



Great Lakes Study Committee Minutes
Brule River State Forest Headquarters
6250 South Ranger Road
Brule, WI
Saturday, September 24, 2011

Call to order at 8:50am

Roll Call: Members in attendance: Dale Maas, David Tupa, Oscar (Rick) Olivo, Alvin Bochler, Bruce Prentice, Pete Petrouske, Donald Anderson, Richard Becker, Richard Alvin. Excused members: (Ron V, Norman B, John C, John B, Tom K.). **Dale Maas** discussed attendance issues, repeat absenteeism, and conflicts with being on other committees. Being a member of any committee is an obligation to be taken seriously.

Discussion about Governor's Charge to the Congress for Regulation Simplification: **Dale Maas** read a letter from Scott Walker as to his views and directives to the WCC. Act 21: Legislators want more control. Act 21 will slow down the previous 77 year process of public resolution to WCC at public hearings to DNR Board, to public vote at spring hearings, to DNR rule change by at least an additional year and complicate the process of NR rule changes by increasing the number of steps in the process, increasing the number of groups reviewing the proposals, and by providing more control for the governor and state legislators in making resource management decisions.

Discussion of FH-10-E rule change: From our meeting in May: read by **David Tupa:** "A motion was made and seconded to have the Great Lakes Committee go on record in opposition to the DNR Board recommendation to establish an exclusionary recreational fishing zone or buffer zone closed to sport fishermen in the trap net area. However, the Great Lakes Committee is in agreement with the petitions submitted by the NWF and the common sense suggestion for fishermen to have wire cutters onboard their fishing vessels. Members of the WCC Great Lakes Committee were unanimously in agreement to this motion." **Chris Groth:** Rule states that cutters capable of sheering downrigger cables need to be readily available.

Review of Committee Mission Statement: Read by **Bruce P.** No changes to mission statement, it remains intact as read.

Fisheries Updates – Bill Horns: Presentation on Chinook stocking adjustments evaluation- fewer, healthier fish now, after 5 to 6 years of reduced Chinook stocks. As a comparison, Lake Huron Chinook fishery collapsed after alewife declined. All of the 2011 Chinooks will get coded wire tags. There is continued concern and issues of invasives in the Great Lakes. There is an emergency rule to extend commercial fishing of whitefish through Oct 25th.

Lake Superior Updates – Peter Stevens: Fisheries advisor. There is a scarcity of trained DNR staff to manage the Lake Superior resource. The research vessel is out for refitting and has been out all during this open water season. As a result, pike and walleye net surveys in Chequamegon Bay as well as small mouth bass, brook trout surveys, and near shore operations have been conducted without the lager vessel. The fisheries team is working with tribal fisheries to set quotas. "Ghost nets" are still being found, marked and removed. **Rick Olivo** suggested that the next time a net is found, that the Ashland Press take pictures and increase public awareness. There is an increase in seeforellen brown trout stocks planed. DNR fishery programs need more positive press: Sturgeon success story, now naturally reproducing. Evidence supports that we now have a restored lake trout population in Lake Superior. Motion and second to go on record in full support the efforts by DNR staff and Stevens to fill the Lake Superior Lake Superior Fisheries Team positions ASAP. Unanimous in support.

Law Enforcement Update – Chris Groth: Report on warden recognition for outstanding service. Trap nets. DNR has a \$16,000 VHS/invasives vessel decontamination service using 140 degree water. Invasives cost tens of millions per year. Salmon are migrating up the rivers/streams. Browns are being caught in the bay. Whitefish through the ice is more popular even with out of state fishermen.

Citizen Resolutions:

150311 *Change Walleye Bag Limit to Three Year-Round*

Motion and second to support. Discussion: We currently have consistency with Michigan/Wisconsin waters, no biological reason to change the bag limits. Walleyes are not in any population trouble. Fishermen on the bay overwhelmingly want consistent regulations. The opportunity is available to catch/possess 1 walleye in/on each body of water and still catch up to 5 fish per day. Motion failed. Motion and second to reject. No discussion. Unanimous to reject.

380111 *Spring Closure for Northern Pike on Green Bay and Tributaries*

Motion and second to support. This action would help protect pike during pre-spawn and spawn periods. **Chris Groth** believes that the majority of our fishermen on the bay practice catch and release of pike, but keep one or two for eating. Currently, hook and line fishing for northern pike is closed on the tributaries in spring to protect these fish. Culturally, there is a tradition of catching pike through the ice in the bay during the late ice fishing season, but there are plenty of fish that escape capture to spawn. Passing this resolution would be restrictive to those fishermen that target pre-spawn northern pike. Motion passed 4 to 2 with 3 abstaining.

Question: Anecdotally, there is some evidence to suggest that there may be significant fishing pressure on pre-spawn northern pike. Would you support a change to the northern pike regulation to close on the waters of Green Bay and its tributaries from after the first Sunday in March to before the first Saturday in May to protect pre-spawning and spawning northern pike.

Background: One of the limiting factors in northern pike reproduction is habitat. Wardens and fishermen have observed an increase in fishing pressure on northern pike through the ice as they congregate prior to spawning.

Motion and second to approve the above question. Unanimously in favor.

410311 *Stocking Lake Michigan Yellow Perch*

Motion and second to approve. Letter and information from Steven Alt was read to the committee. Discussion centered around logistics of stocking perch. Perch have declined, and there seems to be some conflict with alewife and a long list of other plankton consumers that are limiting the potential for perch to survive from hatching through young adults. There exists a great deal of competition within the lake ecosystem for plankton consumption by a host of exotic invasives in addition to the competition for this food source by native fish hatchlings. The DNR protocol is to use fish that are genetically from Lake Michigan to stock in the lake. Research shows that it costs about \$.17/perch to raise them to stocking size (fry). The same research, (UW Sea Grant-Clifford Kraft 1998), shows that only about 3% of the eggs survive to stocking size. Wisconsin does not have a hatchery to raise perch. All hatcheries in operation are being used to their capacity to sustain stocking programs for species that have been successful and cost effective. The DNR would have to build a multi-million dollar hatchery to even begin a stocking program for perch fry that would very likely not survive in a lake where the competition for food is too high for perch fry to survive. The DNR does not have the infrastructure to begin a stocking program for perch at this time.

Motion unanimously failed

Motion and second to reject. Unanimously in favor of rejecting the resolution due to the biological ineffectiveness, extremely low return rate, and economic unfeasibility of stocking perch in Lake Michigan.

Boat Launch Fees, Use of Funds: The position of the WCCGLC is that boat access launch fees should be used to maintain the launch site and fund resource management on the body of water where the fees are collected.

Motion and second to support. Unanimously in favor.

Apostle Islands Sport Fisherman's Association and Lake Superior Alliance – Ron Michael : <http://www.apostleislandsfishing.com>

Working with sport groups on fisheries management issues: Stocking, trap nets, ...

AB 176–Relating to the Minimum Harvesting Requirements for Commercial Fishing in Great Lakes: WWF is on record in opposition to AB 176, proposing that the DNR cannot use minimum catch as a requirement for relicensing. The WCCGLC is also in opposition to AB 176 and SB113 that propose to eliminate the minimum catch rule for relicensing commercial fishermen.

Motion made and second to go on record in opposition to AB 176 and SB 113.

Unanimous.

Member Matters: **Bruce P** talked about St Louis River estuary projects and Invasive species concerns.

Adjourn at 1:52pm to depart on guided tours of DNR fisheries facilities.

Tours: Brule River rearing station, fish ladder/lamprey barrier: (Larry Nelson, Bill Blust, Peter Stevens) 2:00pm-4:00pm.

During the tour, Wild Rose strain brown trout, Seeforellen strain brown trout, and Coho salmon were shown to the group members. At the lamprey barrier, several nice Coho salmon were observed migrating up the river. There apparently is a strong olfactory/pheromone draw of adult lampreys to streams where young lampreys are developing in the stream bed.

Respectfully submitted:

David Tupa
(WCCGLC Secretary)