



## Lake Erie / Lake St. Clair Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee

Established by the Department of Natural Resources to improve and maintain the fishery resources of Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, and the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers through better communication and partnership.

### **Agenda MDNR Outdoor Adventure Center 1801 Atwater St, Detroit MI 48207 April 11, 2017**

**10:00-10:05 Welcome and introductions (Bob Neely, Chair and Jim Francis, DNR)**

**10:05-10:15 Review the agenda and meeting minutes from September 2016 (All)**  
A summary of the status of action items from the last meeting will be discussed

- Selfridge ice access and Belle Isle boat launch update – Selfridge had a minor fix this season, not exactly what we had asked for and Jim will work with parks this year to get a wider section of rail removed for ice anglers to access the lake more easily and safely when ice conditions at Selfridge ramp are poor. Belle Isle-public input very important and being heard. Boating access is identified in their strategic direction and that specifically mentions it's per public request. Feasibility study funded – will try to make sure group has early public input. (Some opposition – rowers) Belle Isle lighting is an issue: Milliken might be a good spot for a small launch for night fishing.

**10:15-10:45 Fisheries Research Update (Todd Wills, MDNR-Fisheries)**

- Smallmouth bass (SMB) tagging - along mile roads area have tagged 500 fish. From 2016 returns look like they may be homebodies, similar to Anchor Bay fish. Avg 16-17", up to 21" good age distribution, 5-6, up to 13.
- Smallmouth bass mortality rates (catch curve data from trap net catches) showed a declining trend from 2012-2016 (avg 35%, which is sustainable for a SMB fishery)
- Northern madtom, they have very high habitat requirements, encouraging that we are seeing so many in St Clair River.
- Nearshore electrofishing – 36 unique species, sport and forage species
- Lake St Clair creel 2016- effort down compared to past surveys in early 2000s. yellow perch highest catch and harvest, but harvest way down from 2002/4. Lots of small fish (YP), likely lots of releases. Walleye harvest also down (2015 year class probably not yet at minimum size limit)
- Working on new temperature monitoring lakewide on U.S. side. Homeowners, maybe buoys.
- SMB fishery concerns – new regulation. Young-of-Year not recruited to Lake St Clair gear. The Catch and Release regulation would not have an impact on adults yet, the decline observed by some anglers would have been correlated to something else. Joel Piatek asked why charter captains' data not incorporated into overall picture and mentioned that anglers perception of catch rate contrast with creel data. Todd and Jan will look into including this data. Charter data required, but catch and release reporting did not begin until mid-2000s.

- Dan Kimmel asked “What does data look like seasonally– fishing was great in spring, but definitely dropped off in summer”. (Canada was good)
- Small yellow perch continues to be a concern in Lake St Clair and a common complaint from anglers. Appears that big perch show up under ice/winter. Small perch (aka “Smerch”) –genetics? Telemetry? (LSC doesn’t have a good array of receivers).

**10:45-11:15 Commercial Fishing Statute re-write (Jim Dexter, MDNR-Fisheries)**

- Current statute dates back to 1929, with one update in 1970. In 1950 there were 1500 licenses - currently there are 50 licenses, with 24 active fishers. Now we don’t let new licenses in, but you could buy someone else’s.
- There are three levels of regulations:
  - Statute: firm regulations
  - Admin Rules: limited flexibility (size limits, seasons)
  - Fish/Director’s Orders: Immediate flexibility, emergencies, areas of total agreement
- Major items in the new rewrite– modernize fees (current ~\$10,000 for license fees, new would bring in \$65,000 with automatic increases without going to legislators), increase fines (current max is \$100), and add penalties.
- Restitution for poaching (comes to fish Div), net tending requirements, immediate notification of lost gear.
- Small lake trout and walleye by-catch allowance. Most commercial fishing is primarily whitefish fishery and they are declining (growth slower too).
- -100 lbs. per license per day on water. Sag Bay is different, would be 5 lbs per net. (Some guys are small with only a few nets, i.e. 5 nets, so didn’t want them to get more and have a targetable fishery. Some licenses have 100 nets.) 100 lbs is the standard fish box for commercial fishers.
- Tribes have over 250 fishers and their regulations are set under the Consent Decree

**11:15-11:45 Muskellunge Telemetry Study (Dr. Jan-Michael Hessenhauer, MDNR-Fisheries)**

- Little known about muskellunge movements and habitat
- Using existing acoustic receiver array. See web page for details on various projects Glatos. Glos.us
- They have tagged 20 fish in Detroit River, 19 in Thames River with both and internal tag and external tag. 19 of 20 fish from the Detroit River have been detected. Results preliminary, but lots of movement. One fish traveled all the way to Buffalo, NY.

**11:45-12:30 Lunch—provided by DNR**

**12:30-1:00 Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMA) (Mike Sobieski, Lake St. Clair CISMA Coordinator)**

- CISMA - Address across ecological/regional rather than political boundaries. Help leverage funding. This one focuses on Phragmites.
- Surveyed 2300 miles, 950 miles treatment.
- Phragmites is a public safety issue– visibility on roads, fire. Extremely flammable. (dead needs to be removed). Also restricts access to water.

- Phragmites can grow to 6-13" feet tall and 80% of biomass is underground. Also Allelopathic – secrete chemicals toxic to other plants. Each flower head about 2,000 seeds. Rhizomes may grow 6 feet a year and up to 60 ft in length at depth up to 6 ft.
- Focus on Control/not eradication. Requires multi-step 2-3 year process. Prevention (vehicle/gear contamination). Attempt to knock down 80% first year, 20% next, then monitor and spot treat.
- Methods: Chemical, mechanical, prescribed burning
- Foliar herbicide (terrestrial and aquatic formulas). Non-selective, will affect all plant material. Spray late summer early fall so it goes all the way down to kill roots.
- Cut/mow at least 2 weeks after herbicide. During winter avoids disrupting soil. Removal of dead stems open site to more light for natives. Pieces of root will sprout new growth – so digging is not recommended.
- MISIN app, mobile boat wash.
- Comments from others– are road commissions trained in proper techniques/application? Can a targeted "roundup" be developed? Ducks Unlimited, St. Clair marsh.

1:00-1:20

### **Lake Erie Management Unit – Regulation Proposals (Sara Thomas, MDNR-Fisheries)**

- Proposals affecting the St Clair-Detroit River System (SCDRS) that would go into effect on April 1, 2018 if implemented. These are in the public comment stage and nothing is final.
  - Expanding the yellow perch spearing season in Lake St. Clair
    - Current Regulation: Perch Spearing on Lake St. Clair open from January 1 – February 29.
    - Proposed Regulation: Yellow perch spearing on Lake St. Clair open from December 1 – March 15 (coincide with the northern pike spearing season)
  - Expanding the Catch and Immediate Release lake sturgeon fishing season in the St. Clair – Detroit River system
    - Proposed Regulation Change: new season would be July 16-March 15. No changes to possession season (Detroit River would still have no possession season).
  - Statewide Muskellunge Proposed Regulation Changes
    - Year round catch and release.
    - Statewide opener for harvest moved to first Saturday in June (this is current regulation in SCDRS).
    - Mandatory harvest registration
    - 50" MSL available for select non-broodstock waters.
- Joel commented that he and others in the Michigan Ontario Musky Club were strongly opposed to year round catch and release in Lake St. Clair. Stated that spring is a very vulnerable time for muskie and he sees floaters each spring. Others mentioned that these are likely incidentals and not targeted. Ralph echoed sentiments to protect species while they are spawning. Dan Kimmel stated that the Michigan BASS Nation organization is in favor of more year round catch and release opportunities for a multitude of species.
- People were told to have their organization write a letter regarding their opinions on the regulation changes and submit them to Lake Erie folks that would forward them to Lansing.

1:20-1:50

### **Law Enforcement Division Update (Joe Deppen, MDNR-Law Enforcement)**

- Complaints from increased number of tournaments (in and out of state anglers) – dead fish at launches. Dan Kimmel asked where these numbers are coming from, that from B.A.S.S. studies death usually 10%, not the 50% thrown around. Clinton River cutoff bad place to release fish.
- Lake St. Clair Walleye Club volunteers with tournaments, help revive fish. If they don't make it, they keep them and donate them.
- Overlimit complaints. Utilize RAP hotline. Don't keep undersized.

1:50-2:20

### **Fisheries Division Update (Jim Francis, MDNR-Fisheries)**

- Gizzard shad die offs this spring – samples sent for VHSv testing
- DTE settlement access – increased access at the Hot Ponds and Marysville
- General Fund proposed to support several more positions in Law Enforcement Division for Great Lakes enforcement
- Asian carp – lots monitoring, no detections. Grass carp telemetry study.
- MI Attorney General issued opinion that Great Lakes are public waters and therefore MDARD cannot issue permits for net pen operations.
- Cormorants-federal court suspended the Public Resource Depradation Order that allowed the lethal take of cormorants - not enough documentation of the need to control birds.
- Bass tournament info system.
- Lake Erie Creel- Record yellow perch harvest in 2016. More walleye were released than harvested (the 2014 year class had not reached legal size). There are 4 good year classes of yellow perch entering the fishery
- Decreased hunting sales, Increased gun sales – up wildlife federal aid funding; fisheries lost about \$800k. User pay system- struggling. Demographics – other types of funding needed.
- Other Topics:
  - Grayling re-introduction – in the works
  - Inland trout management plan out for public review.
  - Inland walleye management plan in works. Walleye egg take completed.
  - Steelhead egg take underway.
  - Department spends \$3 million on putting licenses out, trying to move digitally. Slowly move to digital guides. (after advertising cost to print guides is still \$250k).
- Comments: improve hunting quality/management (bring in out of staters).
- Harsen's Island – boat launch. Ralph has idea for land. (turned over as excess federal land).
- Make handouts available as pdfs – suggested by group members.

2:20-3:00

### **Committee Member Round Table (All)**

Fishing reports, organization updates or announcements, and issues

- Michigan BASS Nation – Legislative Bass tournament on Lake St. Clair in May.
- Sturgeon for Tomorrow – Free Press coverage of 2 sturgeon events, segments with Michigan Out of Doors - highlighting sturgeon in classroom program. 4 schools, as well as 2 fish they travel with for outreach (world wetlands – 3,000 kids). Bluewater Sturgeon Festival June. Mike Thomas on the board now.

- John Bacarella – Sea Grant Lake St. Clair Fisheries Workshop at shop (Sportsmen’s Direct) on this Thursday April 13.
- Sea Grant Lake Erie Fisheries Workshop will be held in Taylor on April 20.
- Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen’s Association – focus on youth, salmon in classroom. Project FISH with MSU, trying to get schools involved.
- Lake St. Clair Walleye Association- asked DNR for Fish Cleaning station on Harley Ensign, willing to donate time, money, labor. Fish fry to donate money to fix one in St. Clair. (Jim Dexter suggests they talk to Michigan Steelheaders, last successful group to get one, at Holland). Estimated cost \$60-100k. May Madness tourney. Fish Fry at Selfridge AFB. Aug 9 help with handicap event, donate use of boat time.
- Larry Desloover, LED - Walpole tribe attempting to claim treaty fishing rights in Michigan waters. Lake Erie commercial fishers - 4 licenses, 2 by one guy, 1 in escrow, 1 not as active Luna Pier. ~20 nets
- Ralph Kandt– drop non-resident fee. Bob Neely notes that the MI non-resident fishing license is actually a lot less than many other states.
- Get youth involved.

3:00-3:15

**Open discussion, summary of meeting, future meeting topics and locations (Bob Neely)**

- Next meeting mid-September. (suggestion by many to move spring meeting before April to avoid “prime fishing”)

*Optional*

**Tour of the Outdoor Adventure Center**

Lake Erie / Lake St. Clair Citizens  
Fishery Advisory Committee

MDNR Outdoor Adventure Center  
April 11, 2017

Attendees:

---

Name	Affiliation
John Bacarella	Sportsmen's Direct Inc
Stan Bydlos	MUCC District 8/Lake St. Clair Walleye Association
Gerry Comfort	Lake St Clair Walleye Association
Frank Corl	Downriver Bass Association
Jim Dexter	MDNR-Fisheries
Eric Diesing	Clinton River Watershed Council
Mike Eichbrecht	Michigan Sportsman.com
Jim Felgenauer	St Clair-Detroit River Sturgeon For Tomorrow
Jim Francis	MDNR-Fisheries
Eric Grajewski	Michigan Muskie Alliance
Ralph Kandt	Wholesale Bait Dealers
Charles Legarski	Lake St Clair Muskies Inc
Tim Muir	Lake St. Clair Walleye Association
Bob Neely	Chair
Joel Piatek	Charter Captain / Michigan-Ontario Musky Club
Dave Realt	The Bass Federation of Michigan
Gerald Sickon	Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association

Staff:

Joe Deppen	MDNR-Law Enforcement
Larry Deslover	MDNR-Law Enforcement
Jan-Michael Hessenhauer	MDNR-Fisheries
Brad Silorey	MDNR-Law Enforcement
Sara Thomas	MDNR-Fisheries
Todd Wills	MDNR-Fisheries

Guests:

Dan Kimmel	Michigan BASS Nation
Nick LeMire	Wholesale Bait Dealers
Mike Sobieski	Lake St Clair CISMA Coordinator

---