

Muskellunge Standing Team Meeting Notes - August 10, 2005

T.G. Thompson Hatchery, Spooner; Members Present: Tim Simonson, Scot Stewart, Joe Kurz, Tom Soles, Joe Weiss, Marty Jennings, John Aschenbrenner, Gary Lindenberger, Kevin Kapuscinski, Skip Sommerfeldt, Terry Margenau. Others present: Al Kaas, Fred Johnson, Bob Munson, Gene Allen, Brian Sloss, Bruce Underwood, Bob Benson, Larry Damman, Scott Toshner. Absent: Cory Painter, Steve Gilbert, Joe Heil, Michelle Wheeler/Joe Dan Rose, Doug Welch.

Research update:

Marty Jennings provided an update of the final design of performance evaluation within the St. Croix basin. He also described a pilot study he will be conducting on PIT tagging procedures, looking at overwinter mortality and tag retention at 2 tagging locations (intraperitoneal and intramuscular). This study is dependent upon surplus production. They are planning 200 fish per treatment (plus 200 control fish), for a total of 600 young-of-year muskellunge. Marty has prepared a brief describing the overall project that will be presented to the October FH Board. Send comments to Marty within 2 weeks.

[Evaluation of muskellunge strains in St. Croix Basin](#) [PDF 20KB].

Leech Lake evaluations outside the native range

Quotas need to be finalized before August 19 for Monona, Delavan, and Wissota. Surplus Leech Lake fish will go to Petenwell. Al Kaas needs a final list of Leech Lake quotas before the production meeting.

Update on genetic strain evaluation project; design, materials available, waters selected, schedule

Brian Sloss provided a Powerpoint presentation on the funded strain evaluation project. He is planning a 4 year project, with preliminary boundary determination after the first 2 years and refinement of the boundaries during the last 2 years. The project will focus on determination of contemporary stock structure and assessment of potential impacts of past stocking practices. He will focus on 60–80 NR populations (50 fish/population) with accurate demographic data and fish community characteristics. The hope is also to look at genetic integrity (stability over time) in selected populations (e.g., Lac Courte Oreilles) where we have historic and contemporary tissue samples.

Brian needs additional candidate NR lakes and lakes with historic data. Tim will send the current list out to biologists and get feedback and additional lakes.

[Identification and Delineation of Muskellunge Stock Structure](#) in Wisconsin and Neighboring Watersheds [PDF 87KB].

Discuss DRAFT brood stock management guidelines

Brian Sloss presented draft brood stock management “best management practices”. Feedback is needed before August 25. The guidelines will be presented and refined at the Propagation meeting and forwarded to FH Board for approval.

[Fish Handling and Propagation of Muskellunge Issues](#) [PDF 88KB].

Discuss brood stock management plan

We reviewed the Brood stock management outline and checked off the steps that are completed or are scheduled for completion. Tim will beef up the outline with specifics and timelines and send out to the committee for review.

Review regulation proposals for 2006 Spring Hearings

We reviewed and approved all three regulation proposals for 2006: 50" minimum on the Fox River from Lake Winnebago to De Pere dam; 50" minimum for Pelican Lake; and 45" minimum for the Winnebago system (the committee's preference would be to see the Winnebago system regulations consistent with the Fox River and Green Bay regulations (50" minimum), which was also noted by Lee Meyers. Also would like to see John provide any growth and forage information for Pelican.

Muskellunge Management Plan

We reviewed the current muskellunge management plan and made some changes which will be reflected in the Muskellunge Management Update on the WI musky Web page. We added more emphasis to identification of NR populations and moved that objective from the III.B. up to I.A. Under II.A. Trophy fisheries, we need to specify criteria for trophy water candidates, including forage requirements and growth based on bioenergetics. We amended the timeline for mail surveys from "frequent" to "10 years". We also want to put more emphasis on a cooperative angler diary program. We also need to better utilize existing data from musky leagues and tournaments to track changes. Under III.B., we now need to "evaluate" rather than "implement" the comprehensive stocking framework. Under III.C. Education, we need to place more emphasis on the role of muskellunge as part of the entire ecosystem, emphasize Aquatic Invasive Species prevention, and elevate habitat issues.

Web Page

The committee will have a dedicated Web page in the near future which will house meeting notes, committee work products, and other relevant information. I'll send out the address when it is live.

Next meeting

February - Stevens Point. Most members (DNR and non-DNR) felt that the mid-week meeting dates were best.

Future Agenda Items:

- Discuss Public Participation (e.g., EA) process for introductions.
- Discuss regulation categories and strategy (how many trophy lakes should we be aiming for; slot limits, guidelines for restoration versus trophy regulations).
- Discuss Harvest Management system for muskellunge/prioritize future research.

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