

Whitefish Stakeholder Engagement Zoom Meeting  
August 18, 2020

- 600 - Welcome - Eggold
- 605 - Administrative items – Zoom, protocol for meeting, etc. - Eggold
- 610 - Intro comments – Eggold
- 615 - Framework and timeline for the process – Eggold
- 620 - Whitefish Movement – Iserman
- 630 - Whitefish modelling results – Hansen
- 650 - Whitefish Comp study information – Seilheimer
- 705 - Questions / Comments - All
- 735 – Group discussion on future meetings – topic, frequency, type, location
- 750 – Wrap up

Presentations by Isermann, Hansen, and Seilheimer were recorded. See webpage for the presentations.  
<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Fishing/lakemichigan/LakeMichiganCommercialWhitefish.html>

Notes from Question/Comment session [Responses in brackets.]

- Keith – recovered \$100 reward tag whitefish in March 2020. It was recaptured at the exact same length as when it was tagged in 2017.
  - [Slow growth – potentially productivity issues associated with quagga mussels and Diporeia, or potentially density issues with whitefish in the Bay]
  - [Charlie – turned in 60-70 tags, plus have 20 more from this year. Tagged fish are weighed and measured. Most tagged fish looked to be in good shape. Maybe the telemetry tags are harder for the fish to haul around, which could limit growth?]
- Jerry – 2.9 million pounds yearly?
  - [Yes]Is that an increase from this year?
  - [That is a safe harvest number based on inputs to the model. That number is not the quota, we still need to determine that number.]Who is able to harvest the additional fish in the southern part of the Bay? In other words, can the Lake Michigan commercial fishers go into the southern Bay?
  - [Fishers are required to have quota in a particular zone. They can buy, sell, or transfer quota.]Is there a market for an increased number of fish?
  - [Charlie – big demand for local, fresh seafood, so yes, there is a market for the fish. The markets tighten up in Spring, but June-Sept are good. We could sell 3x what we are selling now.]
- Charlie – Commercial fishers might help thin the GB population and help with the density issue by catching additional fish out of the lower Bay. The current Bay quota is 362,000, but the new harvestable surplus number is much higher – potentially 3x higher than the current quota. A slightly higher quota next year could help inform the UWGB/Sea Grant bycatch study.
- Scott – is there variation in terms of market price, and is it related to fish size, condition, etc.? Should the model incorporate fish condition as a factor?

- [Charlie – Market price is mainly set by supply and demand. Some holidays are also huge drivers – namely Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah – because whitefish are easily prepared Kosher. Some of the fishers are also fish processors. In July we are catching 8-9,000 pounds/week. About 7,000 pounds of that stays in WI. We will not recover from the Russian embargo of about 6 years ago.]
- [Brad – It wouldn't fit this model to incorporate fish condition or marketability as an input, but it could be looked at separately.]
- David – When a quota is set, by NR rule that quota is split 50/50 between sport and commercial.
  - [Historically with commercial species like yellow perch, the split has been in the general ballpark of 60/40, 50/50, 40/60. The model generates a safe harvest number, then we need to look at social factors and other factors to determine the quota.]
- George – We have good bycatch data from trap nets, but limited data from gill nets. What is it going to take to get good gill netting data, and what the impact might be on walleye?
  - [Titus – Taylor should be able to get better data next spring. April and May 2021 are key.]
  - [Brad – Taylor is working with Todd to monitor gill nets.]

There could be a tripling of commercial effort in the lower Bay. Is there any way to predict what that would mean on the water, i.e. where will those nets be, and what will be the impact to sport anglers regarding conflict over fishing grounds?

- [Brad – we could look at grids or lat/long of where trap nets have been the past several years. Where are the hot spots currently, and is that pattern likely to stay the same or change?]
- [Charlie – Used properly at the right time of the year, gill nets can be very productive. Gill net effort has been dropping in recent years, but the world class walleye fishery has co-existed with gill nets fished in the Bay. Gill netters want to avoid walleye. I don't know that we will see triple the effort since the CPE has been increasing. We are licensed for 36 trap nets, but this year we have caught the majority of our fish with 5 nets. We never see a sportfishing boat near us.]

We want to make sure there are safeguards in place to protect sport anglers from both trap nets and gill nets. What is the best way to address user conflict?

- [Charlie – The NRB has the opportunity to quickly correct any issues. Commercial fishers want to avoid conflicts as well.]
- Duane – WCSFO President and member of 3 fishing clubs – Will this info be on DNR website?
  - [Yes, presentations will be.]
- 920-\*\*\*-\*\*67 – Presentations will be online?
  - [Yes]
- Keith – We are seeing large numbers of whitefish on graphs, and we catch them incidentally. Our club has no problems with higher quota; we are generally a commercial-friendly club. We need nets to be well marked and would appreciate a heads up with coordinates of nets we could announce on our club Facebook page.

#### Topics for future meetings

- None – Brad encouraged follow up calls or emails for additional thoughts

#### Frequency of meetings

- Charlie – Tuesday/Wednesday at 6PM is fine
- Keith – Agree with Charlie; avoid Monday and Friday. Nice that we didn't have to drive to Cleveland
- Dave via Chat – Tues/Wed 6PM
- Brad – One month from now in Sept and again in Oct.
- George – evenings work well

Participants (32-34 during presentations, including 8 DNR and 4 staff from other agencies/universities)

#### WDNR

Brad Eggold

Scott Hansen

Al Blizel

Tom Meronek

Iyob Tsehay

Brad Ray

Jacob Steckmesser

Cheryl Masterson

#### Other Agencies/Universities

Dan Isermann – UWSP/USGS Coop Fish Unit

Titus Seilheimer – UW Sea Grant

Susan Wells – USFWS

Taylor Hrabak – UWGB

#### Participants

George – WI Wildlife Federation

Charlie – Lake Michigan Commercial Fishing Board

Keith – M&M GLSF

David – WI Conservation Congress

Gary

Paul – Milw. Journal Sentinel)

Lynn – KSFCA

Bill – Retired DNR

Jerry – Sheboygan GLSF

KFSUWI (left mtg. about 7:00)

Mark

Amy's iPad

Brian – Milwaukee GLSF

Scott

Steven (left mtg about 6:45)

Lauren

RF Jones

James (late arrival – after 6:30)

Bill (late arrival – 6:40)

Edward (late arrival – after 7:30)

920-\*\*\*-\*\*67

414-\*\*\*-\*\*09

920-\*\*\*-\*\*14 (late arrival – 7:30)