



Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

Established by the Department of Natural Resources to improve and maintain fishery resources of Lake Huron through better communication and partnership.

Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday October 9, 2018

Jay's Sporting Goods, Inc. in Clare

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Approved

Welcome and Introductions (Frank Krist and Randy Claramunt, DNR Lake Huron Basin Coordinator).

Frank thanked everyone for coming to the meeting, introduced himself, Randy Claramunt, Dave Borgeson, and Jim Baker. He also thanked the staff from Jay's. Attendees then introduced themselves.

Attendees: Dennis Gulau, Bryan Darland, Tom Hamilton, Jerry Lockhart, Lance and Doreen Campbell, Glen Buehner, Bob Reider, Tom Frontjes, Randy Claramunt, Jim Johnson, Ken Merckel, Ed Retherford, Jim De Clerck, Randy Terrian, Gene Kirvan, Ji He, Dave Borgeson, Jan Hamilton, Frank Krist, Paul Sullivan, Dave Fielder, Craig Milkowski, Nick Atkin, Brandon Schroeder, Patrick Hanchin, Terry Lyons, Jay Smith, Mrs. Smith, Judy Ogden, Julie Shafto, Steve Shafto, Thomas Heritier, Jan VanAmberg, Jim Baker.

Two-minute fishing season reports from the participants.

Dennis Gulau: It's been another solid year for Saginaw Bay. The big walleye migrated out of the bay early. There are good reports of perch being caught now. Big smallmouth are currently being caught as well. Saginaw and Au Gres rivers have been good this year.

Brian Darland: There has been more interest in Atlantics this year, with better catch reports. Bryan indicated his interest in the Au Sable River Atlantic salmon catch numbers. Fishing on the west side of the State has been good, with inland waters performing well also. Bryan has seen lots of kids fishing and thinks this will pay off with more anglers in the future.

Frank asked Randy about fishing license sales numbers, and Randy said sales are down about 2% to date this year statewide.

Terry Lyons: Heard reports of good Atlantic fishing in the Au Sable, but his personal fishing wasn't good this year.

Tom Hamilton: Tom Hamilton: White River fishing has been slow and sporadic, with a lot of high water. Fishing is down on the White River, but other rivers are seeing better fisheries. Salmon are being seen up in the tributaries. This high water is good for natural reproduction spawning without the illegal snagging. The White River is not stocked and depends on natural reproduction for fishery survival.

Jay Smith: Indicated he did fairly well this year at Rogers City. Anglers were catching decent numbers of fish (Atlantic salmon, Chinook salmon) with coded wire tags (CWT) out of Rogers City.

Judy Ogden: Judy said steelhead were not present early in the season but then showed up in August. Atlantics were present all year and were now being caught around Lexington and Port Sanilac Harbors. Atlantics were also caught early in the year in the St. Clair River. Winds have made for some tough fishing recently. A few Chinook were caught this year, as well as some coho, but catches were sporadic in the southern part of the lake. Walleye have remained present in the fishery. Lake trout were around, but moved deeper 20 miles out to the mid-lake reef when the weather became warmer. Perch anglers have been secretive, but some were being caught in short period of time, about 10 days. In the lower lake off the channel markers, perch fishing lasted longer and was pretty

good. Good numbers of emerald shiners were seen most of the year. Sometimes fishing was excellent. Lots of smelt in fish stomachs.

Julie Shafto: Great lake trout fishery mid-May through now. It was the best Atlantic salmon fishery she has seen in mid-May through mid-August. There has been a lot of east wind this year. She has not observed any pink salmon or coho salmon this year and saw a few steelhead early. Tougher fishing later in year with inclement weather. Julie noted that there was a lot of baitfish available, including age 1 smelt, sticklebacks, gobies, and a few alewives. Some very big Chinook salmon were caught this year.

Steve Shafto: The Chinook salmon were caught more traditionally this season, early and late in the day and near the bottom. He wouldn't be surprised if smelt runs pick up this year based on what he saw this year in the stomachs of the fish. There were lots of 3 to 4 inch smelt in the stomachs.

Tom Heritier: Tom is between boats right now and didn't get much fishing in this year. He is looking for a Great Lakes pontoon.

Jerry Lockhart: Jerry fished lake trout out of Oscoda, but they moved out deeper and were scattered. He didn't get out as much as he wanted in June. Pinconning perch fishing was very spotty.

Gene Kirvan: Reported he caught a good amount of steelhead, and 21 atlantics around 6-7 lbs in the Au Sable River during the spring. Lots of big lake trout this year were caught about 5.5 miles offshore. Some limits contained many large lake trout, especially early in the year. Some steelhead were caught offshore, along with a few kings. Gene didn't see the big kings that others were reporting. Some charters were exceeding limits this year. He noted that he met with law enforcement and Gene is still frustrated with obstacles in enforcement. Lots of larger smelt were observed in the predator stomachs. The Atlantics are generating excitement, they jump, and they are good table fare.

Lance and Doreen Campbell: Didn't fish much, but people raved out of Oscoda about how good the fishing was. Atlantics are being caught in the river now. Some up to 10 pounds and they are in good shape.

Randy Terrian: Fished the North Channel of the St. Clair River in the spring. Atlantic Salmon fishing was excellent. The Au Sable River steelhead run was extended with the cold spring. Predation on stocked steelhead may have been a problem this spring. Years like this are tough. Walleye fishing was very good between Au Gres and Lookout Points. Randy saw cormorants feeding on stocked fish in the Au Gres River. Randy caught some brown trout in Tawas Bay. People are really going after Atlantics in the spring. In the Au Sable River, anglers are catching them in the holes in the lower river. It appears that the stocking strategy of waiting until the water is 50 °F degrees before planting is paying off. There has been some unbelievably good fishing. The east side of Saginaw Bay in the cuts was good in the spring for perch. He saw a lot more targeted boat traffic going after perch, emphasizing the need to get them fully recovered to see the payoff in terms of increased angler effort. His party caught an Atlantic and steelhead on the Au Sable yesterday.

Ed Retherford: May was terrible. He started fishing in June in Alpena, but the Atlantics were in Presque Isle. He fished Presque Isle in July, often taking double trips. Ed's boat won 1st and 4th place in the festival with his brown trout. His old-time fishing partners did well this year in the tournament. Next year will be his 50th year. Atlantics are still spotty, not consistent.

Ken Merkel: Lake trout moved off shore quite a distance this year. For 3 weeks they struggled to catch lake trout. They were seeing a variety of fish, so you need to fish the entire water column. One charter got 91 lake trout while jigging. Walleye fishing was spotty off Grindstone City and south. For 2-3 weeks, they caught some walleye, but after that they were suspended at around 80 feet. Ken thought there is a need to survey the offshore reefs with the RV Tanner to see if lake trout are moving and spending much time on deep structure. Later fishing was good for lake trout out on the offshore reefs. Generally, it was a good year, but he didn't hear of many whitefish caught this year.

Jim Johnson: Jim would like to see prey fish assessments incorporate good goby habitat into the models which might better reflect true preyfish abundance. With the cold spring, walleye stayed in the Thunder Bay River throughout May, and this did not bode well for stocked Atlantics and steelhead this year. There was phenomenal

fishing for Atlantics in Thunder Bay, many limits were caught. That makes this a world class Atlantic salmon fishery. The Brown Trout Festival may consider adding steelhead and Atlantic salmon categories to their fishing tournament.

Randy Claramunt: Responded to Randy Terrian, saying that hopefully Atlantics reared at Harrietta will offer an opportunity to alter stocking times due to the relatively constant temperatures of that facility. He also emphasized (responding to Gene Kirvan's comments) the need to call the RAP line any time violations are observed, since that kicks off the tracking of follow-up actions.

Dave Borgeson: Thanked Gene Kirvan for hosting the meeting to discuss law enforcement issues. Gene again expressed his frustration regarding the lack of enforcement of over-limits of lake trout at Oscoda.

Tom Frontjes: Splake fishing was good this year in the Les Cheneaux Island area. He has been seeing Atlantics regularly, although they are not the targeted species, but they are showing up (mostly St. Marys fish). He has been seeing an occasional large alewife, but mostly gobies in the stomachs. Some chinooks are showing up.

Bob Reider: Saw an interesting bass fishery on Torch Lake this year.

Patrick Hanchin: Patrick wanted to comment on Gene Kirvan's enforcement issue, stating that he knows of successful efforts to inform prosecutors and judges on enforcement issues. It might be beneficial communicating with local officials and expressing concerns.

Glen Buehner: Lake Michigan started off on fire this year in the south with big fish of every species being caught. Different currents and wind patterns resulted in a hit or miss fishery during the summer. East winds messed up the lake, so they had a short window for fishing in the Ludington area. He heard it was tough fishing in Wisconsin this year, perhaps because forage fish of all species are abundant all over Lake Michigan this year. He emphasized the need for anglers to turn in heads so that fish movement can be tracked. Also, stomachs should be collected. He stated the need to figure out where natural reproduction is occurring, so microchemistry work should be done. The Coho fishery provided an alternative option this year one year after stocking. There was an offshore fishery off Ludington this year as opposed to previous years. Coho are being stocked at Ludington State Park. Productivity seemed to be up this year, with color in the water out to 14 miles sometimes.

Brandon Schroeder: Brandon thanked Ed Retherford and the Charter boaters for taking kids in their youth camp fishing on Lake Huron. Oscoda area schools are excited about the salmon in the classroom program. Partner Megan Glass in the southern part of Lake Huron also had great experiences with kids involved in the youth program.

Nick Atkin, Great Lakes Enforcement: Nick said he is learning his new Great Lakes enforcement duties and the areas he will be working in. He has been with the Department for 14 years. Frank asked Nick and Craig for a list of officers and their areas of coverage, as this would be helpful to many of the Advisors. This would help learn where the officer's area is located since many officers have been hired throughout the state or switch positions and are now stationed on the Great Lakes. Frank was assured this would be done.

Craig Milkowski: Craig bought kayaks to fish near his house, but it didn't work out too well.

The need to implement a 2-lake trout daily bag limit in management unit MH-1 from Rogers City to Drummond Island (Randy Claramunt and Patrick Hanchin, DNR Tribal Coordination Unit).

Randy reminded the group of our previous discussions on this subject. The recreational lake trout quota was exceeded during 2016 and 2017 in MH-1. The harvest results for 2018 were not completed. The DNR communicated with the Tribes about combining lake trout management units MH-1 Drummond Island to Rogers City and MH-2 from Rogers City to Alpena. Other proposals were also discussed. An agreement could not be reached between the State, Tribes and United States and as a result, a 2 fish bag limit will be implemented in MH-1 beginning 2019. When a quota is exceeded, the 2000 Consent Decree requires a party to take management action so that its harvest in the following year does not exceed its quota for that year.

Frank discussed the two Executive Council meetings this year where the State introduced their proposals. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Tribes felt that since the Tribal fishers had their whitefish fishery

closed for 6 weeks in October of 2015 because their lake trout quota was exceeded in northern Lake Michigan, then the State should also implement a penalty. The Tribes are not supportive of continuing a penalty system since it can result in harsh impacts and they would like to protect the fishery with other methods. The sentiment appeared to be if the State experienced a penalty then there would be more interest in finding other protocols to protect the fishery as discussions move forward.

Even though biologically the model shows that it is not necessary to go to a 2 fish limit, Frank felt that it was important to follow the Consent Decree and work with the 5 Tribes and United States to solve the issue. With the upcoming new 2020 Consent Decree negotiations fast approaching, this and other related concerns certainly will be discussed. Frank described his past experiences being in the room during the 2000 Great Lakes Decree and 2007 Inland Consent Decree negotiations and how communications between the Parties have improved over the years. Frank felt that despite the negative impact to anglers and the local communities, the Consent Decree needs to be followed.

Steve Shafto said lake trout are at such high levels they are impacting the ecology of the Lake. Randy said that the Tribes are aware of this and may be supportive of liberalized lake trout regulations across the board. Frank said the Tribes are very troubled about the lake whitefish populations. He says the Tribes are concerned about the biology of the Lake Huron, but the complicating factor is that we are so close to commencement of the 2020 negotiations. In addition, decisions are challenging since all Parties must unanimously agree including 5 Tribes with separate outlooks, the State and the United States. If there is not complete agreement and a dispute results, then the Federal Judge would decide. Director Creagh will go in front of the Natural Resource Commission on Thursday, October 11, 2018 to talk about this issue and a decision will be made on implementing the penalty.

Jay Smith asked who stocks lake trout, and who makes the decisions on whether to stock them. Randy said the State stocks a small number, but the US Fish and Wildlife Service stocks most of them in the Great Lakes. The State has control of the Great Lakes and the US Fish and Wildlife Service can only stock fish in the Great Lakes with the approval of the adjacent states. Randy said there will be a major reduction in lake trout stocking during 2018. There will be no lake trout stocked south of Black River in Alcona County with a reduction from 1,495,113 in 2017 to about 540,000 lake trout in 2018. The reduction in stocking was undertaken because of the poor survival of stocked fish and the increasing natural reproduction of lake trout. Frank said that if natural reproduction continues, stocking may be further reduced.

Ed asked what caused the demise of the whitefish, and what the Tribes think of this. Jim Johnson and Ji He are working on a paper regarding this subject. As zebra mussels and quagga mussels increased, whitefish production declined. There is almost a biological desert in Thunder Bay during the spring. Whitefish fry emerge, but don't survive well. There appears that not enough zooplankton of the right size is available for the whitefish as they move from feeding on the egg sac and begin foraging for food. The few juvenile whitefish that survive the early stages have challenges avoiding the large number of predators currently in the Lake. In the past, the abundant pelagic alewife and smelt provided a predation buffer.

Whitefish in Saginaw Bay are surviving better, with greater survival due to greater productivity but will it be enough to sustain the population? Thunder Bay was an excellent producer of whitefish, but this is no longer the case. A study is needed to determine the abundance and size of the zooplankton and if there is the potential of a good year class with the current food web in the north.

The whitefish fishery in Lake Michigan was also mentioned. The populations are declining significantly in all areas of the lake except Green Bay which is very productive similar to Saginaw Bay. Randy said the Tribes are looking to possibly stock lake whitefish in the future through the federal hatcheries. Because of the changes in the food web, it may not be possible or realistic to return to the record whitefish fishery levels that were sustained during the 1990s.

Glen Buehner talked about lake trout stocking cuts that have happened and the Tribal desires for keeping whitefish populations viable. Federal hatcheries are looking for alternative species to keep their facilities operating since the need to stock lake trout is declining.

Frank asked the advisors for their input on the letter to Director Creagh proposing the 2 fish lake trout bag limit in MH-1.

- **Dennis Gulau** - supports
- **Brian Darland** - yes
- **Terry Lyons** - yes
- **Tom Hamilton** - yes, The Lake Michigan managers are facing difficult times and harvest decisions on Lake Michigan as well.
- **Judy Ogden** - yes. Judy also had a question as to how well folks in MH-1 understand the issue. Tom Frontjes said that this action will be highly unpopular, and information will need to be distributed. Patrick Hanchin said we need to look at a worst-case scenario to maintain a proper perspective. If the Tribes took 30% over of their allocation for 2 straight years, sport fishers would be upset, and the tribes could impact the fishery with that level of effort. He said there is a 2 fish limit in northern Lake Michigan right now, and a sport lake trout fishery exists. Randy explained that the Director takes input from anglers when making a final recommendation to the Natural Resources Commission. Randy thinks anglers understand the overall situation in MH-1, but still will not be happy. Judy asked how long will this last. Randy said for 2019 at least, perhaps 2020 as well. With expiration of the Consent Decree on the horizon in August 2020, this is a very difficult timeline. The State and Tribes have not agreed on State and Tribal quotas for the past two years, in northern Lake Huron so there is some gray area in what the quota is. With the reports of many large lake trout being caught, including many limits, the weight of lake trout harvested could still increase even if the number caught declines.
- **Tom Heritier** - Yes
- **Gene Kirvan** – yes, we have too much on the line.
- **Randy Terrian** – yes, we need to do what we say to keep up our credibility. With the Tribes interested is in whitefish, possibly they would work with liberalizing the lake trout harvest if it is biologically supported.
- **Jim De Clerk** – yes is the only choice. Setting a framework for 20 years is not conducive to managing a changing ecosystem. Patrick said there is an avenue within the Decree to deal with this, but it basically means you open up the whole Decree up to changes. Because of the uncertainty, the Decree was never opened for renegotiations. Jim said that you should be able to address single issues separately. Of course, changes have been made but all 7 of the Parties must agree to the proposal.
- **Ed Retherford** – yes. There needs to be a way to change things periodically to deal with unpredictable nature of the fishery.
- **Ken Merkel**– yes. not much of a choice, we need to do this.
- **Jim Johnson** – Sticky point is the allocation percentage, not the quota. We need to show good faith.

Decision: Frank will sign the letter of support for implementing the 2 fish bag limit in MH-1 during 2019 and Randy will deliver the letter to Director Creagh and it appears that the rule change will be in the 2019 Fishing Guide.

Progress Report of the Subcommittee of Advisors and DNR biologists and managers to develop a draft Lake Huron salmon and trout management plan (Randy Claramunt and Frank Krist).

The Subcommittee met in September in Gaylord. Randy talked about the progress to date. Several face to face meetings and conference calls have been held. Discussions for the need for a management plan goes back to 2008. The impetus for this committee was: predator prey interactions in Lake Michigan and Chinook salmon movement, and the long-standing need for a management plan for Lake Huron.

The Subcommittee started with a species by species approach, leading to stocking strategies. Randy showed the building blocks that will form the framework of the plan. He talked about the challenges we are facing in Lake Huron, which are similar to the issues discussed during 2008. The changing food web along with the need for diversification of the predator community and prey base have been a major concern. The biological and economic impacts must be considered.

The Givens were discussed: such as the Swan River Weir remains in operation, effective sea lamprey control continues, round gobies are a main prey item, and the DNR will fund fisheries programs.

A Parking Lot (items to be discussed later) was mentioned. This is a list of things we don't fully understand, such as the number of gobies out there. Should we have mobile weirs? What are the limits of hatchery production? Are guiding principles needed?

Randy then highlighted a long list of *Potential Pitfalls* that were identified, including the outcome of the 2020 Consent Decree, keeping up the momentum, hatchery capacity, cormorant management, conflicting goals, negativity infiltrating the process, inadequate cormorant control, new invasive species etc.

Guiding Principles of the plan were outlined. They include diversification of the predator-prey dynamic and predators should be in balance with the current prey fish population. The plan must be flexible with an adaptive management framework. The goal is to implement changes in 2020 but look for opportunities before then.

Randy then provided the *Mission Statement*: A sustainable and diverse salmon and trout fishery that maximizes the lake's production potential to provide exceptional fishing for communities across Lake Huron.

The *Goals* were listed.

- Develop, expand, and maintain a diverse salmon and trout fishery.
- Maximize fish production potential recognizing the dynamics in prey fish production, abundance and diversity.
- Provide exceptional fisheries across the lake and fishing communities.
- Promote a sustainable and balanced Lake Huron ecosystem through adaptive fisheries management

It was emphasized that this must be a living document with willingness to adapt.

Randy talked about setting *Salmon and Trout Stocking Levels* using criteria as the objectives.

- Will a species provide a fishery, is it catchable and what is its preference from anglers?
- Is a preferred prey source available?
- Is stocking cost-effective (e.g., post-stocking survival, return to fisheries)?
- Does it provide a fishery in the area (managed locally)?
- If it reproduces naturally, is that in line with the goals?
- Will it have economic benefits?
- Provide a description of the current management strategy, past management actions and reasoning, life history characteristics including natural reproduction, ecological niche, and feeding ecology.

Randy used Chinook salmon as an example of a tactical exercise. What levels will meet our goals? How should they be distributed? If Chinook equivalents are preferred, then specify. Subcommittee agreed to: reduce up to 100,000 Chinook and use coho equivalents in the central or southern waters. Approximately 3.2 Coho can be stocked for every Chinook that is not stocked. Glen Buehner explained why the coho were available right now; because they were surplus to Lake Michigan needs. This is a good example of how managers from both lakes can work together. Frank mentioned that it would be desirable to have these coho marked with coded wire tags. Glen agreed, saying this would help us understand movement and natural recruitment numbers. Randy said that we don't have additional funds for more coho tagging. Steelhead are coded wire tagged, but chinook will only be fin clipped. It would be a big challenge to get enough money for tagging coho. A question was asked regarding if lamprey increased and lake trout decreased, would resuming lake trout stocking throughout the lake be considered again? Randy showed the current lake trout stocking plan and agreed the plan needs to be flexible.

Brief discussion on providing survey net setting notifications to anglers and boaters (Randy Claramunt and Frank Krist).

Can resource agencies do a better job of letting folks know where survey nets are located? There is a current process in place but does it need to be improved? Dave Fielder noted the differences between different locations, like Rogers City and Saginaw Bay. Steve Shafto explained some of the things he has heard from anglers. Could harbormasters be notified of net locations? Frank talked to Scott Koproski from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Scott is interested in hearing the suggestions this group might have. Dave said that they notify the Coast Guard of net locations, and that information is posted on line, but that isn't satisfying angler needs. Glen Buehner said the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians contacts him, and he posts it on his fishing report. He says this has been helpful to everyone. Ed Retherford said last year the USFWS notified the harbormaster of net set locations. Ji said the DNR could do something to notify harbormasters and improve their efforts to notify folks of net setting activities. Exact dates of net setting may be difficult to predict in advance due to weather conditions, but a range of dates could be provided. Sending a note to harbormasters, local contacts, and creel clerks would greatly help getting this information out. Randy will send minutes of this meeting to USGS, USFWS, and DNR stations to try to improve notifications.

Update: The new DNR Survey Netting Notification Policy to be implemented during 2019: In addition to the standard practice of notifying the United States Coast Guard (USCG) of the net locations for broadcast on Channel 16, a written notice will be provided to mariners for distribution to the USCG and local harbormasters for posting. The creel survey clerks will have access to the cruise schedule via the state email network to assist them in answering questions. In addition, a schedule for the year will be provided each spring.

Scott Koproski, Manager of the US Fish and Wildlife Alpena MI Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, indicated that the Station's crews set whitefish survey nets between Rogers City and Hammond Bay and the harbor masters at those ports will be notified before the nets are used.

A discussion of the First Nations' refusal to allow Sea Lamprey treatment of the Garden and Mississagi Rivers (Paul Sullivan, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Sea Lamprey Control Centre, Division Manager).

Paul explained the history of the lamprey invasion and the subsequent collapse of many fish populations in the Great Lakes. The lamprey control program was implemented after the discovery of TFM as an effective lampricide. The only fully effective alternative to lampricides are barriers on streams to prevent spawning. Paul talked about the statistics used to assess success of the program; overall abundance and wounding rates of lake trout. Both indices have been declining in recent years toward the target levels and lake trout populations have been rebounding. These gains may be short-lived. Two First Nations, the Ojibwe of Garden River and Mississagi River, have recently raised concerns about treating streams with lampricide. These streams haven't been treated since being scheduled for treatment in 2016-17.

Many meetings have been held since 2016 with the First Nations to outline the issue, discuss the difficulties in managing lamprey and the problem posed if these rivers aren't treated. The Mississagi and Garden Rivers rank 1 and 2 in lamprey production potential, with millions of young lamprey likely to be produced if the rivers are not treated. It is estimated that since 2016 about 180,000 juvenile lamprey escaped from the Garden River destroying 7.2 million pounds of fish. Since 2017 it is estimated that 43,000 lamprey escaped from the Mississagi River destroying 1.7 million pounds of fish. Paul showed the potential production of adult lamprey if all these rivers aren't treated, and subsequent increase in lake trout mortality, see slide on the next page.

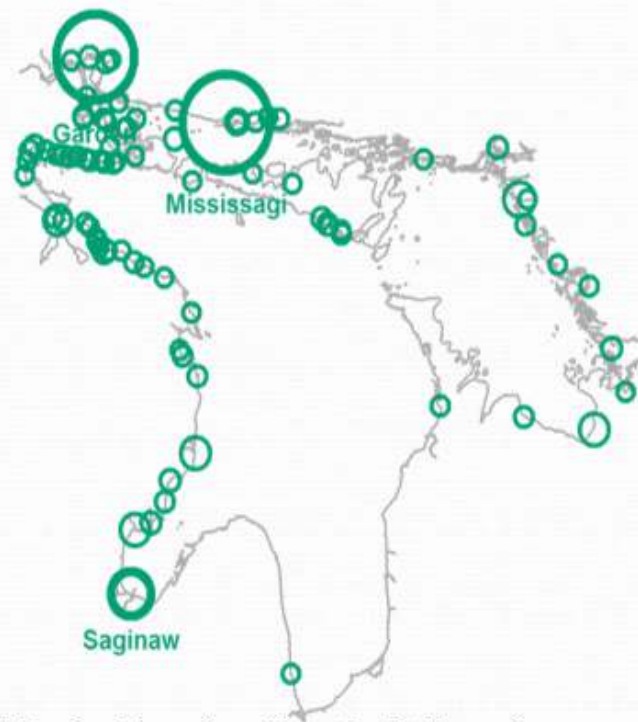
The Great Lakes Fishery Commission has presented the First Nations with draft MOUs that would commit funding to their Traditional Ecological Knowledge Studies. The First Nations are aware of the large investment needed to develop alternatives. The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and the Michigan Tribal Chippewa-Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA) have communicated with the First Nations and recommended the rivers be treated this fall, but the window of opportunity is quickly closing.

Julie Shafto and Ed Retherford have both noticed a large increase in lamprey this year. Jim Johnson asked if the First Nations refuse treatment, would this be the final word. Paul said the issue could then go to court, and this

could take years. The First Nations communities are divided on this issue, so he is hoping that CORA and First Nations that operate commercial fisheries will have some influence on resolving this issue. Paul was asked by Randy if it would be helpful if some of our lamprey wounding statistics were provided. Tom asked if there is any evidence that lampricide is harmful to human health. Paul said no, it does not persist in the environment, and ongoing studies have shown it is not harmful to humans. Dave Fielder asked if other alternatives could be employed, such as barriers or sterile male release. Paul said that since these streams are such large producers, there are no fiscally prudent alternatives that would achieve even marginal gains per dollars used. Jim Johnson said that these rivers will produce more lamprey than the St. Marys, putting all the fisheries at risk. This is a crisis. Why not proceed and treat, then deal with the consequences? Not treating poses a great risk to Lake Huron and Northern Lake Michigan. Frank asked where those opposed to treating obtain their information about the risk of chemical treatments. Paul said it is a fundamental basis of the sanctity of water and the First Nations have a simple view that no pesticides should be introduced. They have a lack of trust in western science, the DFO, and this is a very emotional issue for many in the First Nations. The fishery is utilized for subsistence, but other First Nations utilize the fishery commercially and may be allies to get the treatments completed. Paul recommended that we continue engagement with CORA. Ken suggested sending a letter of appreciation and support to Tom Gorenflo of CORA.

Maximum Larval Sea Lamprey Estimates in Lake Huron Streams, 1995-2012

1. Mississagi = 8,100,000
2. Garden = 7,000,000
3. St. Marys = 4,300,000
4. Saginaw = 2,700,000



The above slide shows that the Mississagi and Garden Rivers have the potential to produce more lampreys than the St Marys and Saginaw Rivers if they were not treated.

Cormorant management update (Randy Claramunt and Frank Krist).

Randy reported on the meeting in August in East Lansing held by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and attended by fisheries and wildlife representatives from the Michigan DNR, Tribes and other states. The USFWS outlined the process they had in mind, that is, first asking stakeholders if they thought there was a problem. This wasn't our view of how this should be rolled out. The DNR wanted to start much further down the path. It was a long day. The DNR stated that there is a need to develop management options and be able to set population targets. The DNR's view is that we have the data to begin, so let's get going. Why can't the USFWS set targets for cormorants for various locations? Randy believes the USFWS understands where we are coming from and hopes for more productive actions in the future. Randy said we want a technical group to sit down with the USFWS and develop cormorant targets with them. In response to a question Randy said we don't need to develop a website to dump data into that gets used by the USFWS on their timeframe. Randy Terrian asked about the timeframe. Randy Claramunt said Congressman Bergman asked the USFWS what their timeframe is, and we need to keep this on the front burner. The goal is to develop targets for spring of 2019 and be permitted to take at least some cormorants in the spring.

Manager and Law Enforcement updates.

Craig Milkowski, DNR Great Lakes Law Enforcement, said that most new personnel have been deployed to the Upper Peninsula or the Tip of the Mitt area. He said there were five abandoned trap nets of concern in Lake Huron, and they plan to have them removed. Apparently a Sault Tribe fisherman set nets, then quit fishing and moved out west. One floating net was also left for total of six. There has been a dispute as to who pays for removal; the DNR boat can't pull the trap nets, and the tribe has refused to pay to have them removed. He also noted that he obtained sidescan sonar for his boat and a Remotely Operated Underwater Vehicle (ROV) to check for nets, sunken boats, bodies, etc. However, the ROV needs to go back to manufacturer for repairs. Their unit has more large boats now than ever before, and they have another 32-foot boat on order. They are getting new personnel, so where that boat will be located is unsure. There was a report of a boat that sunk due to a Tribal net in De Tour, but this is not likely since it appears the small boat was overpowered causing it to sink.

Nick Atkin, DNR Great Lakes Enforcement, said he just wanted to come and introduce himself today.

Dave Fielder, DNR Great Lakes Research Biologist, Alpena Station, said the Station just completed its 49th Les Cheneaux Island area fishery survey. The perch catch was down slightly. They saw lots of large smallmouth bass from one net, and their numbers were up everywhere. The Les Cheneaux's has a diverse fish community with good fishing opportunities. Pike are stable at a high density, likely the beneficiary of cormorant control and high water levels.

Jan VanAmberg, Manager of the DNR Thompson Fish Hatchery, has been involved in the capital outlay project for Thompson Hatchery, and it has been taking up a lot of his time. Six cool water ponds will be constructed, and improvements will be made to allow an additional 200,000 steelhead to be raised from fingerlings to yearlings. They are currently halfway through the Chinook egg take at the Little Manistee Weir, and they may take eggs at the Swan Weir. They are mass marking steelhead again this year. The coho are moving into the Platte River. Michigan is planning to obtain Atlantic salmon eggs from LSSU to rear 80,000 Atlantics at the Harrietta Hatchery which will be stocked in 2020. Well water with a constant temperature at Harrietta Hatchery may help with temperature concerns that normally occur at the Platte River Hatchery because it uses surface water that often has temperatures that fluctuate greatly. They just started domestic trout egg takes at Oden and Marquette hatcheries.

Jim Baker, DNR Southern Lake Huron Unit Manager, talked about the sturgeon rehabilitation effort in the Saginaw system. There were 1,900 lake sturgeon from the Black River hatchery and the USFWS Genoa hatchery stocked into the Tittabawassee, Cass, Shiawassee, and Flint rivers this year. The fish were over 6 inches long. Creel clerks have been reporting dismal fishing in Southern Lake Huron for the past 6 weeks due to weather.

Patrick Hanchin, DNR Tribal Coordination Unit Manager, noted that there was a Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC) meeting scheduled for next week. The TFC has biologists from each Tribe, the State and United States. They plan to talk about Tribal stocking of walleye in Cheboygan and St. Martins Bay, and the philosophy about walleye stocking in terms of strains and genetics.

Julie Shafto, DNR Creel Survey Clerk at Rogers City and Alpena, said the fishing season is winding up, and Lee Martin will be taking over creeling the Thunder Bay River in November. Hopefully the Atlantics will show up in good numbers soon.

Ed Retherford requested that brown trout stocking in Alpena be on the agenda for the January meeting to relay concerns he has been hearing from people in Alpena.

Randy Claramunt, DNR Lake Huron Basin Coordinator, said that around 1 million cisco would be stocked into outer Saginaw Bay soon. Some test hauling has been completed by the USFWS, and the cisco seemed to have survived the handling well. Ken Merckel and Randy visited the facility and fish appeared to be doing well. The size of each lot was dependent on the water temperature in which they were being held.

Dave Borgeson, Northern Lake Huron Unit manager for Fisheries Division, said his crew was planning to take Chinook salmon eggs at the Swan River Weir Thursday. They have also been conducting fall walleye recruitment surveys in many lakes in his unit. Their electroshocking equipment broke down, so they are likely done for the year for this type of survey.

3:00 Adjourn.

Meeting Dates for 2019 will be established before the end of the year.