

Muskellunge Standing Team
Best Western - Lacrosse
July 30, 2009, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Attendees: Jerry Loop (Musky Clubs Alliance), Martin Jennings, Dave Rowe, Scot Stewart, Jordan Weeks, Doug Welch, John Aschenbrenner, Joe Weiss, Tim Simonson. Paul Cunningham, Joe Nohner, Jim Diana

1. Musky Spawning Habitat Thesis. Joe Nohner. Where do we take this from here? – The output from the model was discussed and we determined that it will be useful in many ways – it will allow us to target netting efforts to high probability spawning grounds, allow identification of high probability spawning grounds for future protection through a variety of regulatory and acquisition programs at the state and local levels, provide a communication tool with the public and prioritize efforts of NGOs. We recommend a staged approach to applying the model to Wisconsin musky waters. First, we need to institutionalize the use of the habitat models. We can accomplish this by bringing Joe Nohner to Madison for approximately 1 week to work with our staff on use of the models. We will pay Joe's travel expenses. The second phase would be to apply the model to all category 0, 1, and 2 musky waters with less than 50% of the shoreline in public ownership. The third phase would be to finish all the category 0, 1, and 2 waters. We will prepare a request to the FM Board and request funding for this effort, should additional money become available this biennium.
2. Review Regulation Proposals.
 - a. Review goals of management plan – We reviewed the management goals of the musky plan and decided to revise goal II.A to read “..increase the catch of 50” and larger muskellunge..” rather than 48” and larger. We also came up with an objective of approximately 73 waters that should be designated as A1 (Trophy waters), and managed with a 40” or 50” minimum length limit. The final number of waters will be determined after review of the draft list of “designated trophy waters” by regional fisheries biologists (see below, item 3).
 - b. Statewide 40” minimum (proposal attached) – Reviewed and approved – one suggestion was that MN will be going to a statewide 48” minimum length limit and that we should reference this change in the proposal when discussing rules from surrounding states.
 - c. 50” minimums for GL Spotted Brood Lakes (proposal attached) – Reviewed and approved.
 - d. Quick-set sucker rule proposal (proposal attached) – Reviewed and approved.
 - e. Plan for 54” limit on outlying waters (Rowe) – Dave laid out a schedule to revise the management plan for the GL Spotted muskies with public involvement sessions. Once that is completed, he will be bringing forward a proposal for a rule change, if that is what is reflected in the new plan, most likely by spring 2010.
 - f. Plan for 50” minimums statewide (brood lakes, etc.). – The plan is to complete the re-class of musky waters, with the A1 waters. We also have some criteria developed so we can determine if the A1 waters are meeting their expectations. If a rule change is warranted, then it will be a matter of showing that the water is not meeting its designated use and if the cause is angling harvest, a 50” minimum can be proposed. This will be on hold for this year so we can focus on getting the 40” minimum established first. We did not fully discuss the option of making all the brood lakes 50” minimums at this time.
 - g. Rice Lake (Barron Co) - Benike - 50" min/1 bag – No paper work available at the time of the meeting – separate email sent out to team.
 - h. Little St. Germain Lake (Vilas Co) - gilbert - 45" min/1 bag (reinstitute - 10 year sunset expiring) – The committee recommends that this proposal be either a 40” or a 50” minimum. Steve Gilbert says that he has already worked with the locals on this and that a 50 will not fly.
3. Revision of Musky Waters Booklet/classifications (=designated trophy waters) – The process of revising the designations in the Muskellunge Waters Booklet should proceed as a review of the draft list proposed by Simonson. Regional Fisheries Biologist will be provided the opportunity to review the list, by deleting or adding waters that meet the criteria we've developed to date. A couple of suggestions on the criteria included adding a PSD48 (in addition to the PSD42) and adding Length at infinity for females only, when available by gender.

4. Brood stock management 2009 - Updates from hatcheries for spring 2009. AOH completed musky spawning operations on Big Arbor Vitae Lake on May 3rd, 2009 after first setting test nets for one night on April 27th and setting the remainder of the spawning nets the next day. We handled a total of 88 males and 65 females of which 50 males and 24 females were used for egg collection. There were 8 - 1:1 crosses, 3 - 2:1 crosses and 13 - 3:1 crosses. We collected 22.5 quarts of eggs over the course of 5 days (no eggs were taken on the first lifting day when only test nets were run). 15 of the fish handled were 40" or longer, with the longest being 44.8". Musky catches were very good for the first 2 or 3 egg take days, requiring 2 crews to efficiently handle spawning and do Fish Management science. Catches dropped considerably for the remaining egg take days and only one crew was needed. The majority of crosses turned out to be 3:1. On several days males were in short supply (when considering availability to make 3:1 crosses) but did not limit the ability to spawn available females. Overall success was very good on Big Arbor Vitae and it should remain a candidate to be included in the 5 year spawning rotation of musky lakes.

GTH crews completed their spawning operations yesterday on Lost Land and Teal Lakes after first setting nets there on April 15th. Here's a summary of their results: They handled a total of 62 males and 41 females of which 42 males and 31 females were used for egg collection. There were 19 - 1:1 crosses, 11 - 2:1 crosses, and 2 - 3:1 crosses. They collected a little over 20 quarts of eggs (~1 million) over the course of 7 days (no eggs were collected on the first day that the nets were run). 56 of the males collected and 36 of them used for fertilization came from Lost Land Lake (6 and 6 from Teal). 36 of the females collected and 26 of them used for fertilization came from Lost Land (5 and 5 from Teal). Of the 103 fish netted, 15 were recaps from 2008 (none of the fish collected this year were recapped), resulting in 88 fish being PIT tagged this year. 17 of the fish handled were 40" or longer, with longest coming in at 46.2". While the crews were short on the number of individuals used for the collection, they were hurt in this regards by the fact we had a sudden cool-down in temperature right in the middle of the take and the fact that I instructed them to provide 2.5 quarts of eggs to the LCO tribe as we had agreed to do before the season began. By giving them these eggs we eliminated 4 - 1:1 crosses (8 individuals) from our pool. Once again they were hampered by a relative lack of males. Also, because of limitations on our ability to collect and hold fish in order to determine males and females available to cross, before actually beginning to collect eggs, the crews found them themselves short on females at the end of at least one day and had to release a few males without actually getting to use them. Overall, I think the lake made an excellent brood source, especially because of the large walleye population we found there that allowed us to collect their eggs in a short amount time while allowing us to concentrate our manpower on this one lake for both operations. This was really a bonus this year and probably for the years to come, because of our manpower shortage here at the hatchery.

5. Review Issue Briefs on the Regression Model and Winter Sparring - Margenau, Gilbert – Not Completed.
6. Evaluation of NOR Stocking Framework - Who, what, where, when, how? We briefly discussed this upcoming task, with one idea being to see if perhaps a graduate student could work it into a larger project (this being perhaps one chapter of a thesis). Marty Jennings and Simonson will evaluate and see which would be the best route to take. Possible that SS may be interested in follow-through on this project.
7. Musky Angler Survey - Simonson/Isermann – Dan Isermann provided some cost estimates for a reduced-scale survey that could be set up online: An estimate on what the musky angler survey will cost if you decide to do it through UWSP. These costs include our labor and I will provide you with data analysis and a written report. Web survey alone (no cover letter to notify them, no follow-up post cards, just an email)= \$6500. (Assuming we have email addresses for these folks). A strictly mail survey (the old fashioned way) = \$26,300. This assumes we pay for all the printing and we have to manage all the mailing addresses ourselves rather than let the website do it. This will also take far longer to complete due to increased prep/design time. A hybrid survey-\$11,800- they take the survey on line but we send a cover letter to notify them and a follow-up postcard reminder that they can mail back if they want a written survey sent to them (for the computer phobic). I will assume the mail survey is off the table. Obviously the hybrid survey is the better in terms of maximizing response rate when compared to the web survey alone. We are still in the position of not having the funding to do this, but the suggestion was made that we (or Dan) attempt to seek Becker Foundation Grant money from Muskies, Inc. This is the sort of project that they would likely fund and is roughly within their guidelines for award size.
8. Review of Musky Publications – Gilbert – Not Completed.

9. Cleithra from speared muskellunge – GLIFWC – Not Completed.

INFORMATION

10. Research Update- Marty provided an update on research directions, which primarily shift from support of brood stock management and strain evaluations to detailed, long-term age and growth and population studies. The plan is to PIT tag the majority of fish in some brood stock lakes, as well as others, compare population estimates between methods (fyke-creel vs. fyke-fyke), and try to engage select local club members that regularly fish on study lakes to increase sample size. Would also consider working with tournament organizers where appropriate.
11. Genetics Study Update – nothing specific provided; workshop earlier in the week, and NCD-ETC meeting covered this topic.
12. GL Spotted Musky Update – Dave Rowe provided a written update on the status of the reintroduction of great lakes muskellunge to Wisconsin Waters of Green Bay and Lake Michigan. This document is available on our web page: <http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/musky/2009GLFCStatusofMusky.pdf>
13. Next meeting – we discussed the format of meeting jointly with NCD – ETC (as was done with this meeting) and felt that while it did provide some advantages, it was not flexible enough to ensure good attendance at our meeting. We will plan to meet again in February 2010, and next summer we will meet in mid-late August, likely in NOR, separately from the NCD-ETC.