

Lake Michigan Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Monday, October 25, 2010 --- MUCC Headquarters, Lansing, MI

Advisor reports:

Muskegon – White fish are present in good numbers and the perch fishing has been good.

UP/Esanaba – Walleye fishing started out slow this year but July and August were good.

Whitehall – Weather was major factor in creating inconsistent fishing results; water level in the rivers is low.

SW Michigan – Lot's of blow days but nice size brown trout early in the year and good perch fishing. Steelhead run was very late this year.

Grand Haven – Good early year fishing, slow in June but picked up in July. End of the season fishing was totally different. Warm water drove the fish out; each day was different, spotty, and the salmon run was late this year.

Grand River – Fishing was down this year, significantly fewer steelhead and skippers.

St. Joe – Off year...slow all season.

Southern Lake Michigan as a region was pretty good this summer.

Northern Lake Michigan as a region was bad. Bad weather, lots of wind and only one fish over 20 lbs. caught in a 400 boat sport fishing tournament. Thompson Creek is down and smaller fish are going up the rivers.

Glen Arbor – Great fishing early in the year, but shut down in July. Lake trout fishing was good all summer.

Saugatuck/South Haven – Best lake trout fishing in August. Good fishing early in the year but shut down in August. Perch fishing was spotty.

Wisconsin – Had cold water all summer and suspect we may have lost a class of Chinook (2006) because of non-existent four year old run.

Kelly Smith commented that the data needs to be analyzed and presented at the March (2011) meeting but it is very possible we are missing a year class.

Fall Fingerling Steelhead. (Jim Bedford)

We cannot continue to plant steelhead in warm river locations. Let them become smolts and make it to the lake by putting them in waters that allow that to happen.

Action Item: Yearling Steelhead allocations for the Platte River. (Todd Kalish)

Everyone agreed we need to have a second egg taking hatchery other than the Little Manistee River/Weir to raise wild steelhead trout. It is possible that this source could be jeopardized at some point due to disease, environmental factors, or facility breakdowns. Platte River State Fish Hatchery is the best place to raise the planned 20,000 wild steelhead. The facility is staffed appropriately and the infrastructure is right. We are at capacity at all hatcheries now and have to prioritize where we "cut" fish rearing at the current hatcheries. The subject of allocation was debated and the first two options developed by the Lake Michigan Basin Team were favored by the committee.

Option 1. Equitable reallocation from all the Fisheries Division basins in the state. The Lake Superior Basin is currently allocated approximately 7% of the 1.1 million steelhead allocated yearly in Michigan, Lake Erie Basin is allocated 11%, Lake Huron 35% and Lake Michigan 47%. If we equitably reallocated steelhead yearlings, Lake Superior would get 1,400, Lake Erie 2,200, Lake Huron 7,000 and Lake Michigan 9,400 for a total of 20,000.

Option 2. Inequitably reallocate from all the basins in the state, with a heavy emphasis the Lake Michigan Basin. The Lake Michigan Basin would be responsible for 15,000 (75%) of the 20,000 yearlings requested. The remaining 5,000 yearlings would be proportionally reallocated from the other basins: Lake Huron would reallocate 2,800 (14%), Lake Erie 1,300 (6%), and Lake Superior 1,000 (5%).

Consensus was not achieved as the committee was split between the above options. The Chairman, Denny Grinold, will make the final decision and asked for time to study it further. He will report in November which option will be recommended to the Fisheries Division.

Action Item: Lake Michigan Lake trout seasons and size and bag limit (Todd Kalish)

The Fisheries Division is proposing changes to regulations for harvest of lake trout by anglers from Lake Michigan. The primary objective of the changes are to ensure we meet rehabilitation targets for the numbers and sizes of lake trout while providing valued angling opportunities.

Option 1. Jan. 1 – Sept. 30th: This would result in no change for the Northern (MM 1-3) and Grand Traverse (MM 4) units and would provide an additional four months of angling opportunity in the other Units.

Option 2. Jan. 1 – Oct. 31st: This would result in an additional month of recreational angling in the Northern (MM 1-3) and Grand Traverse (MM 4) units and five additional months in other units.

Option 3. April 1 – Oct. 31st: This would result in a two month loss of recreational angling opportunity in the Northern (MM1-3) and Grand Traverse (MM 4) units and would add two months of angling opportunity in other units.

Option 4. Open All Year

The Ludington Charter Boat Association objected to not extending the season through Oct 31st in the lower Units (MM 6-8) for two reasons. At the April meeting of the LMCFAC we were led to believe the extended season through Oct 31st was not a problem. Secondly, not opening the process up to the southern Units (MM 6-8) was not made clear at that April meeting.

The Glen Arbor committee member reminded the group that opening up the season through October 31st could create problems since the lake trout begin spawning in October in the Northern (MM 1-3) and (MM 4) units.

Kelly Smith apologized for any misunderstanding but reaffirmed what the intent of the process was to concentrate on upper Units (MM 1-3) and (MM 4) this year and we would be looking at Units (MM 6-8) next year. He suggested that those committee members who feel strongly about the proposed change to the lake trout open season come to the NRC meeting on November 4th to express their concern.

Lake Michigan Fish Management Plan (Jim Dexter)

A survey of license holders and general citizens input will begin within the next couple of months to generate lake specific management plans for all fisheries in the basin system.

Lake Michigan Salmon: 5-bag Limit and ecological indicators status (Dexter & Smith)

The committee was reminded that the protocol for establishment of bag limits is to review results annually and any changes would be predicated on the results of charter boat reports (received over 10,000 reports this year).

The number of anglers with three fish was up slightly and the number reporting five fish was up slightly over 2009. **.25%** of all the people reporting caught five fish. As a result, the decision is that we will not make any change in the bag limit for next year.

Charter boat captains present at the meeting express their concern that fish size is not being considered and that we may be adversely impacting 2 and 3 year old fish. Kelly explained that the bio data will tell us what occurred but that the numbers do not support dropping the bag limit.

Mass Marking

Salmon will be mass marked this year.

Asian Carp Response Plan

The Response Plan is complete and now on the DNRE website. The four goals outlined in the plan are prevention, communication, detection and assessment. A summit is planned on November 22nd to review the plan strategies if the carp are found.

DNRE Early Out Program

The committee was reminded that the department will be offering an early out program for employees that will result in back filling only one of two openings that occur. There are 59 employees eligible to take the early out opportunity.

Winter Net Marking for Commercial Fisheries

Paul Jensen reviewed the need to get approval from the law division to remove the buoys marking trap nets for the winter. GPS coordinates are available. There is a discrepancy between how the Little River Tribe are marking their nets; state vs. tribe.

Questions from the Committee

A question regarding walleye stocking in Lake Michigan was asked. DNRE does not stock Lake Michigan per se. It does stock Lake Charlevoix and so walleye can get into Lake Michigan. DNRE stocks walleye in the following rivers: Muskegon, Grand, St Joe and Kalamazoo Rivers.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM