

Muskellunge Standing Team Notes
Schmeeckle Reserve – Stevens Point
March 10, 2010

1. Criteria for exempting waters from the proposed statewide (default) 40" minimum length limit – The team discussed the concept of exempting waters from the proposed 40" minimum. We already currently exempt waters from the 34" minimum, mainly because they are high-density, slow growing populations; these are managed with a 28" minimum length limit. Our approach was to expand upon this "exempt" category, make it broader, and provide a unified category for waters that don't fit within the statewide default rule. The specific objective we came up with was to provide "action-oriented harvest" by maintaining existing high density, slow-growing Class A2 populations as unique harvest opportunities (within the broader existing goal of providing a variety of muskellunge angling opportunities). We discussed these lakes as being self-sustained, high-density, slow-growing Class A2 populations; adults generally do not exceed 38"; inability to produce 40"+ fish generally related to lake characteristics (e.g., small, shallow lakes, generally < 300 acres) or genetic predisposition to small body size, not fishing pressure or harvest. We arrived at some more specific criteria that will be used to include waters in this category: 1) Population sustained through natural reproduction; and 2) density of mature fish < 30" and all fish > 30" ≥ 0.6 muskellunge/acre (75th percentile); and 3) mean length at age 6 < 30" (lower 25th percentile; scales ages acceptable); or 4) PSD38 < 5% (10th percentile); PSD40 or PSD42 = 0. Strategy – Regulation Options: The Musky Team favored the idea of polling fisheries biologists for their preferred regulation to cover this category. Our intent will be to evaluate (including FAST modeling) the most common responses and select the most appropriate regulation for this category.
2. Revision of Musky Waters Booklet. We reviewed guidelines that should be used to review and revise the classifications and category designations in the musky waters booklet. These instructions will be sent out to biologists, along with a list of waters in their areas. We will then compile all the revisions and put together a new version of the Muskellunge Waters Booklet. Simonson will send out asap.



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3. Evaluation of NOR Stocking Framework – Just an update on previous discussions. The 10-year benchmark is coming up on the stocking framework. We need to start scheduling some lakes within each of the stocking rates (0, 5./acre, 1/acre, etc.) for population estimates. Some of the lakes are coming up on the schedule this year, so it would be good to get a few PEs under our belt. Here is an outline of the study design and lake sampling schedule. We obviously won't get all these lakes done, but anything we can do to fill out the schedule would be great. We will line up some extra "Tier II" money for next year (and thereafter).



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4. Musky Angler Survey – Just a quick update. Dan Isermann has received a grant from Muskies, Inc., in order to pull this off. Dan reported that it will likely be set up as an online survey, with some sort of mailing to select individuals that invites them to participate. Things seem to be on track, with the success of the grant application, so we do have the money to do this. We discussed some possible "current topic" type questions to add to the survey. Help me out here – I didn't write anything down!?
5. Review of Musky Publications – The Wild Card has been revised and updated. Some editorial work has begun on the fact sheet. Work is ongoing as time permits. As progress is made, versions will be sent out for review by the team.

6. Stocking Projections Exercise – Just a note to make sure the team takes the time to review this document. I did get comments from a couple people and made some changes since the first mailing. It will be available on our musky management team web page for you to review under Musky Management Plans and Reports: http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/musky/muskymanteam_products.html. Please read it and get comments to Simonson.

FYI

7. GL Spotted Musky Update – Dave Rowe provided an update on recent activities related to the GLS program. We did get fish from Ontario this year, although only about 300. They are being held at Westfield Hatchery for rearing and will be stocked into the inland brood lakes this spring. The plans for this year, as a stop-gap measure, are to take eggs from the Fox River and rear 4,000 fingerlings at the Besadney Facility at Kewaunee. Dave held a public meeting to review/revise management goals for the GLS musky program. He had a good turn out with a diverse set of anglers and they came up with 4 (?) good goals for the population. Dave plans additional meetings in April (to discuss specific objectives) and perhaps June (review strategies).
8. 2009-2011 Rule Proposals - Update – The only musky-related rule that was approved by the department for the 2010 spring hearings was the repeal of the sunset for the 45" minimum length limit on Little St. Germain Lake. The FM Board essentially deferred all other proposals due to staff shortages in the bureau. The Conservation Congress has included 3 musky-related proposals as advisory questions this year (see below).
- a. Little St. Germain Lake (Vilas Co) - 45" min (10 year sunset expiring) – Yes
 - b. 40" minimum length limit statewide (default) - Hold
 - c. 50" minimums for GL Spotted Brood Lakes - Hold
 - d. Quick-set sucker rule proposal - Hold
 - e. Rice Lake (Barron Co) - Benike - 50" min/1 bag - Hold
 - f. Chip Fl, LCO, Grindstone, Whitefish, Round lakes (Sawyer Co) - one line after Oct 1 – Hold
 - g. Whitefish and Round Lakes (Sawyer Co) - Pratt - 50" min/1bag – Congress Advisory (Whitefish)
 - h. Pelican – Remove 50" minimum – Congress Advisory
 - i. Redstone – 50" minimum – Congress Advisory
9. Musky Spawning Habitat Thesis (Nohner). We now have full funding to complete this project as proposed after our July 2009 meeting. Recall we crafted a proposal for the FM Board to seek funding to run the model and predict musky spawning habitat on all Category 0,1, and 2 musky lakes with 25% or more of the shoreline in private ownership. Once completed, we hope to predict spawning habitat for all other Category 0, 1, and 2 lakes, regardless of shoreline ownership. The final product will be a GIS layer that shows high probability musky "spawning grounds" on our natural reproduction waters.
10. Brood stock management 2010. – There is a manuscript in review for Fisheries, written mainly by Martin Jennings and Brian Sloss, with a host of others, describing our brood stock management plan, along with some of the issues related to implementation that we have experienced over the last few years. Overall, things have gone well. For the most part, there seems to be fairly good representation of the spawners in the outgoing progeny. One of the biggest challenges seems to be finding self-sustained lakes that are large enough to support a sufficient population of adult spawners, especially in the NW. However, one of our brood lakes in the NE, Plum Lake, appears now to have little to no natural reproduction. We need to review our criteria for brood stock lakes, probably with a small group, and come back to the team with some recommendations.
11. Research Update – 40" evaluation – Simonson briefly mentioned the data available on the existing 40" minimum lakes relative to lakes that have remained at 34". A powerpoint program is available on the FMCOMMONMUSKY TEAM\Rule Proposals\Why a 40-inch Minimum Length Limit for Muskellunge2.
12. Genetics Study Update – Brian Sloss provided a brief summary of ongoing genetics research. Ed Murphy will be wrapping up his thesis soon. The next area of research will be looking into "unstocked" species to

determine if the observed patterns of genetic similarity can be wholly attributed to stocking or if geologic forces may have played a roll. Brian is also continuing a variety of support roles for our program.

13. Next Musky Team Meeting – Summer 2010 – We have Kemp Station reserved for Monday through Wednesday, August 23-25. FYI - The next meeting of the NCD - ETC will likely again be held around the end of July in Lacrosse. We do NOT plan to meet in conjunction with the ETC this time around.