

Lake Michigan Fisheries Team
9 am – 3 pm, Wednesday, March 11, 2009
Cleveland Training Room, Lakeshore Technical College

Draft Notes –prepared by Tammie Paoli and Bill Horns

Present: Bill Horns, Chris Groth, Paul Peeters, David Rowe, Mike Donofrio, Tammie Paoli, Scott Hansen, Pradeep Hirethota, Brad Eggold, George Boronow, Steve Fajfer, Dave Giehtbrock, John Nelson

1. **Review/revise agenda** – no changes (item 7 later moved up)
2. **Review/approve meeting notes from January 13, 2009** -- approved
3. **Designation of note-taker** – Tammie Paoli
4. **Updates**
 - a) Pending tasks
 - i) Inquiry about Skamania eggs from Indiana
 - Topic deferred to agenda item 7.
 - ii) Draft letter to commercial fishers for Staggs' signature
 - Dropped on advice of legal counsel
 - iii) NER sturgeon trailer
 - DATCP licensing of trailer on Kewaunee R. to be accomplished by address change from existing Manitowoc R. license.
 - Discharge permitting will accomplished via memo.
 - Sturgeon produced will be stocked in the Kewaunee R. There was a discussion of the possibility of stocking upstream and related VHS issues.
 - iv) Net pen issue brief for FM Board
 - Lake Superior biologists are OK with draft. Draft approved for **referral to FM Board**.
 - v) Fish and fish egg collections issue brief for FM Board
 - Dave Giehtbrock discussed coop agreements for commercial collection of sucker and walleye eggs. SCP can allow only the collection of live fish (not eggs) and those fish and/or progeny may not be diverted to commercial use. Live eggs presumably may be obtained via the SCP only if spawned from live fish collections actually authorized by the SCP. **Bill will revise issue brief to a) note that SCP is limited to collections of live fish and b) include citation of statutory authority for cooperative collections not covered by SCP, and will have legal counsel review it.**
 - vi) SCAA modeling group
 - No progress.
 - vii) Stocking of Illinois-produced chinook
 - Topic deferred to agenda item 7.
 - viii) Arrangements for creel analysis project
 - Paul and Bill have discussed this with Paul Rasmussen and will have a follow-up discussion later in March.
 - Steve Hogler raised concern about establishing a clear time line with deliverables.
 - b) Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum vacancy
 - We have a vacancy on the Forum. Suggestions are requested.
 - c) Status of NRDA projects
 - Potential for significant support for spotted musky work. No new projects are being solicited.
 - d) Great Lakes Regional Collaboration's Habitat and Species Workshop – March 17
 - e) Minimum catch rule hearings March 20

- Tammie raised a concern that under the proposed fishing year (Jan-Dec), it will be difficult to have timely implementation of revised harvest limits. Bill attempted to allay that concern, but it will be considered further before the rule goes for adoption.
- f) Replacing the Barney
 - A bid for re-design of the Lake Char has been received and will be forwarded to the FM Board for action.
- g) Management reports (April 1 deadline)
- h) Work planning
 - Bill will e-mail revised budget numbers, as submitted for FM Board review.
- i) NOAA habitat projects (March 12 conference call)
 - Projects in the mix for consideration include Cat Island chain restoration, Duck Creek fish passage, Suamico R. carp pond restoration, Barney replacement, and fish passage on the Milwaukee River.
- j) Creel results
 - Brad provided a brief overview, including the following points: 1) The coho harvest dropped sharply in 2008. 2) Chinook were down, but still good in 2008 with 4th or 5th best CPE. 3) Angler effort has declined 50% since 1987. 4) Yellow perch were sharply down in both Green Bay and Lake Michigan.
- k) OTC marking.
 - In 2009 we will collect all available marked year classes (ages 0, 1, 2, 3+).
- l) Contaminants
 - George noted that the draft new fish consumption advisory allows increased consumption of walleye, brown trout, and Green Bay whitefish.

5. Whitefish quotas

Background. 1) The Lake Michigan Commercial Fishing Board recommended increasing total allowable commercial harvests in Zones 1 and 3. We should discuss the recommendation and formulate some kind of position or response. 2) Scott Hansen will review the modeling timetable and discuss biological reference points.

Meeting action: Scott discussed possible biological reference points and progress/problems toward finalizing the SCAA model, emphasizing the need to get a good modeler focused on the problem ASAP. Bill will bring this need to Mike Staggs' attention and seek to get a firm commitment of Ted Treska's time. Scott asked why WDNR has not contributed to MSU's Quantitative Fisheries Center and wondered if such a contribution would allow us to get help with this modeling effort, so that was discussed. The LM Commercial Fishing Board recommendation was discussed. Bill read Mike Staggs' 2/12/09 letter to Matt Frank, which summarizes the issue very well and states that a quota recommendation will be available July 1. Paul raised the issue of the growing sport harvest of small whitefish from Green Bay and suggested that further discussion is needed.

6. Lake trout

Background. The draft lake trout rehabilitation strategy has been under review of some time. The Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum has a) endorsed the Implementation Strategy (split decision, some abstentions and absences) and b) recommended delaying implementation and maintaining current stocking targets (2.75M) until the LMC determines that the forage base can support additional fish (virtually unanimous).

Meeting action. The Forum action was discussed. Paul Peeters argued that lake trout restoration and the continuation of the salmon fishery as we know it are not mutually compatible, and suggested that before moving forward with a lake trout restoration strategy the LMC should review and revise the Fish Community Objectives and, in so doing, decide whether the salmon fishery or lake trout restoration was the primary objective. The discussion led to consideration of four possible recommendations by the LMFT: 1) Accept the Implementation Strategy (IS), but delay implementation until Lake Michigan Fish Community Objectives are reviewed and revised. 2) Accept the IS, but delay implementation until the

LMC determines that the forage base can support the additional stocking. 3) Reject the IS and stay with a 2.75 million lake trout yearling stocking target. 4) Accept the IS without qualification. The first option was preferred by 8 and the second by 2. LMFT policy requires that when recommendations are not accepted by consensus they are to be referred to the Policy Committee (Horns, Peeters, Eggold) for resolution. A Policy Committee vote was not formally taken, but would have been 2-1 in favor of option 1. **Bill will advise Mike Staggs about this recommendation and discuss with Mike how to handle the issue at the upcoming LMC meeting.**

7. Production and stocking issues

Background. There are a handful of topics related to production and stocking that would bear discussion. These include the following: 1) Preparation and planning for Skamania next year. 2) Management-propagation communication. 3) Brown trout stocking strategies in Green Bay. 4) Distribution of 2009 yearling steelhead. 5) Status of the current year class of cohos. 6) Arlee sources. Dave Giehtbrock will be present to help with these topics.

Meeting action: Discussion. Dave Giehtbrock led the group through a review of the status of fish production for the 2008-09 and 2009-10 production years. **Dave will provide an updated summary table in the near future.** Production of brown trout and cohos next year may be influenced by a pending decision regarding hatchery closures. Expected production of chinook salmon for 2008 stocking is down to approx 980,000 owing to problems at KMS. This includes expected delivery of 45K chinooks by Illinois but not the delivery of any from Indiana. Expected production of cohos of the 2009-2010 year class has been reduced. 305,000 are currently on hand, all of which will be raised for stocking as yearlings. Arlees are being stocked out early this spring. To avoid similar surprises in the future, we will plan a late summer meeting with Dave to review production plans following the annual production meeting. No Skamania eggs were obtained from Indiana. **Bill will review this years' experience with that issue, develop a plan for next year, and bring that for discussion at the next LMFT meeting.** Tammie has asked for discussion of brown trout stocking strategies in Green Bay. **This topic will be raised at the next LMFT meeting.**

8. Lake sturgeon genetic guidelines

Background. A draft set of genetic guidelines for sturgeon stocking has been prepared.

Meeting action. Brad briefly reviewed the draft guidelines. Several LMFT members have concerns about keeping options open for future stocking. Bill agreed to draft a letter to Amy Welsh stating that restoration benefits of stocking must be weighed against genetic risks in future stocking discussions, and that all options must remain open for consideration.

9. Priority tributaries in the Wisconsin Great Lakes Restoration and Protection Strategy

Background. When we met at Wild Rose, Cynthia Moore discussed the GL Restoration and Protection Strategy with us. She has asked me if the LMFT could review the priority tributaries in that document.

Meeting action. This item was dropped for lack of time. LMFT members are encouraged to provide comments regarding the tributary priorities.

10. Club request for walleye bag limit changes in Green Bay

Background. The Marinette/Menominee Great Lakes Sport Fishermen Club has asked for change in the walleye bag limits.

Meeting action. Deferred for discussion at next meeting.

11. Next meeting date and location – May 14. Lakeshore Technical College.