



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.

Approved Minutes Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee Tuscarora Township Hall, Indian River, MI Monday, April 18, 2016

Attendees: Sue Allor, Wayne Blomberg, Paul Borg, Jim Burke, Gina Burke, Tim Cwalinski, Irvin Dedow, Doug Dingy, Ron Dulak, Dennis Fauver, Maxwell Field, Rick Fowler, Bob Garant, Neal Godby, Patrick Hanchin, Lindsey Henski, Marty Holtgren, Dave Hutton, Roger Jacobs, Rick Johnson, David Kolar, John Kolar, Frank Krist, Jim Little, Tony Naylor, Bill Parsons, Anne Pynnonen, Gary Robinette, Steve Roznowski, Mike Saker, Roger Selvig, Roy Tassava, Brett Trepanier, Pat VanDaele, Mike Vigneau, Terry Weber.

Welcome and Introductions:

Frank Krist called the meeting to order. Introductions were made. Frank introduced Sue Allor, Cheboygan County Commissioner.

Tim Cwalinski discussed the Terms of Reference, and read the **Charge of the committee**, *“The charge of the Northern Inland Lakes Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee is to review, understand, and provide recommendations and direction into the fishery goals, objectives and management plans for lakes in the Inland Waterway and connecting waters. These major lakes include Crooked, Pickerel, Burt, Mullett, and Black lakes. Members will assist Fisheries Division in charting the future course of fisheries management by providing voice to and for the diversity of citizens’ interests in the Waterway. Members will also act as a conduit for information exchange to the public from the DNR and other various managing agencies”*.

Burt Lake-Sturgeon River Watershed Plan and a plan to use Zequanox in a 3 acre test plot to control invasive mussels in a northern Michigan lake (Kevin Cronk, Monitoring and Research Director, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council):

Kevin Cronk was unable to attend the meeting. These agenda items have been postponed.

The 2015 DNR Status and Trends fish community survey report of Burt Lake (Neal Godby, DNR Fisheries Biologist):

This survey is called a fish community survey because it looks at all the species present. The final report is not complete, but Neal discussed a preview of the analysis.

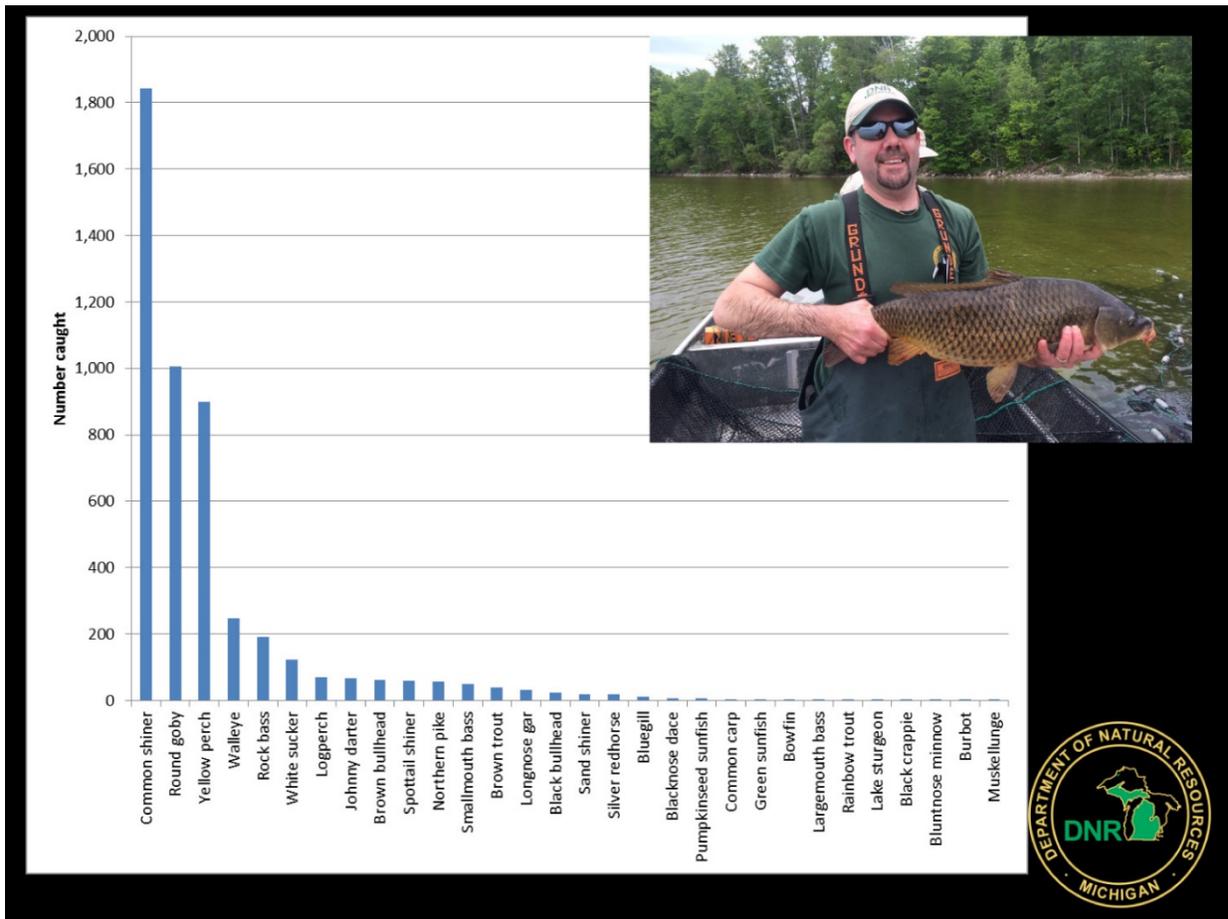
Burt Lake is 17,000+ acres, located within the Cheboygan River watershed, is one of the largest inland lakes in Michigan, and includes the following tributaries: Crooked, Maple, Sturgeon, Little Carp, and Indian rivers.

The DNR with assistance from the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB) have been surveying Burt Lake often. Spring walleye population estimates were conducted in 2001 and 2011,

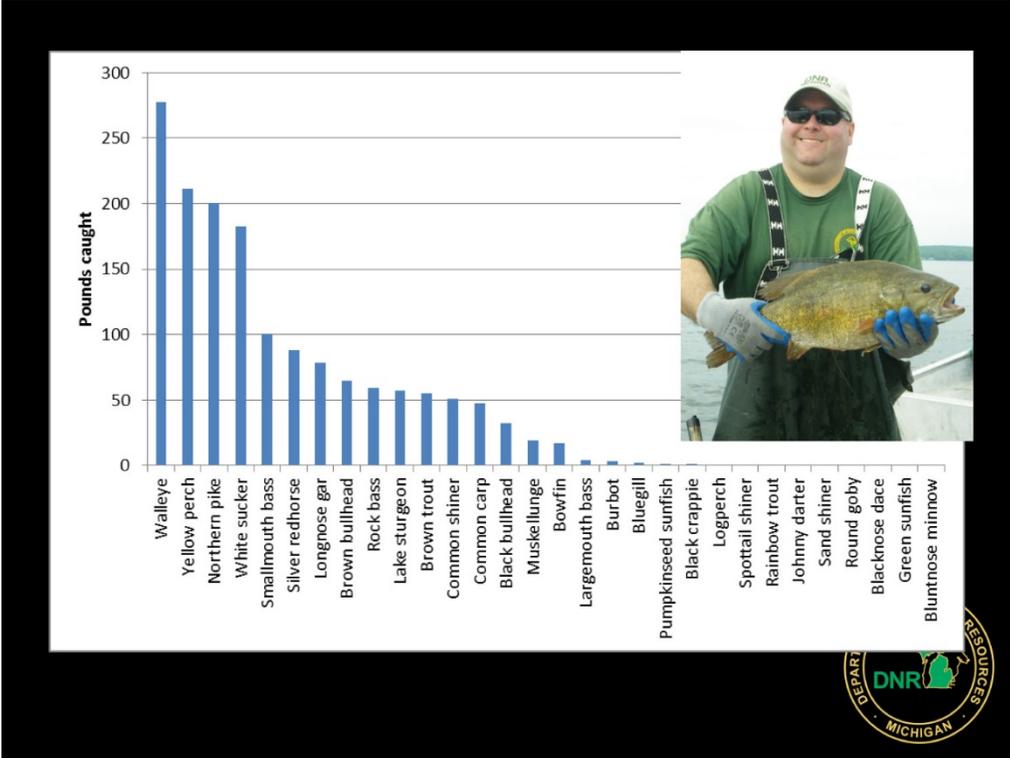
walleye movement surveys were conducted in 2011-2013, fall walleye recruitment evaluations were conducted in 2001, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014, and sturgeon population estimates were conducted in 2009, 2011, and 2015. This most recent fish community survey is different due to timing and gear. This is a Status and Trends survey, which has standardized gear and effort based on lake size, and will allow us to start an index on yellow perch populations.

Protocol for Status and Trends surveys call for a minimum sampling effort. Each gear type that is utilized samples a different habitat or size of fish. Water temperatures range from 55-80 degrees so surveys are conducted between April to mid-July. Our survey included; 39 large mesh fyke net lifts, 13 small mesh fyke net lifts, 24 gill net lifts, seine netting at 10 sites, four 10 minute boom shocker trips and 16 trap net lifts. Preliminary results include 4,845 fish, 1,554.5 pounds, 30 species, and 12 families of fish (see charts below).

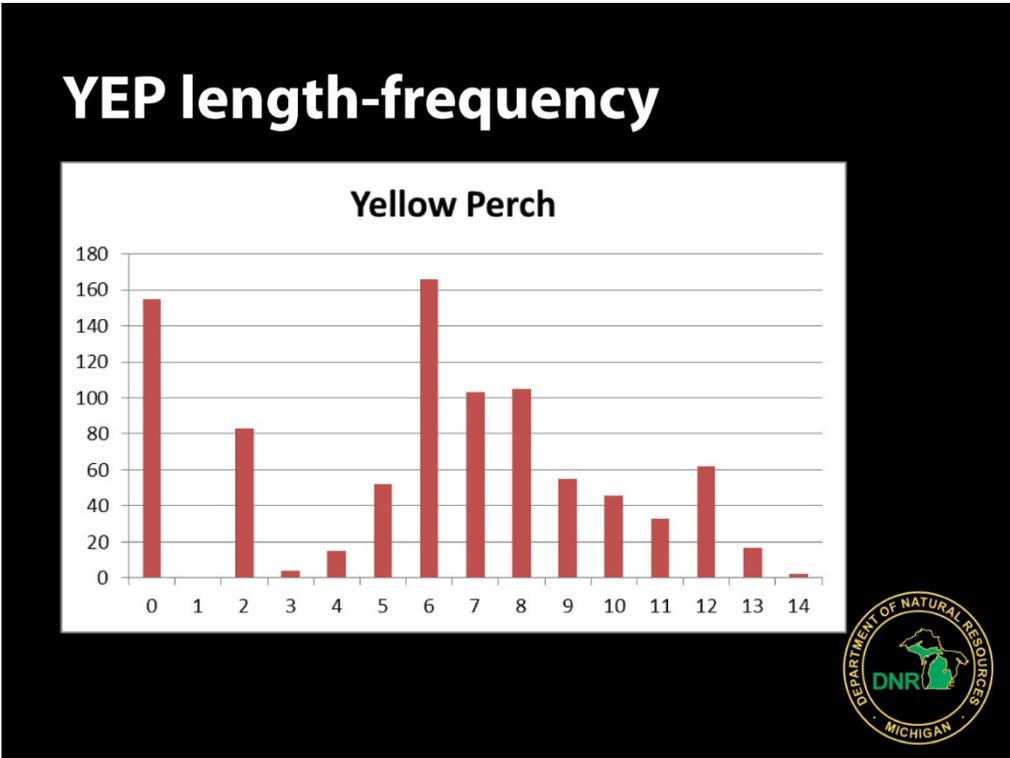
A draft survey write-up will be complete in the fall of 2016 and published on the web. The DNR target is to complete Status and Trends surveys approximately every 10 years. Preliminary results look good in diversity, growth, and consistent year class strength. The following charts show the relative abundance and sizes of the game fish caught during the survey:



The number of the various fish species caught in the nets.

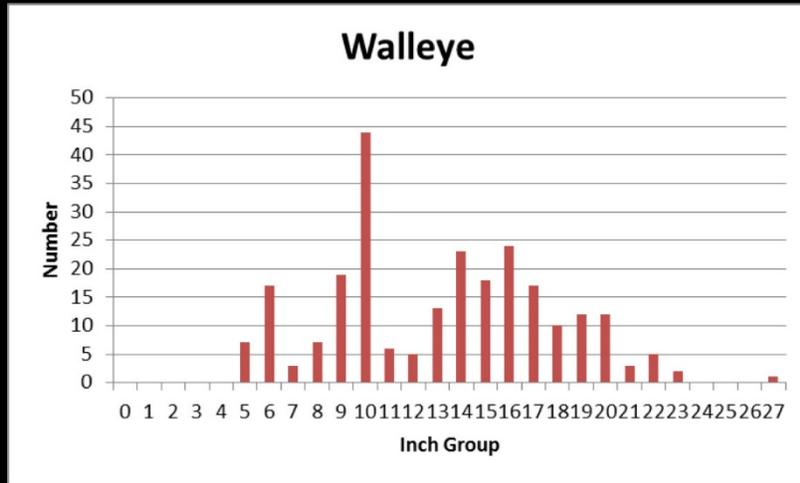


The pounds of the various fish species caught during the survey



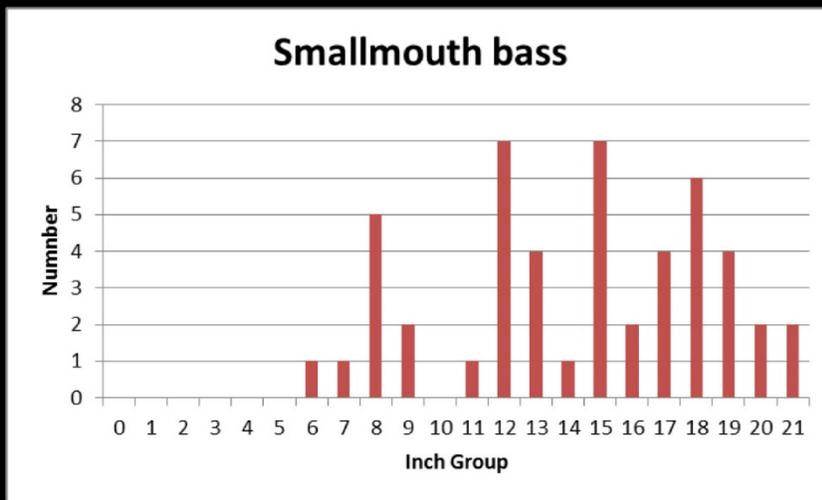
The number of Yellow Perch caught in the various inch groups

Walleye length-frequency



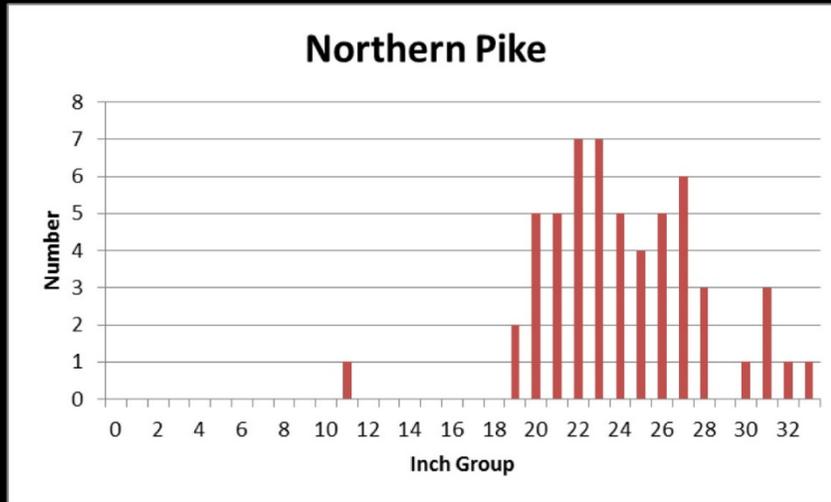
The number of Walleye caught in the various inch groups

SMB length-frequency



The number of Smallmouth Bass caught in the various inch groups

Northern Pike length-frequency



The number of Northern Pike caught in the various inch groups

The 2016 Mullett Lake creel survey and the 2017 Mullett Lake Status and Trends fish community survey (Tim Cwalinski, DNR Fisheries Biologist):

Mullett Lake Status and Trends Survey is scheduled for June 2017. The survey will follow the same protocol as the Burt Lake Status and Trends Survey.

The special 2016 Inland Creel Survey on Mullett Lake has a specific design to increase the information obtained. Anglers will be interviewed five days a week, including weekends. The DNR recently hired a Lake Superior State University graduate, Nick Arend and he will be following a roving design, and be conducting interviews on the water from a red Lund Alaskan boat. The questions are standard including local concerns from the anglers. Participation by anglers will be very much appreciated since it will assist in better managing the fisheries. The survey will continue for 11 months. The department recognizes that no angler wants to be interrupted, and Nick will try to minimize disturbance. Please be patient, and spread the word.

Sturgeon River walleye gamete collection (Maxwell Field, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB):

Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB) recently launched from the Burt Lake State Park in an effort to collect 15 pairs of spawning female walleyes. Only two ripe females were captured so we will repeat this attempt, targeting females. If enough viable females are collected, the goal is to produce fall fingerlings for stocking. This year's plan is to stock in Lake Geneserath on Beaver Island. The holding pen anglers see near the Sturgeon R mouth allows the females time to ripen. In the future, LTBB will be

communicating these activities better with the public (signs/press release). These activities will be done annually.

Current Mullett Lake walleye agreement between the State and Tribes (Patrick Hanchin, DNR Tribal Coordination Unit Supervisor):

In 2009 a survey and population estimate for adult walleye was completed for Mullett Lake. The estimate was lower than the 1998 estimate of 14,350 fish and much lower than the adult walleye estimate of 49,740 fish listed in the Decree. With the low 2009 estimate, the Tribes invoked the Allocation-Based Procedure for determining their share of the walleye harvest, which is very burdensome for everyone. In an attempt to avoid the Allocation-Based Procedure, it was agreed to use the 2009 survey upper 95% confidence level adult walleye estimate of 3,577 and to share the walleye harvest as described in the paragraph below. In addition, a comprehensive walleye study of the Waterway would be initiated and changes would be made to the State recreational fishing regulations (implement a 3 walleye bag limit and May 15 opener).

It was decided that a 40% exploitation rate of walleyes would be used and the Tribes would receive for harvest 15% or 537 walleyes ($3,577 \times 15\%$) and the State would receive 25% or 894 walleyes ($3,577 \times 25\%$). This agreement expired in 2014 and it was agreed to continue the agreement during 2015.

It was decided that for 2016 that a Wisconsin model would be used that assumes more than 50% of the walleyes were stocked. This model indicated that there were 17,307 adult walleyes in Mullett Lake and the Decree Threshold Harvest Level protocol would make available 1,731 ($17,307 \times 10\%$) for the Tribes to harvest. The comprehensive walleye study provided confidence that the recent harvest levels have protected the walleye fishery in Mullett Lake, however, there is concern by some Parties that additional monitoring should be conducted since this new harvest level limits by the Tribes and State is higher than permitted by the previous agreement. The Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians is committed to improved onsite monitoring and potentially will tag walleyes during 2017 to more accurately estimate exploitation. Currently, not all Tribes are harvesting walleye in the system and that has kept the harvest number lower than the number permitted by the current agreement.

Tim Cwalinski discussed the three fish harvest limit on Mullett Lake, and talked about going back to statewide regulations. With a two year regulation booklet, the earliest we could go back to the statewide regulation of 5 fish is 2018.

Black River Marina State potential purchase/property update (Keith Cheli DNR Parks and Recreation Division):

Since 2012 the Northern Inland Lakes Citizen Fishery Advisory Committee has been regularly reviewing the need for an improved boat launch site on Black Lake. There was a presentation and discussions at each meeting on the progress being made. Much of the launching pressure is focused at the Onaway State Park where parking and maneuvering space is limited, and anglers and boaters have complained of wait times during busy use times. The Black Lake State Forest Campground has a semi-improved gravel launch, but the water is shallow. The Black River Marina (private) did provide access on the north end of Black Lake for many years but it is currently closed and for sale.

The Onaway State Park has development challenges that are being dealt with as improvements are made. In spite of extensive areas of bedrock and historical concerns, a two part plan was developed and stage

one was implemented which included a concrete plank ramp and a change in the angle of the boat launch approach. Because of the very limited parking near the launch ramp, a second stage of improvements is planned and includes installing additional parking by converting land at the old park residence into parking spaces. This phase of the plan would also add a second boat ramp and dock adjacent to the newly installed ramp. The second dock would ease congestion during the busy launch periods.

Even after the Onaway State Park boat launch improvements are completed, safety is a major concern since many boats fish on the north end of the lake because of the excellent fishing structure, yet other than the shallow launch at the State Forest Campground there is no improved launching site in the area since the Black River Marina closed. During storms, winds and waves can be treacherous and if someone launches at the State Park and encounters sudden winds on the north end the over 6 mile ride back to the State Park is a safety concern.

Black River Marina has many advantages that make it a quality boat launch site. It is one of the very few sites on the entire lake that has deeper water adjacent to shore. The land is just under 4 acres with 340 feet of river frontage and provides good access to Black Lake. If the land is sold to a private individual, it potentially could be converted to residential development which would eliminate having a quality boat launch on the north end of the lake.



Existing Black River Marina boat launch needs upgrading



Existing Black River Marina Docks



View of Black Lake from the Marina

The closed boat launch at the Black River Marina is in poor condition but some of the infrastructure such as the fuel tanks may be useable. If the DNR purchased this parcel, a double launch would be constructed along with 50 parking spaces. Potential business opportunities on the site would be a possibility since the DNR does enter into leases with commercial vendors to provide fuel, food, and marina services.

Because there are no other apparent deeper water sites along or near Black Lake, this an excellent opportunity to ensure that there continues to be a quality boat launch on the north end of the lake. Currently, the DNR does not have the \$350,000 needed to purchase the property. Overall, funds are down and the asking price does not include any improvements. Keith discussed Capital Outlay funds and potential grants. A State appraisal is required before the land can be purchased because the State of Michigan is only allowed to purchase land up to 10% over an appraised rate. A lot of deals fail if an owner is unwilling to accept appraised value.

DNR plans to capture and tag muskellunge in the Inland Waterway in 2016 and beyond (Tim Cwalinski, DNR fisheries biologist):

The DNR has data on walleye and perch in the Waterway; however, there is little information on musky. The Waterway has a reasonable musky population, yet there is very little data on longevity, density, age and growth. There have been talks on whether the DNR should restock the Waterway. Before any musky stocking can begin, background information on the status of the existing population needs to be obtained. There are not enough personnel to obtain this information and it would take all the staff working from May through June. This simply cannot be done. Therefore, what has been decided is to start tagging musky and recording data incidentally as other surveys are conducted. Musky will be marked with floy tags with the Gaylord address and phone number, and disc tags (dual tag system). This effort will start around the third week of May. This is the initial year, and tagging is experimental. An update on the project will be provided at future Advisory meetings along with how anglers may assist.

Management and Tribal updates:

Maxwell Field, LTBB – The walleye gamete collection for the hatchery is underway and fertilized eggs are trying to be obtained from the Sturgeon River. We are following the same sturgeon stocking plan as the past few years by working with the Black River hatchery to collect gamete, raise them in the LTTB hatchery, and stock the juvenile sturgeon in the Sturgeon River. Historically, the Sturgeon River probably had a large population of sturgeon. The report on the September 2015 Burt Lake Sturgeon Assessment has been completed and the goal is to share the report at the fall meeting.

Bill Parsons, LTBB –A survey on Walloon Lake was just completed with assistance from two additional Tribes. Chris Dye, our new Hatchery Manager, just started work this week.

Pat VanDaele, Technician Supervisor – Work is proceeding with scheduled lake and stream surveys. Walleye pond fry are coming Friday. A new creel clerk, Nick Stimel, who is working out of Cheboygan/St. Ignace was just hired. The other creel clerks are back on staff as well. The Technicians are busy stocking statewide.

Neal Godby, Fisheries Biologist – I recently met with Nick Johnson from USGS and a graduate student at the Hammond Bay Biological station on continuing to collect lamprey data in the Inland Waterway. The student will be interviewing anglers at access sites and working with our Mullett Lake Creel Clerk looking for lamprey wounds. Please work with him. The Maple, Sturgeon and Pigeon Rivers will receive

lamprey treatments. There will be an inconvenience traveling to the Maple Bay boat launch by Brutus Road because the bridge over the Maple River on Brutus Road will be replaced this year. A completed Status of the Fishery Report of Douglas Lake has been published and will be available online. Last winter the Cheboygan River Assessment was published and is available online

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10364_52259_19056-332637--,00.html.

Tim Cwalinski, Fisheries Biologist – Tim provided a summary of sea lamprey in the Waterway. Nick Johnson from USGS published a paper on the work he is conducting on the sea lamprey population in the Waterway and Frank will distribute it electronically. Fisheries Division has a new Assistant Chief, Todd Grischke. Fisheries has been the only division that historically has not had an Assistant Chief. There are no plans to stock spring walleye fingerlings in Black, Mullett and Burt lakes this year, however, if the Tribes (CORA ponds) have surplus fish, and they are looking for an outlet, walleye could be stocked in Black Lake.

A round table discussion including updates, fishing reports, projects, questions, comments and suggestions from the attendees:

Irv Dedow – Spent most of my time last winter on the ice in the Upper Peninsula. The time spent here ice fishing was on Black Lake and I only caught two undersized walleye.

Doug Dingy – At the Cheboygan M33 Bridge I saw three musky. There were two males and one female going though spawning.

Gary Robinette – Looking to put in brush shelters at Long Lake near Alpena. We have to put structures in 13 feet or deeper water. Can perch even spawn that deep? We want to make sure the work we do has benefit. Tim Cwalinski said that brush shelters aid in harvest but they are generally not good spawning sites for perch. Has the department entertained the idea to implement walleye slot limits? Tim replied that Michigan tries to avoid slots because they are confusing to anglers and more difficult to enforce.

Dennis Fauver – We are still waiting for ice out on Grand Lake. Early ice was great fishing, but it dropped off big time after that. Grand Lake had a successful winter fish derby with a 14 inch perch caught! Walleye are getting to legal size. Our next derby is July 9-10 and is free. Our intent is to get families out there fishing.

Brett Trepanier – Black Lake Association saw a great sturgeon season this year and I was one of the successful anglers! The Association has money available for stocking walleye this year and we would like to stock this fall. We have a little over \$20,000 in our fish stocking fund. Tim asked Brett to get with him to discuss this topic.

Ron Dulak – Last week I received notification in the Petoskey paper that groups are trying to remove dams on the Black River. If there are further meetings, the Black Lake Association would like to be involved. Tim Cwalinski clarified that there has not been a meeting. The Black Lake Sturgeon Management Plan has been written and is waiting public input. The plan states, that if you really want to rehabilitate sturgeon, dams would be the key component to opening up stream habitat. That being said, we cannot flip a switch and do that. Yes, students are going around looking at social economic benefits of dam removal. They are doing this as a research project free of charge, looking at what would happen to property values, tourism, etc. Ron replied that the Association would want to be involved in such an effort. Tim indicated that he will forward Ron's comment and contact information to these individuals.

Jim Burke – The Burt Lake Preservation Association is about to embark on a discovery mission in the Sturgeon River to understanding sturgeon habitat. Preliminary discussions are taking place with Sturgeon for Tomorrow and the Tribes. There is much interest in learning more about the Sturgeon River since there probably is a reason it is called the Sturgeon River.

Gina Burke – Gina stressed that the Burt Lake Preservation Association is working with Sturgeon for Tomorrow with the goal of learning more about sturgeon habitat within the Sturgeon River. These meetings provide an opportunity for the Association to support and become more involved in improving the fisheries in the Burt Lake watershed.

Frank Krist – We hear a lot about the big lakes, but we do not hear much about Fletchers Floodwater. This 9,000 acre lake is one of the most productive in northern Michigan and the fish really bite there! The Floodwater is loaded with bluegill, sunfish and perch which are especially easy to catch during last ice. In addition, there are plenty of bass and pike in the lake.

Tim Cwalinski – It was a tough winter. There were days when we would catch a ton; and then there were days when it tapered off. The last few weeks on Black Lake have been excellent.

Terry Weber – Not much to report, poor ice and poor fishing reports. Fished Burt Lake a few times and caught a few perch but there was nothing to brag about.

Roy Tassava – Ice fishing on Mullett Lake was worse than I have seen. Anglers were not catching fish.

David Kolar – Last May I fished the mouth of the river at Mullett Lake and saw sea lamprey for the first time. The weed bed off Orchard Beach kind of disappeared possibly because of lack of sunlight or perhaps because of more crawfish. Line 5 (oil and gas) runs through the Indian River. This issue is near and dear to my heart.

Rick Johnson – Have been working with Enbridge for 4 - 5 years now. Had a sturgeon wash up on the NW side of Burt Lake last fall. Kevin from the Tribes came out, determined that the death was due to natural causes. The sturgeon was tagged (old tag) but the death was not related to netting and tagging. Fished on Burt Lake and did well last fall, mostly up at the Indian River end. Perch anglers did real well.

Rogers Jacobs – I live on the Indian River. Perch are around the weed beds. I am seeing 150 to 200 cormorants at a time.

Adjourn 3:25 pm

Next Meeting, October 17, 2016 at the Tuscarora Township Hall from 11 am until 3:30 pm.