

**Lake Michigan Fisheries Team**  
**Monday July 9 and Tuesday July 10, 2007**  
**DNR Service Center**  
**Sturgeon Bay, WI**

**Draft Notes –prepared by Bill Horns**

Present: Paul Peeters, Brad Eggold, Steve Hogler, Mike Donofrio, Chris Groth, Randy Schumacher, Bill Horns, Mark Holey (during discussion of fish passage), Mike Toneys (during discussion of lake trout), Mike Baumgartner (by phone for Skamania item), Dave Giehtbrock (by phone for discussion of coho)

- 1. Review/revise agenda**
- 2. Review/approve meeting notes from May 15, 2007**
- 3. Brief updates**

Time was allowed for short updates and reminders of topics of interest. The following will be mentioned. Any of these could be elevated to discussion or action items if needed and if time permits.

- Challenges to minimum catch requirement and . . .
- . . .status of bloater chubs.
- Cormorant control activities update
- Spotted musky importation update
  - The Canadians have established and are rearing five separate families of yoy musky.
  - We are waiting for MOUs from the Canadians. Bill Horns will check with Finance regarding processing of the MOUs when they arrive.
  - Mike Donofrio will check with Colette Charbonneau regarding NRDA funding.
  - Bill/Mike will check with Sue Marcquenski regarding VHS testing requirements. [Note: Following the meeting we learned from Sue that no muskies may be imported from Canada until USDA completes rule making regarding VHS.]
- August hearings on the Green Bay yellow perch rule.
  - Hearings will be held in Peshtigo and Green Bay on August 13 regarding the rule increasing the commercial harvest limit from 60,000 to 100,000 pounds.
- Sturgeon trailer update.
  - Currently approximately 670 fish are being raised in the Milwaukee River trailer and 200 are being raised in the Manitowoc River trailer. The fish will be released in October.
- Consumption advisory change for chinook salmon
- Biologist hiring schedule (3 positions on Lake Michigan and Green Bay)
- Fin clip reservations
- Funding for EFHRS programmer.
  - Funding has been provided by LE for the immediate future.
  - Chris Groth, Paul Peeters, and Al Blizel will meet to develop a timetable for implementation of the electronic reporting program.

**4. VHS**

Background. Our VHS response program is pretty well in place. It includes various management actions and policies, as well as regulations. Hearings are scheduled for August on the proposed permanent rule order.

Action. The following questions were raised:

- Will we be able to spawn Winnebago/Wolf/Fox system sturgeon for rearing in trailers in 2008? What testing will be required?
- When must the young sturgeon now in the trailers be tested for VHS? How many must be tested? How many from each trailer?

- In the recent past salmon eggs collected at the weirs have been sold for packaging and sale as bait. A contract is in place for 2007. What testing and/or disinfection will be required?
- Can we give dead Lake Michigan fish to REI to feed raptors being rehabilitated?
- What VHS testing will be required for the Canadian spotted muskies? By whom? Where?
- Does Sue Marcquenski want sturgeon from collections on the upper Menominee River for VHS testing?
- Can we move Skamania adults from the Root River to the BAFF raceways and later to tanks in the Kewaunee pond? Under what conditions or with what approvals?
- Why would movement of coho yoy from Lake Mills to the Kewaunee pond be problematic?

## 5. Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum

Background. In May we discussed possible changes to the LMFF. It was suggested that maintaining the Forum, but supplementing it with semi-annual or quarterly public forums linked to issues of the news memo might be a good approach. I agreed to draft a proposal for consideration at this meeting. My proposal is as follows: 1) Maintain the present composition of the Forum. 2) Hold semi-annual meetings following public informational forums and announced by releases of the news memo. 3) The semi-annual meetings would be in SER in spring and NER in fall. 4) Formal actions on any policies, quota changes, or rule making would be timed to take advantage of the semi-annual meetings. 5) Schedule LMFT meetings to precede or follow the semi-annual meetings.

Action. The LMFT endorsed this approach. The semi-annual meetings will be held at reasonably central locations in early April and early December.

## 6. Lake trout restoration planning

Background. The Lake Michigan Lake Trout Task Group has completed "A Guide for Rehabilitation of Lake Trout in Lake Michigan". Now the Lake Michigan Committee must come to grips with the task of developing a restoration plan.

Action. Discussion

## 7. Chinook salmon mass marking with OTC

Background. All states on Lake Michigan are cooperating in the marking of all stocked chinook salmon, most with oxytetracycline (OTC). A key element in the project will be recovery of fish and examination for marks.

Action. Discussion.

## 8. Skamania

Background. Mike Baumgartner and Mark Opgenorth are completing the proposal for tanks at the Kewaunee coho pond. That should be complete for review by Mike Staggs by Friday of this week. Meanwhile rain is forecast, so we may see a significant number of Skamania in the rivers by the weekend.

Action. Mike Baumgartner expects to have a completed proposal addressing all of Al Kaas' questions later this week. If the proposal is approved, Skamania could be held temporarily in the BAFF ponds will the tanks are being installed. We anticipate that this project will cost approximately \$15,000-\$20,000 to acquire and set up the tanks and \$3,000 to transport adult fish from the Root River to the facilities on the Kewaunee River.

## 9. Fish passage projects

Background. We have hopes and/or plans for fish passage projects on the Menominee and Milwaukee Rivers. Meanwhile the National Fish Passage Program of USFWS is slated to receive a big boost in

funding. I thought we could take some time to talk about fish passage in general. I asked Mark Holey if he would like to send someone to join the discussion.

Action. Discussion. There appear to be opportunities for cooperation and cost-sharing between this project and the fish passage initiative on the Milwaukee River.

## 10. Great Lakes Protection Fund

Background. In the biennial work planning process for FY08 and FY08 we were looking at \$150,000 of Great Lakes Protection Fund funding for FY08 and 100,000 for FY09. We agreed to support the following four projects for

- Milwaukee River fish passage -- \$50,000 for FY08 and \$21,400 for FY09.
- Lake Superior Hydroacoustic Survey -- \$52,800 for FY08 and \$33,400 for FY09.
- Spotted Musky -- \$47,200 for FY08 and \$30,200 for FY09.
- Middle River sea lamprey barrier -- \$15,000 for FY09.

Since then we have learned that the spotted musky work cannot be funded from this source. Because the spotted musky project was deemed ineligible, we still have some potential GLPF money to spend -- \$47,200 in FY08 and \$30,200 for FY09. We could consider moving the Middle River project up to FY08.

Action. Discussion. The LMFT recommends funding the Milwaukee River fish passage work at \$50,000 in each of the two years and holding the \$47,200 uncommitted and available for that work. This would imply a commitment to favor NER and NOR projects in future years. Bill Horns will discuss this with Steve Schram.

## 11. Coho

Background. [Note: The numbers that follows are current holdings. When summed they exceed the overall stocking target of 500,000 cohos to allow for approximately 10% mortality.] a) **180,000 planned yearlings are affected by policy memo.** VHS management policies described in the June 25 Fisheries Field Operations policy memo signed by Secretary Hassett will affect coho stocking. Lake Mills is holding 95,000 coho that had been scheduled for transfer to Lima and Kewaunee ponds and then stocked as yearlings in 2008. Under the policy memo those cannot be transferred to the ponds, and therefore must be stocked out soon. Lake Mills is also holding 85,000 furunculosis-vaccinated coho that were to be transferred to Thunder River in October and stocked as yearlings in 2008. Under the policy memo those fish also cannot be transferred, and therefore must be stocked out as fall fingerlings. b) **219,000 planned fingerlings are not affected by policy memo.** Lake Mills is also holding 110,000 coho for stocking as fall fingerlings according to pre-VHS production planning. Bayfield is holding 109,000 coho for stocking as fall fingerlings according to pre-VHS production planning. c) **165,000 potential yearlings are at risk of VHS exposure.** Lake Mills is holding 165,000 coho that are scheduled for over-wintering at Lake Mills and stocking as yearlings in 2008. Those fish will be switched from well water to Rock Lake water before winter. Even though Rock Lake has not yet been shown to be VHS-infected, there is a possibility that is infected or will be and that the coho will become infected. In that event, the coho could not be stocked anywhere.

Action. Discussion. 1) The LMFT recommends splitting the 95,000 scheduled for transfer to Lima and Kewaunee ponds equally between the Root and Kewaunee Rivers. 2) Final decisions remain to be made about where to stock the 85,000 vaccinated fingerlings, 110,000 planned fingerlings from Lake Mills, and the 109,000 planned fingerlings from Bayfield. 3) A decision must be made about whether to hold the 165,000 planned yearlings from Lake Mills through the winter and risk their exposure to VHS or to stock them out as fingerlings before they are transferred to Rock Lake water.

## 12. Next meeting date and location

September 18. Plymouth DNR Service Center.