

Wisconsin Conservation Congress

Great Lakes Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes



ORDER OF BUSINESS	9/24/2016	9:30am	Marathon County Public Library, 330 1 st St, Wausau WI, in the 3 rd Floor Wausau Room
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I. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. CALL TO ORDER

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY	WCC Great Lakes Committee Chairman, Dale Maas at 9:34am
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B. ROLL CALL

ATTENDEES	Committee Members: Committee Members: Dennis Haanpaa, Alfred House, Thomas Johnson, Al Marotz, Bryce Luchterhand, Robert Nicksic, Dale Maas, Jim Johnson, Joseph Felhofer, David Tupa, James Baumgart, Anthony Grabski, Austin Ragotzkie, John Blumreich, Eugene Altwies.
EXCUSED	Tom Kleiman, Dave Sorenson, Erick Flood, Madison Houchin.
UNEXCUSED	Tom Thill, David Zielke, James Wierzba, Don Anderson.
GUESTS	DNR Liaisons: Chris Groth - DNR law enforcement marine supervisor, Lyob Tsehaye - DNR fisheries research scientist, Willie Fetzer - Great Lakes Fisheries Specialist, Other Guests: Charlie Hendrickson - Commercial fisherman in Lake Michigan and Green Bay, Gary Nalt - resolution author, David Snell - resolution author.

C. AGENDA APPROVAL/REPAIR

DISCUSSION	Motion and second to be flexible with agenda items.
ACTION	Motion carried

D. REVIEW COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT

DISCUSSION	<p><i>The mission Statement of the Great Lakes Committee of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress is to provide input from the public through county delegates assembled from all areas of the State of Wisconsin making up that committee and addressing issues where public input is deemed appropriate on matters concerning the Wisconsin territorial waters of Lakes Superior, Michigan and the Bay of Green Bay. The charge of the Great Lakes Committee is to ensure that the waters of the Great Lakes that boarder Wisconsin are managed to sustain a healthy fishery and pristine beauty while fully protected with every effort taken to enhance and upgrade their status whenever and wherever possible. The Committee will also assist the agencies that are involved in enforcing natural resource laws and regulations, by offering and facilitating public input. Specifically, the areas of concern will be defined as:</i></p> <p><i>1) For issues related to regulations pertaining to resource management the committee will use outlining waters and their tributaries as defined in NR 20, Wis. Adm. Code.</i></p> <p><i>2) For issues related to the general health of the Great Lakes, including water quality and ecological impact to native flora and fauna, the committee will use the Great Lakes Basin boundary as described in the Great Lake Compact.</i></p> <p>Motion and second to maintain mission statement.</p>
ACTION	Motion Carried

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

DISCUSSION	Presentation by David Snell on Lake Michigan steelhead - support reduction in bag limit from 5 to 2. Support of resolution 410516. See resolution comments under Action Items below:
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II. INFORMATION & ACTION ITEMS

A. CITIZEN RESOLUTIONS:

1. RESOLUTION 150416: SHEEPHEAD IN GREEN BAY

GARY NAULT

DISCUSSION	Gary Nault - presented resolution and talked about the problem of too many sheephead in the waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay. Comments/questions: from DNR Fisheries - No data to support any conflict or competition with game fish. We have very limited control over the dynamic system of the Great Lakes. Charlie H (commercial fisheries) - large numbers of sheephead get in trap nets in mid to late September. Discussion: Ecological system view suggests that we need to know about ALL organisms in the system and how these organisms interact. It is good science to collect data about each species, including sheephead.
ACTION	Motion and second to advance resolution to question with a "friendly amendment" to delete the last 5 words of resolution question. Motion carried with unanimous support. Background: Anecdotal evidence from sport and commercial fisherman suggests a significant increase in sheephead populations over the past 5 years. Question: Would you support the WCC work with the DNR to conduct sheephead studies to determine the impact of sheephead on the Green Bay Ecosystem. Motion and second to forward background and question. - Motion carried with unanimous support.

PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: AUTHOR NOTIFIED AT MEETING	DEADLINE: 9/24/16
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2. RESOLUTION 410416: GREAT LAKES FISHERIES, JOBS, SPORT DOLLARS

AUTHOR NOT PRESENT

DISCUSSION	Motion and second to reject resolution. Discussion: Resolution does not take Lake Superior fisheries into account. A long-standing, complex, trusting, and vital relationship has been established between DNR Fisheries, hatcheries, commercial fishermen, sport fisherman, and native tribal fisheries managers. There is currently an active task force to study the issue of shortfalls in money available to fund fisheries management issues. Commercial fishing licenses are currently \$900 with 55 licenses on Lake Michigan and 8 on Lake Superior (totaling \$56,700.00 in revenue). Management of the Great Lakes involves partnering with all stakeholders and user groups of the resource in order to properly manage our water resources. The WCC is a citizen-based organization that serves as an advisory body only to the DNR. The WCC brings forward citizen-based management ideas and advises the DNR, who may take the recommendations of the WCC, work with those ideas, and may incorporate them into their best management practices if the idea serves the best interest of the resource and all citizens who use the resource. The DNR may work with state legislators to make changes to the management of our natural resources. Legislative changes are not made by this committee.
ACTION	Motion to reject unanimously carried. It was recommended that the committee's action be passed along to the Legislative Committee for further review.
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: AUTHOR WILL BE CONTACTED	DEADLINE:

3. RESOLUTION 410516: LAKE MICHIGAN STEELHEAD BAG LIMITS

AUTHOR PRESENT

DISCUSSION	Resolution presented under "public comment" section. Motion and second to support resolution. Discussion: Committee members comments are that steelhead are typically caught on charters as incidental catch (1 or 2 fish) while salmon fishing. This is supported by DNR creel survey data analysis. Other members of the committee do not feel that the resolution will benefit the resource or the management of steelhead. Steelhead have a high mortality rate when released, so decreasing the bag limit may result in dead fish being released. Steelhead are a "Put and take" fishery in the Great Lakes. Solutions are in the works with new hatchery.
ACTION	Motion to support the resolution unanimously failed. Motion and second to bring forward a committee question to reduce bag limit from 5 to 3. Discussion: Comments from DNR are that reducing bag from 5 to 3 would not significantly impact the population. Several committee members disagree with the proposal for several ecological and biological reasons. No good science to support this change. Motion failed.
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: AUTHOR NOTIFIED AT MEETING	DEADLINE:

4. RESOLUTION 150216: LAKE MICHIGAN/GREEN BAY SALMON BAG LIMIT

AUTHOR PRESENT

DISCUSSION	Motion and second to reject resolution. Discussion: Charters rarely catch a limit. The current limit of 5 per day allows people to bring home plenty of fish. Charters would not support an increase in daily bag limit.
ACTION	Motion to reject was supported by a majority.
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: AUTHOR NOTIFIED AT MEETING	DEADLINE:

5. RESOLUTION 150316: WHITEFISH BAG LIMIT

AUTHOR PRESENT

DISCUSSION	Motion and second to support resolution. Discussion: Whitefish adapt and move within the lake and bay ecosystem. The current limit of 10 per day allows people to bring home plenty of fish. Charters would not support an increase in daily bag limit.
ACTION	Motion to support the resolution failed by a majority.
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: AUTHOR NOTIFIED AT MEETING	DEADLINE:

6. RESOLUTION 360116: FOX RIVER SPRING WALLEYE FISHING

AUTHOR PRESENT

DISCUSSION	Motion and second to reject resolution. Discussion: Data collected by DNR studies show that walleye populations are thriving in the waters of the lower bay and Fox River. There is no protection of the resource needed in this area, nor is there a law enforcement issue in this area according to DNR game wardens. Closing this area would cause a significant loss in fishing opportunities.
ACTION	Motion carried unanimously to reject the resolution.
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: AUTHOR WILL BE NOTIFIED	DEADLINE:

7. **RESOLUTION 160316: LICENSE FEE INCREASE – COLD WATER HATCHERY**

TOM JOHNSON

DISCUSSION	<p>Resolution presented by Tom Johnson. Motion and second to support resolution. Discussion: There is universal support within study committees of the WCC. Hatcheries are currently underfunded.</p> <p>Background: According to DNR Fisheries, our state hatcheries are currently underfunded. There is support from the fishing public and WCC committees to increase the stamp fee. Additionally, there has not been a Great Lakes stamp fee increase since 2004.</p> <p>Question: Would you favor an increase in Great Lakes stamp fees from \$10 to \$15, providing additional funds for our cold water hatcheries? (out of state license fees would be prorated accordingly).</p>
ACTION	Motion unanimously carried to support and advance the resolution question.
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: AUTHOR NOTIFIED AT MEETING.	
DEADLINE:	

B. DNR INFORMATION AND UPDATES

LYOB TSEHAYE, WILLIE FETZER, CHRIS GROTH

DISCUSSION	<p>Lyob Tsehaye - DNR fisheries research scientist</p> <p>Lake Michigan Ecosystem Research: (Multi-species approach) Yellow perch have been declining over past 20 years. Data shows reproduction rates fluctuate year to year, but population is very low. Walleye data trends indicate increase in reproduction in both Fox River and Lower Green Bay. Whitefish data trends show steady/stable population. Round goby is now an important diet item for yellow perch, walleye, and whitefish.</p> <p>Willie Fetzer - DNR fisheries research scientist</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mortality Study on Catch & Release: Data shows that a number of variables such as temp, fish length, lure type, playing time, ... may impact mortality. Water temperature seems to be the biggest factor in mortality rates of released fish. 2. Lake Superior Cisco Rule: Relative abundance of cisco has declined. Goal to set WI harvest at 15% of allowable catch to help bring the cisco population back into balance. 3. Proposed Salmon Stocking Levels: Chinook - Alewife predator prey ratio is at goal. Hatchery production is maxed out. We are managing the risk of crashing the alewife forage base with manipulating the different species of trout and salmon. Reducing the stocks by 50% is the management option with the least risk and ecologically best for the long term sustainability of the trout and salmon fishery in the Great Lakes. Lake trout stocking priority reallocation to reduce total lake trout stocks. 4. Proposed Commercial Whitefish Harvest: Historically 82% of catch has been from zone 2. with a total annual catch quota of 2.88 million pounds. Green Bay trawl assessments and sport harvest has grown slightly over the past 15 to 20 years. According to net surveys off North Eastern Door County (Zone 2), there is a significant decline in whitefish population on the lake and a decline in young fish (low recruitment). The population is aging according to the data collected. Zone 1 and 3 harvest rates have remained fairly constant, but there has been a steady annual decline in harvest from Zone 2. There have been 8 public meetings about proposed rule changes. Current proposal is to maintain the quota for the next two years. Genetic studies will help us understand the fish populations in the bay. <p>Chris Groth - DNR Law Enforcement</p> <p>5. DNR Law enforcement updates: 12 training recruits in process. Discussions on Lake Superior issues, Root River issues, allocation of salmon stocks related to charter captain reporting at ports, study found that charter boat captains reported 100% accurately when they were checked on the water and then reported at the port. At best, compliance accuracy was 81% when both ports in the study were compared, checking calendared charters, boats leaving port, numbers of people, and numbers of fish, compared with monitoring by wardens. Those reported numbers are used to determine stocking allocations for trout and salmon, so they need to be accurate.</p>
ACTION	<p>Motion and second for WCC-GL committee to support the most ecologically sound and least risky management option (least risk of causing an alewife collapse) for stocking predatory salmonids in Lake Michigan as presented by DNR Fisheries Specialist - Willie Fetzer.</p> <p>Motion carried by majority.</p>

C. RULE SIMPLIFICATION IDEAS

NONE

DISCUSSION	None
ACTION	None

D. AWARENESS TO CARRY PAPER COPY OF LICENSE

DALE MAAS

DISCUSSION	<p>Anglers must carry paper copy of license on "boundary waters."</p> <p>Motion and second to extend communication, outreach, and awareness of the requirement to carry a paper copy of their license when fishing on "boundary waters."</p>
ACTION	Motion carried by majority

III. MEMBERS MATTERS

DISCUSSION	Dale - It creates an issue when inaccurate information is provided at our meetings. Misinformation at our meetings can lead to poor decision making and a waste of time for everyone involved. Bryce - would like to; expand the boundaries and scope of our committee to weigh in on other issues not assigned to us, increase science based research, have us meet at fisheries facilities. There is a need for a "time keeper" to keep us on task and prevent presentations from exceeding the time limit. Tony - aquatic invasive species; boat plugs, water in motors, water guard. Joe - Thank you to DNR staff and committee members. Mining concerns. Eugene - fishing is good. Al - need to be aware of and voice concerns about all issues that impact the Great Lakes. Tom - same. Support of 2-day meetings. Required DNR land sales impact all of us. Chris Groth (DNR Law Enforcement) - pipeline is shut down for now. Charlie H - Aug 5th 2017 next meeting.
ACTION	2017 Meeting date set for August 5th location and time to be determined.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

MEETING ADJOURNED	Motion and second to adjourn at 4:53pm, Motion Carried.
SUBMITTED BY	David Tupa
DATE	9/24/2016

Dear Committee
September 23, 2016

I would like to address some concerns on behalf of sport anglers on the proposed changes to commercial harvest regulations.

A little about myself, my name is JJ Malvitz and I am a professional ice fishing guide from Sturgeon Bay Wisconsin. Since 2009 I have been guiding anglers from across the Midwest for whitefish on the bay. This type of sport fishery is something very unique to this area. Whitefish provide anglers with a great deal of action along with their exquisite table fare. Those who venture out are often able to catch their limit, sometimes in a hour or sometimes it takes a good part of the day- that's fishing. When speaking with anglers from across the Midwest, there are no other fisheries that allow anglers this much action when venturing out. This type of fishing is a great way to encourage first time ice anglers or youth to take up the sport because it provides plenty of action and engagement. This fishery also provides a major economic stimulus to a area that is very slow during the winter. Numerous hotels and inns have remained open due to the whitefish fishery.

Since the sport fishery has started biologists have struggled with accurately calculating the guide harvest during the winter months. CREEL surveys provide data for private and non-guided individuals.

During the winter of 2016 myself and several other guides worked with fisheries biologist Scott Hansen from sturgeon bay to document our guide catches. This pilot program was designed to help fill in the gap that the creel surveys were unable to account for.

The re establishment of whitefish in Green Bay has been a example of a native species settling into changes with in the Eco system. Recently whitefish have shown very good spawning

activity in numerous west shore rivers along with spawning activity in Sturgeon bay. I believe that Green Bay has now turned into the incubator to allow whitefish to expand their range back their traditional spawning locations, such as Moonlight Bay.

I fear increasing the commercial catch would increase pressure on whitefish in these locations. Allowing whitefish to use Green Bay and its rivers as a area with reduced commercial activity would increase their chances to reestablish themselves across the entire area.

Another element of this proposal that raises concern is the by catch of other species. Green Bay is a worldwide destination for anglers on numerous fronts, walleye, bass, and musky. The increased pressure of commercial nets would pose a problem to these species. There are different netting methods, but the increase in nets with in different areas would pose a challenge for these other species.

Finally, the whitefish phenomenon in Green Bay is new ecology speaking. There are still many unknowns about the future for whitefish. One thing can be certain; whitefish are adapting and reproducing in their new home. I feel a more time is needed to to fully document how many whitefish are in Green Bay and precisely calculate the sport fishery harvest before hastily allowing a increase in commercial harvest.

I hope the committee takes into consideration my comments and professional opinions expressed in this letter.

Sincerely
Captain JJ Malvitz
JJs Guide Service LLC

3040 Stevenson Pier Road
Sturgeon Bay, Wi 54235
jj@jjmalvitz.com