

Lake Michigan Citizen's Fishery Advisory Committee Meeting
Draft Minutes
October 2nd, 2018
MUCC Lansing

Attendees: Denny Grinold, Jay Wesley, George Freeman, Denny Kuenzer, Gregg Mariuz, Gary Smith, Glen Buehner, Jim Dexter, F/Lt. Dave Shaw, Cpl. Sean Kehoe, Jim Bedford, Dan O'Keefe, Frank Krist, John Stegmeier, Wes Newberry, Eric Andersen, Blaise Pewinski, Mark Williams, Paul Jenson, Jason Phelps, Chip Klein, Bill Winowiecki, Brian Gunderman, Ed Eisch, Dennis Eade, Jim Fenner, Jim Bos, Dave Peterson, Stephen Greg, Patrick Hanchin, Bob Reider, Ed Barr, Martha VanAmberg, Bart Bale, Chuck Pistis, and Ed Metzger.

Advisor Reports

- Holland: June and August were slow. Had to fish deeper than normal.
- PM River: Good run of Chinook salmon this fall. Trout fishing was slow during summer.
- Ludington: June was tough with some lake trout around. July and August were mostly lake trout with some silver fish mixed in. Chinook salmon are big this year. September's fishery was mostly offshore. We are seeing coho salmon in Ludington State Park so stocking effort is paying off. Bait is doing well and have not seen this much in years with lots of smelt. Feel that effort was better in Ludington due to size of fish not the numbers. Charters lost trips due primarily to a lake trout dominant fishery. Offshore productivity seems to be getting better. There were lots of currents this year changing the water constantly.
- PM Lake: Best run of Chinook salmon in many years coming in the lake.
- Manistee: The king fishery was decent, but the consistency was poor. There seemed to be frequent changes to the water. It is the most bait that we have seen in years. Lake trout was good with coho and steelhead down. There was no offshore steelhead fishery this summer. Brown trout fishing was poor. Lake trout were stuffed with alewives.
- Glen Arbor: Great lake trout fishing all year. Chinook were inconsistent but had some good days this fall. No bait in the area until July. Coho were ok but not as good as last year. Seeing some more smelt. Fish are big. Saw a few brown trout. Not seeing as many Lake Huron Chinook based on tag returns.
- Lake Huron: Saginaw Bay is seeing record catches of walleye, and the regulations will stay the same for 2019. Atlantic salmon doing well from Rogers City to Alpena. Lake trout fishing has been great. Diet studies are showing smelt and gobies with 75% of fish having bait in their stomach.
- Frankfort: Lake trout fishing was good. Chinook numbers were down but the fish are bigger with decent fishing in May and June. We had coho in August. Overall a good season. Platte Bay has good numbers of Coho salmon. Jiggers are having the best success. Saw lots of bait.
- Grand Haven: Spring was good until June and then it was just lake trout. August was tough and could hardly find even lake trout. There was a scattered king run up the Grand. Offshore fishery was non-existent. People are asking for salmon and not lake trout. Had to go out past 300 ft for any good steelhead fishing.

- Grand River: Poor year for summer run steelhead with warm water. They are just starting to come in now with cooler weather. Some of the Grand River tributaries have coho and Chinook salmon in them now.
- New Buffalo: Coho fishing was great through end of June. There was lots of bait around. Kings were good with 10-12 per trip in April and May – best spring king fishing in years. Lots of lake trout for the rest of the year. Some lake trout have sores and customers were unwilling to take those fish.
- Port Sheldon: Good fishing for the most part. Kings were big. No one likes the lake trout.
- Upper Peninsula: Salmon and steelhead were very slow. Anglers are catching more lake trout. Lots of bait all summer in northern waters.

Stocking Numbers and Sites for 2019

The Lake Michigan Citizen’s Fishery Advisory Committee has been discussing stocking options since the 2016 Lake Michigan Committee decision to reduce predation in Lake Michigan. The original plan was to reduce to 200,000 Chinook salmon. After public comments, we reduced lake trout south of the 2000 Consent Decree area along with coho salmon to bring the number up to 330,000 based on Chinook equivalents. In 2018, we bumped the stocking up to 553,000 anticipating reductions in a mix of lake trout, brown trout, and coho salmon. Lake trout were not approved by the five tribal nations and the USFWS. Therefore, one last change was made to decrease more Chinook, brown trout, and coho to maintain Chinook stocking at 504,000 in 2019 and to stay under our predator cap. Steelhead stocking will not change because we are in the middle of a mass marking study. We will evaluate possible stocking increases of Chinook salmon in 2020 depending on the Predator Prey Model results.

2019 Chinook Stocking Plan

Site	Current			Proposed	
	2016	2018	2019	2019	2020
Escanaba	12,000	0	0	0	0
Manistique	34,000	80,000	0	0	69,000
Medusa	72,000	0	80,000	72,000	0
Boardman	60,000	75,256	0	0	62,306
Manistee River	22,000	0	0	0	0
Little Manistee River	150,000	208,000	248,000	228,000	208,000
Big Sable River	38,000	0	0	0	0
Muskegon River	18,000	0	25,256	25,000	0
Grand Haven	59,000	0	100,000	89,306	0
Holland	15,000	40,000	0	0	35,000
Black River	15,000	75,000	0	0	55,000
Saugatuck	16,000	75,000	0	0	75,000
St. Joseph	48,000	0	100,000	90,000	0
Total	559,000	553,256	553,256	504,306	504,306

2019 Brown Trout Stocking Plan

Site	2016	2018	Proposed
Bark River	22,000	0	0
Manistique	10,000	0	0
Big Bay De Noc - Hallsteads	28,500	0	0
Little Bay De Noc	20,000	0	0
Menominee	17,500	20,000	30,000
Petoskey	20,000	20,000	15,000
Elk Rapids	15,000	0	0
Leland	20,000	0	0
Glen Arbor	15,000	30,000	20,000
Platte Bay	30,000	60,000	40,000
Frankfort	46,000	60,000	50,000
Arcadia	15,000	0	0
Manistee	30,000	75,000	60,000
Ludington	56,000	91,000	81,000
Pentwater	19,000	0	0
White Lake	19,000	0	0
Muskegon	19,000	0	0
Grand River	15,000	0	0
Holland	24,000	0	0
Saugatuck	19,000	0	0
South Haven	8,000	0	0
St. Joseph	19,000	0	0
New Buffalo	19,000	0	0
Total	506,000	356,000	296,000

2019 Coho Salmon Stocking Plan

Site	2016	2018	Proposed
Escanaba	26,259	51,259	46,000
Manistique	0	0	0
Boardman River	87,530	87,530	78,500
Platte River	800,000	725,000	724,000
Manistee River	87,530	87,530	78,500
Sable River	43,765	43,765	40,000
Muskegon	0	40,000	35,000
Grand River (Lansing)	50,000	50,000	38,000
Grand River (Lyons)	200,719	100,719	83,000
Rogue River	25,000	35,000	35,000
Grand River (Ada)	0	90,000	85,000
Saugatuck	0	40,000	35,000
St. Joe River (Berrien Springs)	131,295	101,295	86,000
Galien River	21,883	21,883	19,981
Total	1,473,981	1,473,981	1,383,981

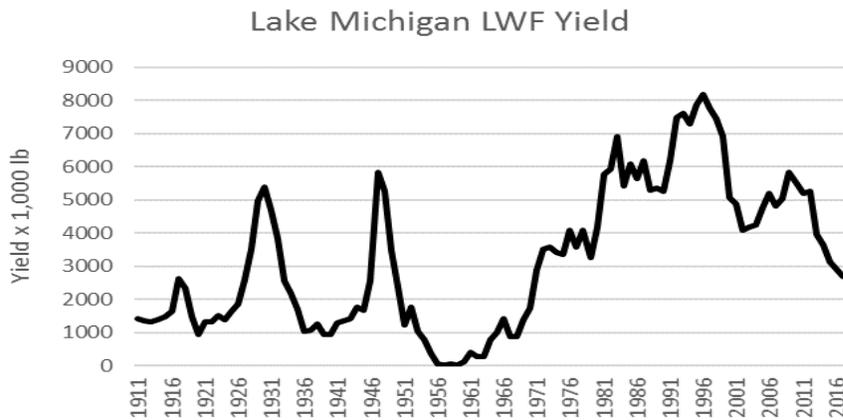
Regulation Changes

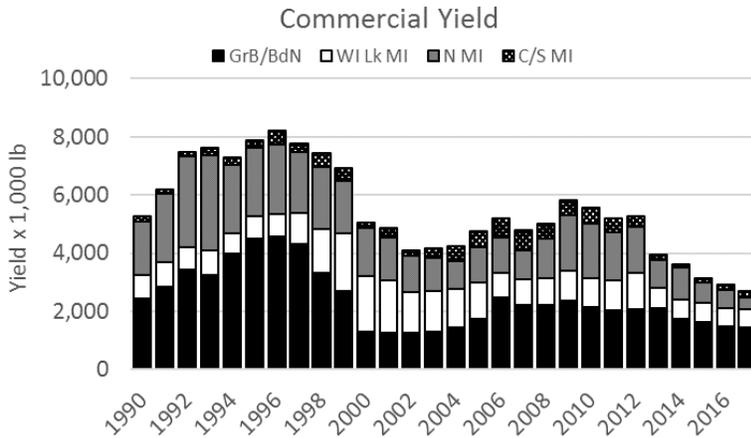
- Definition of an artificial lure: from Aug. 1 – Nov. 15 single-pointed hook measuring ½-inch or less point to shank or treble hooks 3/8-inch or less from point to shank only when attached to a body bait, plug, spinner or spoon. An artificial lure is not a device primarily constructed of lead.
 - Adjustments to Muskegon, White, and Pentwater rivers to limit lure restriction up to first barrier and not entire river.

- Allow drop-shotting on all Type-F Lakes (drowned river mouth lakes). Restricted to a single-pointed hook measuring ½-inch or less gap distance between point and shank.
- Yellow perch statewide bag limit going from 50 to 25 per day. Lake Michigan would be 25 throughout the lake. Above 45th parallel would go from 50 to 25. Below 45th parallel would go from 35 to 25. This is more in line with other GL States and simplifies regulations throughout state. Some areas like Lake Erie will have an exception and will remain at a 50 yellow perch daily bag limit.
- Bass tournaments have required an online registration since 2015. Walleye and muskellunge tournaments will require registration starting in 2019. Information from the registration assists the DNR in determining how many tournaments there are and provides opportunity to collect biological information
- The above regulation changes still require NRC approval.
- There was discussion about the salmon bag limit. The advisors have been split on this issue. Right now, the bag limit is tied to the Predator Prey Ratio and would not be proposed for a change until the ratio is below 0.05. The public has not been supportive of a change from 5 salmon in combination to 3. An informal show of hands showed support to drop the bag limit to 3. We will evaluate this regulation again at the April meeting. Other states on Lake Michigan will stay at 5 as well as lakes Superior, Huron and Erie in Michigan waters.

Lake Whitefish Update

Patrick Hanchin (DNR, Fisheries Division, Tribal Unit Manager) provided an update on lake whitefish in Lake Michigan. Harvest continues to go down after it peaked in the mid-1990s. Zebra and quagga mussels changed the food web and are impacting the lake whitefish recruitment.





Lake whitefish recruitment problems appear to be lake-wide. Green Bay may be an area where recruitment might be increasing presumably from river spawning whitefish and better productivity in southern Green Bay waters. The state and tribal biologists continue to collaborate on larval and young of year sampling efforts to track annual recruitment. Tribal commercial fishers in MM1,2,3 also are dealing with lake trout allocation limits that reduces their lake whitefish effort if they exceed their lake trout quotas. Grand Traverse Band may experiment with some stocking. There may be more future interest in lake whitefish stocking if they could be raised big enough to get through the recruitment bottleneck.

2020 Consent Decree Process

DNR started meeting internally in 2014 and asked for angler group written comments at same time. Patrick Hanchin will continue to receive written comments if groups get them in soon. There have also been meetings and opportunities to comment from biologists and law enforcement to get a good handle on the issues. Tribal Nations are reluctant to start negotiations until there is a new state administration along with new tribal directors. In 2000, amici curiae (friend of the court) were recognized based on a court decision. Groups need to petition the court to be recognized as amici. Amici play more of an advisory role and are neither defendants or plaintiffs. What is the role of USFWS? They represent the federal government and have trust responsibilities to the tribes and to native species restoration. What if nothing is negotiated when existing decree expires? We could negotiate to extend existing decree or to extend the date. Judge could also order a deadline to complete negotiations. Common themes at this point are allocations of fish, zones and harvest limits, sharing data, net marking, reporting, enforcement, safety, and communications. Are tribes contributing to stocking of fish? They do stock lake sturgeon, walleye, cisco and some whitefish. Will DNR continue outreach during negotiations? Depends on the confidentiality agreement. Best to get your comments and concerns known now prior to negotiations.

Fisheries Division Updates

- Lake trout lesions: anglers have reported trout with red sores throughout Lake Michigan. Possible causes are a parasitic copepod that attaches to the skin of trout and/or a bacterial infection. Lake trout pox (*Piscirickettia salmonis*) is the most probable cause of the

lesions. USFWS is taking samples to confirm and should have information available by December 2018.

- Weir returns: Platte Upper and Lower Weirs have a good return of Coho, and there should be plenty for egg take. Little Manistee Weir has just enough for a Chinook egg take with kings continuing to come in later with cooler weather. Medusa and Boardman Weirs have Chinook and coho, and the numbers are slightly below last year.
- FishPass and Boardman River Project: Sabin Dam is currently being taken out. There is an initiative to replace Union Street Dam with an experimental fish sorting facility that will be capable of passing desirable species while blocking sea lamprey and other undesirable fish. There is a coalition against passing of salmon and steelhead.
- Cormorants: A 2016 Court Order prevents controlling cormorants. Bergman Bill, HR 6302, is an attempt to get back control efforts. USFWS is required to do a NEPA review. Currently, there is some control allowed to protect aquaculture but not free-swimming fish. Cormorant numbers are increasing in Bays de Noc, Beaver Island, Grand Traverse, Ludington, and Grand Haven.
- Grand River Rapid Restoration: City of Grand Rapids is working on designs and permit application for phase 1 of the project. This will remove the four coffer dams and replace them with riffles and white-water features. Phase 2 will involve removing 6th Street Dam and constructing an adjustable hydraulic structure to block sea lamprey. Advisors are concerned about the risk of sea lamprey escapement into the upper Grand River watershed and the possible budgetary and fish mortality consequences.
- Arctic grayling: The initiative meets annually and is assessing potential streams for introduction. Public and groups have nominated 28 streams, and the top candidates to date are Upper Manistee, Upper Jordan, Boardman, and Maple rivers. Arctic grayling eggs were brought in to Michigan from Alaska to conduct competition and predation experiments at MSU.

Next Meeting:

April 16th, 2019 – Tentatively Jay's Sporting Goods in Clare.

