullett Lake shoreline survey, 2021 Long Lake and Twin Lakes Greenbelt, etc.
- The plan will cover water quality threats, critical and priority areas, implementation steps, monitoring and evaluation strategies. The Lower Black/Cheboygan Rivers, Mullett Lake Watersheds Plan will be completed and available next year but the completed Burt Lake Watershed Management Plan can be viewed at: https://www.watershedcouncil.org/uploads/1/2/6/3/126321286/burt_lake_watershed_management_plan_final.pdf.
- The question was asked whether there was any funding for septic tank replacement or maintenance, but the group was not aware of any funding opportunities for this.

Concerns about Walleye recruitment issues in Burt Lake (David Steenstra BLPA and Neal Godby)

- Catch rates of age-0 walleye were low in the 2021 fall juvenile walleye survey, but it was not a year class failure.
- Very strong walleye year classes were documented in 2016, 2018, 2019, and 2020.
- During 2021 there were several fall survey caveats including challenging conditions produced by high wind and waves. Because of these poor conditions the typical stations that are normally sampled could not be monitored.
- **BLPA** is very concerned about low numbers found in survey, and the poor catches from anglers. Members of the Association asked what they could do, what information to gather?

- DNR identified some potential reasons for reduced survival (reduced productivity, starvation caused by less prey availability, and winter conditions).
- Tip of the Mitt, University of Michigan Biological Station (UMBS) and DNR have proposed some studies/measurements
 - Continue water quality measurements (BLPA, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council).
 - Add temperature and dissolved oxygen profiles (year-round) – BLPA
 - Zooplankton surveys BLPA, UMBS
 - This would be proposed as a Masters Project at U-M
 - Continue the fall juvenile walleye index surveys – MDNR
- Discussion
 - Possibly, some factors similar to the conditions in Black Lake are beginning to impact the Burt Lake walleye fishery.

Overview of the DNR and Tribal lake sturgeon netting survey in Burt Lake, July 2022 (Emily Martin, DNR Fisheries Biologist Tribal Coordination Unit)

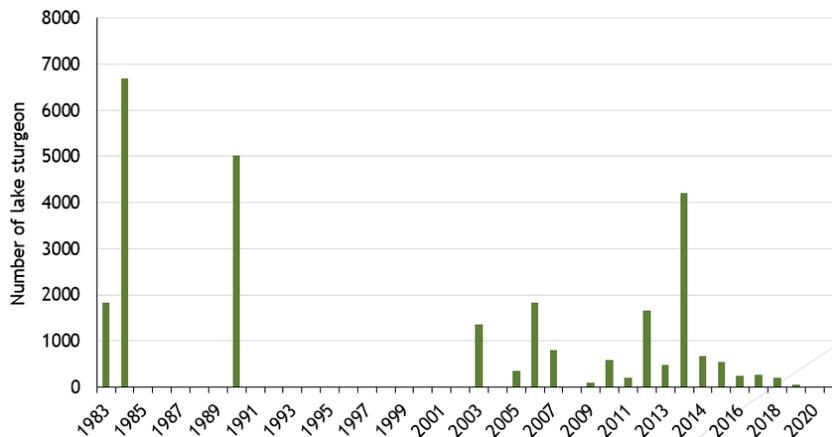


- Results of previous sturgeon surveys in Burt Lake
 - 2009 – 20 sturgeon captured
 - 2011 – 108 sturgeon captured, estimate of 1535 fish (all ages/sizes)
 - 2015 – 63 sturgeon captured, estimate of 644 fish
- For 2022, we are planning to survey for 3 weeks in July (beginning July 11). There will be three crews, and we will be using 6-inch, 8-inch, and 10-inch mesh nets. Aging structures will be collected for fish <40 inches in length. Fish will be PIT tagged and a tissue sample will be collected. Gil Archambo suggested that the DNR should consider using a new much less intrusive aging tool and technique for this survey. Neal said he would investigate this new technology.
- The survey will provide data for future management decisions and will help inform a Burt Lake Sturgeon Management Plan by understanding the survival of stocked fish and growth rates.

- **Gary Michaud** who is the Little Traverse Bay Bands fishery biologist that replaced Maxwell Field said his crew is looking forward to coordinating the survey work with the DNR.
- **Action:** Emily will work with Jim Burke to get an article published about the survey in the upcoming BLPA newsletter.
- The slide below shows the number of sturgeon stocked in Burt Lake over the years.

Purpose

- ▶ Lake sturgeon assessment
 - ▶ Stocking
 - ▶ Interest
 - ▶ Future management



Number of Sturgeon Stocked



Update for northern pike regulation changes for Crooked, Pickerel, and Black Lakes; timeline for proposals (Tim Cwalinski)

- A number of lakes within the Inland Waterway have or are in the process of getting liberalized northern pike regulations (no minimum size limit, 5 fish daily possession limit with one over 24 inches). These regulations were put in place for Crooked Lake in 2021 and have been proposed for Black Lake for 2023. Pickerel Lake pike regulations will be proposed to change in the next cycle (2024) but could be moved forward in 2023 if needed.
- There was support from the group for moving forward with the Pickerel Lake pike regulation change.
- Update: There is an opportunity to include the Pickerel Lake pike regulation change proposal to the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) this fall, for implementation in 2023 if approved. **Action:** Godby will submit that for NRC consideration.

Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee business items (Frank and Tim added this agenda item)

- **The current meeting time from 11 am – 3:30 pm** was discussed. Does this work for the committee, or would another time period work better? After a discussion, the 11 am start time seemed to work best, considering some participants have to travel considerable distances.
- **Should the committee have a vice chair?** Other DNR committees have a vice chair to help with continuity of the committee and helping with setting up the meetings. Other DNR Advisory Committees also have elections every 3 years. **Action:** Frank will send out the Terms of Reference of the Lake Huron Citizen Fishery Advisory Committee to see if Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee would like to

adopt parts of these Terms. **Action:** Frank and Tim will add this topic to the fall agenda along with providing both the current and potential future copies of the Terms of Reference just before the next meeting.

- **Proposed Infrastructure funding.** Extra funding for Fisheries Division is in a legislative supplemental proposal, but the supplemental funding is at risk. Frank recommends contacting your representative and representative Sue Allor to support DNR funding. **Action:** Frank will send out information for contacting your senator and representative.

Roundtables (All)

Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians (Gary Michaud)

- Planning to do a walleye population estimate on Long Lake, Cheboygan County
- Studying the relationship between wild rice and fish in Crooked River
- Will be doing a spotlight sturgeon survey in the Black River and Sturgeon River
- Will be doing fall walleye recruitment surveys in Black Lake, and Mullett Lake, likely assisting DNR

Grand Lake

- Fishing has been fairly decent
- Winter fishing derby had a good turnout

Black Lake

- Black Lake Association (BLA) is trying to make the lake one of the better fishing lakes in the state.
- DNR is putting in a new boat ramp on Black River near the lake outlet
- Hoping to get a grant for a Black Lake Watershed Management Plan – BLA would like to get an approved Non-Point Source pollution plan
- Roger Bergstedt retired Great Lakes biologist, is a volunteer for Water Quality Monitoring and would like to add more gadgets to collect more data if there is interest in using the information. It was mentioned that it would be a very important baseline that could be used as a reference to compare changes over the coming years and decades.
- There will be additional DNR enforcement activity this year during the sturgeon spawning run due to increased interest by the caviar trade, and the officers will be patrolling walleye fishing near the mouth of the Rainy River before and after opening date.
- Gil mentioned again that there is a new paper punch style device for collecting aging structures that results in much less damage to the fish. **Action:** Neal Godby will look into this for use on Burt Lake.

Long Lake (Alpena County)

- There were new boat launch improvements.
- 729 people fished in an ice fishing tournament this year
- Fishing was so-so, typical of Long Lake. But some decent perch were caught throughout the winter.
- A lot of pike were caught, even by those targeting bluegill.
- There has not been a follow-up evaluation of the fish habitat structures placed in the lake but such a survey may be undertaken soon.

Burt Lake

- Maple Bay perch fishing was good, but could be spotty
- Steelhead fishing on the lake was way down
- Fishing pressure on the lake has been light
- Walleye fishing has been down

Pickeral-Crooked Lakes

- People like the new pike regulation on Crooked Lake
- At the Conway end of Crooked Lake, there is excessive weed growth.
- The Reid Berney walleye pond was sold. The DNR once used the pond but found it difficult to maintain.

Seth Herbst – Aquatic Species and Regulatory Affairs Unit

- There was an exceedance in the lake trout harvest quota in MH-1 on Lake Huron. The Natural Resources Commission will be taking action in May. The Commissioners will be considering reducing the daily bag limit of lake trout from 3 fish to 2 fish in MH-1 from De Tour to Rogers City and increasing the daily bag limit in MH-2 from Rogers City to Alpena from 3 to 4 lake trout.
- The DNR statewide Inland Walleye Plan has been finalized, including an approach to prioritizing stocking locations. The plan may be found at this link, https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/dnr/Documents/Fisheries/NEW/Walleye_Management_Plan_FINAL.pdf?rev=40a59d0915f84c5a9dbe6ce25be41c5c

Mullett Lake

- A member and his family during the last spring walleye opener only caught 4 fish over 5 nights – slow fishing. Fishing was slower last summer than previous years. Ice fishing has been slower this year too.
- Walleye were skinnier in Mullett this year
- Perch fishing was very poor in weed beds this year
- Only walleye fishing was better at night due to clear water for one angler
- November fishing was very good for yellow perch. Ice fishing for walleye and perch were good.
- Effort was way down.
- A lot of small 10-12 inch walleye were caught this year.
- More ciscoes caught than ever for one angler.
- Fall fishing for perch was excellent.

Tyler Bruning, USGS Great Lakes Science Center from the Hammond Bay Biological Station

- Sea Lamprey trapping in the Pigeon, Sturgeon, and Maple rivers is continuing this year.
- Sterile Male Release Program will continue in these rivers
- Some sea lamprey larvae were detected in the Pigeon River
- Nick Johnson will give an update in the fall on the Inland Waterway

Lauren Dey, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

- The new Fishing Pier in Cheboygan will be under construction this spring.

3:28 Adjourned