

Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum

April 2, 2020 Virtual meeting

Recording of meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWHxaPdIOTw>

NOTES

Kelly Robinson – Assistant Professor Quantitative Fisheries Center at Michigan State University
(kfrobins@msu.edu)

- Michigan Sea Grant funded project
- Salmonine stocking model
 - Current model uses populations of Chinook salmon and Alewife, but would like to add other species of trout and salmon.
 - Include stakeholder input on what the preferred mix of species should be.
 - Use models to look into the future
- Structured decision making (SDM)
 - What is a decision? How are they made?
 - How to balance conflicting viewpoints
 - SDM can help improve decision-making with stakeholder input.
 - Work through complex decision through structured steps
 - ProACT decision making model <https://www.project-management-skills.com/decision-making-model.html>
 - **Problem**
 - **Objective**
 - **Alternatives**
 - **Consequences**
 - **Tradeoffs**
- Using SDM for salmonine management in Lake Michigan
 - Objective 1 (Problem objectives, alternatives)
 - Stakeholder workshop
 - Objective 2 (Consequences) -> data gathering
 - Brian Roth MSU -> diet study to inform new fish consumption
 - Include and update models with new data
 - Include the movement of fish between Lake Michigan and Huron
 - Assessment models
 - Objective 3 (Consequences)
 - Updated model runs
 - Guide from stakeholder workshops
 - Predator Prey Model runs
 - Forecast -> look at difference options and scenarios
 - Lake Trout models
 - Early model run

- Newer models show higher lake trout numbers in recent years, but consumption has shifted from 100% alewife to less alewife and more round goby in diet.
 - So Even with higher lake trout biomass, consumption of alewife not increasing.
- Objective 4 (Consequences and Trade-offs)
 - Second stakeholder workshop
 - Help aid the Lake Michigan Committee using models and stakeholder input.
- Timeline 1st workshop in late summer/early fall.
- Questions
 - Will prey survey data be included (USGS)? Yes
 - All of Lake Michigan? Yes
 - All Lake Michigan states involved? Yes. Sea Grant involved in all states.
 - How will the potential reduced harvest in 2020 due to COVID-19 influence things? Time will tell.
- Wisconsin anglers can participate in the MSU diet study.
 - <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/collaborative-study-seeks-to-find-out-how-great-lakes-invaders-are-influencing-fish-diets-msg19-okeefe19>

Brad Eggold – WI DNR - Charter Boat Program update

- Electronic reporting
 - Investigating electronic reporting for charter boats and guides.
 - Especially interested in guided winter Green Bay whitefish fishery
 - Likely need a change in the administrative code to require guide reporting, so that will take some time.
- Charter boat education day
 - DNR staff and politicians the target audience to learn more about the fishery
 - On the water and about how the industry runs
 - Wisconsin Lakeshore Business Association (WLBA) is the lead for this part of the program
 - Q – will only WLBA be involved? Other charter companies and captains might be interested, but may not be WLBA members or agree with WLBA.
- Charter Boat Ridealongs for WDNR
 - DNR staff on charter boats
 - 1 boat ride per county per month in 2020 in June, July and August
 - WLBA is organizing the charter boat captain participants. DNR using a google calendar to help match DNR staff availability with charter boats that meet safety inspections
 - June 2020 is proposed start date, although COVID-19 is making all plans fluid
 - DNR biologists may be able to collect additional information while on the water
- Alewife survey
 - Look at alewife age frequency in two ports
 - Surveys would be May-June, likely from Kewaunee and Kenosha. Spawning aggregations will make it feasible to collect enough fish.
 - 10 fish per 20 mm size group from 80-200 mm alewife.

- Question, only these ports?
 - Might be able to be flexible.

Scott Hansen – WI DNR – Lake Whitefish population model update

- New version of the lake whitefish population model. In the past it was treated as a single stock, but now Green Bay has been separated from Lake Michigan
- Many types of data are used in the model. The GB and LM models have different types of data used because the LM has a longer data set and GB has an increasing importance of winter recreational harvest.
- Green Bay model
 - Biomass has been increasing since the start of the model (2007). The current estimate is 37 million pounds of spawning stock biomass
 - GB harvest has been between 800-900 thousand pounds since 2007. There has been an increasing harvest in the recreational harvest, stable trap net commercial harvest, and a decline in gill net commercial harvest.
 - The changing ecology of the bay and lake (quagga mussels) have changed the ability of gill nets to fish efficiently (water clarity is higher and fouling from mussels/Cladophora).
- Lake Michigan model
 - Longer term model because longer data history
 - Biomass peaked in the early 2000s. Declined since then but has been trending up in the last few years.
 - Effort up and down in recent years. Higher in 2000 (peak biomass), decline in effort.
 - Trap net is stable, recreational up, and gill net down.
 - Average age of lake whitefish has increased since the mid-90s.
 - From 5 years (large year classes = many young fish) to 15 years old. In the 1990s when average age was low there also weren't many age classes present.
 - Growth has slowed too. Linked to changes in the food web.
 - Food quality has declined, from Diporeia (native benthic invert and high energy food) to lower quality food (quagga mussels and other inverts).
 - Size at age has declined since 2000 as well.
- Quota
 - New quota will be separate for Green Bay and Lake Michigan.
 - 35% exploitation of the most vulnerable age class
 - Green Bay 1,177,889 pounds commercial
 - Green Bay 1,177,889 pounds recreational
 - Lake Michigan 605,499 pounds commercial
 - Green Bay is 50/50 split, similar to yellow perch allocation.
 - Current commercial quota is 2.88 million pounds. New quota would be 2.96 million
 - How will commercial quota be allocated? Working on it.
- Question about the increase and then decrease in population. Current population still higher than in the 90s. Probably many reasons.

Attendees

TS Titus Seilheimer (Host, me)

SH Scott Hansen

AS Aaron Schiller

BW Bob Wincek - President WFGLSFC

B Brad

CM C. Masterson

C cbronte

CS Chris Strege

D Dan

D ddembkow

ID Isermann, Dan

J jericj

JF Jerry fetterer

JB Jim Berzowski

JH Jim H

J jjanssen

KR Kelly Robinson

KN Kevin Naze

LS Laura Schmidt

L Lee

M markh

M meront

MD Mike Donofrio

NL Nick Legler

PI psmith's iPhone

R RFJONES

RK Russ Kleinert

SR Steven Roach

TP Tammie Paoli

TN Tom Nowak