

Lake Superior Fisheries Management Plan – Advisory Panel Meeting
Monday, March 5, 2018, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (CDT)
WITC – Ashland, WI

Panel Members Present

Organization

Advisor to the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission
Advisor to the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission
Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Bodin Fisheries
Brule River Sportsmen’s Club, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
Charter Captain
Clean Wisconsin
GLIFWC
GLIFWC
Lake Superior Commercial Fishing Board
Lake Superior Steelhead Association
Northland College
Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Superior Rivers Watershed Association
Western Lake Superior Trollers Association
Wild Rivers Chapter Trout Unlimited
Wisconsin DNR - Office of Great Waters

Participant

Al House
Bruce Prentice
Lorrie Salawater
Beta Bodin
Ken Lundberg
Darryl Fenner
Susan Hedman
Bill Mattes
Ben Michaels
Craig Hoopman
Mike Pitan
Randy Lehr
Chad Abel
Tony Janisch
Jim Vanlandschoot
Luke Kavajecz
Michele Wheeler

Panel Members Absent

Organization

Apostle Island Sport Fishing Association
Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce
Bayfield County Land and Water Conservation Department
Brule River Sportsmen’s Club
Chequamegon Food Cooperative
Douglas County Fish & Game League
Douglas County Land and Water Conservation Department
Isaak Walton League/Duluth Chapter (W.J. McCabe Chapter)
Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve
Northwest Rod & Gun
Wisconsin Sea Grant

Participant

Rob Jones
Mary McPhedridge
Ben Dufford
Dennis Pratt
Steve Sandstrom
Tom Johnson
Christine Ostern
John Carr
Hannah Ramage
Dave Sorenson
Titus Seilheimer

DNR Fisheries Management Staff Present

Name

Brad Eggold
Jeff Scheirer
Brad Ray
Paul Piszczek

Title

Great Lakes Fisheries Supervisor
Inland Biologist-Lake Sturgeon Team
Lake Superior Biologist
Lake Superior Tributaries Biologist

Purpose: Discuss Objectives for Goals 4 and 5; Hear Statewide Lake Sturgeon Management Plan Process

Summary

Paul Piszczek called the meeting to order and asked the Panel members to introduce themselves. Paul also acknowledged three members of the public in attendance to hear about the Lake Sturgeon Management Planning process that is currently underway throughout Wisconsin. He introduced Jeff Scheirer, DNR Fisheries Biologist in Park Falls, who is a northern district representative for the State's Lake Sturgeon Team.

Jeff gave an overview of the existing sturgeon management plan, the current sturgeon management planning process, and a timeline. Jeff provided comment cards for all attendees to fill out and return to DNR throughout the sturgeon management planning process. Brad Ray gave an overview of Lake Sturgeon in Lake Superior and noted the public has an opportunity to comment on a forthcoming advisory question during the annual DNR Spring Hearing scheduled on Monday, April 9.

Brad Ray provided local information about Lake Sturgeon and noted the possibility of including regulation changes as an objective in Goal 3. Al House suggested adding some language to closely monitor the sturgeon population to protect the spawning population. Jim Vanlandschoot asked how safe harvest is measured, and Luke Kavajecz thought that a lottery system could be developed. Ken Lundberg stated the need to identify ways to reduce injury and mortality, perhaps with an informational brochure in the regulations that suggests circle hooks, handling techniques, etc. Ben Michaels asked if mortality is being studied, particularly unintended hooking mortality, and Jeff Scheirer answered that the issue is low to moderate priority for research in Wisconsin. Bruce Prentice noted a lack of public involvement for opportunities such as "sturgeon watch," and that the public can have a better understanding of sturgeon if the public is more involved and aware. Al House questioned whether Lake Superior Lake Sturgeon has cultural significance, and Lorrie Salawater affirmed. As such, Al recommended acknowledging this in the management plan. Tony Janisch inquired about other states' sturgeon management, such as Minnesota and Michigan. Brad replied that Minnesota has a no-harvest and Michigan is closed; only Wisconsin has a harvest season.

Regarding the statewide sturgeon management plan, Michele Wheeler asked if the plan would be partitioned by system. Jeff replied that the sturgeon plan will likely list specific waters and could overlap with the Lake Superior Fisheries Management Plan.

Brad Ray initiated the Goal 4 objectives discussion. The objectives were listed individually on the PowerPoint presentation slide, which Brad Eggold revised in real-time as suggestions were voiced from the group.

Goal 4: Develop, evaluate, and implement strategies to maximize the resilience of Lake Superior fisheries through the control, management, and mitigation of future threats.

Susan Hedman interpreted Goal 4 as reactionary, and it should be more active regarding detection and response. Brad Ray noted that we will rely heavily on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as partners to

early detection of invasive species, which could be included in the plan. He added that Wisconsin DNR has an invasive species coordinator. Brad Eggold mentioned that working with partners might be the best approach. Al House felt that Asian Carp are not likely stoppable, yet perhaps the plan can include language to develop economic gains through carp capture. Michele Wheeler commented on the difficulty of determining the lake's vulnerability to carp through time, particularly as dynamic climate patterns can influence water temperature and offer preferred conditions for carp and other invasives; this is noted in the Lakewide Action and Management Plan (LAMP). Bruce Prentice questioned whether a need exists to revisit attempts for lamprey marketing and exploitation. Bill Mattes replied that the high mercury concentrations (approximately 1.0 to 1.5 parts per million) often discourage lamprey consumption. Al noted that warming could happen more quickly in Lake Superior, and Darryl added that higher lake levels and darker water could create a heat sink. Brad Ray and Michele thought the plan could look at how sediment-laden runoff affects nearshore water temperatures, and Al thought that sediment could affect fish reproduction.

Brad Ray asked for any tactics/ideas for chemicals of mutual concern. Stable isotope work was suggested by Bill Mattes. Susan Hedman offered pharmaceutical effects on fish, referring primarily to feminization in fish; Michele Wheeler agreed. Al House inquired about how, if at all, Toxaphene is being monitored and if the compound is higher in Lake Superior. Randy Lehr affirmed monitoring by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Michele recognized that partnerships could play a role in raising awareness, and Randy noted the value of collaboration in distributing information (e.g., health advisories). Further, he noted an emergence of concerns for harvest rates, where a changing demographic uses resources in different ways than in the past. Brad mentioned this could be addressed in other goals. Michele note that variations in climate patterns could influence harvest through variations in ice cover.

Brad Ray stated how Goal 5 tries to address economic and social values of Lake Superior fisheries, as follows:

Goal 5: Develop, evaluate, and implement strategies to improve the social value of Lake Superior fisheries

The four objectives of Goal 5 were discussed among the group, and Brad Eggold made real-time revisions to the PowerPoint slides as comments were made by the group. Al House noted a need for language to improve communication and cooperation among stakeholders, toward better management. Michele Wheeler shared a thought that when people are invested, they often feel more engaged and therefore more apt to protect things in which they are invested. Randy Lehr added that future stakeholders should be cultivated. Susan Hedman commented that Lake Superior is the largest and cleanest in the world, and its global importance should be recognized. Jim Vanlandschoot noted, however, that DNR is already doing this by bringing stakeholders to the table. Darryl Fenner added that he promotes and recognizes the resource during his charter outings. He suggested that maybe DNR can increase lake advertising by producing high-quality brochures, something he and others can distribute. Ken Lundberg stated that other user groups may have some of these products, and perhaps

coordination among the groups for this information could be increased. Al House noted that Lake Superior is a multi-national, multi-state waterbody that needs a vector for information. Michele replied that the Lakewide Action and Management Plan serves as the vector, a framework to address lakewide issues. She added the need to engage with LAMP agencies on cross-jurisdictional management. Bruce Prentice thought that “and its tributaries” should accompany the reference to Lake Superior, and Brad Ray agreed. Susan continued with the importance of stewardship around the lake, comparing Lake Baikal with Lake Superior in that Lake Baikal’s quality is diminishing. Michele asked who has outreach responsibility, and noted the need to invest in outreach education and communication.

Darryl stated that the group still needs to address the conflict between sport and commercial netting/trap netting during the summer. Craig Hoopman explained that the area from Houghton Point to Long Island is completely open to sport fishing; netting does not occur. A group discussion followed regarding the availability of sport fishing area, and a general conclusion was that sport and commercial areas were relatively even. Al House suggested the plan include language to document the needs of the different user groups. This could fit in with other goals, for example that which addresses communication between stakeholders. Craig noted the history of give-and-take among the users, and today’s cooperation seems much less than that during his teenage years. The lake still supports a world-class fishery, and we should keep it that way. Chad Abel added that the Lake Superior fishery is the most regulated fishery on the Great Lakes. Darryl expressed concern that the area from Van Tassels Point inward is insufficient, since commercial netting can occur from June 1 through August 15. He hears from the sport community that catches are low once the nets are in the water.

Darryl questioned the need for a whitefish bag limit, if the species has an open harvest. Brad Ray replied that it is a waste reduction tool. Bruce Prentice thought a fact sheet on this could be made available as a postcard. Craig Hoopman indicated that education is the key to his business. Darryl framed the fishing regulations in a social context, where a five-fish limit for trout and salmon is excessive, due to the vulnerability of these fish during spring.

Tony Janisch asked how the plan will address threats of large-scale developments, such as mining, pipelines, etc. Brad Ray replied that this would be addressed in the land use and habitat goal.

Brad Ray made some final remarks to conclude the meeting. He noted that comments on all the goals can be submitted anytime to DNR. Instead of an April meeting, DNR will distribute an outline to the panel for a 30-day comment period, then review and incorporate comments into a draft plan in early September. The group will likely need to convene for a couple of meetings in the fall.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Notes by Paul Piszczek