

Lake Michigan Committee

Cleary International Center
Windsor, ON
March 23, 2006

Executive Summary

Attendance: Jim Dexter (MDNR) Chair, Brian Breidert (IN DNR), Chuck Bronte (USFWS), Gavin Christie (GLFC), John Dettmers (GLFC) Denny Grinnold (MI advisor), Tom Gorenflo (CORA), Bill Horns (WDNR), Todd Pollesh (WI advisor), Mike Ryan (IN Advisor), Stuart Shipman (IN DNR), Tom Trudeau (IL DNR), Ralph Wilcox (MI advisor).

1. Legislative

The GLFC will provide the House and Senate bill numbers of NAISA and WRDA to the LMC and advisors for letter writing purposes. The GLFC will distribute a fact sheet for the advisors at the Upper Lakes Advisors lunch.

2. Sea Lamprey Status and Control Efforts

Gavin Christie provided an update to the LMC, mentioning that spawner numbers are reduced, but wounding rates have not declined in step with spawner abundance. Christie pointed out that the GLFC has again increased funding for control in 2006 and that the Cedar River barrier will be completed. Tom Gorenflo asked whether the reduced spawner numbers lake wide resulted from reductions only at Manistique or at other sites as well. Christie responded that spawner numbers also were down at other sites, but the Manistique does have a strong influence on the model results. Christie is comfortable and confident in the model numbers despite this. Dexter wondered whether it made sense to rebuild the electric barrier on the Jordan River or to put the investment into other treatment options. Christie thought that it was unlikely that rebuild would occur, but the agents are considering other alternative barriers. Bill Horns expressed the opinion that marking rates are a better description of what's going on than spawner abundance. Dexter wondered whether the incongruity between spawners and wounding occurred before. Christie replied that the correlation between these variables is 0.4 -0.5. Horns said that the LMC is concerned about lamprey numbers. Chuck Bronte pointed out that the incongruity between high wounding rates in the face of declining spawner abundance may be partly due to the number of adult lampreys in search of a limited number of available large lake trout prey, especially in the north where he thinks the number of prey is going down. Ralph Wilcox mentioned that GLFC needs to get wounding under control on other species, too, including chubs. Denny Grinnold mentioned that he had never seen more big lampreys attached to fish that he caught in 2005, and he was not getting many lake trout. Mike Ryan also has seen lamprey wounds on big perch. The LMC responded to Gavin's questions regarding sea lamprey control.

1. Does the Lake Michigan Committee concur with our interpretation of the status of sea lamprey populations and marking rates? *LMC provided a mixed review of consensus.*
2. Does the Lake Michigan Committee agree with the proposed control plans for the lake during 2006? *LMC supported 2006 control plans*
3. Does the Lake Michigan Committee have concerns about the status of sea lampreys and the progress toward targets? *LMC expressed continued concern and provided strong encouragement for continued progress towards meeting targets.*

3. Coho Salmon Stocking In Michigan

Dexter reported that, due to budget reductions, Michigan will stock a minimum number of yearlings starting in 2007. That will be 625,000 in the Platte River, and that this same number is planned for stocking in 2008. Michigan is still facing big budget problems. Michigan will be in serious budget difficulty by 2008 unless a new funding stream is identified. Michigan encourages other agencies to see what they can do increase their coho stocking numbers in response to this cut in stocking form Michigan.

4. Environmental Objectives

Comments on the draft Environmental Objectives for Lake Michigan were returned to Ed Rutherford. This is an important component to fish management, on par with the FCOs. Dexter added that once a final form of the Environmental Objectives is received members will need to present them to their agencies/constituents for review. LMC acceptance will occur after that.

5. Lake Trout Rehabilitation

LMC has had the draft report from the Lake Trout Task Group (LTTG) since mid May 2005. LMC members will provide comments to Dexter by June 1. Dexter will incorporate members' comments and return to LTTG. The LMC also needs to develop the implementation plan. Dexter would like to roll out the completed plans to the publics and implement in time for stocking next year. Horns said that there is no consensus about what the rehabilitation plan will look like. Horns thinks that the LMC needs to get into it in a serious way. Horns also wondered whether there would be two documents. Dexter saw the implementation plan as a much smaller document with a basic statement about how many strains will be used, where they will be stocked, and how many fish will be stocked.

6. Advisors' Issues

The advisors were quite concerned about Michigan plans to cut the number of coho stocked. They wondered whether other states were likely to pick up the slack. Illinois will not raise more coho. Wisconsin has no extra capacity until Wild Rose comes back on line in 2008. The Indiana hatchery also is down. The advisors then wondered whether it made sense to consider temporary 5-3-2 regulations to spread fish around. It seemed too late to gain much advantage of such a change. Other options were discussed, including the idea of stocking fry or early fingerlings and the possibility of funneling funds to MDNR to raise coho.