



Lake Erie / Lake St. Clair Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

Established by the Department of Natural Resources to improve and maintain the fishery resources of Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, and the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers through better communication and partnership.

Meeting Notes – Final Lake Erie/Lake St. Clair Citizen’s Fishery Advisory Committee Zoom Meeting

March 23, 2021

Present: Bruce Yinger, Jim Francis, Jerry Comfort, John Bacarella, Jim Felgenauer, Henry Walters, Jim Dexter, Robert Burns, Mark Davis, Blair Hughes, Bob Neely, Eric Grajewski, Tim Muir, Matt Shackelford, Ted Meyer, Walleye Mike Eichbrecht, Dan Kimmel, Dave Reault, Matt Belletini, Gerald Sickon, Mary Bohling, Michelle Selzer, Todd Wills, Andrew Briggs, Nick Torsky, Pat Hartsig, Jan-Michael Hessenauer, Christian LeSage, Matt Hughes, Melanie Foose, Chris Kiel, Scott Pratt, David Shaw, Katelyn Brolick

Welcome and Introductions – Jim Felgenauer, Chair

Update from Parks and Rec Division (Scott Pratt, DNR)

- Improved boating access to upper Detroit River
 - Erma Henderson marina will be closed this year
 - What is the status of developing a Boating Access Site at Greyhaven? A feasibility study from 2010 identified it as a good option. Is it still an option? How do we get it going?
 - Scott will follow up with an update
 - \$1M has been allocated in Fiscal Year 2021 for design and development of a boating access site at Greyhaven
 - The design will include paved parking for car and trailers, paved roads, lighting, launch ramp, sidewalks, and landscaping
 - Actual costs for the project will not be available until the project is bid for construction
 - Unless there is money held for this project to go into the construction phase in FY21, it will move to FY22, where it will compete statewide for funding. This is dependent on how high a priority it is, in comparison to other statewide projects.
 - If everything went perfect - meaning funding, low water conditions, approvals made quickly, and bid awarded - there could be a usable site in FY 23. The earliest would be late FY 22 and the latest would be FY 24 or 25, depending on funding.
- Fish cleaning station for Lake St Clair
 - Clinton River site has been identified
 - establishing LLC, raising funds is the next step
 - design group has offered their assistance
 - multiyear endeavor – contact Jim Felgenauer to get involved
- Harley Ensign boating access upgrades
 - Delayed – postponed until 2022, majority of statewide projects have been put on hold and has to go through executive approval
 - high water levels also creating challenges
 - Mt. Clemens crew will perform pavement and catch basin repairs

- Improved ice access at Selfridge
 - site improvements completed, tremendous safety issues
 - in the past Parks has removed a section of rail to improve access, they are looking for better options
- Clinton River cutoff
 - dredging will start in April and construction begin on June 1 - site will remain open during construction on west side
 - DNR looking into purchasing property adjacent to the access site to expand parking

Jim Felgenauer: Fish cleaning station progress being made, thanks to DNR

- Work group formed to help with this project
- Filed corporate paperwork to create Lake St. Clair Fish Cleaning Foundation– non-profit corporation purpose to fund construction and upkeep of a fish cleaning station on public property adjacent to Lake St. Clair
- In the process of forming an agreement to proceed
- Need to raise about \$180,000 for station
- Will need Board of directors

Bob Neely: Update on Hoffman Access Site and Sterling State Park - both in serious need of maintenance and repairs; look into American Rescue Plan for funding

Adopted Terms of Reference (All)

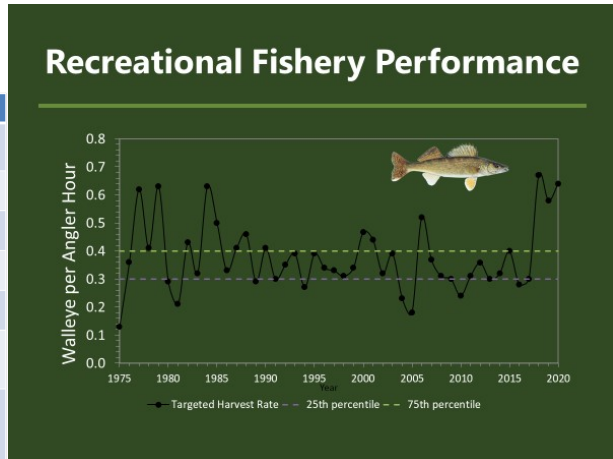
- New Terms of Reference sent out
- Membership roster was updated and circulated
- Vice Chair election
 - Bob Neely elected Vice Chair
 - The next election for the Chair and Vice Chair positions will be in Spring 2023

Fisheries survey results for 2020-21 (Todd Wills, DNR)

- Staff is mostly teleworking, but return to work granted for small vessel survey, large vessel survey, limited lab work, limited shop work
- Working on R/V Channel Cat winter maintenance
- Annual Surveys Not Completed in 2020
 - April-May Lake Erie and Lake St Clair (LSC) creel
 - LSC trap net
 - LSC spring electrofishing
 - LSC spring trawl
 - SCR sturgeon setline
 - Cooperative lake-wide small fish survey
- Annual Surveys Completed 2020
 - Creel (June-Oct)
 - Lake Erie trawl
 - LSC sturgeon trawl
 - Lake Erie gill nets (USGS)
 - LSC nearshore
 - SCDRS reef sonar
- Recreational Fishery Performance - focus on Lake Erie non-charter boats
 - Walleye 2020
 - 191,490 walleye harvested – estimate

- Harvested 32% of Total Allowable Catch
- 301,447 angler hours – increase of 14% relative to 2019
- Targeted harvest rate 0.635 (walleye per angler hour), 2nd highest harvest rate since creel began in 1975; 2018 was highest

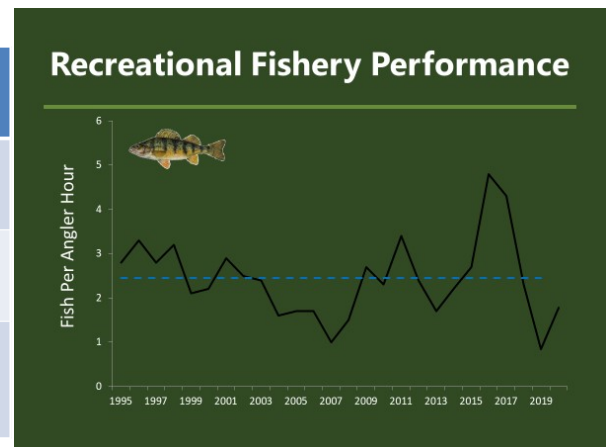
	Year		Year-to-Year Comparison		
	2020	2019	Direction	Difference	% Change
Number caught	N/A	207,623			
Number harvested	191,490	153,171	+	38,319	25%
Total Allowable Catch	597,000	497,000	+	100,000	20%
% of TAC harvested	32	31			
Targeted effort (angler hours)	301,447	265,330	+	36,117	14%
Targeted harvest rate (walleye per angler hour)	0.635	0.577	+	0.058	10%



Illustrations by Joseph R. Tomelleri ©

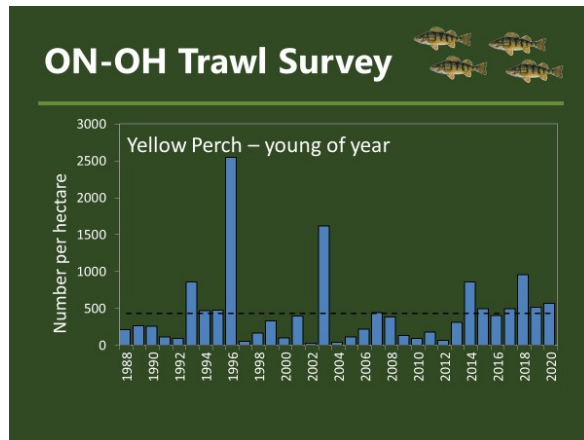
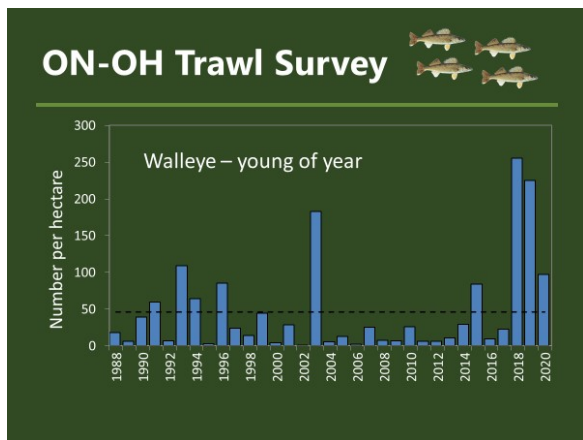
- Yellow Perch 2020
 - 84,613 harvest (lbs) – below long-term average
 - 151,528 effort (angler hours) – exceeded long-term average
 - Harvest rate 1.8 fish/hr; improvement from 2019 but below long-term average

	1995-2020	2018	2019	2020
Avg Harvest (lbs)	106,727	107,790	15,745	84,613
Avg Effort (angler hrs)	145,848	137,930	57,929	151,528
Avg Harvest Rate (fish/angler hr)	2.4	2.3	0.8	1.8



Illustrations by Joseph R. Tomelleri ©

- Lake Erie fall gill net survey
 - Walleye catch was low, but cooler water could be a factor
 - About half of the sport harvest was made up of age-5 fish (2015 year class)
 - The 2015 year class ranged in size from 17 – 24 inches
- Ontario-Ohio Trawl Survey – West Basin
 - Walleye 2018-2020 exceptional reproduction ~ double the long-term average
 - Yellow Perch pretty steady reproduction over the past 7 years, with 2020 a bit higher than long-term average
 - West basin better production than central basin



Illustrations by Joseph R. Tomelleri ©

- 2021 plans
 - all surveys planned and biodata returns
 - LSC lake wide small fish survey
 - LSC smallmouth bass acoustic telemetry study this year- movement and habitat
- Questions:
 - Did not see the 2018 year class show up in the St Clair River.
 - Not sure why the year class was not better represented in the fishery
 - They showed up in the 2019 trawl survey as age-1 fish
 - The 2018 and 2019 year classes are expected to contribute significantly to the fishery over the coming years.

Clean Vessel Program (Mary Bohling, Michigan Sea Grant)

- Michigan Sea Grant is now managing this program for the state
 - Creating new website and outreach materials
- Primary purpose is to allow marinas to get grant funds to get pump out stations
- \$200,000 is available annually, 25% match required from marinas (may be able to include 1st year maintenance as in-kind match)
- New grant application announced late April-May 2021. Help spread the word on availability
- Michiganpumpouts.com

Update from Law Enforcement Division – Commercial Fishing (Cpl. Pat Hartsig, DNR)

- Commercial fishing effort in Lake Erie this spring
 - Trap nets 8-12 spread out in Lake Erie at any given time
 - 2 orange staff flags indicate trap nets
 - Generally these nets closer to Stony Point area, targeting white bass early in the season
 - Move south towards Luna Pier and fish for rough fish later in the summer

Update from Law Enforcement Division – District 9 (CO Kris Kiel and CO Dave Schaumburger, DNR)

- 25 new conservation officers being hired this summer
- The walleye possession limit increased to 6 last year on the Detroit River – how was it received by anglers?
 - Well received a lot of people were happy to keep another fish

Update on the Michigan Domestic Action Plan (Michelle Selzer, EGLE)

- Lake Erie Domestic Action Plan created to reduce phosphorous inputs into Lake Erie by 40% by 2025
 - Currently drafting Adaptive Management Plan and being reviewed
 - Ecosystem assessment - where we are relative to central and eastern basin, River Raisin and Maumee River
 - Identify 6 projects – goal with these projects is to adjust as we go, learn and modify if needed
 - 20% reduction by 2020 was met by Detroit Waste Water Treatment plant reductions
 - Meeting the 40% reduction in other watersheds will be challenging and the document lays all of that out
 - Establishment of Western Lake Erie advisory group
 - LELSC Citizen Fishery Advisory Committee is a key stakeholder and written into the document
 - Will be getting updates and Michelle is willing to present deeper findings if interested
 - DNR pilot wetland restoration project is in adaptive management plan.
 - Will be used as nutrient retention and enhance wildlife; will be part of state game area.
 - Watershed assessment project
 - Develop model of landscape, develop survey of field and Best Management Practice implementation
 - Generate maps from these surveys and engage farmers where we see resource concerns
 - Will not be able to reach reduction targets by just a few BMP's need to be thoughtful and make sure there are many BMP options
 - Questions:
 - Have seen spring runoff into Lake Erie in Leamington – what is Ontario doing to address inputs?
 - part of Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement - 1 of 10 priority watersheds to target
 - U of M new study shows phosphorus in sediments in Lake St Clair and the lake is self-fertilizing, not just about new inputs but about existing. Will this plan address this?
 - Plan does mention it, but primarily focuses on inputs
 - Other teams being formed that are tackling these issues

DNR-Fisheries Update (Jim Francis, DNR)

- Cormorants

- Record of Decision (Final EIS) by USFWS on Dec 29, 2020 goes into effect Feb 12, 2021
- Have to apply to USFWS to take cormorants, similar to nuisance goose permit
- Working on prioritized sites to take cormorants
- DNR working with USDA Wildlife Services
 - Wildlife Services has \$90K GLRI for 2021
 - Hope to restore \$150K General Fund support by the State for 2023
- Walleye Regulations
 - September 2018- SCDRS regulations review
 - March 2019- Recommendations
 - Consistent walleye bag limit
 - Increased April 1, 2020 on the Detroit River – now 6 fish possession limit throughout SCDRS
 - Consistent walleye size limit
 - Minimum size limit increase on St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair (15 inches) (April 1, 2022)
 - Consistent regulations across whole system
- Michigan Spear Fishing Association Proposal
 - Overview of spear fishing
 - Presented suggested changes to NRC in April 2019 – looking to make changes to already established rules
 - NRC told the group to contact DNR
 - DNR is reviewing proposal and seeking stakeholder feedback
 - Potential implementation would be April 2022 if approved
 - Proposal expanding opportunities for harvest of additional species - Northern Pike, Lake Trout, and Walleye
 - Existing minimum size and possession limits still apply

Roundtable Reports (All)

- Walley Mike: Report coho being caught jigging in Marine City
- Mark Davis: Low participation rates in activities; hoping to do annual sportsman banquet
- Eric Grajewski: Pot holes near entrance as you come to docks at Harley Ensign – are they going to be addressed this year?
- Henry Walters: Perch fishing in Fair Haven and it's pretty good
- Jerry Comfort: Club member mentioned Marine City boat launch, watch for rebar on launch, repair need to be made
- John Bacarella: expanded participation with whole families - hope to keep it up, hard to get inventory right now
- Bob Burns: Friend of the Detroit River hosting clean up event April 24th.
- Bruce Yinger: 38 degrees in the lower river, pretty crowded out and hoping for more functional launches.
- Michelle Selzer: initiative efforts webinar April 24th; going to share information on objectives and next steps
- Mary Bohling: Fishery Workshop, Belanger Park is open and charging on the weekend, Delray Great Lakes Fishery Trust Fund dollars who is managing that property? Need availability of a dumpster because of trash

- Jim Felgenauer: North Channel boating access site will not open till April 1; none open at Marine City; Marysville open at St. Clair River
- Matt Hughes: Wolf Lake Hatchery is gearing up for the Muskegon River Walleye egg take and expect to begin taking eggs next week.

Action Items:

Conversations and Coffee April 12, 7-8 pm

MSG Fisheries Workshop April 15, 6-8 pm

<https://events.anr.msu.edu/SoutheastMIFisheriesWorkshop2021/>

- Identify whether 9 mile or Blossom Heath is closed and relay that to group – Jim Francis
- Scott Pratt send plans for Clinton River cutoff redesign to Jim Francis for distribution to the group
- Matt Shackelford will check with the Monroe Power Plant regarding any agreement with the commercial fisherman storing equipment in canal over the winter
- Pat Hartsig will also follow up about Monroe hot ponds hartsigp@michigan.gov
- <https://freshwaterfeasts.com/> Fresh Water Feast blog- Send any recipe ideas to Mary bohling@msu.edu
- Distribute list of problem cormorant areas that were considered for the new permit system – Jim Francis

Next meeting – Date to be determined, but it will be scheduled in late September or early October.