

## **Lake Michigan Citizen's Fishery Advisory Committee Meeting**

April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017

MUCC Headquarters, 2101 Wood St, Lansing MI

Attendees: Jay Wesley, Denny Grinold, Sarah Carlson, Mike Verhamme, Dennis Eade, Jim Dexter, Jim Bos, Jim Bedford, John Robertson, Keith Wils, Denny Kuenzer, Dan O'Keefe, Gary Smith, Matt Groleau, Bill Winowiecki, George Freeman, Eric Anderson, Jim Fenner, Chuck Pistis, Paul Jensen, Frank Krist, Rick Kretzschmar, Terry Walsh, Wes Newberry, Bob Reider, Alex Maguffee, Todd Thorn, Donna Wesander, Ed Eisch, Scott Heintzelman, Jim Schram, Todd Grischke, Tom Gorguze, Asa Wright, Martha Wolgamood, Tom Goniea, Larry Desloover

### **Fishing Reports**

Bay De Noc – Fishing excellent so far, but not a lot of boats out yet.

Holland – Fishing is good, but spotty. Coho are out in 200 FOW feeding on mysis.

Pere Marquette – Average steelhead run, high-water issues.

Grand River – Slightly better this year, high-water issues, fish seem slightly larger/longer.

Manistee – Winter fishing was good, spring has been hit or miss, fair amount of Cisco. Some boats not fishing yet, plantings went very well. Big Manistee having a better run of Steelhead this year

West and East Traverse Bay – Cisco is great, excellent perch hatch. Lake Trout haven't been planted since 2007 in west bay but they are seeing smaller ones, estimate around 50% are natural reproduction.

Ludington – Fishing for Lake Trout very good, recent tournament for Brown Trout produced spotty results but the conditions weren't the greatest, handful of Kings caught the last 4 or 5 days. Brown trout stocking went well at car ferry this year.

Lake Huron – catching a few Steelhead, but it is early yet.

Betsie River – on fire this year for steelhead.

Grand Haven – Not many boats out yet, Coho are down deep.

Muskegon to St Joe – pretty spectacular, healthy, beautiful fish.

Northeast – Saginaw Bay, best spring perch fishing in years and years, Steelhead fishing in Whitney Drain the best it has been, East Branch of the Au Gres fish look very healthy, walleye is slow, more Lake Trout than Walleye, Lake Trout are big, up to 16lbs, water still cold.

**Fish Division Updates**

Little Manistee Weir egg take for steelhead is complete. Fish were bigger in size and 2,837 were handled at the facility, which is about a 1,000 more than last year. The winter run was also solid prior to the weir grates going in this spring.

**Salmon and Trout Stocking Plan – Jay Wesley**

Below is the Lake Michigan stocking plan as agreed to by the Lake Michigan Committee. Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois will reduce chinook salmon. All states reducing lake trout and Wisconsin is reducing brown trout.

## Lake-Wide Stocking Plan

- 1.35 million Chinook salmon (-24%).
- 1.10 million brown trout (-24%).
- 2.54 million lake trout (-18%).
- 1.45 million steelhead (-3%)
- 2.25 million coho salmon (-2%)



Michigan will try “pulse stocking” to increase stocking numbers per site and to help spread fish to ports that do not have significant natural reproduction.

Port	2016 Stocking	2017 Stocking	2018 Stocking	Site Selection Criteria Number Achieved
Escanaba	12,000			
Manistique	34,000		33,334	2, 4, 5
Medusa	72,000	50,000		
Boardman	60,000		50,000	2, 4, 5
Manistee River	22,000			
Little Manistee River	150,000	180,000	180,000	1, 4, 5,
Big Sable River	38,000			
Muskegon River	18,000			
Grand Haven	59,000	50,000		2, 3, 4, 5
Holland	15,000			
Black River	15,000		33,333	2, 3, 4, 5
Saugatuck	16,000		33,333	2, 3, 4, 5
St. Joseph	48,000	50,000		2, 3, 4, 5
<b>Total</b>	<b>559,000</b>	<b>330,000</b>	<b>330,000</b>	

By 2018, nearshore (second priority) stocking of lake trout will be eliminated in Wisconsin, Indiana, and outside of 1836 Consent Decree waters in Michigan (south of Ludington).

Michigan Lake Trout Yearlings from Federal Hatcheries				
Site	Plan Numbers for 2016 and previous years	2016 Preliminary	2017 Inventory	2018 Planned
Northern Refuge	1,440,000	1,440,750	1,440,750	1,440,000
Mid-Lake Refuge	0	0	300,000	0
MM-4	340,000	310,000	310,000	340,000
MM-5	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000
MM-6	140,000	80,000	80,000	140,000
MM-7-8	80,000	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,200,000</b>	<b>2,030,750</b>	<b>2,330,750</b>	<b>2,120,000</b>
Extra Lake trout from plan =	130,750			
Extra Lake Trout from 2016 =	300,000			
10% variation	220,000			
Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana Lake Trout Yearlings from Federal Hatcheries				
Site	Plan Numbers for 2016 and previous years	2016 Preliminary	2017 Inventory	2018 Planned
Wisconsin Mid-Lake Refuge	600,000	600,000	300,000	300,000
WM3	80,000	50,000	0	0
WM4	20,000	15,000	0	0
WM6	50,000	25,000	0	0
Illinois Julian's Reef	120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000
Indiana	40,000	40,000	0	0
<b>Other States Total</b>	<b>910,000</b>	<b>850,000</b>	<b>420,000</b>	<b>420,000</b>
<b>Lake Michigan Total</b>	<b>3,110,000</b>	<b>2,880,750</b>	<b>2,750,750</b>	<b>2,540,000</b>

Michigan DNR raises lake trout at the Marquette Hatchery that are currently stocked in Grand Haven, Holland, and New Buffalo. The plan is to continue this stocking through 2018. These fish would then be replaced with steelhead once the Thompson Hatchery enhancements are complete.

Michigan DNR Lake Trout Stocking			
Site	2017 Plan	2018 Planned	2019 Plan
Grand Haven	12,500	12,500	0
Holland	24,500	24,500	0
New Buffalo	12,500	12,500	0
* To be discontinued starting in 2019.			

Approximately, 96,000 coho salmon were reduced in order to stock an additional 30,000 chinook salmon. This will result in a 12.4% reduction for all Lake Michigan sites except Platte River, which is our broodstock/egg-take river. The plan is to stock at level 2 starting in 2018.

Michigan DNR Coho Stocking					
		0.1247	0.05	2018 Request	0.05
		Stocking Adjustment			
Site	2017 Request	12.47%	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Platte River	800,000	0	720,000	800,000	880,000
Boardman River	100,000	87530	83,154	87,530	91,907
Galien River	25,000	21883	20,788	21,883	22,977
Grand River (Lansing)	50,000	43765	41,577	43,765	45,953
Grand River (Lyons)	240,000	210072	199,568	210,072	220,576
Manistee River	100,000	87530	83,154	87,530	91,907
Manistique River	30,000	26259	24,946	26,259	27,572
Rogue River	25,000	21883	20,788	21,883	22,977
Saint Joseph River	150,000	131295	124,730	131,295	137,860
Portage Lake	50,000	43765	41,577	43,765	45,953
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,570,000</b>			<b>1,473,981</b>	

Steelhead stocking remains the same with some additional sites to evaluate fall fingerling survival.

Michigan DNR Steelhead		
Site	2017 Yearling Plan	2017 Fall Fingerling Plan
Brevoort River	8,000	
Cedar River	17,000	10,000
Days River	5,000	
E.B. Whitefish	12,000	
Ford River	15,000	
Menominee	10,000	
Manistique	28,000	
Bear River	5,000	
Boyne River	8,000	
Elk River	7,000	
Boardman River	15,000	
Jordan River	8,000	
Platte River	20,000	100,000
Betsie River	20,000	
S.B. PM River	10,000	
Manistee River	51,000	200,000
Manistee River (Skamania)	34,000	
Pentwater River	7,000	
White River	22,000	
Muskegon River	55,000	
Grand River (Crockery Cr.)	5,000	
Grand River (Prairie Cr.)	5,000	
Grand River (Red Cedar)	3,000	
Grand River (Lansing)	22,825	
Grand River (Rogue R.)	28,000	
Grand River (Fish Cr.)	5,000	
Grand River (Flatt R.)	5,000	
Kalamazoo River	22,000	
Kalamazoo River (Rabbit)	16,225	
St. Joseph River (Sports club)	18,000	
St. Joseph River (Berrien sp)	30,000	70,000
St. Joseph River (Niles)	25,000	36,000
Galien River (New Buffalo)	12,000	
	<b>554,050</b>	<b>416,000</b>

Brown trout stocking remains the same as previous years.

Michigan DNR Brown Trout	
Site	2017 Yearling Plan
Bark River	22,000
Manistique	10,000
Big Bay De Noc	28,500
Little Bay De Noc	20,000
Menominee	17,500
Bear River	1,000
Petoskey	20,000
East Grand Traverse	15,000
Leland	20,000
Empire	30,000
Glen Arbor	15,000
Frankfort	46,000
Arcadia	15,000
Manistee	30,000
Ludington	56,000
Pentwater	19,000
White Lake	19,000
Muskegon	19,000
Grand River	15,000
Holland	24,000
Saugatuck	19,000
South Haven	8,000
St. Joseph	19,000
New Buffalo	19,000
	507,000

Comments:

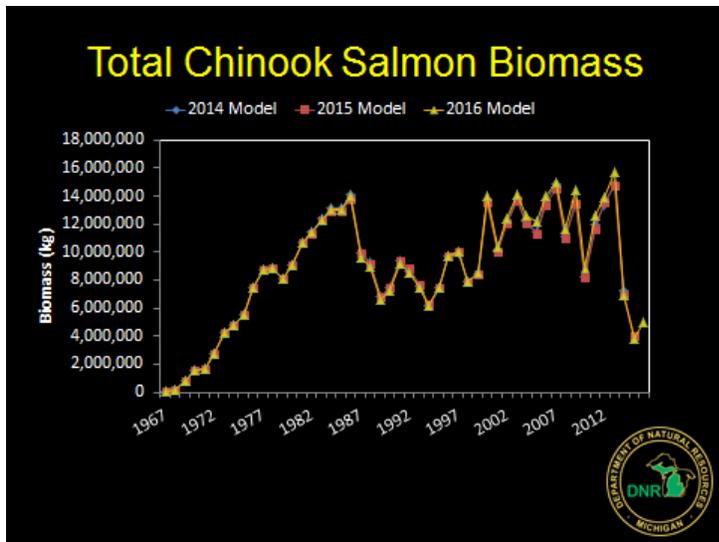
- Chinook important so people keep coming to Lake Michigan, stocking should continue until natural reproduction takes hold.
- Posts on the internet stating alewife production in Green Bay is a lot better than in other areas, reports saying there is a much higher concentration of alewife there.
- Nettings in Bay De Noc shows almost all salmon were wild fish, have we done this kind of survey in Lake Michigan? Beach surveys were last done through an MSU graduate student in the 1990s. Mass marking and the micro-chemistry research will help us understand more about natural reproduction.
- Jim Dexter – Researchers say we need to look at Age 1 fish to get a truer reflection of what is out there. In 2011 we had discussions about reductions and most of the LMCFAC members at that time supported complete reduction. Now, some support complete reduction and some want to continue stockings, we have to walk that line and move forward in the best way possible. The mentality seems to be, “if it is stocked, it is good.”
- Maybe we should consider stocking bait fish like.
- We need to think about the message, it’s not about the stockings, it’s about the fishing. Our message should be about the camaraderie and family, not just about the fish.
- As we make this transition, emphasize natural reproduction and its implication on the future of fishing. Put out projected number of a year class that will be natural instead of

focusing on how many will be planted. How about putting out an article on natural reproduction and what we expect for the future?

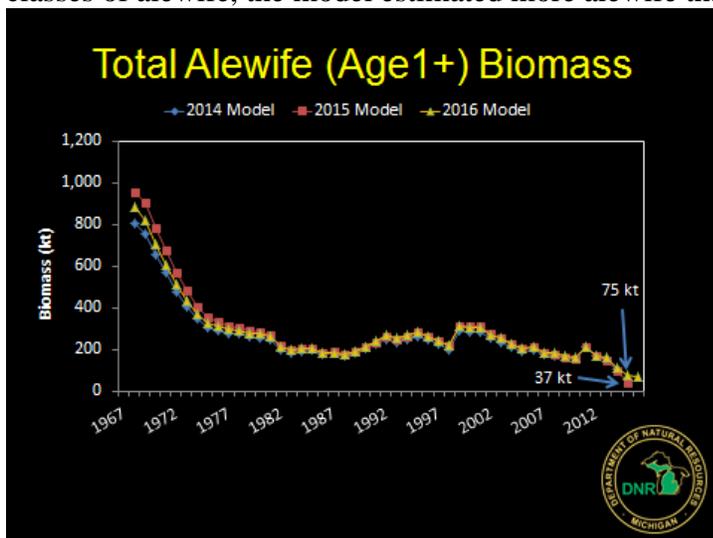
- I understand the perspective of stopping stockings, but we have not done adequate research and we need the stocked (marked) fish to complete that research.
- Feels like everything is about stocking, at some point we need to just say – “the Chinook are failing.” The Coho are doing great, why not just talk about Salmon?
- If we stop stocking, we will reduce catches of Chinook by 30%.
- But, there would be increased catches of other fish.
- People don’t want to pay a Charter for the “experience”. They want to catch Salmon.
- Planting numbers are hard numbers, wild are more nebulous, we need to give actual numbers of wild fish, for example, say 1.5 million vs. 70%.
- We could offer projections, but we don’t really know what drives that production, would take a couple of years to know. We get the best estimate of wild fish by looking at age 1 Chinook salmon through mass marking program.
- Perception is reality, when people hear about cutting Chinook, they hear negative. They want a balance, and we need to put priority on what stakeholders want. Look to Lake Huron, the facts are the fishery dollars are gone.
- Why are we reducing Coho stockings?
- On Lake Trout, how close are we to self-sustaining in Lake Michigan?  
Southern Lake Michigan is getting very close. Northern Lake Michigan still has high mortality and a very young lake trout population and it is improving.
- That is still a lot of Lake Trout being stocked and they will eat alewife and compete with our salmon.
- Maybe stakeholders don’t want don’t want Lake Trout.
- How scientific are the natural reproduction numbers?  
The numbers are based on mass marking – all stocked salmon have the adipose fin clipped and a coded wire tag. Prior to this, Chinook salmon were fed oxytetracycline in the hatchery, which produced a mark on bone structures of the fish.

### **Predator Prey Model – Jay Wesley**

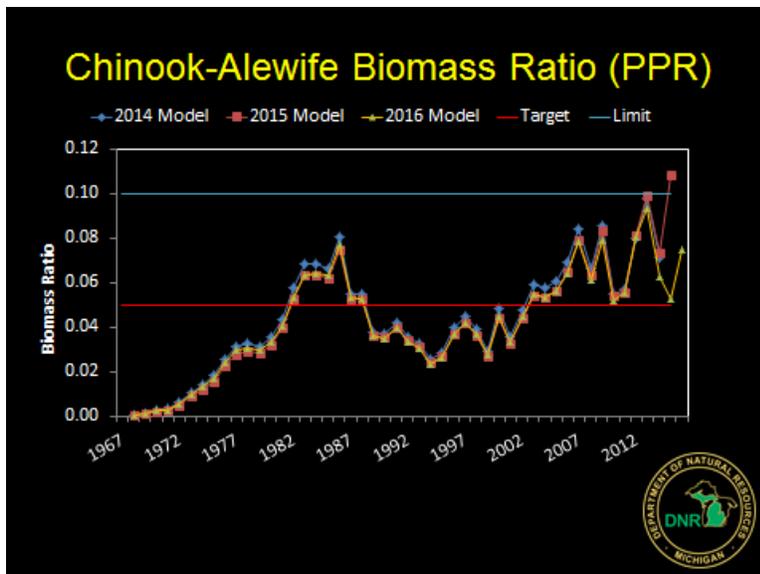
The Predator Prey Model is really an ecosystem model that estimates total prey and predator biomass using various survey data and fish consumption. Each year the model is run for the entire time series, so the most recent years in the time series typically show the most variation. The model learns about year class strength and fish growth so it adjusts accordingly for both predators and prey. Chinook salmon biomass increased slightly in 2016 to over 5 million kg.



Alewife biomass is still at historic lows but the estimate did come up some or flattened out for the 2015 and 2016 estimates. Based on predator growth and survival of the 2012 and 2015 year classes of alewife, the model estimated more alewife than the 2015 model run.



Given higher estimates of alewife for 2015 and 2016, the ratio shifted down into the cautionary area at about 0.074. This is above our target of 0.05. Although there was some improvement in the ratio, the Lake Michigan Committee is still comfortable with the recent multi-species stocking reduction to help bait fish recover and to bring down the ratio to target levels. The stocking reduction plan will not be fully implemented until 2018, so the committee is not considering any lake-wide stocking changes at this time.



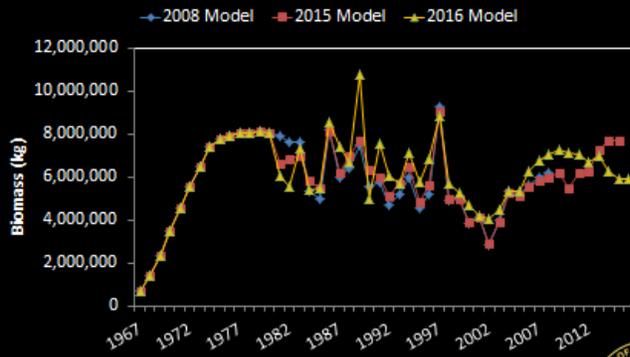
As stated earlier, some additional information such as wild recruitment was updated for the steelhead and coho salmon changing their biomass estimates. We also recognize that the lake trout biomass estimate should be improved for southern Lake Michigan. Rick Clark from MSU is leading an effort to receive grant funding. There is also another project out of MSU that will look at predator diets for both lakes Michigan and Huron.

### Updating the Lake Michigan Fish Community Model

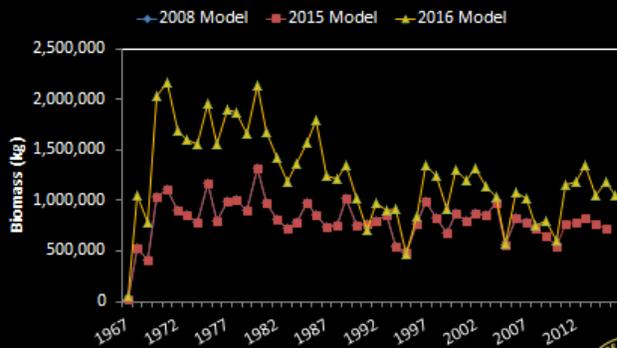
- After the March presentation of the PPR, update the lakewide models for:
  - Lake trout
  - Coho salmon
  - Brown trout
  - Steelhead
- Once estimates of lakewide biomass, abundance, and consumption are completed, feed the output into the prey model
- Evaluate alewife biomass with the other predators updated
- Use to guide future management decisions



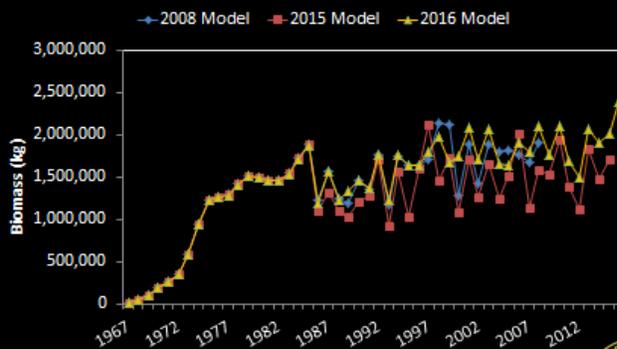
## Total Lake Trout Biomass



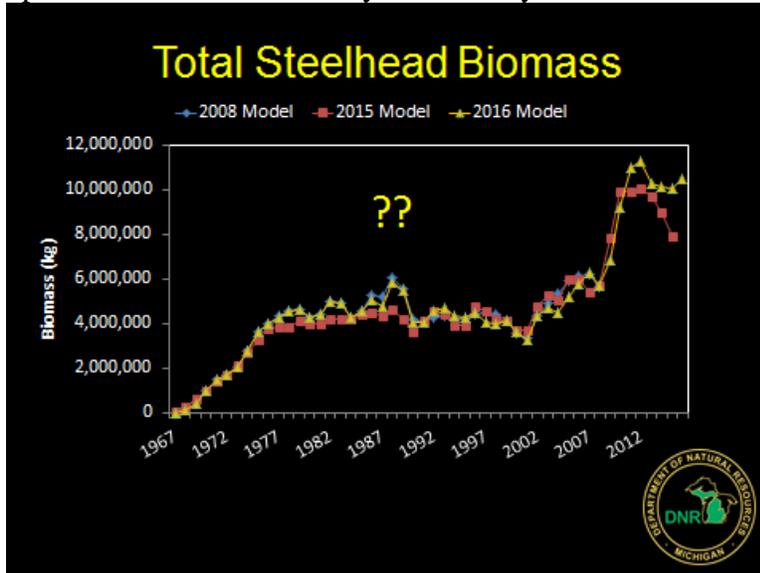
## Total Coho Salmon Biomass



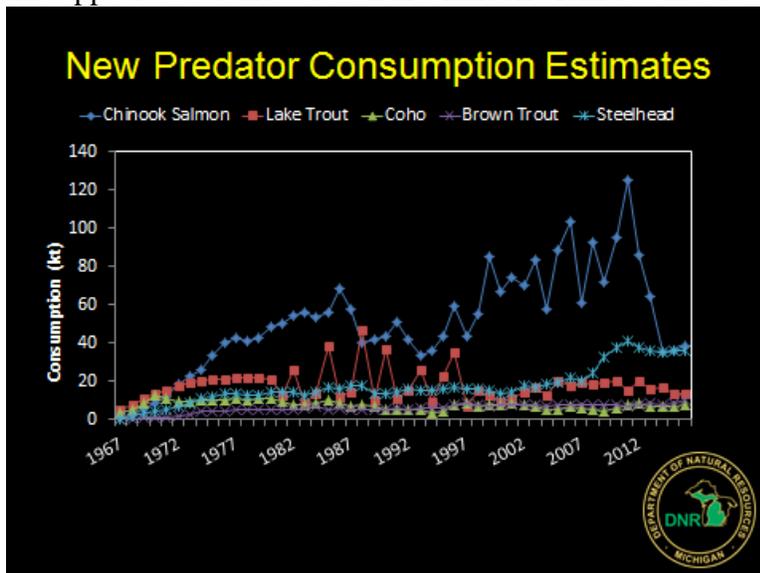
## Total Brown Trout Biomass



Recent model runs show that the steelhead biomass in Lake Michigan has been high the last five years, which was a surprise to some anglers. The PPR modelers will continue to evaluate and make improvements to the steelhead model to make sure that model inputs are good. Remember that biomass is a combination of fish size and number. It could be that the average size has gone up while the number has stayed relatively the same.

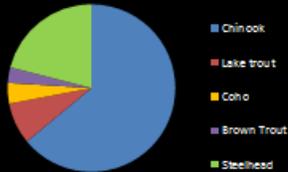


With steelhead biomass being higher, their percent of the alewife consumption was also higher making them a significant alewife predator on par right now with chinook and lake trout. At least this appears to be the case when Chinook biomass and alewife biomass are both low.



### Annual Consumption Updated Estimates by Predator 2017 Model with other salmon/trout updates

Predator	Kt in 2011	Percent	Kt in 2016	Percent
Chinook salmon	125.2	64	38.4	36
Lake trout?	15.0	8	13.7	13
Coho salmon	7.5	4	7.8	7
Brown trout	6.5	3	10.3	10
Steelhead?	40.7	21	36.3	34
Total	194.9		106.5	

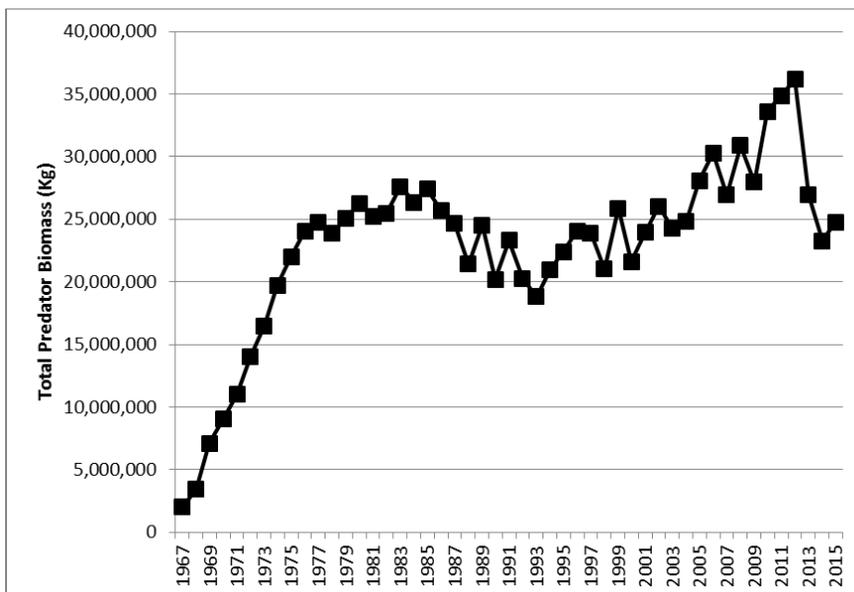


■ Chinook  
■ Lake trout  
■ Coho  
■ Brown Trout  
■ Steelhead



#### Comments:

- Are you concerned about no cormorant control?  
Although I don't think that cormorant numbers and consumption are specifically factored into the model, the year-end estimates of both prey and predators are after all mortality is accounted for. Yes – cormorants are a source of mortality.
- According to this, Steelhead make up the same biomass as Lake Trout and Salmon combined?  
That is what the model is telling us. We know that we can continue to make improvements to the model for estimating both steelhead and lake trout.
- It was requested that we add up the “totals” and include in the minutes. Total predator biomass peaked in 2012 at 36 million kg. The most recent low was in 1993 at 18.8 million kg. We are currently at 24.7 million kg. There appears to be a carrying capacity at or below 25 million kg.

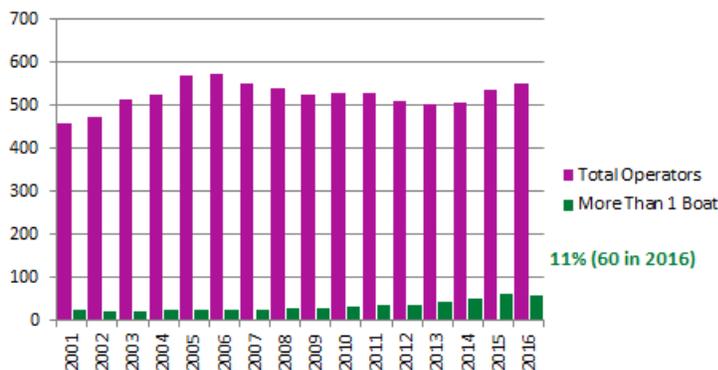


- Are Cisco competing for prey?  
Cisco will eat alewives, gobies, spinney water flies, etc., so they are both predator and prey.
- Does this say that Lake Trout only eat 13% of prey? I don't buy that for a second.  
It states that based on the lake trout biomass estimates and what we know about their diet that lake trout consumed 13% of the alewife biomass in 2016. Chinook grow much faster, move constantly, and live in warmer water. They have a much higher consumption rate than Lake Trout. A bioenergetics article will be coming out through Michigan Sea Grant that will help explain the differences between lake trout and chinook salmon.
- Angler perception is not accurate according to this data in regards to consumption.
- Still don't believe that Lake Trout don't eat more than Salmon.
- Should we look at reducing all predators to save Alewife population?
- Steelhead in the Betsie is the best it has been since 1995, it could be that they are that prevalent and if their size is increasing, it would also increase biomass and consumption.

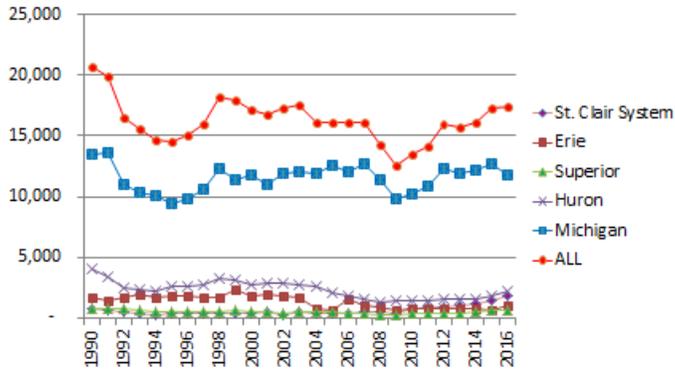
### **Creel and Charter Data – Donna Wesander**

Donna gave an update on both the Creel and Charter data. The number of charter operators has remained relatively consistent. Most of the excursions have been in Lake Michigan and this has been the case through the time series. Lake trout and Chinook salmon were the primary harvested species in Lake Michigan. Creel effort has declined along with the Chinook salmon catch rate. Chinook catch rates are similar right now to the “post BKD” days. All states Chinook salmon harvest rates are down except Wisconsin had a slight bump up in 2016.

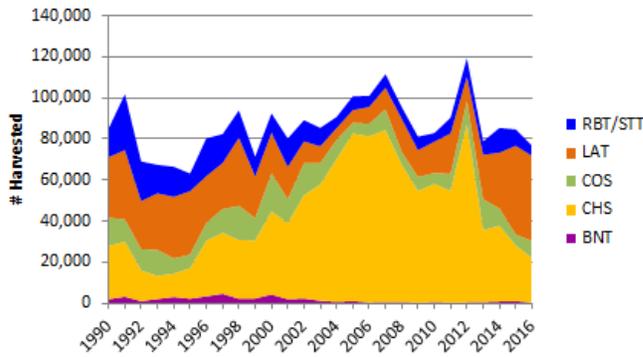
### **Number of Charter Operators**



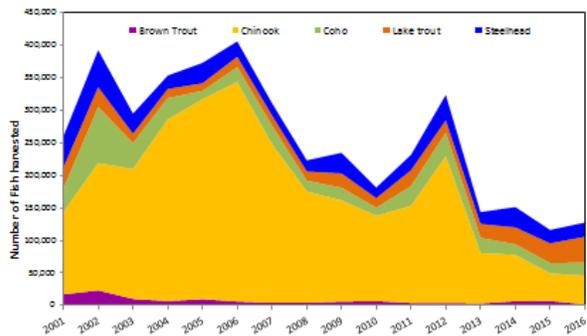
Number of Charter Fishing Excursions by Great Lake  
(State of Michigan waters only)



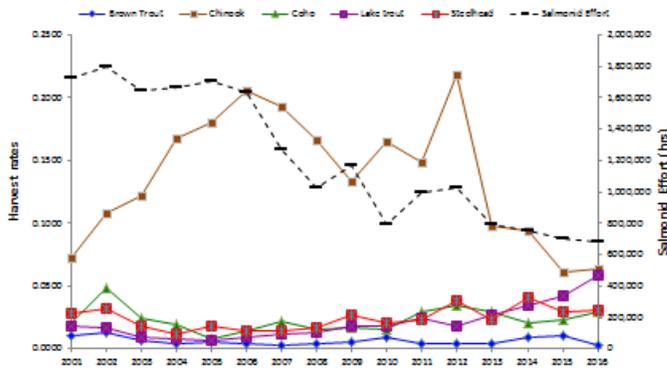
SOM Lake Michigan (GL only) Charter Angler Salmonid Harvest, 1990-2016



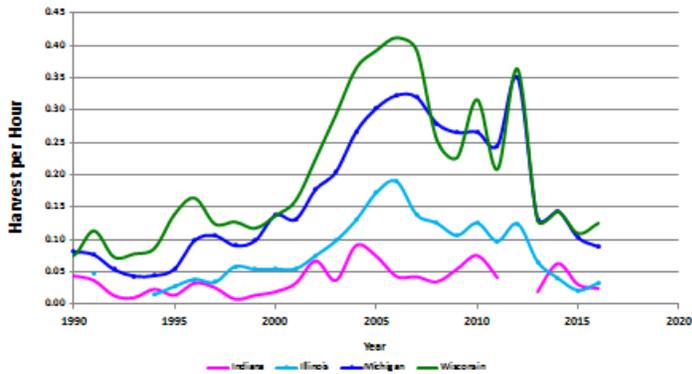
LM Creel Harvest



## LM Creel Harvest Rate and Effort



### Targeted, Boat Fishing Harvest per Hour of Chinook in Lake Michigan Charter Fishery - States Separately



Lake Michigan Technical Committee

### Questions:

- Do you have information on total angler hours?  
Not today, but the information is available on the website- [Creel and Charter Data](#) or you can contact - Donna Wesander - 231-547-2914 x 223

### Chinook Salmon Microchemistry Research – Alex Maguffee

Presentation on otolith examination to determine movement patterns of open lake fish.

## Quantifying differences in otolith chemistry of Chinook salmon in Lake Michigan to determine natal origins



Alexander Maguffee  
Reneé Reilly  
Rick Clark  
Michael Jones

### Questions:

- One of the points was that this will be a consistent way to pattern fish, why does it vary year to year?  
It really doesn't vary that much, it could be because the chemistry comes from local geology so run off, rainfall, etc. may affect outcomes, but it can still be used with moderate success.
- What is the cost per sample? \$40 - \$50 per sample.
- Do you have any numbers yet? Not yet, still completing pilot study.
- Can you use water samples? Yes, but it varies day to day and is hard to incorporate in the models, otolith sampling is faster and more accurate.
- Does microchemistry research have sidebar benefits, disease research, etc.? Potentially, would have to examine literature to determine that.

### Coho Stocking – Jay Wesley

Fisheries Division is currently reviewing coho salmon stocking locations through the Lake Michigan Basin Team. They are evaluating recent moves of coho from Lansing to Lyons and the Rogue River. Depending on the results, there may be opportunity to move more coho downstream. A net pen experiment this spring stocked 50,000 coho salmon in the Sable River at Ludington State Park. About 10,000 were stocked in two net pens and 40,000 were directly stocked at the time of the net pen release. Anecdotal evidence from angler catches this fall and fall of 2018 will be used to evaluate the Sable River coho stocking. Fall fingerling coho salmon will be stocked in the Medusa Creek pond as another experiment to see if a fishery can be created with fall fingerlings. The Basin Team is also evaluating Platte River Weir returns, lake-wide harvest, and port specific harvest to determine if other changes could be made.

Michigan DNR Coho Stocking	
Site	2018 Request
Platte River	800,000
Boardman River	87,530
Galien River	21,883
Grand River (Lansing)	43,765
Grand River (Lyons)	210,072
Manistee River	87,530
Manistique River	26,259
Rogue River	21,883
Saint Joseph River	131,295
Sable River	43,765
Total	1,473,981

**Comments:**

- Did we mark the stocked Coho at the Sable River? No, it is a cost issue, we should have them tagged, but it is not possible at this time.
- Where on the Manistee are coho stocked? Up at Tippy Dam.
- Would Coho run the Pere Marquette? There is already a wild run there and we are already seeing straying.
- Are there wild Coho in the Kalamazoo River? There is a run each fall but we don't know if they are wild or straying from other locations. There are some small tributaries that do show some coho natural reproduction.
- Is egg take for Michigan only? It is for Michigan and for other state's needs (typically Indiana).
- Could you move some from Platte coho to other ports? Possibly, this is being evaluated.
- Do coho just come and go? Yes, sometimes, it depends on weather and other factors from year to year. Movement throughout the lake varies as well as run timing.
- As people learn to target Coho, they are becoming a better fishery.
- When you think of the Platte River and the years where we planted 600,000-800,000 and some years we get no return. We would have to keep stocking a significant number to get the return we need.
- You've got to make sure you have big enough stocking numbers in a couple of areas to ensure return of enough fish.
- Manistee has large run of wild Coho that could be utilized for eggs.
- Closing – Please feel free to share information and ideas with Jay as they are discussing these numbers now.

**Salmon Bag Limit – Jay Wesley**

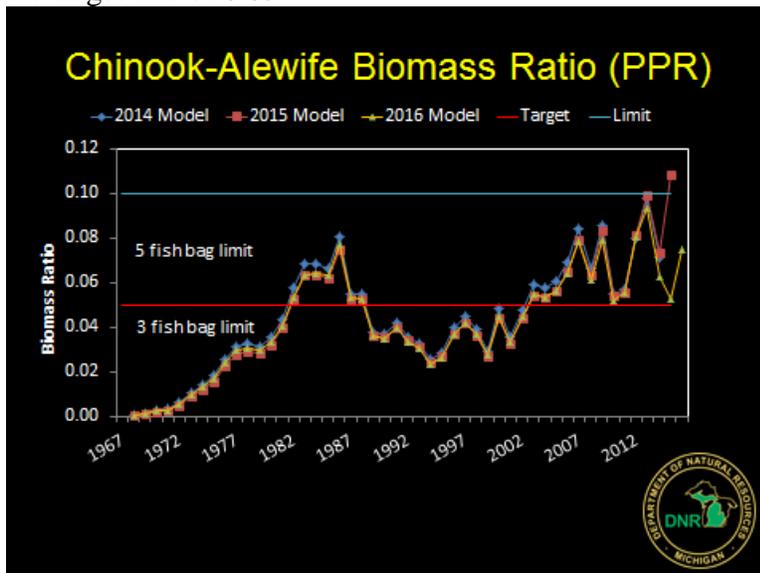
The salmon bag limit was historically 5 fish like the states of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana until the reduction in the salmon population due to BKD. It dropped to a 3 salmon bag limit in 1989. During talks of Chinook salmon stocking reductions, anglers asked to go back to the 5 fish bag limit. Randy Claramunt determined that during times of high effort and harvest that the 5 fish bag limit could assist with lowering alewife consumption but most of the time it would have minimal impact. In 2009 the bag limit went back to 5 fish and was tied to a feedback policy that

followed Charter Boat catch per effort and % of Charter anglers catching 3 fish or more. In 2014, the feedback policy was shifted to the predator prey model with the assumption that the bag limit would stay at 5 during times of stocking reductions and decrease to 3 during times of stocking increases.

## Salmon Bag Limit

- Established in 2009
- Why not let us harvest the salmon?
- Based on Charter catch per effort and % catching 3 or Chinook per day (2009-2014).
- In 2014 converted over to Predator Prey Ratio based on LMCFAC recommendation to keep it a biologically driven policy.

Should we determine a decision point with the Predator Prey Ratio? It was recommended to use the target line of 0.05.



Question from Jay to group – When do we shift, do we make the decision based on biological data or based on social concerns?

The new fishing regulations go into effect for 2018, and we will be continuing a two year cycle. If we make changes after the fishing guides are printed, it can be confusing and if they are less restrictive that is fine, but if they are more restrictive they will be difficult to enforce.

### Comments:

- Would like to see it go to 3 due to the “limit” mentality, easier to limit out at 3 than at 5.

- Lake Huron had that debate, if biologically makes sense, then it should be changed, but why punish the fishermen for social reasons.
- Biological stance we should go 3, also send message that the DNR is trying to protect the salmon fishery.
- Biologically we are getting enough adults returning to rivers to keep wild fish production going, so lowering bag limits isn't really a biological decision.
- Do bag limits really matter at this point if you can't catch 5 anyway? Dropping to 3 might increase angler satisfaction as they would be able to catch their limit.
- When discussing limits, you are talking about other waterways as well. Anglers may only have a month to fish Coho depending on where you fish and if you limit them to 3 you may lose those fishermen.
- The weekend fishermen might not be willing to travel if you limit to 3, they may only have a couple of days a year to fish and need to get more fish during that time period.
- What if the limit is set based on where you are fishing, or Charters are restricted to 3 but the "regular" fisherman could take 5.
- Charters don't want their license or their patrons licenses to be treated differently.
- Real dilemma is there are the "weekend warriors" and it isn't fair to restrict them when they may only have a day or two to get out.
- It is both a biological and a social issue, but we should stay at 5 unless the science indicates otherwise.
- Why not raise Steelhead to 5? Why not raise Lake Trout to 5?
- Last meeting everyone was saying that "we need more silver fish". Why change a tool that is helping bring the numbers down which would allow more plantings in the future. The message, if we lower the limit, is that the Chinook fishery is gone.
- Most places in the world you can only keep 1 Salmon annually, we really have it pretty good here.
- Let's vote on Steelhead. Let's vote on Lake Trout.
- What about surveying the stakeholders?
- Just an informal discussion at this point, may have to put it on the agenda for future meetings.
- What about looking at a Lake wide instead of Statewide change?
- Members need to talk to their groups and constituents.

Informal survey done by show of hands, 12 wanted bag limits to stay at 5, 7 said it should be changed to 3. Following the meeting, Jay sent an email to the committee suggesting that an issue statement be produced so that a formal decision could be made through a conference call this summer.

### **Share Drive and Marketing and Outreach Plan for Lake Michigan – Elyse Walter**

Elyse discussed the marketing plan which will emphasize the benefits in the diversity of the Lake Michigan Fishery. The tactics used to promote this information will be phenomenal content, promotional videos, social media, emails, press releases, engaging the Michigan Wildlife Council, and finding other beneficial groups to communicate our message with a variety of anglers.

## What is the *problem*?

- Lake Michigan has had a couple of tough years with the change in lake dynamics.
  - We, the DNR, want to continue to highlight the excellent fishing opportunities that can be found there.
  - How do we do that? M A R K E T I N G !
- 

## What are we doing for *Lake Michigan*?

- Developing content!
    - Road Map to Fish Lake Michigan
      - What to fish for
      - Where to fish
      - When to fish
    - Promotional video
      - Looking to create a buzz around Lake Michigan
- 

## What are we doing for *Lake Michigan*?

- Making use of social media
    - Promote “Road Map to Fish Lake Michigan” and promotional video
  - Sending emails
    - Promote “Road Map to Fish Lake Michigan” and promotional video
  - Distributing press releases
    - Tack Lake Michigan-related messages onto relevant press releases
-

Elyse also shared information and instructions on utilizing the LMCFAC SharePoint site. If anyone needs the information on how to sign up to access this site, please email Elyse Walter at [WalterE@michigan.gov](mailto:WalterE@michigan.gov).

#### Comments:

- Will it be all about Lake Michigan? Lake Michigan and Lake Huron this year, will focus on Michigan ports.
- The DNR has become much more user friendly.
- Think in terms of the fact that Lake Michigan is the most productive “inland sea” with a world class fishery. We need to reach out to CVB’s and other partner groups, Pure Michigan, Beach Town, etc.
- Work on tying in fishing reports and the Charter boat reports.
- One of the things that is a struggle is that they come for the Charter boats, but we need to get them to stay, maybe by helping inform Charter Captains of other things to do in the community so they can refer their customers to other community resources. Some Charter Captains are already doing this.
- We need to build sustainable tourism, propose a formal campaign to other CVB’s.
- Information isn’t getting out there, even when we do have it, most in the room have not seen the Chinook video.
- We should include marketing information and other presentations on the Extranet team site.

#### **Cormorant Control Update**

In 2016, a U.S. District Court ruled that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had done an inadequate environmental review of ongoing cormorant control efforts including those in the Great Lakes and in Michigan. Depredation orders are on hold until the USFWS can complete an Environmental Assessment. This means that there will be no orders issued for Michigan, which could allow cormorant populations to rebound and could prevent efforts to harass birds at stocking sites.

#### Comments:

- Constituent groups need to apply pressure to legislatures regarding cormorant control and push USDA Wildlife Services to address this issue.
- Best way to do this is to write a letter and follow up with a phone call.

#### **Commercial Fish Statute Presentation – Tom Goniea**

Tom gave a brief history of the Commercial Fishing statute and why it is necessary to develop new statute. The statute language has many positive changes proposed such as better reporting, higher fees and restitution fines, notification of lost nets, clearer enforcement procedures, and defines authorities to issue orders and individual licenses. The controversial proposal would be to allow by-catch of lake trout and walleye. Tom also discussed the legislative process.

## The Current Commercial Fishery

- 50 state licenses (33)
  - 8 on Superior (6)
  - 15 on Michigan (8)
  - 24 on Huron (16)
  - 3 on Erie (3)

~21 Active  
businesses



## Proposal: Major Items

- Define authorities to issue rules, orders, and individual license conditions
- Modernize fees, fines, and penalties
- Restitution for poaching/resource violations
- Require the immediate notification of unattended, lost, vandalized, or stolen gear
- One LWF spawning closure on the upper lakes
- Clarify enforcement procedures



## Proposal: Major Items

- Better reporting to improve tracking / enforcement
- Define crucial fishing terms
- Create a commercial advisory committee
- Create two lists:
  - List of species authorized for commercial harvest
  - List of species prohibited from commercial harvest
  - DNR authority to evaluate additional species
- Lake Trout and Walleye bycatch allowances



## Proposed Bycatch Allowance

- Lake Trout: Superior, Michigan & Huron
  - From April 15 – November 6:
    - Up to 100 pounds of lake trout per day
  - Owns more than one license
    - Daily limit for each license that is actively fished
  - Lake Trout must be 17 in. to sell
  - The bycatch allowance cannot impact TACs



## Proposed Bycatch Allowance

- Walleye in Saginaw Bay (May 15 – November 6)
  - Licenses with up to 20 nets = 5 lb. / net / day
    - License with 1 net has daily allowance of 5 lb.
    - License with 10 nets has daily allowance of 50 lb.
    - License with 20+ nets has daily allowance of 100 lb.
- Each license's daily bycatch allowance will be written into the license
- Limited to 15% of recreational harvest
- Walleye bycatch must be 15 in. to sell



Contact Tom with any questions or if you need more information about the proposal– 517-284-5825 or email [gonieat@michigan.gov](mailto:gonieat@michigan.gov)

### Comments:

- We will allow 100lbs bycatch? What if they decide to check nets daily to take advantage of this?
- Upset with rollout of this, feels like it was done in secret and some of these issues really needed to be discussed. No one talked to the Advisory Committees, so the only way to make changes now would be to stand in line and talk to the legislature. Controversial report estimates bykill up 100,000 fish (MSU). Look into Saginaw Bay more, a lot of mortality, let's compare that and discuss other options. The credibility of the DNR has been damaged because of these recommendations. This is already on the way to legislature with no discussion with the communities or groups involved.
- Many people say that the DNR gets away with "funny business" and this just proves it. I am concerned that all this funny business on Saginaw Bay will ruin that fishery.
- Michigan Steelheaders has real concerns with this statute and they were not at the table and they should have been as they are stakeholders in this.
- Jim Dexter – It is important that these issues come out so we can work to adjust things, the information we gather helps us address legislators. This is in the Senators office, it is not in legislature yet.

- We need more time to look at this issue and create a package that both sides can live with.
- Several requests to take it out of the Senators office before it goes to legislature.
- What about non reported fish going to wholesalers, there is nothing in there regarding that, all of this under the table “funny business” needs to be addressed.
- About 90% of the recommended statute is fantastic, but it needs to be fine-tuned and we need it for the tribal decree.
- Biggest issue is they know what Commercial Fishermen have been getting away with for years.
- Lake Trout and Walleye are the only sport fish left in Lake Huron, how can commercial fish and game fish be in the same group, how can a fish be a game and a commercial fish at the same time?
- Proposed draft defines yellow perch as commercial fish.
- Lake Trout and Walleye should be designated as sport fish.
- We put together a biologically sustainable proposal, it is up the legislature to decide if they will go with the plan as proposed.
- This should be taken out of the Senators office and discussed with the Advisory Groups.
- Could bycatch be negotiated down? Could we negotiate to make everyone happy?
- Any assurances that before the bill goes through legislation there can be negotiations?
- You have to realize that all tribal commercial fishermen are under the consent decree that allows by catch and is in need of better reporting and tracking, that is the real issue right now, hopefully this will move tribes to work on that.
- Wisconsin allows large mesh gill net and by catch for their commercial fishers and so does Canada and the 1836 Tribal fishers.
- Why not just buy them out? Not feasible, no money available to do so.
- I have been with the Citizen Advisor process since 1988, one of the issues as a group is transparency, we haven’t always been transparent. I believe it is a gene in scientists; they want to get to the bottom of the stuff, so they just keep pounding it out. Opinions have been the same at each showing of this information. Are we operating in the daylight or at night? We start a lot of conversations, how many do we finish?

### **Next Meeting Date**

October 17<sup>th</sup> in Grand Haven or Jay’s in Clare.