

Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum
Lakeshore Technical College, Wells Fargo Room (L261)
Cleveland, WI
April 9, 2016

NOTES

Chuck Bronte (USFWS) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2015 Mass Marking update –

A. Mass marking

69% wild Chinook salmon 1 year-old fish in 2015.

Well mixed fishery. Lake Huron fish moving into Lake Michigan to feed and being caught.

Comment from audience – Need to get the word out that there are lots of fish in the lakes. Hard for charter captains to get anglers to come on trips if they don't think any fish are getting stocked. How can we get more focus on the # (stocked and wild). [Contrast to past high catch rates.]

B. Lake trout survival

Lake trout stocking money comes from general tax dollars via the Department of the Interior. All Lake Trout from federal hatcheries.

History of strains being stocked through time.

CWT strains of Lake trout stocked. Evaluate survival of the 1994-2003 year classes recovered in 1998-2014.

What variables influence CPUE? Northern refuge stocked Lake trout didn't survive well. Northern Refuge has sea lamprey from Manistee and gill net fishery in northern part of lake.

Southern part of the lake. Low fishing pressure and low sea lamprey wounding.

Southern Refuge and Clay banks – strain seems important.

Stocking location was most important factor followed by strain and length at stocking.

Higher percent wild in southern part of the lake.

2.8 million LT stocked in LM in 2015 – 60% offshore, 40% shoreline stocked.

Titus Seilheimer (WISG) – Salmon Ambassadors Update

Report bait balls - photos of fish finders when they find bait balls, along with the date, time, location, depth, latitude, and longitude to Dave Warner USGS (dmwarner@usgs.gov).

http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/wheres_the_bait_okeefe16

Fewer volunteers in 2015. Generally less satisfied with the fishery in WI and MI.

70% wild being caught. Similar percentage to Mass Marking.

Results here: <http://www.miseagrant.umich.edu/explore/fisheries/salmon-ambassadors/>

Volunteers? -> tseilheimer@aqua.wisc.edu

Testing a App. With link

Chuck Bronte (USFWS) – Opportunities and Challenges to Coregonine Restoration in the Great Lakes

Cisco and Chubs – Can we restore native planktivores?

Lake Michigan deepwater cisco flock -> many lost (only bloater chub left)

Lost important ecological roles to LM. Covert energy and transfer energy around system.

Opportunity to introduce now? Low alewife and smelt = niche now open.

Zooplankton has shifted to more resemble Lake Superior, which supports cisco and chubs. Can the current Zooplankton and Mysis numbers support cisco? Not at historic density.

Cisco and Kiyi easier to restore, Blackfin and Shortjaw most challenging/unlikely.

Genetics are an important consideration. At a standstill. What are best sources?

Would need to renovate and restore hatcheries to produce them.

Prey fish update (Great Lakes Fishery Commission meeting); video)

Was not available in time for the meeting.

Brad Eggold (WDNR) – Salmon and Trout Information (Harvest, Predator/Prey Ratio, stocking numbers)

A. Prey Survey (presentation from charter captain meeting)

Most recent surveys of USGS (trawl and acoustic). Alewife are very low.

Early 2000s good Alewife year classes, supported the fisheries.

Alewife age structure further truncated.

B. Harvest surveys

Creel, charter reporting, moored boat survey.

Angler hours consistent over 10 years at about 2.8 million hours. Most harvest is from boat, only small proportion from shore, pier, and stream.

4 chinook salmon per 100 hours, much lower than past couple years.

C. Predator/Prey Ratio

Where are we at in 2015? Was above the upper limit (0.108 in 2015 (upper limit is 0.1).

The predator prey ratio forecasts a few years into the future but it is based on average alewife year classes and we have been observing below average year-classes for the past several years. With average year class the PPR would drop into the safe zone but if we have continued poor recruitment the ratio predicts that we would stay at the upper limit. ,

Age 3 returning female weights – weights are dropping. Indicates that there isn't much forage in the lake.

D. 2016 chinook stocking

808,255 total chinook to be stocked. Allocated between ports using formula. Some small changes for ports (+/- few hundred fish per port).

E. Going forward

- Begin internal agency discussions on the need and ramifications of another stocking reduction
- Discuss the level of comfort with another Chinook salmon reduction and determine if other species should also be included in the reduction (e.g. previous reductions in 1986, 1992, 1998, 2006 and 2013 were almost exclusively Chinook salmon)
- Convene a conference call by May 1, 2016 to synthesis agency perspectives
- Determine options for stocking changes
- Discuss with public at various meetings throughout the summer, possible special LMFF meeting
- Any change in stocking numbers for 2017 would need to be decided by as early as September 1 to coincide with wild egg take plans

Comment – Lake trout stocked in large numbers in the lake. They are eating fish and they will be around for a long time. Will that be part of the discussion? [See earlier documentation supplied by Mark Holey, USFWS about Lake Trout stocking program]. -> Still ~1.6 million Chinook stocked lakewide, plus naturally reproduced fish (~70% fish being caught).

Chris Groff (UWM) - Potential for Hexagenia mayfly re-colonization of lower Green Bay

Restore Hexagenia to Green Bay. Restore ecosystem functioning and provide some food for perch and walleye.

Stocked 28 million eggs inside Longtail Point. Found some nymphs but not many. Could need more sampling or eggs/larvae could have moved more than what was expected.

Titus Seilheimer (WISG)

Trawl Study Update

Experimental whitefish trawling in Two Rivers/Manitowoc area. Fewer trap nets needed, so less risk of getting fishing gear caught. Catching whitefish on Steve Kulpa's quota. Measuring and marking non-target species. Overall bycatch rate was 2.8% of total catch. Tagged whitefish have been caught around Lake Michigan and even in Lake Huron.

Trawling will continue in 2016. Be aware of the trawler. Trailing line is behind the boat (~200 feet) on surface when trawl not down. Trawl net may be 700 feet behind the boat (plus trailing line) when fishing. Give the trawler a wide berth and you won't get entangled.

Michigan Net pens

Proposal to put two commercial net pens for Rainbow Trout in Michigan's Lake Huron waters. State of Michigan went through a process to determine the risks and benefits. Lots of press on the issue and several bills pro and con introduced in Michigan legislature. In March 2016, State of Michigan decided to not move forward with permitting commercial net pens.

John Komassa (WDNR) – Rearing station and hatchery update.

Locations and terms of hatcheries.

Well water is a better source than surface water. Less risk of disease. Some rearing stations use surface water (Bois Brule and Thunder River).

Wild Rose – Most modern facility, built for efficiency.

Kettle Moraine Springs – upgrades. Want to produce about 500,000 steelhead. Renovations are on target but it is a complex process. Will take time. 26.6 million dollars for the project and it has already been allocated via Stewardship dollars. The new facility will be a partial recirculation aquaculture system which will use less water than a full flow through hatchery. Timeline will take some years before construction can start (2019 start construction).

Rearing facility rears fish hatched elsewhere. Hatchery hatches fish. Collection facility collects gametes.

Dennis Hickey (Commercial fisherman, Bailey's Harbor) – Walleye incidental take

Has fished commercially in Great Lakes for 50 years. Invasive species removal in four western states (Lake Trout and Walleye are not native to western states).

Walleye and musky in Lake Michigan. Seeing lots of walleye in trap nets. Had to move from Peshtigo Reef because too many walleye to deal with. Walleye eating whitefish, burp up from walleye in trap nets.

Food web changing. What is the right balance? Green Bay anglers and walleye anglers were not at this Forum meeting. We need to engage them too on this issue. This includes Walleyes, perch, musky, and northern pike.

Dave Boyarski (WDNR) – Bloater chub rule update

Went through a full public process on this rule development. The quota would be based on USGS surveys. The calculations use a 3 year average of USGS trawl and acoustic information and set a 25% exploitation rate. This process then will automate the quota since we get the USGS estimates each year we can calculate a new quota based on the formula in the code. .

Went through LMFF, public hearings, and LM commercial fishing board. Final step was for legislative review and by that process it was put on hold.

Jim Lubner (USCG Auxillary) - Coast Guard updates

Coast Guard Updates. Prevention Office (Response does law enforcement stuff).

Focus on safety and information. Making sure boats (commercial and charter [uninspected passenger vessels]) are prepared for emergencies. Can call and make an appointment for an inspection. Be safe on the lake.

Future Topics

Budget of 2 day and stamp. How much and where? See attached memo from Mike Donofrio (WDNR).

Guide Reporting – Boyarski – What is being done? Pilot program on GB with WF guides, Scott Hansen (October meeting?).

WDNR has a proposal for a NOAA Grant to work on electronic reporting for charters and guides and to create a reporting app for charter, commercial and to guides.

Whitefish management. Future meeting for those LMFF members interested. Topics to include allocation amongst commercial fishing zones, and restrictions on the commercial fishery to protect north-moonlight Bay spawning fish. Timeframe would be late April, early may.

Tammie Paoli (WDNR)- Could talk about Pike habitat work. Has been going on for 20 years. Northern Pike is a native species to Green Bay.

Special August LMFF meeting to discuss changes in trout and salmon stocking numbers.

Asian Carp. LE population research. What would happen in GB if Asian Carp (Silver Carp and Bighead Carp) were established there? Grass Carp and wetlands?

LMFF April 9, 2016

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