

Warmwater Resources Steering Committee Meeting March 6, 2012 Conference Call

Attendees: Patrick Hanchin (Chair), Tim Cwalinski (notes), Todd Grischke, Amy Trotter, Doug Dingey, Benji Wood, Christian Lesage, Jim Felgenauer, Joe Bednar, Kregg Smith, Mary Bremigan, Mike Holmes, Will Schultz, Jim Diana, Nick Popoff

Introduction:

Hanchin laid out the ground rules for conducting an efficient conference call and said that everyone would have the chance to speak on each topic during the call.

1. Approval of minutes from the December 14, 2011 meeting

Hanchin stated that the minutes from the December 14, 2011 meeting were sent to the WRSC on December 15, 2011 and again on February 22, 2012. Minutes from the December 14, 2011 meeting were approved with the addition of a notation that there had been discussion about the validity of the growth projections in some high-density muskellunge populations.

2. Discussion about posting meeting minutes on the DNR website

Hanchin read a recommendation from the DNR chairs/co-chairs of the 6 citizen advisory committees to post meeting minutes on the DNR website. The minutes are already public to some degree since representatives share them with their respective organizations. Additionally, posting of minutes aligns well with the Director's goals for improved public service and outreach. The recommendation is to capture major ideas, action items, and decision items rather than verbatim comments from individual members. The goal will be to have minutes posted within one month of each meeting. This goes against the current Terms of Reference which states that the minutes will be reviewed at the following meeting. The new process will entail the draft minutes being sent to the Committee within 2 weeks of the meeting, comments being provided to the Chair within 1 week, a revised draft being sent to the Committee, and the Committee having 1 week to approve of the final draft. Discussion ensued with several people agreeing that the minutes should not include direct quotes or names. There was also some concern that the public will be seeing issues prior to decisions being made, and some may jump to their own conclusions about issues. The minutes will have to be explicit with regards to what stage of a process they relate to (e.g. information gathering, brainstorming, decision-making). All participants agreed to the posting of meeting minutes on the DNR website.

3. Terms of reference (TOR) review and changes

Hanchin explained the two major changes proposed for the TOR. The name of the Committee has changed from the Coolwater Regulations Advisory Committee to the Warmwater Resources Steering Committee. The TOR will also need to be changed for the previous agenda item of posting meeting minutes on the website. Hanchin read the proposed paragraph relating to the minutes, which includes a minority opinion addendum to the minutes if consensus can not be achieved. All participants approved the changes to the terms of reference.

4. Northern pike and muskellunge regulation proposals

Hanchin stated that the northern pike and muskellunge proposals were sent to the WRSC on January 20, 2012 and again on February 22, 2012. Hanchin stated that he didn't anticipate

significant changes to these documents at this point, but this was the final chance for recommendations from the Committee. Hanchin clarified the use of ultimate length, or length at infinity, to describe growth potential in fish populations. The parameter describes an average fish in the population, though there is the possibility of outliers below and above the average fish. Hanchin also responded to a concern that some growth data for muskellunge populations outlined in an early draft of the proposals may have been outdated. The tables were removed from the proposal, but Hanchin clarified that the DNR will not use old population data to justify regulation changes if there is evidence that a population has undergone significant changes. Smith explained that the DNR is working internally on the potential use of a muskellunge tag and reporting system, but the details have not been worked out yet. Discussion ensued regarding some differences between details on the regulation proposals and the surveys that will be used to gauge public opinion (e.g. possession limits). The final regulation proposals were based on thorough evaluation by Fisheries Division biologists and input from the WSRC, but they may be modified based on public opinions received during the comment period. For some proposed regulations, such as an annual possession limit for muskellunge, we generally want to know if the public is open to the concept. Regarding proposed muskellunge possession limits, option 3 has a 1 fish per season limit, though we are entertaining other options such as 2 fish per season. A few wording changes were suggested for the muskellunge proposal that will be incorporated into the final document. All participants approved the northern pike and muskellunge proposals for moving forward to the public.

5. Northern pike and muskellunge surveys for the public

Hanchin stated that the northern pike and muskellunge surveys were sent to the WRSC on January 20, 2012 and again on February 22, 2012. Comments have been received and Smith has incorporated all the recommendations. We will use SurveyMonkey® linked through the DNR website for the surveys which will limit responses by IP address. We will also allow phone call responses to the Plainwell DNR office as well as hard copies of the survey to be mailed in. Some personal information may be required to ensure that duplicate responses are not a problem via phone and mail. The surveys will also be brought to a series of public meetings around the State during which proposed regulation changes will be discussed. We ask that Committee members talk to their organizations about limiting people to one response. A recommendation was made to require responses to some of the questions so that relative comparisons could be made as well as to add a few license types that were left off one question. A recommendation was made to include zip codes from other States as well as to make this response mandatory (online version) so that out of State responses can be determined. A discussion on the duration of the public comment period ensued and there was concern that the period would include all public meeting dates, but not stretch out too long so that the DNR has enough time to prepare final recommendations for the Director and Natural Resources Commission. *The original timeline for making the regulation proposals and surveys available to the public was early March, but following the meeting a decision was made to hold the public comment period from March 26 to May 25.* All participants approved the northern pike and muskellunge surveys with the few minor wording and structure changes.

6. Other Issues

Hanchin summarized the “Kid’s Fishing Pond” issue statement that had been sent to the Committee on February 27, 2012 and asked that comments be sent to him. Lesage informed the

Committee that the proposed regulation provides guidelines for cities, townships, etc. to create and effectively regulate ponds designed for children. Apparently some ponds designed for children have been utilized heavily by non-target users, which has diminished the resource available to the children. A few comments made were in support if it did not entail a large time commitment by DNR staff. One comment suggested reservations about the potential for law enforcement issues.

Hanchin suggested **June 12, 2012** for the next meeting and asked each committee member if they would prefer to hold the meeting in Lansing or if they would be open to holding a meeting in the northern Lower Peninsula (Grayling or Gaylord). Four (29%) of the attendees favored Lansing and 10 (71%) were either indifferent or open to holding the meeting in the northern L.P. Hanchin will work with the Management Team sponsor to the WRSC to select a location as the tradition is Lansing and the majority of the non-DNR representatives are from southern Michigan.