



Lake Michigan Citizen's Fishery Advisory Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes

Location: Jay's Sporting Goods

Date: October 8th, 2025

Attendees:

Denny Grinold, Jay Wesley, Jim Bos, Tim Hossack, Bill Winowiecki, Mark Williams, Dave Peterson, Dean Jessup, John Stegmeier, George Freeman, Jim Bedford, Mike Verhamme, Dan O'Keefe, Nick Torsky, Dennis Eade, Jim Fenner, Ed Blissick, Justin Vanderlinde, Eric Braden, Ed Erdelac, Ben Turschak, Troy VanGelderen, Steve Lenart, Brian Gunderman, Mark Johnson. Via TEAMS –Darren Kramer, Gregg Mariuz, Frank Krist, Tom Andris, Bob Reider, Kevin Hughes, Mike Pajtas, Paul Jensen, Christian Lesage, Mike Ryan, Tom Couston, Seth Herbst, Patrick Hanchin, Kendra Koslauskos.

Advisor Reports:

- Smaller kings in June and July in Manistique and Fairport. Bay in Munising is loaded with coho.
- Pentwater in spring was tough. July through summer was great for Coho and king salmon. King size was smaller. Big king was 27 pounds. Fish looked healthy.
- Ludington was good in July and August for kings. Not much for Lake Trout but did not have to target them. Not as many Coho this year. Bait seemed to be good. September was a good month for weather and fishing. PM Lake has been good for Coho and Chinook.
- Leland and Glenn Arbor were good early with Lake Trout. June wind brought warm water from top to bottom. Fishery was tough for a while. There was no bait in this area except a few big alewives. North Manitou Island finally got salmon. Typically get 5-8 salmon a trip. Labor Day weekend was good.
- Grand Traverse bays were good for salmon. East bay had some 20 pound kings. Is this because of our net pens? Flows and water levels are low, so we will have to make a decision to direct plant. Ciscoes were good, big, and full of Alewife. There are some Yellow Perch around.
- PM River is full of salmon, and they were about two weeks late.
- No report from the Grand River as it was 80 degrees all summer. There was only one summer run Steelhead seen in Prairie Creek.

- MUCC celebrates 87 years. Kids Camp was near capacity with 97 kids receiving hunter safety certificates.
- Frankfort was good with lots of 15 to 18 pound kings. Fish were either empty or had a couple big alewife. Coho salmon are all upriver even though the rivers are warm. Kings started late in June and are still going well. Steelhead fishing was good all summer with most 6-8 pounds. Lake Trout was good early but down after July.
- Michigan Steelheaders Association reports great fishing for Coho and Chinook Salmon with very few Lake Trout.
- White River has a mix of fish with some spawning and some still coming in. Kings are in 10 to 15 pounds.
- Reminder about the Great Lakes Diary Program to report Steelhead catches.
- Walleye in Detroit was good. Manistee fishing was good for small kings but less Coho. Jigging for salmon was good in Manistee Lake and went for three weeks.
- Spring St. Joe and South Haven Coho fishing was average with some Kings mixed in. Whitehall was good this summer with 15 to 18 pounders. In September, the Steelhead fishery really turned on. There are still a lot of Kings still out there. There were less Coho this year in Whitehall.
- Rogers City down to Presque Isle Lake Trout started early as they follow the gobies up into 30 feet of water. Then they move offshore. In July, Chinook start and are good through September. An acoustic survey in Saginaw Bay found that many Walleye are spawning on reefs in the lake.
- Manistee and Arcadia had decent early Brown Trout fishery. July through September the Salmon fishing was excellent and lasted through September. Salmon were smaller this year and the biggest King was a 29 pound in the annual derby. There are a lot of 1 to 2 inch alewife. Could these be Bloater Chubs?
- Grand Haven was good with wild fish but there was a lot of wind.

Fish Division Budget and House and Senate Bills:

- FY 2026 Budget
 - \$21.6 M Game and Fish
 - \$12.3 M Sportfish Restoration
 - \$1.2 M General Fund
 - \$2.8 M Fish Production one-time
 - Supplementals for infrastructure and Department Dams – one-time
 - More details to come
 - Loss of 19 FTEs unfunded
- Senate Bills 276 and 277
 - Age 16 require license

- \$30 All Species; \$90 non-resident
- \$15 (24 hour); \$25 NR
- Coldwater Subaccount \$5 from each license (\$15 NR)
 - Habitat improvement, monitoring, production, and dam removal
- Consumer Price Index (removed)
- Child Base and Senior at 60% discount
- \$5 add on
 - \$2 Michigan Wildlife Education
 - \$2 Hunting and Fishing Education and Recruitment
 - \$1 Hunter Feeding Michigan
- SB 277
 - Senate Bill 277 would amend the General Sales Tax Act to earmark annually from the sales tax collected at a rate of 4% an amount equal to the amounts reported to the Department of Treasury under Senate Bill 276 (S-3) concerning qualified licenses and fees, beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2025-26. Earmarked revenue would be credited to the game and fish protection account and two subaccounts, the pheasant subaccount and the cold-water subaccount.
- HB 5093
 - Age 16 require license
 - \$28 general fishing license; \$78 Nonresident
 - \$12 (24 hour); \$17 NR
 - \$5 hatchery stamp
 - Chinook salmon, coho salmon, Atlantic Salmon, steelhead, lake trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, walleye, splake, pike, lake sturgeon, and musky
 - Unlimited rods for trolling Great Lakes
 - \$5 Youth Fishing License between ages of 12 and 16
 - Fisheries Division receives 100%
 - Senior discount from 60% to 20%
 - Fisheries Oversight Committee
 - Consumer Price Index
 - The Advisors voted and approved a draft letter to be sent to the DNR Director with copy to bill sponsor.
- Underwater Spearfishing NRC Commissioner Walter's Amendment
 - Continues harvest of Lake Trout, Northern Pike, and Waleye
 - Extends area up to Leland and includes Upper Peninsula shoreline.
 - Waters north of the Michigan/Indiana border northward to the 45th Parallel excluding all waters of Grand Traverse Bay
 - Waters from the Michigan/Wisconsin border northward to the southern edge of the mouth Ford River (45.673512, -87.143475) extending out 5 miles from shore

- Lake Michigan from Point Detour (southernly point of the Garden Peninsula) eastward from the west edge of the mouth of the Brevort River, extending out 5 miles from shore
- Going to NRC for decision on November 6th in Lansing.
 - NRC@michigan.gov
- Discussion
 - Concern about the ability to evaluate harvest
 - Concern about diver safety especially near ports and in bays that have high volume boat traffic.
 - Could this sport grow in interest creating more user conflict?
 - Piers provide access for anglers that do not have boats and this activity could limit angler use of piers.
- The Advisors voted to draft a letter to Chief Claramunt and the NRC Chair.

2024 Predator Prey Ratio:

- Ben Turschak presented updates to the Predator Prey Ratio
- Average Weight of Age-3 Female Chinook Salmon.
 - Currently over 16 pounds and has been declining since high in 2019 at 21 pounds.
- Catch Rates and Harvest from Charter Boat
 - Increasing since 2020 for both harvest and catch
- Percent Composition of Angler Harvest weight by Species
 - Chinook made up the most harvest followed by Coho. Coho was the highest on record in the time series. Lake Trout were down with a slight increase in Steelhead.
- Lake-wide Biomass of Alewife
 - Mortality on Alewife continues to increase and the biomass of Alewife has decreased for three years in a row. We are approaching predation mortality rates that were like other time periods when stocking was reduced.
 - Mortality was reduced allowing for biomass increases of Alewife during the BKD era and after stocking reductions in 2015 and 2017.
 - There are currently 6 age classes of Alewife.
- 2024 Predator Prey Ratio
 - The PPR is increasing and at 0.048 and approaching a cautionary zone as Chinook biomass increases and alewife biomass decreases.
- Discussion
 - Fall acoustic and mid-water trawl surveys found some spotted areas of Alewife young of year and some larger 7-8 inches Alewife. There seemed to be a strong Bloater Chub year class that may be some of the small prey that anglers see in stomachs. Young Bloater tend to stay high in the water column and are more available to salmon and Steelhead. Adult Bloater are more oriented to bottom areas in deep depths and less available to salmon.
 - Some advisors are nervous based on salmon size and where the PPR is.

- PPR is headed into a cautionary zone – stop the problem before it becomes a problem.
- We are seeing a lot of wild Chinook salmon
 - Up to over 8 million wild smolts
- We are also seeing smaller Coho this year at 5-8 pounds.
- General consensus of advisors is to start process for reduction in stocking.

Reef Assessment Project in Lake Michigan

- Patrich Hanchin provided an overview of Lake Michigan Reef Evaluation and Prioritization.
- The report provided to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is available.
- Reefs are important spawning areas for Lake Trout, Lake Whitefish, and Cisco.
- Goals: advance understanding of condition of reefs (i.e. physical characteristics, aquatic communities, and characteristics that contribute to native fish production) and recommend management actions to enhance reefs.
- Assessed 27 reefs in north shore, Grand Traverse area, and two in the south.
- Detailed maps were produced with Lidar and multibeam technology.
- Reef size ranges from 100 acres to 4,000 acres and average 6 meters in depth.
- Evaluated invasive mussel density, shell hash, and algae growth as well as use by gobies and crayfish.
- Spawning assessments used egg mats to look at Lake Trout, Lake Whitefish, and Cisco egg deposition.
- Good Harbor acoustic telemetry located spawning concentrations near ridges within the reef.
- These data will be further evaluated to look at relationships between reef characteristics and egg deposition.
- Management Recommendations: Protection, Restoration (sediment control, sediment removal, or mussel removal), Habitat Enhancement by adding rock.
- Each reef has a summary page within the report.

Coho Salmon Mass Marking:

- Coho salmon mass marking begins with fall fingerlings stocked in 2025 and spring yearlings stocked in 2026.
- Objectives: estimate wild recruitment, contribution of stocked fish to each jurisdictional fishery, compare relative survival across stocking sites, movement/straying, and differential survival between fall fingerlings and yearlings.
- Lake Huron will have two tag lots for north and south.
- Lake Michigan has multiple tag lots with a concentration on Platte River (test downstream vs upstream) and north, central, and southern stocking sites.
- Plan for other states is 500,000 coho in WI, 300,000 in IN, and 150 in IN.

Cormorant Update:

- Under a permit system that provides colony depredation at 7 sites with approval to take 9,445 adults and 2,767 nests.
- \$150,000 from DNR and \$114,000 from GLRI to work with USDA-Wildlife Services to conduct depredation activities.
- Looking at adding Dornbos Island in Grand Haven that is privately owned.
- Added capacity for lethal reinforcement of hazing at 22 stocking sites and 4 inland lakes, which is DNR staffed and funded.
- Nest counts are stable at most sites with an increase in Bays De Noc and Ludington.
- Looking into laser system at Ludington. The laser costs \$15,000.
- The program continues to be under funded.

Lake Michigan Management Plan:

- Current plan completed in 2018 and was more high level with goals and objectives that followed the Fisheries Division Strategic Plan with tactics and outcomes specific to Lake Michigan. It involved angler surveys and focus groups.
- New plan will follow Lake Superior Plan with goals, objectives, management actions and evaluations for manage species.
 - Will include an angler survey sometime in 2026
 - Plan will focus on co-management of the lake and incorporate salmonine stocking strategy and lake trout implementation strategy.
 - Species focus: Chinook, Coho, Steelhead, Lake Trout, Brown Trout, Lake Whitefish, Cisco, Smallmouth Bass, Walleye, Yellow Perch, Northern Pike, Muskellunge, and Lake Sturgeon.

DNR Updates:

- Law Enforcement
 - Boats are finally done after work being done in Cleveland.
 - There should be full staff in a couple weeks.
 - There should be no lay offs and might be difficult to hire until 2027.
- The Little Manistee River weir egg take is complete for Michigan with other state needs done this week. Grates are open.
- Platte weir should start in a week or so with good adult numbers.
- Boardman weir showing good numbers of Chinook with average Coho.
- Dornbos Island (Grand Haven): trying to communicate with landowner with no response so far.
- Low water levels and warm water temperatures have slowed salmon runs on southern rivers.
- Tribal Co-Management Citizen's Advisory Committee meeting was last week with harvest updates.
- Charlevoix is working with other partners to use benthic mats to reduce mussel density on reefs.

- The R.V. Steelhead II should be done by spring 2026. The old vessel will be sold on the state auction site.
- MSU is conducting a statewide angler survey to evaluate angler use and behaviors. It will be coming through email, so be aware that it is not SPAM.

Next Meeting:

- April 8th, 2026 – Location TBD.

Adjourned at 2:35 PM

Contact Jay Wesley if you would like copies of the presentations or need more information on any of the agenda topics.

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