

Tribal Co-Management Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee



Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual, MS Teams

Date: June 24, 2024

Introductions:

- MDNR Attendees: Dave Caroffino, Steve Lenart, Emily Martin, Chris Kemp, Ben Rook, Kevin Postma, Jay Wesley
- Public attendees: Mark Williams, Bryan Burroughs, Frank Krist, Mike Veine, CT Shuman, Mike Radcliffe, Steve Mondrella, Bill Winowiecki, Jeremy Applekamp, John Dettmers, Justin Tomei, Dean Jessup, Dennis VanLandschoot, Ed Blissick, Floyd Drops, Paul Sacks, Tom Andris.
- Williams informed the group of Burroughs appointment to Vice-Chair, and he will serve in Williams' absence.

Technical Fisheries Committee Update (Caroffino):

- Terms of reference being finalized for Modeling Subcommittee, to be followed by Standard Operating Procedures (Lenart contact)
- Information sharing has received a lot of attention, with emphasis on harvest reporting. Mostly minor bugs being worked through; Tribes have been responsive to addressing issues, though a few remain. Harvest reports being received 2x monthly (Caroffino and Rook contacts).
- Lake Whitefish Stocking evaluation ongoing; focused at this stage on rearing practices (Sault Tribe and Little Traverse Bay Bands are leading efforts)
- Compiled workplan document has been finalized which includes planned activities of all Parties; has already proved useful as Parties can more efficiently answer inquiries (Lenart contact).
- Creel Harvest Reporting Workgroup has been formed, focus on reviewing Statewide Angler Survey Program (i.e., Creel) for potential improvements. First meeting July 2 (Kemp contact).
- Native species stocking protocol in very early stages of development, effort lead by US Fish & Wildlife Service with input from others (Lenart contact).
- Stocking Table is developed; provides upper targets for stocking number for each species, but targets are for a Stocking District (generally a Lake Trout Management unit) versus individual sites, so much more flexible. Also includes approved strains and life-stage equivalents. One unresolved issue relates to target for Atlantic Salmon in northern Lake Huron- this item will be on the August Executive Council Meeting agenda (August 22 at Grand Traverse Resort).
- Other items that will be on Executive Council agenda include mortality rate implementation document, formal documentation of harvest limits for Lake Trout and Lake Whitefish, update on YTD harvest of Lake Trout in MH-12, update on northern Lake Michigan Lake Trout

movement study, research priorities, and an initial discussion on the composition and structure of the Decree's Environmental Committee.

Questions: Are inland stockings affected by the stocking targets in Decree? Only for salmonids stocked in tributaries that expected to spend their lives in Great Lakes.

Net Marking Information (Krist):

- Sea Grant has taken lead role in development of waterproof information placards that will be made available to anglers at any port; in addition, there will be a link to a website that has more detailed information for those interested. Multiple Sea Grant staff have been involved and have worked with DNR Law Enforcement and Tribes.

Commercial Harvest Update (Rook):

Information presented includes year-to-date commercial harvest through June 11 for State and Tribes: Tribal harvest for 1836 waters only, State harvest for both 1842 and 1836 waters. Twice-monthly reporting required, big improvement over previous Decree, where harvest wasn't available until after the year ended.

- LWF harvest by LWF management unit
 - All units well below established harvest limit
 - State harvest mostly lower so far compared to June 2023 in all units with the exception of WFM-06 (Leland), which is slightly higher. For the Tribes, YTD is lower in all areas, particularly so in eastern SU and northern lakes MI and HU
- Tribal LAT Harvest by LAT management unit
 - All units well below established harvest limit, no real surprises
 - Harvest lower so far than 2023 throughout 1836 waters except eastern Lake Superior (MI-7 and MI-8)
- Tribal harvest of other species by LAT management unit
 - Mainly by-catch but some targeted fishing for perch and walleye in northern Lake Huron
 - Most game fish species harvest lower than YTD last year
 - "Salmon" and "Other" categories are expected to be resolved by Tribes after interviewing fishers; these categories are mostly from early reporting periods and are no longer expected to be used.
 - Gave example of BNT by-catch in Grand Traverse Bay: 78 lb caught in seven fishing days, so around one or two fish per lift.
- Tribal LAT harvest in new fishing area or season
 - One fisher with limited gill-net activity west of Grand Island in Lake Superior, but most of the harvest is LWF, about a 6:1 ratio of LWF to LAT, which is what you would expect when LWF are available

- Bay de Noc zone being fished by same fisher permitted under 2000 Consent Decree; one lift reported with only 12 lb of walleye
- Little Traverse Zone (grid 519) had the most activity and roughly 4,500 lb of LAT reported, but much of this occurred during the unusually warm winter months, not very typical that fishing opportunities are available during these months. This area is now closed until fall.
- Limited permit activity in Grand Traverse zones, less than 500 lb of reported harvest from a few fishing days in MM-4, no activity in MM-5 (Leland)
- No gill-net activity in Little River Zone
- For Lake Huron, LAT harvest in previously closed Drummond Island area nearly all from trap-net; note that fishing with trap-nets in this area was permissible under 2000 Decree but retention of LAT was prohibited.
- Limited harvest in Hammond Bay Zone, mostly from trap-nets; one gill-net fishing day reported

Questions/comments: It appears that there was more fishing activity than expected in Lake Michigan grid 519. Recreational Lake Trout fishing has been poor in Little Traverse Bay, requiring long runs to find fish.

Law Enforcement Update (Postma):

- Fair number of complaints about net-marking, primarily in 1842 waters of Lake Superior- State has no enforcement authority here but LE working with Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) more than they ever have. Encourage folks to keep reporting these issues, LE will continue to actively address these, Brett DeLong is the local contact.
- Not many issues being reported in Lake Huron, focus has been on removing ghost nets around Goose Island shoal- long term problem from operator who left a number of trap nets in the water who has since passed on. Net identified last year was removed this week, hope it is the last one (7 removed so far over the years). Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA) has had a program in place that funded removal operations over the years, but funds are running out- hope some additional funding can be secured.
- No complaints in Lake Michigan, successful joint patrol with Tribes conducted in northern Lake Michigan; Sault Tribe included. Very little fishing activity documented.
- Compliance with new net marking requirements needs work, particularly the increased size required for flags (16" versus 12"). LE is focused on education given the new regulation.
- Reporting delinquencies for Charter, Commercial and Wholesale systems improving, encouraged it is moving in right direction.
- Three patrol vessels still undergoing repair work, moving slower than expected. LE is still patrolling these areas but relying on district vessels.

Updates from Area Representatives:

- Winoweicki: As noted, limited tribal fishing; Lake Trout fishing poor. Questions: Any contact with State commercial fishery regarding flag size requirement? Postma to follow up. Any restrictions in how close nets can be set to river mouths? Issue is Crystal River. Caroffino noted there is a 0.3-mile buffer requirement for certain streams, but Crystal River not on that list. Is Executive Council meeting still open to public? Caroffino said he is not aware of any change to how the EC meetings operate, so yes.
- Burroughs: Involved with inland committee focused on Steelhead management, might be useful to have Tribal harvest of Steelhead from inland systems if available. Martin to follow up.
- Shuman: not much recent commercial activity, generally in usual spots like 7 mile; LAT not in usual spots so something seems to have changed
- Jessup: no activity in Little River zone as noted but might be useful to know about Tribe's Natural Resource Department gill-net surveys in advance if possible. Caroffino noted that at best we would be able to identify the month of their surveys, not the exact dates. Surveys are fluid due to weather, port schedule, staffing, etc.
- VanLandschoot: most recent activity west of Munising. Limited trout catches in his operation, lots of small LWF in Keweenaw operation, Bete Gris generally best area for LWF. Also shared that he is a long-term sport fisher, so supports those fisheries as well, but has observed a long-term decline in recreational fishing effort.
- Dropps: just heard of one complaint about getting hung up in net by Grand Island, not sure if this was reported to law enforcement.
- Krist: providing contact information and areas of responsibility for TCU staff would be helpful (Lenart/Caroffino to follow up). Asked whether meeting info will be posted to a website? Caroffino responded that there is no plan at this point to do so.
- Williams: working a lot on topics related to reporting, believes there needs to be better communication/messaging from legislature as it relates to the Decree requirements, Little River Band fishers continue to be cooperative.

Next meeting to be held in Sep/Oct time frame. Details to be determined.