

Muskellunge Standing Team Notes
Kemp Natural Resources Station, Lake Tomahawk
Thursday, September 5, 2013

1. Attendance – New members Jeff Kampa (SS) and Roger Sabota (Congress) were introduced; also in attendance were John Aschenbrenner (Congress), Aaron Cole (NAD-Barron), Bob Hasse (Musky Clubs Alliance), Gary Lindenberger (CO), Mark Luehring (GLIFWC), Greg Matzke (NAD-Florence), Dave Rowe (SAD-Fitchburg), Dennis Scholl (Treaty Unit), Tim Simonson (CO), Scot Stewart (SAD-Fitchburg), Jordan Weeks (WAD-Lacrosse), Doug Welch (SAD-Sturtevant), Steve Gilbert (NAD-Woodruff), Steve Hewett (CO), Dan Isemann (UWSP), Mike Preul (Mole Lake), Jon Pyatskowitz (Treaty Unit).
2. Status of the muskellunge fishery in Wisconsin – A brief presentation was provided that tracks the status of the musky fishery in WI over the last 20 years or so, based mostly on data from the WDNR statewide database. This presentation was put together at the request of the Wisconsin Chapters of Muskies, Inc., for their meeting last February. This program contains many slides of long-term trends in the musky fishery and is available from Tim Simonson (or on the “MUSKY TEAM” folder of FHCOMMON under “2013 Meeting – Kemp”).
3. Review Team Structure, Charge ([Musky Team Web Site](#)) – We discussed our charge and developed specific objectives under several elements:
 1. Develop/review regulation guidance and proposals. Specifically, we want to explore the idea of lengthening the musky season to allow anglers to fish when open water exists in the fall (in the northern zone). We also agreed to explore the idea of changing the 28” minimum lakes to “no minimum” and to consider a protected slot proposal if accompanied by a convincing modeling effort.
 2. Develop/review stocking guidance and stocking plan. We resolved to specifically consider the idea of removing the 2500 cap on selected lakes to allow for more efficient management of these fisheries. One idea was to cap small lakes to provide enough fish for larger lakes. We will examine the implications of this idea and discuss further at the next meeting. We agreed to add a habitat element to our general charge, and to specifically look at the weed control issue as it relates to fish mortality, and to develop some more specific research topics related to bulrushes, critical habitat designation/sensitive area designations, etc.
 3. Develop/review assessment metrics and sampling protocol, we specifically want to pursue the issues of the mark/recapture periods for population estimates, net dimensions as it relates excluding certain sized fish, development of the use of fin rays for aging fish (including validation of fin rays from known-age fish), and exploring the idea of PIT tagging every musky handled in our surveys. If this does end up as a recommendation, we will probably need to seek external funding for this initiative.
4. Habitat Protection and Improvement
 - a. Dan Isemann provided an update on a Midwest Glacial lakes Partnership project that he is proposing, related to identification of musky spawning and rearing habitat in lakes. The Musky Spawning Habitat Model project (Simonson) is currently stalled due to issues with running the newest version of the MAXENT Model. We hope to get it up and running soon.
5. Musky Fishing Regulations
 - a. We reviewed our Musky Rule Development Guidance. See [Musky Management Handbook](#), pages 4-5. – No changes were recommended.
 - b. We reviewed and discussed the following 2013 Conservation Congress Resolutions ([Link to 2013 Resolutions](#)) and deferred action at this time:
 - i. 640113 - Motor trolling with 1 line using live bait in Vilas and Oneida counties (56-33)
 - ii. 640413 – Motor trolling with 1 line per angler in Vilas Co (45 -28)
 - iii. 640613 - Allow Trolling while positioning when fishing (44-27)
 - c. We reviewed and discussed the following 2013 Conservation Congress Advisory Questions ([Link to 2013 Advisory Questions](#)):
 - i. (97) Increase the musky size limit on Petenwell and Castle Rock from 45” to 50” from resolution 290212 (1989-1016) 58-11-3 (61-52; 2-1 Adams, Juneau, Wood) – We support the position of the local fisheries biologist
 - ii. 40” minimum on Spider Lake, Sawyer County (2,003-381) (2012) – We support the recommendation of the local fisheries biologist to move forward with this proposal.
 - d. We reviewed and discussed the following 2014/15 FM Advisory Questions/Proposals
 - i. Allow motor trolling/clarify position fishing – Congress Compromise – this proposal will be presented at the 2014 Spring hearings. We discussed other alternatives but we were

unable to reach consensus on a preferred alternative. Generally, most people were supportive of a statewide one-line per angler, with some exceptions for 3-lines in specific areas/waters.

- ii. Eliminate 28" minimum - Spider Lake Chain, Tiger Cat Chain, Mud/Callahan Lakes, Chief River (Sawyer County); Solberg Lake (Price County).

6. Propagation/Stocking

- a. We reviewed the updated "cost" estimates for production of fingerling muskellunge (\$10.03 - \$11.29 total – \$4.51 to \$7.87 for minnows). The total included infrastructure costs for projects that are spread out across all fish produced statewide.
- b. We reviewed and discussed current issues with musky propagation (forage costs/quality) and implications for management – specifically, we reviewed the details of the planned evaluation of pellet-reared muskellunge survival. We reviewed the production progress to date and discussed the details of the fall shocking protocol. We recommended that fall sampling can commence 2 weeks from the stocking data regardless of the water temperature at that time. We also confirmed that standard shocking practices with 2 dippers at normal speed should be used because several people are using these surveys for other purposes, as well. We also recommend that fingerling muskies be marked with a small Top Caudal fin clip to promote identification of recaptures within the fall sampling period.
- c. [Brood stock management](#)
 - i. 2013 Spawning/rearing report – Written reports were presented and are available.
 - ii. Evaluation of the Brood Stock Management Plan – No report available
- d. GL Spotted Musky Update – MI egg take/fingerlings from Lake St. Clair – 2013 – Steve Hogler provided a written update that was distributed to the musky team members.
- e. Stocking Guidance – Review winter 2013 internal FM workshop (Evaluation and guidance). See [Musky Management Handbook](#), pages 5-10, for details on stocking guidance.

7. Information and Education – The Musky Clubs Alliance would like to establish links on their web page to information from our web site. Tim will work with Bob Haase to get this done.

8. Muskellunge Surveys and Assessments – We reviewed the standard sampling protocol, metrics, and criteria - See [Musky Management Handbook](#), pages 10-14. Specifically, we reviewed and discussed musky age and growth Index proposed by the Fish Aging Task force and agree that it would be a useful assessment tool. We also recommend that we put together a comprehensive age validation study for fin ray sections in order to develop a non-lethal aging technique for muskies. Many biologists are already aging muskies with fin rays, so we need to put some effort into validation of the technique.

9. Research Update – Jeff Kampa/Dan Isermann. Jeff will be taking over Martin Jennings' projects since Martin left for the MN DNR. We reviewed and discussed our research needs and priorities. The only new initiative we recommend adding is the anal fin ray aging validation analysis. We have yet to assign this to specific staff/researchers, but feel it is a high priority objective for the next two years. Dan also reviewed his ongoing research projects with us.

10. FYI - Musky symposium sponsored by Muskies, Inc., Twin Cities, Spring 2016.

11. FYI – A Winter Biologist's Meeting, likely in February, will be the venue for review of rule proposals for the next cycle (proposed in 2014, spring hearings in 2015, effective in 2016). No specific date has been set yet.

12. FYI - Summer 2014 Musky Standing Team Meeting – Tuesday, August 26, Cabela's, Green Bay. (10 am to 4 pm)

13. Adjourn

Musky Team

Charge

1. Develop/review regulation guidance and proposals;
2. Develop/review stocking guidance and stocking plan;
3. Develop/review assessment metrics and sampling protocol;
4. Review/update management plan; assess status of fishery;
5. Identify research needs; coordinate statewide evaluations;
6. Maintain/update musky water classifications.

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