

Coldwater Resources Steering Committee

April 27, 2017

Hartwick Pines State Park

Attendees: Jim Bedford, Dave Peterson, Jim Schramm, Jim Bos, Jim Francis, Nick Popoff, Jim Dexter, Randy Claramunt, Jay Wesley, Steven Mondrella, Marvin Roberson, Dave Borgeson, Sr., Christian LeSage, Roger Hinchcliff, Bryan Burroughs, Mike Verhamme, Terry Lyons, Bernie Campos, Troy Zorn, Dave Borgeson, Jr., Scott Heintzelman (notes), Mark Tonello, Corey Jerome, Archie Martell, Ty Ratliff (sub for Don Wright), Bryan Darland, Phil Schneeberger.

10 Brook Trout Bag Limit –update (Schneeberger)

Phil updated the group on the status of this issue, and showed a map with streams that have been proposed to be excluded from the 10 brook trout bag limit regulation.

Comment/Discussion

- TU (Burroughs) suggested group should provide a resolution to NRC. Study is clear, preference is clear, trend is clear. Current proposal should be reversed to be: 5 fish bag with exceptions for 10 fish bag.
- Dexter commented that the division is on the side of conservation.
- Borgeson Sr. asked if NRC would consider other options, such as a compromise bag limit of 6 or 7. Effects of bag limit would depend on how hard study streams were fished and how skilled the anglers were.
- Dave Peterson (FFI) said he would support a resolution from the group expressing support for a 5 fish bag limit.
- Question to Dexter: Why is NRC pursuing this? Dexter replied that there was a 10 fish bag limit in the past, and some thought an increased bag limit could increase fishing interest. UPSA supports having a higher bag limit and wants more people fishing.
- Schneeberger: Interest did not increase during study. Some results and assumptions that were part of the study were shown (slides). There was more discussion of data and demographics.
- Borgeson Jr. commented on the angler perspective and asked if a 10 fish bag would unrealistically raise their expectations?
- Claramunt said some European studies have shown fewer people fished streams with higher bag limits.
- Roberson (Sierra Club) said he had never heard of a kid not wanting to fish because of low bag limits, concluding that a low bag limit is not the impediment to recruiting new anglers.
- CRSC members proposed a recommendation in support of a default bag limit of 5 fish with exceptions for streams with a 10 fish bag limit. A show of hands was taken, and about 90-95% of CRSC members supported this recommendation. (didn't get the exact count)
- Mondrella noted that some did not express an opinion, including him, because they are not comfortable with either option.
- Claramunt commented that in conversations with younger angler/non-anglers the complexity of regulations was often a reason to not participate.

Inland Trout Plan Update (Zorn)

Troy said that about 100 sets of comments were received. Goals/objectives had a high rate of comment, Regulations had the highest number of comments, Biology had a few, and Status of Fisheries and Habitat and Partnerships had some. He covered the timeline for the plan, saying the coauthors are targeting late-June or July for a revised draft for CRSC review.

- Several folks offered compliments on the plan and the process of plan development.

Stream management decision support tools (Zorn)

Troy gave a presentation about development of a management decision support tool for stream fish assemblages and habitats that is based on survey data collected using DNR's Status and Trends Random Site protocols and existing valley segment classification data. The tool and survey data will be online and available to the public.

- Questions/comments – Borgeson Sr. would like to see status reports added and valley segments covered.
- Several positive comments about the viewer tool.

LRBOI – Sturgeon Assessment/Resistance weir (Jerome)

Corey Jerome from LRBOI gave an informative presentation on the lake sturgeon resistance weir proposed for installation in the Big Manistee River.

- Questions: Can you use a type of tag, such as a PIT tag, that can be read without handling? Corey said they want to handle fish to collect, additional information on males and females along with genetics and sex ratio.
- Are boats able to pass – up or down? The weir has been designed to allow for upstream and downstream boat passage.
- After spawning, “drop back” steelhead go downstream tail first. Will they pool up at the weir and how will they pass? It would be possible to drop the weir down to the bottom to allow passage.
- TU comment – This is an invasive method to get this information. TU would welcome the opportunity to work with the tribe to develop options to evaluate the sturgeon population that are less invasive. Tribe comments that other methods can cause stress or mortality as well.
- Popoff – Suggested that by using genetics and PIT tags, parent pairs could be distinguished overtime.
- Comment that females from the rearing program will likely not return for 10 or more years. So, there may not be much sex ratio information to collect from stocked sturgeon for some time still.
- Contact information was distributed.
- Tonello commented that volitional fish passage should be the goal for the resistance weir.
- A question about liability in injury or property loss was asked. This could not be answered.
- A suggestion to add a camera/ streaming capability was offered.

Artic Grayling Update (Wesley, Zorn)

Wesley presented the draft Action Plan document and discussed the areas of focus. He asked the group to review the draft and offer comments within two weeks. There was some discussion of site selection upstream of Hodenpyle Dam. Troy discussed the stream prioritization process that the Founding Partners (i.e., MDNR, LRBOI) and long-time

grayling researchers at MTU have been drafting, and showed draft scoring criteria for habitat parameters that are typically measured on habitat surveys, particularly those done using MDNR's Status and Trends Random Site protocols. They also gave update on efforts to garner external funding for Arctic grayling work.

- TU suggested selecting streams that are optimum and also well outside of optimum, as part of an experimental approach to test assumptions about suitability of Michigan streams for grayling. (Some of this has been built in already)

Coaster brook trout rehabilitation study update (Zorn)

Troy provided an update on the coaster brook trout rehabilitation study that involves coaster-friendly fishing regulations on eight Lake Superior tributaries. Presentation highlights: the relatively low densities of brook trout in most study rivers; occasional occurrences of unusually large (coaster-sized?) brook trout caught in electrofishing surveys in control and treatment reaches; the need for non-lethal techniques for confirming migrations between tributaries and Lake Superior for sporadically captured brook trout; and documentation of adfluvial migrations of brook trout in the Pilgrim River via collaborators at Michigan Technological University.

- Questions: Do you monitor these fish/streams in the spring? When do larger fish show up? What are the movement patterns of offspring of spawning brook trout? Addressing these questions would be interesting to pursue, but is not part of the present study.

Vegetation changes, flooding, and erosion (Borgeson, Sr.)

Building on his earlier presentation, Dave showed a series of slides documenting his efforts to determine what is leading to the mass erosion in streams in the Oceana county area.

Using perched culverts as an indicator, his work suggested that forested areas promote erosion, sedimentation, and widening of stream channels in the area. Presentation included many photos of Oceana County streams used as examples.

- Question about what these streams looked like pre-logging era.
- Wesley commented on the benefit of fixing perched or undersized culverts.
- Some discussion: TU, groundwater, stream morphology, etc.
- Comment – healthy streams exhibit habitat diversity.

Adjourn