

**Lake Michigan Fisheries Team  
December 6, 2007  
Wisconsin Training Room  
Lakeshore Technical College  
Cleveland, WI**

**Draft Notes –prepared by Bill Horns**

Present: Dave Rowe, Pradeep Hirethota, Scott Hansen, Steve Hogler, Mike Donofrio, Tammie Paoli, Pat McKee, Dave Giebtrock, Steve Fajfer, Paul Peeters, Brad Eggold, Randy Schumacher, Chris Groth, Bill Horns

- 1. Review/revise agenda**
- 2. Review/approve meeting notes from September 18, 2007**
- 3. Brief updates**

Time was allowed for short updates and reminders of topics of interest.

- Lake Michigan decision analysis modeling update
  - Brad will try to locate a written report from the 1998 decision analysis exercise
- January LMTC meeting
- Bill's pending items
- New LM fishing calendar for 2008 Wisconsin Fishing Report
  - Bill will discuss this possibility with Alisa
- Fin clip reservations
  - Brad will put this topic on the Lake Michigan Technical Committee January agenda
- January meeting of Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum
- Green Bay yellow perch commercial harvest limit
- John Janssen's preliminary lake trout data
- Grant funding
- OTC mass marking project
  - Paul and Brad will coordinate transmission of Wisconsin samples to MI for processing.
- Mark Maricque's request to change the commercial fishing year from July-June to April-March
  - The team discussed pros and cons of a change. Further discussion with legal services is needed.

- 4. Salmon and trout production**

Background. There are a handful of 2008 production-related issues to discuss: 1) What about skamania? 2) VHS-related production limitations. 3) Decision not to buy more cohos from Michigan. 4) Breaking in the new Wild Rose.

Action. Discussion

- 5. Lake trout restoration planning**

Background. The Lake Michigan Committee is at the point of asking the GLFC to provide mediation to help us reach consensus on a lake trout restoration plan. We have reviewed two draft Implementation Strategies that Jim Dexter prepared, and are looking at draft 3. The following proposal was provided to the LMC on December 4:

*A great deal of thought and effort has gone into creating A Guide for Rehabilitation of Lake Trout in Lake Michigan (the Guide) and three drafts of A Fisheries Management Strategy for the Rehabilitation of Lake Trout in Lake Michigan (the Strategy). The agencies have agreed to accept the Guide, but unresolved issues remain regarding the Strategy. To help move the process forward, we offer the following as a basis for fleshing out a Strategy that is acceptable to all parties.*

*In summary our primary concerns with the latest draft Strategy are as follows: 1) The Strategy calls for further increases in lake trout stocking without calling for and assuring commensurate cuts in stocking of other predators. This has implications for the stability of the ecosystem and of the current sport fishery. 2) The Strategy fails to include specific intermediate measures of success, together with binding adaptive strategies in the event that those benchmarks are not met. We feel that this has implications for our ability to achieve natural reproduction by lean lake trout. 3) The Strategy fails to fairly allocate among the jurisdictions the lake trout stocked for harvest. This has implications for ability to provide sport fishing opportunities for lean lake trout. We suggest the following approach:*

- **Stock first priority areas as proposed.** In 2008 stock first priority areas as shown in Table 1 of the draft Strategy (2,360,000 yearlings).
- **Provide some discretionary fish for fishing.** In 2008 stock 390,000 yearling equivalents (bringing the total to 2,750,000 yearling equivalents) in four states in proportion to shoreline or surface area, or as agreed to by consensus of the LMC.
- **Provide a mechanism for increased lake trout stocking.** We are willing to consider increases in lake trout stocking above 2.75 million if the LMC agrees by consensus to a specific permanent reduction in salmon and trout stocking. In that event the predation-equivalent number of lake trout yearlings and/or fingerlings could be stocked in second priority areas following Table 2 of the draft Strategy, with specific sites selected by the LMTC.
- **Develop a rigorous scientific protocol within the stocking framework presented in the Guide.** We suggest that a panel of scientists be charged with developing a detailed research-based adaptive management protocol, subject to review by LMTC and adoption by LMC, to guide stocking on all first and second priority areas. This panel could be made up of Janssen, Krueger, Bronte, Marsden, Hansen or a subset of those individuals. The protocol would build on the "Proposed Goal and Objectives" and "Evaluation" sections of the Guide and include specific 5 and 10-year benchmarks defining acceptable progress at any site, such that stocking at any site would be suspended, pending review by the LMC, if a benchmark were not met. The protocol may include experimental and adaptive approaches not suggested in the Guide, and may include the use of Klondike strain lake trout, but not siscowets. If the protocol is not completed and adopted by the LMC in 2008, the implementation strategy would be suspended until all issues are resolved. The same panel could develop a research-based fry stocking protocol subject to review by LMTC and LMC.
- **Clarify the stocking and harvest expectations of the Consent Decree.** In our discussions and communications there appear to be differences of opinion about the stocking and harvest expectations of the Consent Decree. It would be helpful to know exactly what is expected by each party to that agreement.
- **Estimate the numbers of stocked fish supporting sport and commercial harvest.** In 2008 the LMTC develops an estimate of annual lake trout harvest (sport, commercial, incidental) and converts that to yearling equivalents (i.e., How many yearlings were stocked to produce that many harvestable fish?) for each jurisdiction.
- **Reallocate discretionary stocking to balance harvest among jurisdictions.** The allocation of the 390,000 yearling equivalents among the jurisdictions in subsequent years is determined annually by the LMC following review of the LMTC report on the previous year's harvest, with the specific objective of assuring the fairest possible allocation of harvest among the jurisdictions.

Action. Discussion.

## 6. Whitefish

Background. We have responded to Glenn Seger's suggestions regarding 1) increased harvest limits, 2) inter-zone quota transfers, and 3) allowing large-mesh gill nets in zone 3, but the issue may warrant further discussion.

Action. Discussion.

## 7. Minimum catch rule

Background. Senator Dave Hansen is introducing legislation to eliminate the minimum catch requirement for commercial fishers. Mike Staggs has asked us to suggest modifications to the current minimum catch rule.

Action. The LMFT agreed to advance a rule proposal that would establish species-specific minimum catch standards for each zone. Bill will pull something together along this line for review at the next LMFT meeting (or earlier by e-mail).

## **8. Invasive species rule**

Background. Bill Horns has been working with the statewide Invasive Species Team to develop a comprehensive new invasive species rule. Bill would like to review the parts of the draft rule that pertain to fish.

Action. Discussion

## **9. Sturgeon**

Background. The second year of stream-side rearing has been completed and we're getting better at it. Steve Hogler is encountering some issues pertaining to water quality and the status of the Branch River as an Outstanding Water. Steve will provide further background.

Action. Deferred.

## **10. Magnetic creel signs**

Background. Tammie Paoli is on to an idea about using magnetic signs on creel survey vehicles to increase public awareness of the creel survey.

Action. Tammie will check handbooks and policy to see if this is possible. We are not sure such a sign can be put on a private vehicle. Some creel clerks use state-owned vehicles; other use their own vehicle. We felt there were pros and cons to this idea that need to be thoroughly discussed once cost and feasibility is known. For example, depending on the situation, it may be better to NOT announce there is a state of Wisconsin Fisheries employee on the premises in this manner. The LMFT will discuss this at a future meeting and develop a recommendation.

## **11. Seeforellen brown trout**

Background. Tammie has requested a discussion of the seeforellen project and ways we can evaluate the performance of domestics versus seeforellens.

Action. As it has been almost 15 years since the strains were evaluated by Brian Belonger, one suggestion was to develop a similar project to fin clip a percentage of Wild Rose strain browns that are stocked into the Menominee, Root, and Kewaunee Rivers. Returns can be evaluated by creel and fall shocking. The team also discussed clipping seeforellens that are stocked into the Peshtigo and Oconto Rivers with the same annual clip as the three brood rivers. Clipping is done in March at WR hatchery. Peshtigo staff and an LTE allotment is available in 2008. The LMFT will further discuss the strain evaluation study at February's meeting.

## **12. Pike and musky projects for Green Bay**

Background. Marty Jennings will be present to help us discuss possible management projects on northern pike and musky in Green Bay.

Action. Deferred.

## **13. Next meeting date and location – February 14. Lakeshore Technical College**