



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 Belle Isle Nature Zoo 176 Lakeside Drive, Detroit, MI 48207 September 8, 2016

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

New Staff:

Sara Thomas – MDNR, Lake Erie Unit Manager

10:05-10:20 Review the agenda and meeting minutes from April 2016 (All)

- Agenda changes – Mike Terrell from Parks will present in morning, and LED update will be moved up
- Review of Action Items
 - Terms of Reference have been updated and copy of final available. Member appointments remain by Chairman and Chief and meeting notice will be at least 4 weeks prior. No one opposed.
 - Letter to Parks and Recreation Division regarding Selfridge and Belle Isle- After being “lost” for some time, it finally resulted in a meeting with Fisheries, Parks/Waterways, and committee members (Neely, Kimmel, Felgenauer) at Selfridge on August 23. Parks said would conduct a study for Belle Isle boat launch, but no time line. We requested input into the process from the beginning stages, not at the end when it’s already planned. Bob sent a follow-up letter reiterating safe access to ice for anglers at Selfridge and boating access at Belle Isle; desire to have a speeded up timeline. Most recent response from Jordan (BAS) was that they are willing to open up some railings for ice access at Selfridge, no timeline.

10:20-11:05 Committee member round table (All)

Concern expressed around smallmouth bass fishery in Lake St. Clair.

- Joel stated numbers this year are his worst, and size of fish was down too. Other member’s observations were that catch rates were down, but size appeared improved. Joel suggested people are keeping more to eat as other sport fish populations are declining and that the year round Catch-and-Release is negatively impacting smallmouth bass/compounding other factors. Several expressed concerns over tournament mortality of SMB and indifference to dead fish by some out of state anglers. Also concern of not protecting the fish while spawning.
- Paul stated that catch-and-release survival in tournaments is generally 96% when protocols to reduce stress are followed. Emphasized cannot draw a correlation to the 90 days Catch-and-Immediate-Release (CIR) was open this year to catch decline some are observing this year. State tournaments this year caught a lot of fish, some 25 lb bags. LSC changes year to year, give it time.
- Bruce expressed concern of tournament fish being released far from capture, especially fish caught in Canadian waters. Others agreed a few for-profit, small local tournaments are not taking proper care of fish and would like to see some

requirements for this. They have proposed a tube where fish would be released to colder, deeper water.

- Jim said there will be additional data coming from the tournament reporting system and the LSC creel survey from this year that can be shared at the spring meeting. Stressed it is pre-mature to say there is a cause and effect of the CIR regulation change.
- Todd said that trap net catches of smallmouth bass have declined over past 4-5 years and seen in Ontario surveys as well. However, Ontario regulations have not changed, so something bigger happening in the lake. There has always been some pre-season fishing and did not see a noticeable increase in boat use at Harley Ensign this spring with the first year of the regulation change.
- Mary said Sea Grant periodically has funding and a potential topic could focus around various factors and impacts on smallmouth bass. Suggested fish cleaning stations needed on Detroit River as well.
- Mike Thomas, research fishery biologist at Lake St. Clair is retiring in October. Bob will send a thank you/congrats note from the committee.
- The smelt run on the St. Clair River was very late this year with lots of fish seen in May and June.

11:05-11:40 **Public Access in SE Michigan (Mike Terrell, MDNR-Parks and Recreation)**

General Update: Metro-Detroit District. 42 Boating Access Sites (BAS), most inland, some of the busiest in the state, ex. Selfridge (fills up a lot of days). BAS paid for by waterways funds (boating), so limited to that use. Most shore fishing unofficial, however, atmosphere switching so that some of busier sites may be plowed in winter (for fishing). Trend going to more fishing accessibility, maybe not in this fiscal year (acceptable) – creates parking problem. Bob asked him to keep the committee in the process as BAS are developed and/or modified with fishing in mind, if hit road block – come to us.

Belle Isle: Spent \$26 million so far, mostly infrastructure. Could spend \$100 million and still only half way (ex. heating for aquarium, conservatory). Fishing is important, but not top priority at moment.

Looking to put BAS on island, but probably 5 years out; health and safety issues have to come first.

- Stan - Boat ramp would be highly used on Isle. The current boat launches on the Detroit River do not have the capacity to handle the current need. Don't have a launch that could accommodate a big, national tournament.
- Justification for high need/priority: state's info of registered boaters in area, year round fishery (present to NRC?).
- Ralph – A boat launch could be funded with Waterways money which is dedicated to this type of project; not asking for general fund or money designated for the park.
- Jim brought up ball fields and other areas that might not be top priorities to some. Applying for grants and planning process takes time, how can we start to get traction? At the Selfridge meeting, we were told the first thing that needed to be done was a study, but currently no funding. Given that there are multiple steps, how can we move up funding of the study to get the process started?

Belle Isle can't be 1st on everything, but it is right now – right now there are \$350M in critical infrastructure projects statewide. Last year Belle Isle received \$5M in capital outlay and the remaining 101 state parks shared \$2M. Need to upgrade to get to code and/or rent some of these buildings out, heating and cooling, etc. Athletic contract was a grant. Boat ramp would be brand-new. "Everyone in Detroit has a priority for this island".

State has only been on Belle Isle for 3 yrs. Understands that an access site is needed, but it will take time. Mike currently trying to work with city to get a launch site.

- Gary suggested boat ramp should not be first priority in relation to fishing. Have the opportunity to make the island a fishing accessible hotspot, make available to families and kids. Get kids to be avid anglers, then maybe someday they will need a boat ramp.
- Bob concluded by saying need for BAS was clear to all, desire of committee input at beginning stages of planning, and working together with parks in congenial relationship.

Fish cleaning stations

Mike- If tap into city sewage cost a lot of money. Try to tie in with partners. Not just an initial commitment, lot of continuing costs. Leverage of funds necessary.

11:40-12:20

Michigan's Aquatic Invasive Species Program (Dr. Seth Herbst, MDNR-Fisheries)

Invasive species cause economic, environmental, or human health harm. Can impact food web, abundance of native species. Economic effects –decreased fisheries, property values, tourism, utilities. Ex. Sea lamprey, Zebra/Quagga mussel, Eurasian water milfoil cost \$60M/year to control.

- Ballast water introductions on down trend, now focus on Organisms in Trade (high pop centers)– pacu, red swamp crayfish (found in live food markets, but it's one of the most invasive sp. worldwide). Anglers are purchasing it for bait. Other risks are water garden plants (water lettuce, hyacinth) but Nursery industry lots of \$.
- Anglers/boaters can be a major pathway for spread. Many plants only need a small piece to reproduce. New Zealand Mud Snail (NZMS) – stick easily to waders and spread in trout streams. They outcompete native invertebrates that the trout eat, but they provide little/no nutrition. 1st detection in MI on Pere Marquette River (flies only zone) 2015. June 2016- AuSable River, then Boardman River south of Traverse City. Signs will be posted this fall. Work with angler groups to install wader washing stations. Clean, drain, dry, dispose.
- Reporting invasive species websites (www.misin.msu.edu www.mi.gov/invasives)
- Grant program \$3.6M, majority going to local partners. Prevention and early reporting is most important, cost exponentially increase after more time passes and abundance increases.
- Committee asked about the following:
 - OMNR, silver carp caught- was actually a grass carp (been in lake Erie since 1980). It's on MI prohibitive list; it is a concern, but not at level of bighead/silver concern. Similar life history, so hope to learn and could react better to big/silver if they are detected. Where are they congregating- increase capture rates.
 - eDNA sampling for silver and bighead carp - negative in MI for 2016
 - Eagle Marsh in IN- connection was closed down. (was potential pathway for Asian carp to Lake Erie)
 - Purple loosestrife seems to be exploding- has been well controlled by beetles, currently *Phragmites* is bigger concern. MI SeaGrant at one time reared the beetles, trying to get a "beetle in the classroom" program.
 - Any update on gobies?- USGS/MDNR project next year. They are very cryptic, will try various detection methods.

12:20-1:00 **Lunch—provided by DNR**

1:00-1:15 **MSU Mobile Boat Washing Program (Mary Bohling, Michigan Sea Grant)**

- Dr. Jo Latimore at MSU started program to help stop spread of invasives through recreational use when boats are moved to different waterbodies, change behaviors and raise awareness. It's a self-contained heated, mobile washing unit run by paid summer staff (2) that do the boat washing. No cost – just need space. They collect what they wash off; can show people what was in drain/on boat, which has a big impact.
- Since 2014 have had 4500 conservations, 685 boats washed, & 110 events. Volunteers 850 hrs (can be used as match) Jun-Aug 25.
- They are looking for help in coordinating locations they can come to. Contacts, events -Would like to get more local club involvement. Mary is promoting it here because it helps to have an insider rather than cold-calling tournament events.
- BASS tournaments-Have done this nationally at some bigger events, when boat comes out of water it's the first thing that happens.

1:15-1:40 **Law Enforcement Division update (Sgt. Jason Smith, MDNR-Law Enforcement)**

- Sgt Smith covers Area 2: Oakland and Genesee Co. Short handed, new class coming through this June. Provided some examples of common violations, lots of double/triple trips with limits. Requires lots of surveillance, monitoring and creativity. Plain clothes, unmarked vehicles.
- Walpole net – MI side. Surveillance early in morning and caught them on the net. 170 ft of gill net had 53 pounds of walleye, 7 pounds of yellow perch, plus more. Use the RAP line- Real time reporting was key in this bust. Seized big batch of crayfish.
- Common concern from committee that fine deterrent is not enough to stop people. Sgt. Smith-Trophy buck law might start to change that. COs in his district will go to court dates so cases don't get automatically dismissed. Committee asked- How can we find out what is going on so we can start to petition for higher fines? "Starts at county prosecutor's office. Fines are different in all counties." State has guidelines, but it's a matter of walking prosecutor's office through cases. Violent crimes top priority. Make local offices aware of support for higher fines. They often don't do restitution, if so state would get that money. Suggested that committee could take state recommended list of fines to local offices, emphasizing economic value of resource and public support. Some expressed desire to get a wildlife type trophy level fine for some fishery violations.
- Michigan Outdoor News, Cuffs and Collars section- good source for updates on CO activities throughout state.

1:40-2:30 **Lake Michigan Salmon Stocking (Jay Wesley, MDNR-Fisheries)**

- Past Chinook stocking reductions: 1980s first sign of overpredation by Chinook and BKD, 1st adjustment in 1989. Clean Water Act, Mussel impacts-reduced stocking 3 times to keep pace with the reduction in available prey.
- 2016 reductions-Adjusted proposal is 50% lakewide Chinook, 20% lake trout. Currently stock 1.8 mil Chinook, proposing 0.9 mil and 21% reduction in lake trout, increase bag limit of lake trout to 3, open year round season. These stocking numbers do not include high #s of naturally reproduced fish.

- Public meeting in Ludington on Sept 7 had 150 people. Lobbyist group formed and passing out flyers beforehand. Concerning that groups are trying to circumvent science and going straight to legislators when Managers are trying to save their fishery.
- 2011-2012 stocking review process, started with Fisheries Advisory Committee. Avoid alewife collapse and maintain diverse fishery including Chinook. Base decisions on Predator/Prey ratio and need to react quickly. So after data this year, DNRs reacted quickly as the plan was. 2014/2015 historic prey lows (USGS bottom trawling) and low numbers in acoustic surveys. 8-10 year classes of alewife spawning historically, down to 2 yrs now. Chinook salmon biomass to biomass of alewife (1:20 is good). The upper threshold is 0.1 (1 pound of Chinook/10 pounds of alewife). The predator/prey ratio was over 0.1 for 3 years on Lake Huron before the total collapse. Lake Michigan crossed the threshold in 2015.
- Public reaction - You did not include public in proposal. Your data is questionable (wild fish are not that high, prey biomass is higher), and lake trout are too high. Negative press is hurting business (headlines always skewed negative). Consumption estimates- lake trout starting to converge with Chinook, but still much lower. Central ports look at lake trout as competitor to Chinook.
- Lake trout reductions will be in stages because lake trout are in hatcheries 18 mon-2 yrs. Rehabilitation plan and implementation strategy (historic spawning reefs). Some natural reproduction in south.
- If all the Michigan hatcheries were converted to alewife – it would feed predators for 2 days! This year had a warm summer and water stratified, so lake was more productive. Zebras have leveled out and rare now, quaggas can inhabit much deeper water and are still expanding in deep water zones.

2:30-2:50

Fisheries Research Update (Todd Wills, MDNR-Fisheries)

- Original 1968 engines on the R/V Channel Cat were replaced this spring. Huge gain in speed and full efficiency. However time run over meant couldn't do all surveys. Instead did different surveys with electrofishing boats, tagged bass in mile road area to investigate movement. Know that in Anchor Bay smallmouth bass are home bodies, may move out when really heats up in summer, however not clear about mile rd. fish. Tagged 456 smallmouth bass and will look for them in surveys next year. Also did habitat assessment work, cormorant nest counts (navigational structures) and pilot acoustic musky tagging.
- Gov. Snyder and Rep. Candice Miller went out on boat for sturgeon setlines. 174 sturgeon (30% recaps). Northern madtom- species of concern but higher numbers in LSC; they are sensitive to disturbances so good indicator. 299 caught this year, night crawler bags are yummy. Marked with elastomer tags to examine recaps.
- Aug Lake Erie trawl, 3rd yr since '70s. Age 1+ older yellow perch, walleye. White perch most abundant. Yellow perch and walleye year classes appear to be strong this year; bodes well for future. Non-forage size yellow perch - Increase 2014-2016. Walleye very high 2016.
- 2015- Fall trawl, drop in shiners. Fall walleye gill net catch was down, but high numbers of yearling, so strong 2014 year class moving into fishery. Non-target species were low, 90% drop in white perch.
- Yellow perch are growing very slowly.

2:50-3:10

Fisheries Division Update (Jim Francis, MDNR-Fisheries)

- Improved access: Lots happening! Marysville fish cleaning station, pier improvement at Chrysler Beach (city funded). LSC Metropark- Black River Marsh grant for shore fishing. Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge with new boardwalk and fishing pier (225') (opportunity for shore fishing for spawning run walleye). Belle Isle- 4 areas new or improved, improved pier by bridge, access to deep water, handicap accessible kayak launch, South pier fishing deck being re-done. Algonac State Park- request \$ for boardwalk.
- Harmful Algal Blooms- limited blooms this year, generally confined to Maumee Bay. Low rainfall/surface runoff this spring.
- Pacu 3 captured in LSC, lots of media attention
- Sara Thomas new hire, Mike Thomas retirement.

3:10-3:20

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

- Future meeting at Wildlife Refuge new facility perhaps. Try to schedule early so that Chief Dexter can get it on his calendar.
- Ralph and Bill trying to set-up meeting with Rep. C. Miller about Gino's, working on maybe some fed \$.
- HAB tracker website, live info.
- Smallmouth bass revisit to earlier discussion. Some wanted to know what committee could do about regulation. Others stressed need to wait and see. DNR emphasized that biologically the regulation could not have yet had an impact on adult size fish, the recruitment effect of the CIR would take 5-8 years to show up in the fishery. Creel reports indicated anglers still catching smallmouth bass, extremely hot year, fishery will change year to year.
- 40th Anniversary St. Clair Walleye Association in July.

Next meeting – April 11, 2017

Lake Erie / Lake St. Clair Citizens
Fishery Advisory Committee

Belle Isle Nature Zoo
September 8, 2016

Attendees:

Name	Affiliation
John Bacarella	Sportsmen's Direct Inc
Mary Bohling	Michigan Sea Grant
Bob Burns	Friends of the Detroit River/Detroit Riverkeeper
Stan Bydlos	MUCC District 8/Lake St. Clair Walleye Association
Frank Corl	Downriver Bass Association
Matt Einheuser	Clinton River Watershed Council
Jim Francis	MDNR-Fisheries
Ralph Kandt	Wholesale Bait Dealers
Rick Kretzschmar	National Professional Anglers Association
Tim Muir	Lake St. Clair Walleye Association
Bob Neely	Chair
Joel Piatek	Charter Captain / Michigan-Ontario Musky Club
Paul Sacks	Michigan BASS Nation
Gerald Sickon	Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association
Henry Walters	Michigan Charter Boat Association
Gary Williams	MDNR/MSU Extension
Bruce Yinger	Downriver Bass Association

Staff:

Seth Herbst	MDNR-Fisheries
Jason Smith	MDNR-Law Enforcement
Mike Terrell	MDNR-Parks and Recreation
Sara Thomas	MDNR-Fisheries
Jay Wesley	MDNR-Fisheries
Todd Wills	MDNR-Fisheries

Guests:

Nick LeMire	Wholesale Bait Dealers
Henry Walters	Michigan Charter Boat Association
