

Lake Trout Commercial Harvest Stakeholder Group Meeting #4
May 16, 2023

- 6:00 pm Welcome, Roll call of Lake Trout Stakeholder Group
- 6:05 Brief summary from April 16 – Lake trout models and TAC – Brad Eggold
- 6:10 Scope Statement Review – Brad Eggold
- 6:15 Fish Tank Items – Justine Hasz
- 1) Consumption advisories for Lake Trout
 - 2) Lake trout size, bag limits and commercial size regulations in Lake Superior
 - 3) Michigan Tribal harvest numbers
 - 4) Lake Trout latent mortality studies references
 - 5) Economics of the Lake Michigan Fishery
 - 6) Cost to administer the commercial fishery
 - 7) Maps of current commercial fishing areas / restrictions / seasons
- 6:25 Public Comment Process – Justine Hasz
- 6:30 Questions / Discussion on a Lake Trout scope statement - All
- 7:00 Break (if needed)
- 7:10 Listening Session – Provide Input / Comments on Lake Trout Scope Statement - All
- 7:55 Wrap up
- 8:00 Adjourn

In person stakeholder group members

Arnie Arredondo
Titus Seilheimer
Jamie LeClair
Jerry Fetterer
Charlie Henriksen
Bob Wincek
Todd Stuth
Dale Maas
Lee Haasch
Dennis Hickey

Online stakeholder group members

Sharon Moen
John Anderson

Additional Zoom Participants

Andre Jacque
Angelo Trentadue
Bill Smith
Brandon Wambach
Charles Bronte
Craig Bender
Dan Pawlitzke
Dan Welsch
Eugene Altwies
Frank Krist
Gregg Peters
Jason Meacham
John Janssen
Meredith Penthorn
Nate Cook
Nick Legler
Paul Smith
Rich Mathews
Richard Jones
Scott Gutschow
Scott Hansen
Tom Burzynski
Tom Couston
John Janssen
Luke Stoyer

Recordings are online for the first three meetings

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Fishing/lakemichigan/LakeMichiganLakeTroutManagement>

Public comment period from May 16-31. Submit comments one of two ways:

1. DNRLakeMichiganPlan@Wisconsin.gov (Preferred)
2. Mail to:
Bradley Eggold
WDNR
600 E Greenfield Ave
Milwaukee WI 53204

Questions/Comments

Jamie LeClair – Currently purchase and sell about 68,000 lbs. of lake trout annually (about 11,400 fish at an average of 6 lbs.). Would like to be able to purchase more since the consumers deserve to have fresh trout in addition to whitefish.

Bob Wincek – Jamie’s document shows that 12.5% of sport fishing license holders fish for trout in WI. However, there is no way to determine the percent of sport fishing licenses that might fish for trout in WI without digging into creel survey data.

Dale Maas – Not every Great Lakes stamp holder will fish for lake trout, but they have the opportunity to do so.

Charlie Henriksen – Jamie’s document shows there are over 150,000 stamp holders, but they only harvest 30,000 lake trout.

Titus Seilheimer – How is commercial bycatch accounted for in the 30% mortality in the TAC?

- Brad Eggold – It is accounted for in the model based on data from a study done in the late 1990s.

Bob Wincek – There is a headline in the Great Lakes Sport Fishing Council’s Basin Report that states “Court Dates in Tribal Fishing Decree Could Determine Fate of Great Lakes Fishers.” They could fish just east of the Mid-Lake Refuge.

Jerry Fetterer – The Consent Decree grids are online. There are 10 or 11 areas in MM5 where Tribal harvest is not allowed.

Unknown audience member – I’m impressed with the numbers that DNR presents, and they know the background of where the number comes from. Jamie’s sources are not cited in her handout. My charter clients are happy with catching lake trout. Where did the “3% of the population can afford to fish for trout” come from?

- Jamie LeClair – I calculated the number of people of the WI population that are fishing license holders. Since I’ve been a little girl, customers in our store have requested trout.

Dan Welsch 6:41 PM

Our state and our communities need all trout and salmon to maintain and support the multi billion dollar fishing industry here in Wisconsin. We can't afford to lose any lake trout and by-catch in commercial kill nets!

Nate Cook 6:49 PM

I feel like a small increase in stamp fee would be welcomed by fishermen in exchange for an increase in stocking numbers. It's hard to imagine a small increase in stamp fee being a "deal breaker" (i.e.- "I won't pay for a license/stamp anymore...") for anyone who is currently fishing lake Michigan if it meant an increase in stocking using that increase in funds.

Rich Mathews 7:01 PM

Arnie was 100% correct when he said you're just arguing semantics. At the end of the day, recreational anglers contribute far more to this fishery than any commercial entity ever will. Throw in the amount of revenue generated by the anglers contribute to the industry as a whole (i.e. 10% excise on ALL tackle and gear), and it's exponentially greater. This push for commercial harvest can destroy all that.

Tom Couston 7:02 PM

if you really want or especially need something, you'll find the money IMO

Charlie Henriksen – The last comment hit a nerve. A fairly small harvest by commercial fishers would not ruin the sport fishery. It bothers me that someone would suggest otherwise. There is no evidence that our fishing is detrimental. The fearmongering is crazy.

Bob Wincek – I agree with Charlie except the State of WI has made the rule process convoluted. It takes two years to make a sport fishing regulation change. If something happens and we need a regulation change, we wouldn't be able to address it immediately. We should not shut down the sport fishery like Lake Superior does.

- Charlie Henriksen – In the latest whitefish rule, we adjust the quota internally based on DNR models outside of the rule making process. We could make changes in a shorter amount of time using the emergency rule process if something catastrophic happens.

Lee Haasch – Lake Superior lake trout management is interesting in that it is regulated as a bycatch fishery. All sportsmen should be concerned about wasting the resource. If we are talking about fish in a net that have to be released, if they have higher mortality in the summer it makes sense to require those fishers to harvest the lake trout. This is an opportunity to allow someone to eat the fish that would otherwise die and be wasted. Maybe it would have been better wording in Jamie's document to say that only 3% of the population chooses to fish for trout rather than saying they can't afford it. I think we should be focused on the bycatch opportunity.

Dale Maas – Do we know the dynamics of catch and release on Lake Michigan? Lake Superior is a lot deeper and colder – could fish on Lake Michigan be successfully released?

- Titus Seilheimer – Shawn Sitar's paper on recreational release looked at Lake Superior and Lake Huron. Lake Huron is about 75% mortality, which could be similar to Lake Michigan.

Bob Wincek – The predominant commercial catch has been in trap nets because the trap nets have low mortality. Gill nets kill fish and are made with material that is almost impossible for fish to see. Other salmonids might be susceptible to those gill nets.

Rich Mathews 7:05 PM

No evidence? Check the trout fishery in the 50s, 60s, and 70s, and how that was, then get back to us.

Tom Couston to Everyone 7:07 PM

how many pounds of lakers are the commercials looking for?

Scott Gutschow to Everyone 7:10 PM

Commercial Fisherman are currently using emergency rule to open a lake trout gill net fishery... and now Charlie mentions that they are working to change quota using another process???? Soooo open lake trout to gill netting (not bi catch) and then adjust quota in future years???

Sharon Moen to Everyone 7:12 PM

I also 100% agree with the fellow who talked about not wasting resources. It is tragic to waste food at a point in time where food systems are breaking down.

Scott Gutschow to Everyone 7:13 PM

Lake Superior is the only lake that is considered recovered and they have a small bi-catch fishery only! Yet door county commercial fisherman are asking to gill net lake trout as a quota fishery. The data shared in meeting 2 and 3 do not support the ask by commercial fisherman at this time...

Sharon Moen 7:09 PM

I fish recreationally and have paid for and enjoyed charter fishing experiences BUT I support Jamie's idea that many people cannot afford the luxury (time, physical ability, equipment and money) required for catching their own Lake Michigan fish. Is Lake Michigan a playground for the wealthy, a source of local food for people in the region, or can it be both?

Nate Cook 7:13 PM

Anyone can "play" on lake Michigan. It only costs \$10 to catch fish for a year if someone would like to catch fish. I don't understand what you're asking? Last time I checked the price of fish in the grocery store wasn't exactly "cheap".

Lee Haasch – Based on commercial monitoring, the Lake Superior catch-per-unit-effort is calculated annually.

- Brad Eggold – On Lake Superior, they run a lake trout model and TAC similar to this process. Every three years they go for a rule change to adjust the quota and then divide it among sport, Tribal, and state fishers. The numbers are tracked through creel surveys and charter and guide reports, and at times the recreational fishery has had to close during the season.
- Charlie Henriksen – What is the split on Lake Superior on Tribes vs. state?

- Brad Eggold – It is complicated due to the different management zones. We will get back to you with the allocation. **For Lake Superior in both zones combined the State Share is approximately 42% with the State commercial fishers at 14% of the total and State Sport anglers at 28% of the total. This does not include assessment allocation**

Jerry Fetterer – What is the price per pound for lake trout?

- Charlie Henriksen – A whitefish customer said they pay \$2.50/lb.
- Todd Stuth – Dressed lake trout could be sold for \$8-14/lb. depending on how it is processed.

Angelo Trentadue 7:14 PM

If we were to move forward and go to a scope statement, what is the cost estimate of a scope statement. It has been mentioned in the past it takes 100 DNR man hours for a scope statement. Where will the funds come from to do this scope statement. Are there 2 scope statements the commercial fishermen are working on

Nate Cook 7:16 PM

In this proposal is it required that commercial fishermen replenish/replace the fish they take through funding the increase of stocking of lake trout to match or even supercede their harvest numbers?

Bob Wincek – I have the Paul Smith article that states in 2023 WI sport fishing generated 13.1 million dollars in income back to the State of WI. Lake Michigan is still in a state of flux with invasives. How fast can something be turned off if there is something catastrophic that happens with the lake trout fishery?

- Jamie LeClair – When the chubs and smelt fisheries dropped, we stopped fishing for them.

Dale Maas – There have been a lot of comments about the commercial fishery. I value Charlie's comments. I would like to hear a summary of what the Commercial Fishing Board really wants – just trap nets, or is it gill nets too? What is the wish list of what the commercial fishery would look like? How quickly could the fishery be shut down if the quota is hit? What do you do with older, 30 lb. fish that are on the do not eat list?

- Charlie Henriksen – What we want is a commercial lake trout quota that we can take fish in our regular fishing of primarily whitefish. There is almost no chub fishing going on, but there is some, so there could be lake trout harvested in that fishery also. We originally requested 40,000 because we thought the safe harvest number was 82,000 and thought 40,000 was a reasonable number. If the new safe harvest number is 49,000 and the sport harvest has consistently been 29,000 then there is 20,000 left. If we were told we could take 10,000 we would say thank you.
- Todd Stuth – The data we would gain on the fishery as a whole would enhance the models moving forward. If 10,000 fish is the quota, that's the quota. Incidental and bycatch fishery is what we've discussed, however, we've been told that the fishery can't specifically be labeled as such. Most of the whitefish gill net fishery does not overlap with lake trout. I don't think you'll see any increase in effort with what we are using today if there is a 10,000 fish lake trout quota. Our reports are submitted daily by midnight, so the fishery could be shut down on short notice. From a marketability standpoint, 25-30 inches is the majority of what we catch.

Scott Haberman – How can you even think of giving additional quota to 12 or 48 people who are already getting so much? If they harvest the fish, it is coming out of the sport fishery. They will come back for more and more.

Bob Wincek – Brad presented the dollar amount DNR spends to administer the commercial fishery. Sport fishers should correct that.

- Jean Romback-Bartels – the numbers presented only represent Fisheries, not law enforcement.

Why was a bill being pushed through in the Legislature before this process finished playing out?

- Charlie Henriksen – The Wisconsin Commercial Fisheries Association is different from the Lake Michigan Commercial Fishing Board. The LMCFB has recommended the scope statement since 2016. There is a frustration that it hasn't happened yet. A state representative offered to write a bill. Commercial fishers in the Commercial Fisheries Association worked with them to write the bill. The Legislature thinks the DNR is dragging their feet on this issue. The science is murky. I told the Legislators that if they asked 1,000 of their constituents if the commercial fishers should be able to harvest lake trout from Lake Michigan, 950 of them would either be surprised that they can't already or would be in favor of it. There is a sense of entitlement from the sport fishery. People have asked for years and years to give the DNR more money, and the Legislature has refused. Deer hunting is driving the Segregated funds, not the sport fishery.

Nate Cook 7:36 PM

While we're discussing commercial fishing using nets can we PLEASE get something passed to increase the safety of users of Green Bay and Lake Michigan. Commercial nets are a safety hazard and need to be illuminated at night during sundown hours. If construction barrels on the highway can have flashing yellow lights on them to increase visibility, so can net flags on the water.

Tom Couston 7:38 PM

It sounds like the commercial request for lake trout on Lake Michigan is strictly by-catch while netting for whitefish. Am I correct in my thinking?

Dan Pawlitzke 7:38 PM

How does the DNR analyze PCB contamination? Use the entire fish or only the fish without skin and belly fat?

Tom Couston 7:40 PM

I guess I meant incidental catch?

Sharon Moen 7:41 PM

I was in the throws of responding to a direct message when my internet crapped out. Sorry. The question was circling the idea of who can't afford to fish. I would suggest that inner city kiddos, people with certain disabilities, people who have limited gateways into the idea of recreational fishing, Wisconsinites who visit the shores of Lake Michigan with complicating situations, etc. It was weird for me to be visiting a tilapia farm on the shores of Lake Michigan and thinking it was easier/cheaper to

have a tilapia dinner than a meal of fish from Lake Michigan. Yes, price per pound is up there for fish. I agree with that.

Rich Mathews 7:48 PM

Recreational fishing generates FAR more than just license revenue. 10% excise tax on ALL fishing tackle and gear sold. Sales tax on all of that same gear. Sales tax on fuel. Sales tax on hotel stays. The list goes on.

Dale Maas – Legislative action trumps DNR listening sessions. The legislators can push something through regardless, and the end product may not be favorable. In good faith, it would have been nice to know that there was legislation in the works ahead of time.

Jerry Fetterer – It is hard to discuss things when you don't know the how, what, when, and why. We went from 40,000 fish down to 10,000 fish, and I still don't know exactly what the fishery would look like.

- Titus Seilheimer – Those details will come out through the scope statement.
- Arnie Arredondo – What point do we find out what the fishery would look like and how it would affect the recreational fishery?
- Brad Eggold – Through the scope statement, we develop the TAC for lake trout, and might need to consider regulation changes on either the sport or commercial side to stay under that number.
- Justine Hasz – If the scope statement moves forward, that gives us permission to have the conversation to answer these questions.
- Lee Haasch – Does that mean we get together again and talk about it at that time?
- Charlie Henriksen – We have never asked for anything that would impact the sport fishery. When we asked for 40,000 fish, that was when the safe harvest was 82,000. We've had a conversation with the lobbyist for the WI Lakeshore Business Association. We've been respectful of the sport fishers.

Tom Couston 8:00 PM

I don't think there will be progress until some specific numbers of commercial take of lakers are discussed

Rich Mathews 8:04 PM

So did I hear that correct? They can't afford with their licensing to cover the cost of additional enforcement? Is that another thing that will be covered by sport fishermen?

Paul Smith 8:08 PM

It's not clear to those of us on Zoom how stakeholder group members are voting on the question of a scope statement. Could you please summarize or list the vote totals for stakeholder group members?

Note: This was not a vote but a gauge of everyone's comfort level with the topic after hearing the information presented in the 4 meetings as it pertains to a potential scope statement for a commercial fishery for Lake Trout in Lake Michigan.