

**Muskellunge Standing Team  
Schmeckle Reserve – Stevens Point, February 28<sup>th</sup> 2007  
Meeting Notes**

1. Update on Leech Lake Rearing/Study (Lindenberger) – Generally had poor success with the fry we got from MN DNR last spring. We did not produce enough fish to fill all the quotas and the fish that were produced were small and appeared to have metabolic problems. The new APHIS restrictions related to VHS (viral hemorrhagic septicemia), along with recent changes to DATCP rules on imports (VHA - Veterinary Health Assessment, requiring sacrifice of adult brood stock – valid only for 30 days), will make it very difficult for us to obtain eggs or fry from MN DNR this coming year. We could request large fingerlings from MN (which would then have to be tested), but it was felt that would confound the study because the fish would be subjected to different rearing and hauling conditions. Recommendation is to wait until next year to see what the permanent APHIS rules look like. Fisheries Biologists should switch any Leech Lake strain quotas over to WI production fish from the appropriate basin. In the interim, we should draft a feasibility plan for development of a brood stock lake, with the help of Brian Sloss. Apparently, the department is working on a position paper related to issuance of stocking permits this year. The committee expressed concern related to the apparent exemption for bait imports, which could easily hold of mix of species, some of which are on the “do-not-transport” list. Bob Benson, representing Wisconsin Chapters of Muskies, Inc., expressed frustration that DNR does not seem to be giving this project the same level of importance that we are giving the Great Lakes Spotted musky program.
2. Brood stock management 2007. Both cool water hatcheries reported no major problems related to instituting the new brood stock management guidelines. Egg-take from the Chippewa flowage did not cover the entire spawning run due to the incidence of lymphosarcoma in pike, which were common in musky nets. Egg-take from North Twin Lake was much later than typical and they had some difficulty obtaining the recommended numbers of pairs due to the slow warm-up. This spring, the hatchery at Woodruff will attempt to spawn fish from the Moen Chain, Oneida County, and the hatchery at Spooner is planning to take eggs from Butternut Lake, Price County. Research is working with hatchery staff to set up a program to PIT tag all brood fish used. Bob Benson, representing Wisconsin Chapters of Muskies, Inc., expressed concern with the use of Butternut as a brood lake because the average size of adults is low. The department feels that fish in Butternut have trophy potential, and that the current high density is dictating the observed slower growth rates.
3. Great Lakes Spotted Muskellunge – The Great Lakes Spotted musky program, active since 1989, is beginning to produce tremendous fishing on the Lower Fox River. However, this program is threatened by the same issues discussed under the Leech Lake Study, namely VHS and tighter DATCP restrictions on import of fish. Tim Simonson and Mike Donofrio will draft a brood stock management plan for the Great Lakes Spotted program, which will include the disposition of approximately 1000 yearling spotted muskies currently in the Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery (WRSFH); a long-term plan for a brood source robust to VHS (i.e., increase diversity, other inland sources – brood lakes/holding waters); along with shorter-term recommendations related to egg disinfection; test-netting on other stocked waters, e.g., Butte des Morts, etc.; and looking into conservation hatchery techniques. Additionally, Al Kaas reported that WRSFH will lose one year of production (08-09) during renovation.
4. Genetics Study Update (Brian Sloss) - Ed Murphy, the graduate student on the project, should have all the data collected so far analyzed by April and he is on schedule to complete the project by September. Lakes to be sampled this spring include: Moen Chain (treaty), English/Spillerburg (Skip – Skip is not sure if English is a native population), Blaisdell (UC Team) Sevenmile (Supplemental Crew), Rice Reservoir (Supplemental Crew), Katherine (Supplemental Crew), Lower Clam (Skip), Little Arbor Vitae (Treaty), Squirrel (Supplemental Crew), Sissabagama (?). Brian would like to see the “wish-list” expanded. We are looking for “native” populations that are naturally reproducing. I will work with Brian and Steve Ave to expand the list.

5. Butternut Lake Muskellunge Removal – The FM Board has asked us for a recommendation on where to put fish removed from Butternut. Michelle Wheeler encouraged the department to discuss this project with the tribes. The removal (up to the lower 95% CI) is part of the management plan to reduce the density of fish and improve growth rates. The plan is to sacrifice 20 adults at ice-out for the VHA (cleithra must be removed from these fish to determine growth!!). The committee recommended Lake Neshonoc as the recipient water. The Club representatives felt they could provide funds to cover the cost of hauling the fish. Gary Lindenberger felt that our trucks could haul 2 pounds per gallon, with up to 100 adults in a load. Cost will be approximately \$1.18 per mile. We are likely looking at one or two loads. Jordan felt that Operations at Black River Falls would have a truck available and that using them would reduce costs. Because Butternut is currently on the rotation as a brood lake, we need to be sure that there is no size-selection when it comes to removing fish – all sizes should have an equal probability of removal. Transferred fish should be PIT tagged for determination of growth after translocation.
6. Critical/Sensitive Habitat delineation; U of MI study; Musky Alliance donation – Paul Cunningham described a new project through the University of Michigan aimed at delineating musky spawning areas using remote sensing data. This spring, a graduate student will be doing spotlight surveys during the spawning period on NR musky lakes. There will be 2 years of field work. The student will then attempt to develop a model to predict spawning areas in other lakes, based on the features of known spawning areas. The Musky Clubs Alliance has donated money for supplies and volunteer hours to assist with the spotlight surveys.
7. Musky angler survey (2009-2011) – Margenau recommended that we start planning now for a 10-year repeat of the mail survey. In order to follow past surveys, this should be sent in 2010. The survey should include a set of standard questions for tracking changes in angler attitudes through time, as well as a few “hot topic” questions. Ideas included slot limits, viruses, habitat protection, and genetics. Terry will provide a PDF of the last questionnaire for committee review. We need to identify a point person, likely from research (or UWSP??).
8. PIT Tag orders – Here are the latest instructions on ordering PIT tags. We let bids and now have a bulk rate, regardless of how many you order in a single shipment.  
  
[PITtagorder081406.pdf](#)
9. Musky Cleithrum Program update – After discussions within the Treaty Working Group, Michelle Wheeler reported that GLIFWC approached the Voight Task Force and they now have approval to go ahead with this project. GLIFWC will collect cleithra from tribal spearers. The details have not been worked out yet, DNR will provide training and support as requested.
10. Musky PE reports on the public web site - We initiated a project to place all of our muskellunge population estimates on the DNR web page. Joanna Griffin got this started by placing the data structure and some of the most recent estimates out there. We will be filling in the database with historic information as time allows. You can find the data at:  
[http://infotrek.er.usgs.gov/wdnr\\_public](http://infotrek.er.usgs.gov/wdnr_public)
11. 54” length limit – Green Bay/Lake Michigan – Several anglers are discussing the introduction of a 54” minimum length limit for muskellunge on Lake Michigan, Green Bay, and the Lower Fox River. This will likely be introduced in several counties during the spring hearings this year.