

Lake Michigan Yellow Perch Public Meeting

October 2014

Plan: The WDNR Bureau of Fisheries Management in conjunction with the Wisconsin Conservation Congress is planning a public meeting to update anglers and stakeholders on the latest science about Lake Michigan ecology and yellow perch population status, fishing and management. This meeting will include informative presentations by invited experts and a question and answer / discussion session. In addition, participants will be able to provide input to Lake Michigan fishery managers regarding yellow perch management options. The meeting will take place from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on October 23, 2014 at the UW-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences, 600 E. Greenfield Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53204.

Background: The yellow perch population in Lake Michigan has experienced a rapid, lakewide decline in abundance during the early 1990s, and has continued to decline despite stringent regulations imposed to reduce harvest. Individual management authorities closed the commercial perch fishery in the lake's main basins and reduced the potential harvest from recreational angling by implementing restrictive harvest regulations. In Wisconsin, commercial yellow perch harvest was suspended in 1996 in the main lake. The sport harvest was reduced to 5 perch per day with a season closure to protect spawning perch. These regulations were intended to ensure that adequate numbers of mature perch remained for future spawning seasons when favorable conditions returned to the lake. While these actions helped produce a few strong year-classes and prevented a complete collapse of the perch population, recent stock assessments indicate continued lowered population abundance.

Management authorities convened a yellow perch conference in December 1994 at Kenosha, WI to alert constituents about declining yellow perch abundance around the lake. A Yellow Perch Task Group was created and the group developed and implemented a research strategy to explore the causes of declining yellow perch populations. The lack of population recovery is thought to be due to poor perch recruitment. The Lake Michigan ecosystem has been altered tremendously due to aquatic invasive species especially zebra/quagga mussels that have changed the aquatic food web.

The overall goal of the meeting will be to update stake holders in Wisconsin on the latest science about Lake Michigan yellow perch ecology and management, and provide a public forum for constituents to participate in the management process.

Logistics: The meeting is scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. and end at 9:00 p.m. with registration starting at 5:30 p.m. It will be held at UW-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences, 600 E. Greenfield Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53204. Parking is available in the staff parking lot or on Greenfield Avenue. (Light refreshments will be provided during the break.)

Meeting Format: The program will include invited presentations on various aspects of the Lake Michigan ecosystem. After the completion of structured presentations a question and answer / discussion session will last for 60 minutes.

The program has been structured to:

- Discuss changes in Lake Michigan ecology and how changes have affected yellow perch populations (e.g. recruitment and growth) and fishing;
- Update on the status of yellow perch populations and fishing
- Discuss yellow perch stocking
- Provide a forum for stakeholders to ask questions and provide suggestions to improve yellow perch management on Lake Michigan.

Follow-up and Next Steps: The WDNR will prepare a brief summary report of the meeting including main comments and suggestions from participants.

Program for October 23, 2014

Time	Presentation Topic	Speakers
5:30 - 6:00 p.m.	Arrival/registration	
6:00 - 6:05 p.m.	Welcome, introductions, explanation of meeting format and goal	Ron Bruch – Wisconsin DNR
6:05 – 6:30	Nutrients and primary/secondary productivity	Richard P. Barbiero, Senior Environmental Scientist, EPA contractor
6:30 – 6:50	Yellow perch early life history and movement	John Janssen – Professor, UW-Milwaukee-SFS
6:50 – 7:00	Status of yellow perch populations	Pradeep Hirethota – Wisconsin DNR
7:00 – 7:15	Historical Lake Michigan yellow perch fishing experience	Paul Smith – Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
7:15 – 7:30	Yellow perch aquaculture	Fred Binkowski – Scientist, UW-Milwaukee-SFS
7:30 - 7:45	Status of yellow perch populations -Whole lake perspective	John Dettmers – Scientist, Great Lakes Fishery Commission
7:45 – 8:00	BREAK	
8:00 – 8:55	Question and Answer / Discussion session	Moderator: Rob Bohmann, Chair, Wisconsin Conservation Congress
8:55 - 9:00 p.m.	Wrap up	Brad Eggold – Wisconsin DNR