

Musky Committee Meeting Notes - May 25, 2005, revised 6/20/2005

South Central Region HQ, Fitchburg; Present - Scot Stewart, Tim Simonson, Martin Jennings, Kevin Kapuscinski, Cory Painter, Gary Lindenberger, Bruce Underwood, Doug Welch, Al Kaas, Joe Kurz, John Aschenbrenner, Gene Allen, Jerry Loop, and Tom Soles. Absent - Terry Margenau, Steve Gilbert, Joe Heil, Brian Sloss, Skip Sommerfeldt, and GLIFWC (Joe Dan Rose/Michelle Wheeler).

Update on Nancy Lake findings

Marty Jennings provided an update on his survey efforts in Nancy Lake this spring. They captured 6 Leech Lake muskellunge from about 43 to 49 inches in 78 net lifts (0.08 fish/lift). It was concluded that the population is not of sufficient size to serve as a brood stock if the intent is to establish naturally reproducing populations. Efforts will be made to obtain eggs or fry from Minnesota DNR.

Proposed Strain Evaluation Project

Marty Jennings presented a proposal to compare the performance of Leech Lake fish with our production fish from Spooner (LCO-derived fish) within the St. Croix Basin. This proposal included 7 lakes that are fairly representative of musky waters within the basin. The proposal includes 2 class A waters (Deer Lake and Shell Lake or Yellow Lake), 4 class B waters (Big Moon, Matthews, Sand, and Twenty Six) and 1 class C water (Des Moines Lake). The committee also added 3 waters outside the native range that would follow the same protocol but would be surveyed by regional fisheries biologists (Delavan, Monona, and probably Round, Chippewa County). Petenwell was suggested and discussed as a study lake but the numbers needed and sampling difficulties make it a low priority for a rigorous evaluation. Club-purchased fish can be stocked in Petenwell, and we would encourage Scot Ironside to evaluate any club stockings as best as he is able. The lakes were selected because they were either seepage lakes or there was little chance of escape or straying of test fish. The proposal was approved as amended. Terry Margenau wanted to reiterate (via DRAFT memo) that during the course of this study, no new stocking permits should be issued for Leech Lake fish in the St. Croix Basin. This position should be revisited as the project proceeds. Marty needs to identify specific criteria and a timeline for the project.

Update on Club Stocking Requests and Criteria for evaluation of Club introductions

Besides Petenwell, Monona, and Wisconsin, no new requests were received for club stocking of Leech Lake fish. Stocking permits will continue to be issued for Leech Lake fish in "universal receptor" lakes outside the native range. Evaluation of these introductions will be at the discretion of the Fisheries Biologist issuing the stocking permit but if they intend to evaluate the introduction, they should follow ISS protocols as closely as possible. Either a sound evaluation should be conducted or no evaluation at all should be attempted. Half-hearted evaluations will not be useful and create false expectations with clubs; time and money should not be wasted unless a rigorous evaluation is planned.

Proposed Genetic Stock Evaluation Design and Funding Status

Brian Sloss was unable to attend the meeting but we are now pretty certain that sufficient funding will be secured for his project. Tim, Marty and Scot will meet with Brian in June and

provide some input on the final design of the study to ensure that it meets the needs identified by the committee. Specifically we would like to see a detailed survey of genetic stocks within Wisconsin, a thorough evaluation of the potential impacts of past stocking practices and an evaluation of current and potential brood stock lakes. It was suggested that the historic propagation and stocking information gathered by the Wisconsin Muskellunge Restoration Project might be very helpful to Brian as he develops this project. This project is scheduled to run a total of 4 years, with some results available after the first 2 years.

Discuss Current Stocking Policies

Muskellunge stocking guidelines for 2006-07 were reviewed and recommendations were made and forwarded to Al Kaas. Tim provided the following table to Al that he believes reflects the discussion of the committee. We discussed stocking boundaries for Great Lake’s muskellunge. We still need to define specifically where they can be stocked based on production limitations and migration issues. If you have questions or comments, contact Tim Simonson.

Stocks Available:

Species	Basin Stock	Suitable Stock for the following Inland Waters	Suitable for the following outlying Waters
Muskellunge:	Upper Chippewa River	Chippewa River, St. Croix River, Lake Superior, and Black River Basins. Universal receptors	N/A
	Upper Wisconsin River	Wisconsin River and Lake Michigan Basins. Universal receptors	N/A
	Great Lakes Spotted	Lake Winnebago system	Lake Michigan, Lake Superior
	Leech Lake	Approved Research Projects Only	N/A

Brood stock management guidelines

We discussed the DRAFT Brood Stock Management Plan Outline that was distributed by e-mail after the last meeting. We identified the specific topics that should be fleshed out prior to our next meeting. Tim will work with Brian Sloss on a draft plan that addresses the following issues:

- Should NR versus stocked populations be used as brood lakes?
- How many lakes should we identify as brood lakes?
- Should crews rotate among identified lakes?
- What process should be used for selection of individual fish for spawning (e.g., random, don’t spawn sick or deformed fish, etc.)?
- What is the minimum number of individuals that should be spawned?
- Should spawning take place across the entire run?
- What lakes should be used?

- Process for culling eggs when over-taking eggs early in the run and sufficient eggs are subsequently collected?
- What sizes of fish should be used for spawning?
- Pairing? One-to-one? Pooling milt, eggs?

The rest of the components of the DRAFT plan will have to be finalized after Brian's genetic study is completed.

Next meeting:

August. Location: Northern Wisconsin. Will confirm via email.

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