



## 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.

### **Agenda Belle Isle Nature Zoo 176 Lakeside Drive, Detroit, MI 48207 September 11, 2018**

#### **Welcome and introductions (Frank Corl, Chair and Jim Francis, DNR-Fisheries)**

- Rene' Michele is the newest member, representing MetroWest Steelheaders

#### **Review the agenda and meeting minutes from April 2017 (All)**

- Some minor adjustments were made to the content and timing of the agenda

#### **PFAS Update (Tammy Newcomb, DNR-Executive)**

- 24 different types of chemicals in this family of chemicals – including jet firefighting foam (military bases), waterproofing, plating, Teflon, stainmaster carpets, paper production.
- PFOS – type of PFAS
- Drinking water most serious way of ingestion. Health problems not immediate - higher cholesterol, thyroid disease, ulcerative colitis, immune system, high blood pressure during pregnancy, testicular and kidney cancer
- Toxicity based on reference doses calculated from developmental toxicity study in rats. Lifetime Health Advisory PFOA + PFOS = 70 parts per trillion (ng/L). Working with EPA to get regulated. This level will protect unborn babies and others against cancer risk.
- Red Cross blood donors – have some small background level. Levels of PFAS in blood have been declining since 2000.
- PFOS phased out by 3M in 2002.
- Reduce risk: use a water filter if recommended, follow eat safe fish guidelines, limit using PFAS products (outdoor clothing, carpets, cleaning products, leather goods, ski waxes)
- 34 confirmed PFAS sites statewide (Ann Arbor municipal water supply – detected, but not at concerned level).
- First Fish consumption advisory in 1970 for mercury. 2012 PFOS first included in MI fish advisory.
- DEQ & DNR collect fish samples; DEQ conducts analysis; DHHS issues advisory.
- Huron River – unprecedented for this large a portion of a watershed. Protect health while continue to collect more data.
- There are no additional fish consumption advisories for Lake Erie due to PFAS.
- Black crappie and largemouth bass samples in Kent Lake 2017. Avg PFOS over 1,000 ppb (Do not eat level is 300 ppb). Only other place this high is Clark's Marsh in Oscoda at end of runway. Baseline lake avg is 205 ppb, high 285. Argo pond rock bass 2015 avg 313 ppb.
- PFAS – is not like mercury that can bioaccumulate because it is water soluble and accumulates in many types of tissue; may pass through gills. LSC has a bluegill advisory near Selfridge due to PFAS.

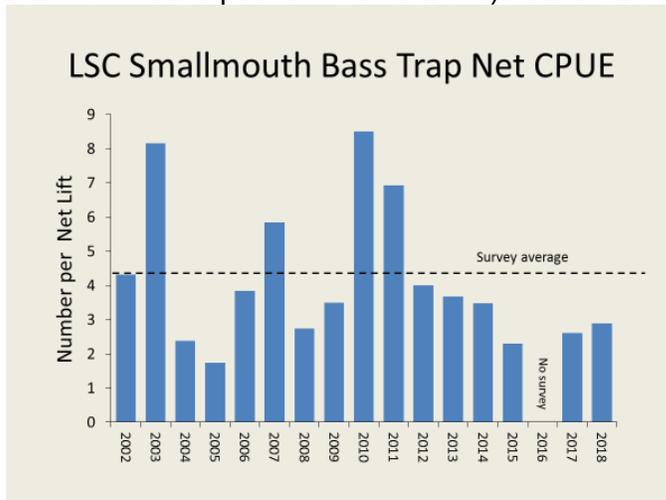
- DEQ continues to sample and narrow down sites, continued evaluation of fish in area. Drinking water highest priority.
- Remediation – stays around a long time. Incineration only option and filtration in water supply. Ongoing research.
- Refer to the PFAS Response web site for more background and the most up-to-date information <https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/>

### **Detroit River: Upper Trenton Channel Sediment Remediation Project (Heather Williams, USEPA-GLNPO)**

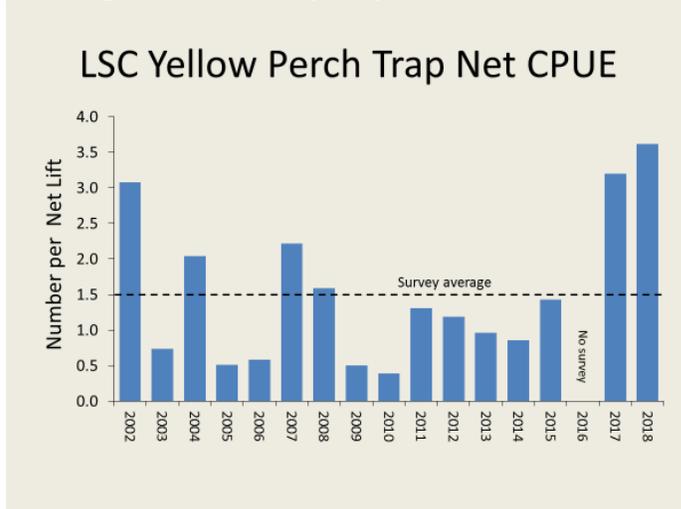
- USEPA Great Lakes Legacy Act – clean-up contaminated sediments in Areas of Concern (AOC). Voluntary program that needs at least 35% non-federal funding.
- Information is being shared on this project because the 90% design is now completed.
- Upper Trenton – western shore contamination. 3.9 miles along former and existing chemical plants. This project is required to delist the Detroit River as an AOC
- BASF, Arkema, Dow/Union Carbide are the partners. PCBs, Mercury, PAHs, PCNs, high pH (some core samples at 12), NAPL are the identified contaminants.
- 215,000 cubic yards will be removed. (14,000 cubic yards with high PCBs). (Taking a lot of spots down to clay).
- Process: hydraulic dredge (less sediment re-suspension), dewater, transport sediments to landfill, armor shoreline to protect remaining sediment. Sand cover to address residuals, community outreach.
- Where: BASF Northworks, Wyandotte Power, Bishop Park, BASF Southworks A&B (golf), Arkema Wye St. and East plant, former Firestone.
- Sediment dewatered in geotubes at Arkema – 90 acres vacant land, will have on-site water treatment facility. Dredging Pipelines will be well marked with buoys.
- Mechanical dredging at Wye St. with closed turbidity curtain for PCB complete removal.
- Project application for remedial action has not yet been submitted from the partners. Dredge 2020-2021?

### **Fisheries Research Update (Todd Wills, DNR-Fisheries)**

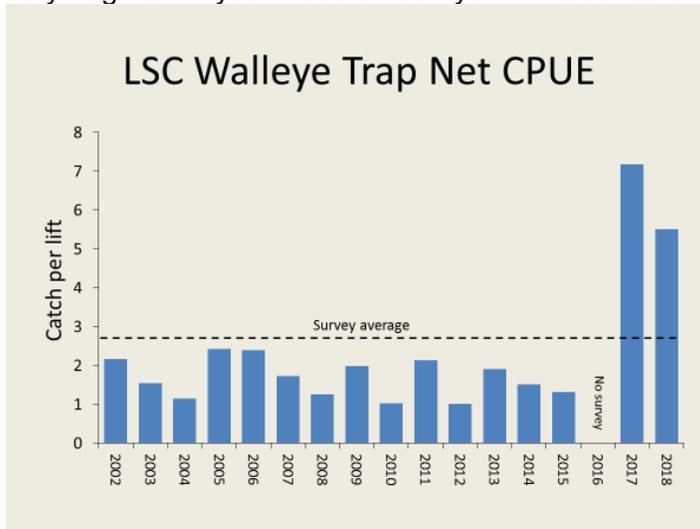
- Sturgeon. Setline – 2018 was highest juvenile Catch-Per-Unit-Effort (CPUE) since survey started in 1996. Trawl catch rates for sturgeon up in 2018 relative to last few years, but overall catch rate is still down and may be linked to increased water clarity. (second week of August highest no matter what – so that’s when they sampled this year).
- Smallmouth bass - spring trap net CPUE (2003, 2009, 2010 highest catch rates in data series, lowest secchi depth - less clear water). There was a slight uptick in 2018.



- Smallmouth bass mortality trending down since 2011. Currently averaging about 20% - very sustainable. (determine mortality rates - catch curve, age, abundance, follow individual cohorts through time and look at slope of curves across all age groups). FLW tournament results – the top ten anglers’ day 1-4 total weights above 80 lbs. Winning 93 lbs. These are huge catches, indicating the quality of the fishery remains high.
- LSC yellow perch trap net CPUE up 2017 & 2018 (2018 highest in time series). LOTS small fish. Age 2 LSC perch are on avg 3.5 inches smaller than Lk Erie fish. After that parallel, similar trajectory, LSC perch at a disadvantage when young. Probably productivity issue affecting food availability for juvenile fish. More investigation is needed.



- LSC walleye trap net CPUE – way above average in 2017 and 2018 – presumably driven by the very large 2015 year class of walleye from Lake Erie.

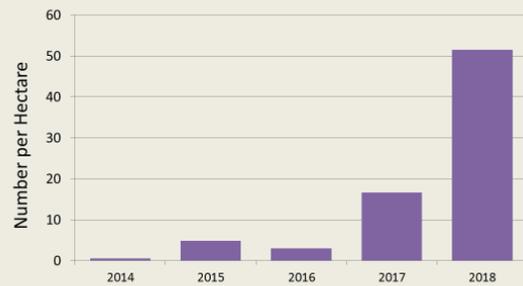


- Lake Erie age 0 yellow perch and walleye trawl CPE off the charts in 2018 (since 2014). (OH and ONT saw huge numbers as well).

LE Age 0 Yellow Perch Trawl CPUE

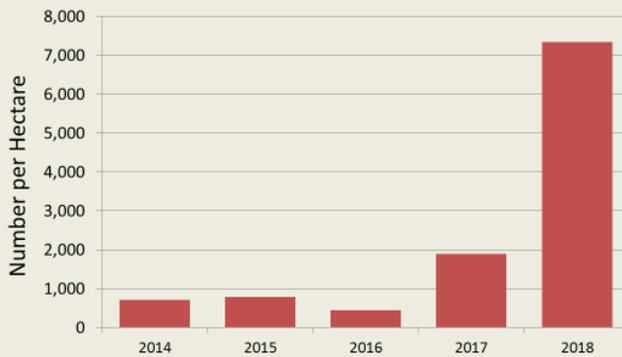


LE Age 0 Walleye Trawl CPUE



- Forage also good – ex. Age 0 white perch in record numbers

Lake Erie Forage  
Age 0 White Perch CPUE



- Cormorant nests, slight downtick (probably now space limited).

### Walleye regulations for the St Clair – Detroit River System (Sara Thomas, DNR-Fisheries)

Information presented should be taken back to groups and discussed. Specific options will be addressed at spring Citizen's meeting and feedback will also be collected at public Coffee and Conversation meetings in spring. Summer 2019 – DNR process of writing up regulation proposals, Fall 2019 review by NRC, Spring 2020 -new regulations in effect if approved.

#### Regulation History:

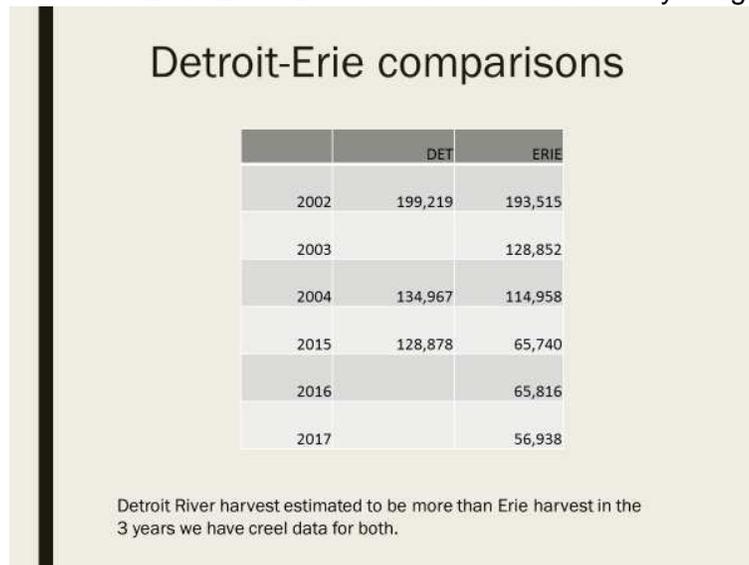
- 1975: Statewide walleye limit of 5 fish and 13" Minimum Size Limit (MSL)
- 1976: Statewide MSL for walleye increased from 13" to 15", with the exception of the St Clair River (SCR), Lake St Clair (LSC), Detroit River (DR) and Lake Erie, which remained 13"
- 1983: SCR, LSC, DR and Erie were allowed 1 extra walleye (6 total)
- 1985: bag limit for Lake Erie increased to 10 walleye
- 1990: bag limit for Lake Erie reduced back to 6 walleye
- 1999: bag limit for Lake Erie increased to 10 walleye
- 2001: bag limit for Lake Erie reduced back to 6 walleye
- 2004: For DR and Lake Erie, bag reduced to 5, MSL increased to 15", and April-May closed on Erie.

- 2006: the months of April and May re-opened on Lake Erie
- 2011: bag limit for Lake Erie increased to 6 walleye

From 1983-2003, SCR-LSC-DR-Lake Erie were allowed 1 additional walleye on top of the 5 fish statewide bag limit, with Erie sometimes getting 5 extra walleye for a bag limit of 10. (Up until 2015, the bag limit was 5 for a combo of bass, walleye and pike). Walleye abundances reached critical levels in the early 2000s and all the Lake Erie jurisdictions were charged with drastically reducing harvest. Since 2004, the Minimum Size Limit on Detroit River and Lake Erie has been 15" and from 2004-2010 the bag limit on those 2 waterbodies was 5, but the SCR and LSC limits remained 13 inches and 6 walleye. Beginning in 2011, Lake Erie's walleye bag limit was a moving scale tied to the Total Allowable Catch determined by the Lake Erie Committee and has been at the maximum of 6 fish for the last several years. During this switch, Detroit River remained unchanged at a 5 fish bag limit.

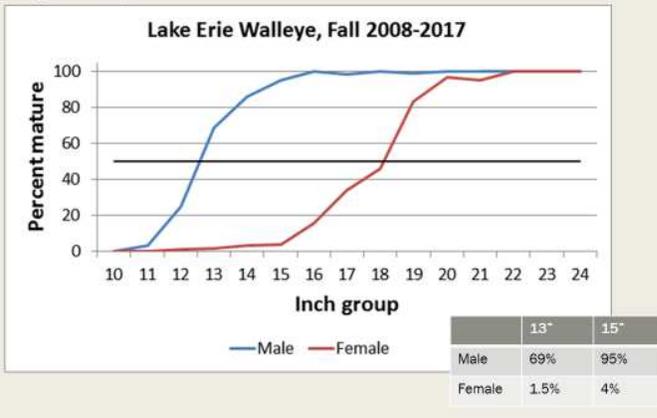
Creel and growth data:

Last creel from Detroit River was 2015, which was a very low harvest and low catch rate year. In the 3 years we have creel data on both Detroit River and Lake Erie, harvest is higher on the Detroit River relative to Lake Erie. 2015 showed there is already a high incidence of overbagging occurring.



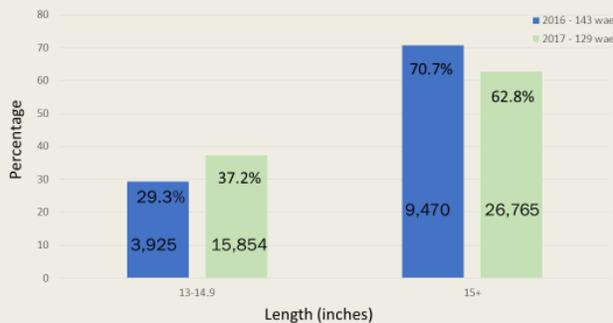
Growth data from Lake Erie walleye collected in 2008-2017 shows that both male and female walleyes at 13" are age 1. If we look at percent maturity by inch group, 69% of males are mature (in Fall) at 13", while 95% are at 15". For females, which mature at a later age, 1.5% were mature at 13" and 4% were at 15".

## Percent maturity by inch group



The size distribution of walleye harvested in the LSC sport creel during 2016-2017 is very well distributed, with fish from 13” to 26” being recorded and even 20% of fish being 20 inches or larger. In 2016, 29% of LSC harvested walleyes were 13-14.9” and in 2017 it was 37% (but more than 3 times as many walleye overall were harvested).

## Percentage of walleye under and over 15 inches – LSC biodata



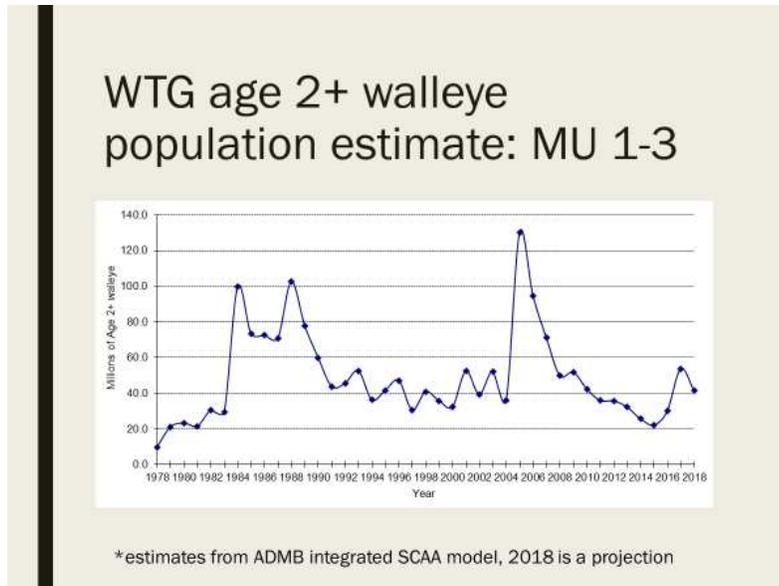
The statewide walleye Minimum Size Limit (MSL) and bag limit is very consistent, outside of SCDRS/Erie - only 1 major exception on Lake Huron for MH-4/Saginaw Bay. The daily possession limit is 8 walleye and MSL of 13”. This regulation was implemented for a biological reason to reduce predation on perch to help rebuild the perch population.

### Walleye Assessment and Quota Management

Fishery dependent and independent surveys in Management Units 1-3 used in a stock assessment model to estimate population abundance and generates a range of recommend allowable harvest. The Lake Erie Committee decided the Total Allowable Catch (TAC), which is allocated to MUs based on geographical area (Michigan has 6% of the area and quota).

Average percent of MI’s quota harvested from 1990-2017 is 48%. MI’s TAC has gone up since 2010, but harvest has not dramatically increased.

When looking at the combined Ontario-Ohio age-0 walleye recruitment index that feeds into the model, 1993, 1996, 2003 and 2015 have been the biggest year classes going back to 1988. The age-2+ walleye population abundance for MU1-3 peaked in 2005 (120 million) and then declined until 2015 (about 20 million). 2018 projection is 40 million age 2+ walleye.



Ohio regulations have the Lake Erie regulations apply to the major tributaries (Maumee, Sandusky, etc.) up until their first dam.

There has been some talk, that given the high walleye abundance levels we are currently seeing, that Ohio and Michigan may consider increasing the daily possession limit to 7 walleye.

Recent studies have shown even more movement and dependence of the Lake Erie fish for this region. Fish in SCDRS are Lake Erie fish. A genetic study in 2008-2009 showed that about 25% of the recreational harvest in Saginaw Bay were Lake Erie-LSC walleyes (Brenden et al. 2015). At least since 2000, the Thames River stock has been depressed and no longer a major contributor to the fishery due to poor recruitment. Basically, we are dealing with one - primarily Western Basin stock - throughout SCDRS.

The major points to consider and discuss with your groups:

- 1) How do you feel about raising the daily possession limit for walleye on the Detroit River to 6?
- 2) Considering both social and biological aspects (protecting more spawners), how does your group feel about increasing the MSL on SCR-LSC from 13" to 15"?
- 3) How many walleye is too much? How does your group feel about a potential increase in the daily bag from 6 to 7 fish (currently would be on Lake Erie only!!!)
- 4) Given that non-Erie stocks are much lower than historical (ex. Thames River) and that the majority of walleye caught in SCDRS are Lake Erie fish, how does your group feel about managing the system as a whole, with uniform regulations tied to those on Lake Erie? In the current scenario, the daily possession limit would be 6 walleye and a MSL of 15" throughout. Given that the TAC can only go up or down by 20% each year, it would take a number of years before the daily bag limit would be lowered. But if it reached that point, the daily bag limit reduction would apply from the St Clair River down to and including Lake Erie. Conversely, if the system was managed as a whole - recognizing it's the same stock - then if Erie did increase to 7 fish, then so would those other waterbodies.

## **Lunch – provided by DNR**

### **Marketing and Outreach Activities by Fisheries Division (Suzanne Stone, DNR-Fisheries)**

- Focus on three actions over the past few years –
  1. Reach lapsed female anglers in SE Michigan
    - 18,000 females in 3 counties received email/postcard (videos)
  2. Reach all lapsed anglers in SE Michigan
    - 57,000 anglers in metro-Detroit – email and Facebook
  3. Encourage all types of anglers to visit SE Michigan
    - Roadmap to Fishing
- Marketing efforts appear to be translating into increased license sales
- Career Pathways Student Camp – pilot program introducing high school age youth to DNR careers
- Fishing Programs through Parks and Visitor Centers. Hook Line and Sinker 8,800 participants in SE MI 2017 (teaching kids and parents).
- Academy of Natural Resources training camps for educators. Tie natural resources into educational benchmarks for science.
- Salmon in the Classroom 2017-2018 school year - 250 teachers 20,455 students 3<sup>rd</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Youth Conservation Academy Belle Isle
- Invasive species activities - online science education

### **Feasibility study for a BAS on Belle Isle (Amanda Treadwell, DNR-Parks and Recreation)**

- Firm hired to do a feasibility study
  - Assess what is existing; evaluate Belle Isle and Milliken; look at staffing and safety
- Field Surveys at existing boat launches, followed up by online survey ~1400 Responses.
  - ~500+ fish boats for Detroit River and Lake St Clair, St. Jean most popular launch. (23% suggest making improvements to existing facilities). Spring and summer most activity. (Suggestion-Milliken open slips to anglers during spring before summer season?)
  - Parking, congestion, security main concerns. (Restrooms)
  - Where are facilities needed: Belle Isle (25% best option)
  - In open comments 500 people specifically noted Belle Isle would not be suitable (traffic, congestion, Yacht club location – sailing)
- City interested in investing in boat launches. Riverside park.
- St. Jean's has poor layout and could be re-designed to hold more.
- Comments from group: traffic and congestion shouldn't be concerns, anglers primarily will use ramp 6:30 am- 8 am in spring. Other locations? Is yacht club location primary complaint

### **Law Enforcement update (Kris Kiel, DNR-Law Enforcement)**

- Wyandotte- Bust made of a boat with 70 walleye over limit. Need other anglers to help be eyes and ears. Tickets written, filets seized. Restitution to state for fish over bag.
- RAP line – call. Yes, they might not be able to get out right away or everytime, but you could have the missing piece of puzzle they need for an investigation or to help them out next time.
- Nick Atkin – new Great Lakes Enforcement Officer for Alpena to Lake Erie. Out of Sag Bay office. He covers a huge area, also mentioned to call in reports. Don't just complain about things online.

### **Fisheries Division Update (Jim Francis, DNR-Fisheries)**

- Cormorants – new bill, had field meeting in Alpena. USFWS should do Environmental Assessment after data by Nov.
- Regs: fish tournament expanded to wae and muskellunge (info at Sept NRC)
- Yellow perch: reduction from 50 to 25 statewide, exception for Lake Erie. Presented at Oct NRC meeting for information.
- LSC muskie spearing – NRC will not consider.

### **Committee Member Round Table (All)**

Jim Felgenauer - working on getting legislation for increased fines for sturgeon poaching, working with Clay Township on getting some cameras installed. Promoted tournament on Sept 28 - last year 27 boats 82 sturgeon.

Tim Muir – Crocker Boat launch only 1 light on. Yellow perch tournament Sept 29.

John Bacarella - lots of cormorants at LSC metropark on island in Black River marsh (500 counts). Admiral marina?

Bob Burns - GLRI restoration projects, Okonoka in water work done, waiting on permit for culvert at end. Stoney Island finished this spring. Celeron started in July about 1,000 feet reef now, working on armoring before winter.

### **Open discussion, summary of meeting, future meeting topics and locations (Frank Corl, Chair)**

Frank will determine the date of the next meeting – looking at March 2019

Lake Erie / Lake St. Clair Citizens  
Fishery Advisory Committee

Belle Isle Nature Zoo  
September 11, 2018

Attendees:

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Name	Affiliation
John Bacarella	Sportsmen's Direct Inc
Mary Bohling	Michigan Sea Grant
Bob Burns	Friends of the Detroit River/Detroit Riverkeeper
Jerry Comfort	Lake St Clair Walleye Association
Frank Corl	Downriver Bass Association
Mike Eichbrecht	Charter Captain/Michigan Sportsman.com
Jim Felgenauer	St. Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon for Tomorrow
Jim Francis	MDNR-Fisheries
Rene' Michele	MetroWest Steelheaders
Tim Muir	Lake St. Clair Walleye Association
Henry Walters	Michigan Charter Boat Association

Staff:

Nick Atkin	MDNR-Law Enforcement
Kris Kiel	MDNR-Law Enforcement
Craig Milkowski	MDNR-Law Enforcement
Suzanne Stone	MDNR-Fisheries
Sara Thomas	MDNR-Fisheries
Todd Wills	MDNR-Fisheries

Guests:

Tricia Blicharski	Friends of the Detroit River
Rich DeMerse	Lake St Clair Walleye Association
Caitie Nigrelli	Sea Grant-GLNPO
Simone deSouza	Michigan State Univeristy
Heather Williams	USEP-GLNPO

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