



Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

Established by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, to improve and maintain fishery resources through better communication and partnership.

Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee Minutes

Approved

Friday April 18, 2014

Tuscarora Township Hall

3546 S Straits Hwy Indian River MI

12:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Attendees: Brenda Archambo, Terry Weber, Geo Crooken, Virgil Smith, Ron Dulak, Roger Selvig, Erin McLean, Roy Tassava, Kevin Prediger, David Kolar, John Kolar, Dave Hutto, Al Terry, Irv Dedow, Seth Herbst, Dan Hayes, Nick Johnson, Pete Hrodey, Dave Borgeson, Tim Cwalinski, Theresa Krist, Frank Krist, Matt Claucherty, Jim Burke, and Wayne Blomberg

Welcome, Introductions (Frank Krist and Tim Cwalinski)

Frank thanked the attendees for coming and mentioned the Tribal members were off today and could not participate. Attendees introduced themselves.

Continued and new aquatic research efforts in the Inland Waterway during 2014 (Dan Hayes, Professor MSU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife)

Ryan McWilliams finished his thesis on walleye fry and food availability. With Ryan finished, and Seth now with the DNR, some money remained available to conduct further analysis of larval perch. This will be an examination into the early life history of yellow perch. The goal is to gain a better understanding why perch may be able to survive better than walleye in their early stage of life. Both species are closely related but walleye need abundant zooplankton populations of larger individuals to grow fast to become fish eaters quickly. Perch are more plastic in terms of their feeding strategy and can subsist on zooplankton their entire life. Larval perch eat smaller plankton that may be less sparse. Some sampling will be done this year as well to take advantage of previous years collection efforts when perch made up the majority of the larval catch. Sampling will hopefully be expanded to include Black Lake this year. Other possible lakes may include Grand, Hubbard and or Long Lakes (Alpena/Presque Isle Counties) to examine regional effects. Kevin Prediger related his observations of young perch (very small age 1) feeding activity in the early spring on Mullett Lake. Tim mentioned the slow growth rate of perch observed in Mullett Lake from recent aging samples. Roy asked about the zebra mussels and impacts on phosphorus and the entire food chain. Dan Hayes agreed that mussels have an effect on phosphorus and the levels measured in the Waterway are at the low end of the productivity scale (Tipp of the Mitt Watershed Council data). He said it is important to know where the available phosphorus goes; whether it is concentrated more on the bottom as it is currently or more concentrated in the mid waters as it was before the zebra mussels were introduced. Low productive lakes can have good fish populations although the fish may not grow fast and may be unable to withstand high levels of harvest. A discussion of the importance of chlorophyll-a in the water ensued. Chlorophyll-a is a measure of algae production and is at the base of the food web within the lakes.

Michigan DNR's Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program (Seth Herbst, DNR Invasive Species Coordinator)

Seth highlighted the state's effort targeting invasive species. An invasive species is one that is **not native** and whose introduction causes, or is likely to cause, economic or environmental **harm** or harm to human health.

Invasive species compete with native species for food and habitat or indirectly harm native species by reducing species diversity and altering the food web. These changes have the potential of greatly reducing or eliminating native species.

The economic effects include decreased recreational and commercial fisheries, decreased property values, decreased tourism and effects on utilities and other industries. Economic and ecological costs total over \$55 million annually for Sea Lamprey, Eurasian Water milfoil, and dreissenid (zebra and quagga) mussel control efforts. Four departments are involved in invasive species management in Michigan and implement the [State's Management Plan](#). These agencies include the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Department of Transportation and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The plan includes prevention, communication, early detection and response and limiting negative impacts of invasive species. The Governor's budget includes six million dollars in 2015 and eight million in 2016 to help in this effort. The focus will be on forests, coastal wetlands, inland lakes and the Great Lakes.

There is much concern and effort directed toward Asian carp (Bighead, Silver, Black, Grass). Grass carp have been found in Michigan waters for years and Bighead and Silver carp are the top priority species at this time. Bighead carp get up to 5 feet long, 110 pounds and are prolific spawners. Silver carp are acrobatic jumpers and can reach 3 feet long and 60 pounds. They can be a recreational hazard as well as an ecological problem. Both species have a high reproductive potential and a high potential to cause damage. Risk assessment has indicated that there is suitable habitat in the Great Lakes for Asian carp and the Chicago Area Waterway System is the area at highest risk. The electrical barrier currently used to stop Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes at this location is not as effective as hoped. Large carp can move through the barrier by swimming between two large barges that shield the electrical current and very small carp can pass freely unaffected by the electrical current.

The State is hoping for the construction of hydrological separation which is a better option for containment. Asian carp need large free flowing rivers for reproduction. Risk assessments look at the various life history stages and requirements in relation to available habitat within the Great Lakes basin. US Fish and Wildlife Service ([monitoring and rapid response](#)), US Army Corps of Engineers ([electric barriers](#)), Great Lakes Commission ([separation study](#)) and Great Lakes Fishery Commission ([Bi-National Risk Assessment](#)), are all involved in components of the effort. Michigan DNR Fisheries Division created an [Asian Carp Management Plan](#) to include, prevention, communication, surveillance, assessment and management. Seth described what is involved and ongoing for each of the plan's elements, including the eDNA sampling efforts. This sampling effort is an early detection tool and the US Fish and Wildlife Service will collect water samples throughout the Great Lakes basin. Seth talked about the St. Joseph River Asian Carp exercise using common carp as a surrogate to Asian carp. Seth emphasized the need for groups like the Northern Inland Lakes Citizen Fishery Advisory Committee to communicate with others to make sure people are aware of the issue and the potential magnitude of the problem Asian carp pose to the Great Lakes. There is a page on the DNR website for people to report any potential sightings (http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10364_52261_54896-246818--,00.html). The website (http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10364_52261_54896---,00.html) also contains fact sheets, the DNR Asian Carp management Plan, identification guides and many other resources. Questions about how quickly these species would be able to spread once they enter the system are answered on the website. The lamprey situation was brought up as an example

of how individual fish species can disperse throughout the Great Lakes Basin and then begin to generate spawning populations subsequent to invasion. Tammy Newcomb ([State liaison on this topic](#)) has been to Washington D.C. to talk to Representatives in the US Congress and the Attorney General's office has been involved in this effort as well. Hydrologic separation is preferred and was estimated to cost \$14 billion and take 25 years to complete. For more information on options to control Asian carp see the [GLMRIS report](#).

Sea lamprey research in the Cheboygan River watershed: plans for 2014 and how the public can help (Nick Johnson, U.S. Geological Survey Great Lakes Science Center Hammond Bay Biological Station, Pete Hrodey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Nick described current efforts to understand the status of sea lamprey in the Inland Waterway. He outlined sea lamprey life history and how they home in on spawning locations by smelling larval lamprey in the streams. A single lamprey can kill 40 pounds of fish. The chemical TFM is only 95% effective in killing larval lamprey so complete eradication has never been possible. The Cheboygan River Dam is not 100% effective in blocking lamprey, so infestation of tributary streams occurs and those streams, Maple, Pigeon, Sturgeon, are highly suitable for lamprey reproduction. The federal goal for the Cheboygan system is to eliminate the need for chemical treatment.

The research project for this year will include tagging 148 sea lamprey migrating from Lake Huron and releasing them below the Cheboygan Dam. Last year assessment work occurred above the dam and no tagged lamprey were detected upstream of the dam. Since the tagged lamprey were a small percentage of the total number of lamprey below the Dam there is a reasonable chance that some sea lamprey do move from the lower River to above the dam. It is estimated that approximately 25,000 lamprey annually run up to the Cheboygan Dam, which is more than any other stream flowing into the Great Lakes. The trap below the Dam harvests about 15,000 lamprey each year so it is 60% effective in capturing migrating lamprey. Questions that need to be answered include:

- *Do enough lamprey bypass the dam to fill available spawning habitat upstream?
- *Do some lampreys complete their life cycle above the dam in the lakes and streams of the Waterway?

Answers to these questions will determine the various tactics for eradicating lamprey. Lamprey captured in the assessment efforts last year in the tributary rivers were smaller than those caught below the dam and had a different chemical signature in the statolith (bone structure), suggesting that there is a land-locked population in the system above the Cheboygan Dam. Nick wanted everyone to know that nets will be placed in the Pigeon, Sturgeon, and Maple rivers again this year. He also urged everyone to turn in (preferred) or photograph any lampreys anglers may encounter in the Waterway in the coming years. Any lamprey turned in are extremely important and will add to the knowledge base in terms of origin and the likelihood of understanding if a land-locked population exists, and if so, the magnitude of that population. A sea lamprey collection form is attached*.

The DNR Aquatic Habitat Grant Program (Dave Borgeson, DNR Northern Lake Huron Management Unit Supervisor)

Dave presented material that outlined the new DNR Aquatic Habitat Grant Program, its objectives and the scoring process for potential projects. A page on the DNR website (http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-58225_67220---,00.html) provides this material along with several other resources. Frank mentioned that Hammond Bay Anglers Association supported the license package and was promised that lakes would be eligible for funding, but the process is skewed toward river restoration projects. Dave said a review will take place to see if the process needs to be adjusted so that lake projects have a better opportunity for qualifying based on what occurred this year.

This grant program holds great promise to improve aquatic habitat across the state. There was \$1,000,000 available this year, and it is planned that the amount will increase to \$1,955,600 by 2015. Local projects receiving grants this year included efforts on the Pigeon and the Ocqueoc rivers with both addressing dam and abutment removal work. Updates on the new DNR Aquatic Habitat Grant Program will be provided to the Committee at future meetings.

New information on the size, movement and other aspects of the walleye population in the Inland Waterway (Seth Herbst, MSU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife)

Seth focused on the movement of walleye within the Waterway. He started by showing other studies in the region that described substantial walleye movement within a system and how the Inland Waterway is similar in this regard. The reason for the study was to understand the greatly differing walleye population estimates that have occurred in the past on Mullett Lake. The primary goal was to determine if a better method of estimating the adult walleye population within each lake in the Waterway could be developed. Walleye movement patterns within the Waterway are needed for the estimate. Seth described the Hilborn movement model he employed to help describe the population, which incorporates a population component and observation component. The population component of the model uses movement from the spawning area, mortality, uncertainty, and the rate the walleyes return to the same sites each year to spawn. The observation component included exploitation (total number harvested each year) and the reporting rate. The tag reporting rate was derived from the reward tag program which offers a financial incentive to anglers to turn in tags from harvested walleye. Tags recovered ranged from 10-22%, which indicates a relatively low exploitation rate.

Seth described movement among the lakes from fish tagged at different tagging locations.

Tags released				Tags recovered: 2011-2013		
Location	2011	2012	2013	Cohorts	total released	% recovered
Burt Lake	5,468	687	2,747	Burt 1-3	8,902	14.0
Mullett Lake	409	54	188	Mullett 1-3	651	13.1
Crooked Lake	562	529	614	Crooked 1-3	1,705	21.6
Pickereel Lake	623	108	326	Pickereel 1-3	1,057	16.7
Black River	261	99	231	Black River 1-3	591	9.8
Totals	7,323	1,477	4,106			

There is substantial movement of walleyes throughout the Inland Waterway to show that each lake is not a closed system and migration patterns must be taken into account when determining the adult population estimates. There is evidence that many walleyes return to the same locations each year to spawn and often feed throughout the year in various other locations. This is an important factor that needs to be considered and the next step will be to compile the information obtained in the study and develop an effective method of determining an adult population estimate for each lake in the Waterway.

Walleye stocking and fall juvenile survey results in the Waterway in 2014. Are there plans for either? (David Borgeson, Northern Lake Huron Management Unit Supervisor)

Dave handed out a spreadsheet detailing fall walleye electrofishing efforts in the Inland Waterway including Black Lake and emphasized the intense effort these lakes have received in recent years, see attached*. The Fisheries Division’s Northern Lake Huron Management Unit (NLHMU) is not planning any fall electrofishing survey in these lakes in 2014 and will be focusing efforts in other parts of the unit. Tim and Dave believe they can obtain good walleye survival information for both young of the year and

yearling walleye when electrofishing, so one fall survey can be a good barometer for the past two walleye year classes. Dave also explained how the unit prioritizes walleye stocking. The unit must look at recent stocking history, the fisheries the lakes sustain, and make decision annually on the distribution of fingerling walleye. He emphasized that the walleye received from the Southern Lake Huron Management Unit (SLHMU) are critical to implementing the annual stocking plan for the NLHMU. The rehabilitation of the natural recruitment of walleye in Saginaw Bay is the reason for surplus walleye available from the SLHMU. Stocking is based on production and that is unpredictable from year to year. It is uncertain if the northern inland lakes (Black, Mullett, Crooked, Pickerel) will receive walleye this year, but because of recent good stocking numbers (Mullett and Black) or documented natural reproduction (Crooked-Pickerel), it is not deemed critical that they be stocked this year. Burt Lake has consistently good wild reproduction so stocking is not necessary in this lake.

DNR Fisheries Division updates.

Dave Borgeson and Tim Cwalinski distributed a handout outlining statewide updates and regulation changes, as well as a work schedule for the NLHMU's upcoming field season, see attached*. Regulation updates included the need for muskellunge anglers to have a harvest tag handy if they plan to keep a musky. Beginning in 2015 regulation guidebooks will be good for two seasons. The viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) related regulation requiring bait users to retain receipts has been discontinued. Dave again reminded attendees that this spring the drawdown of the Lansing Club Pond impounded by the Golden Lotus Dam on the Pigeon River will commence, with a more comprehensive dam removal project to follow, aided by the Aquatic Habitat Grant program.

Round table with questions, comments and suggestions from the attendees.

Roy Tassava said the Mullett Lake Area Preservation Society Board, Topinabee Development Association and Mullett Township approved the concept of constructing a fishing pier in Mullett Lake to be located in the village of Topinabee. Kevin Prediger has been working closely with Roy. Assistance is being received by some of the individuals that worked on the Veterans Pier Project. Working on permits and design are the next items to be considered. Roy suggested associating fish habitat enhancement with any planned pier placement. If the project is designed with an emphasis on incorporating fish habitat into the project, there may be an opportunity to comply with the requirements of the DNR Aquatic Grant Program. The Committee will be watching with interest the new criteria for this Grant Program that are being developed for 2014.

Roy and Kevin looked at the shoreline of Mullett Lake and it looked like there was a lot of hard substrate that could be utilized for spawning see attached map*. There is much interest from the Committee in obtaining a grant to compare the walleye spawning habitat in Mullett and Burt Lakes to determine why Burt Lake appears to be producing much a higher level of wild reproduction. The question is whether Mullett Lake has plenty of walleye spawning habitat or are other factors limiting walleye reproduction on the rocky shoals.

Kevin thanked everyone present for their efforts working with the Committee.

Virgil Smith talked about the plan to improve the boat launch at the Onaway State Park. The first phase of the project is planned to be completed this year with the current launch being rotated to facilitate better traffic flow. Phase two will increase the size and capacity of the launch and construction is planned to begin during 2016 with the goal of minimizing conflicts with users by undertaking the construction in the fall if possible. He urged folks to visit <http://www.blacklakeassociation.com/> to review the details. One of the issues mentioned was the lack of boat launch etiquette at this site by some users.

Virgil likes the agenda topics that have been developed to date. Tip of Mitt Watershed Council is going to conduct an aquatic plant and spawning habitat survey in Black Lake this year. With more light penetration, it is suspected that additional weed cover is now present. **Ron Dulak** said they are planning to stock some fall fingerling walleye and are fundraising to make this happen. They are trying to change their association to a board run system. **Erin** caught walleyes in Black Lake, but had a lot of fun in the Bay of Quinte in Ontario catching huge walleyes during the winter. **Tim** heard of large pike being caught in Black Lake with young walleye in their stomachs. This indicates that the stocked walleyes are surviving well. **Ron** says they are still looking at trying to understand the dynamics of wild walleye reproduction in Black Lake and the Association plans to obtain assistance from researchers to learn more.

High water levels were discussed and **Ron** has never seen Black Lake this high. **Tim** mentioned that the prolonged ice cover and the high water levels have made it very difficult for the hatcheries to stock the fish in a timely manner. Progress is being made and it is anticipated that all the fish will be successfully stocked.

Terry Weber likes the transparency of the DNR in these meetings and appreciated the opportunity to meet directly with DNR representatives. The fishing was terrible this winter because of the poor weather conditions. Heavy amounts of slush on the lakes made it difficult to move around much of the season. Terry also asked about the future of walleye regulations in Mullett Lake as a result of the new information gained from the study. More discussion will take place when the study is completed.

Dave Kolar liked the format of the meeting, the transparency, and willingness to accommodate a variety of agenda topics. He also said they are available to help distribute signs for the lamprey study and distribute angler diaries. He suggested the potential for an I-phone app for angler diaries. This digital approach would probably be more appealing to younger anglers.

Matt Claucherty said that the **TIP of the Mitt Watershed Council** will be shifting focus to the Waterway with development of a tributary (Crooked, Maple, Sturgeon) watershed management plan scheduled to begin this year. Tip of the Mitt will be working with North Central Michigan College to conduct training to educate volunteers to become stream monitors. One day will be spent sampling streams and learning the techniques and a second day will cover identification and ecology of aquatic invertebrates. This is a great opportunity to learn about the smaller animals that live in streams, see attached flyer for more details*.

Burt Lake folks have discovered Eurasian Water Milfoil and are planning to obtain some weevils to keep it under control. Weevils were used in the past and they controlled the Milfoil well. He also addressed the Black Lake Association's desire for a board driven association, and urged they consider geographic distribution for board member composition. He liked the pier idea for Mullett Lake.

Irv Dedow loves ice fishing and said it was the worst year he can remember, at many different locations. Issues included lots of slush and other tough fishing conditions.

Al Terry described the lack of parking in the winter, including the Maple Bay launch. Perhaps an increase in plowing could help facilitate more angling use during the winter. **Dave** and **Frank** stated that DNR's Parks and Recreation Division has been receptive to increased plowing at Au Sable River sites after being informed of the potential for increased use. **Frank** said this will be an agenda item for the fall meeting.

Pete Hrodey thanked the group for the input he has received over the past few years and he said this was extremely well informed group.

Frank said Hammond Bay Anglers have been a board driven organization and have operated well for about 30 years.

4:05 Meeting adjourned.

***The handouts may be obtained by emailing Frank Krist at krists@speednetllc.com**

Next meeting will be held Tuesday October 14, 2014 in Indian River Mi.