

Lake Superior Fisheries Management Plan – Advisory Board Meeting
Monday, October 16, 2017, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (CDT)
WITC – Ashland, WI

Panel Members Present

Organization

Advisor to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission
Advisor to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission
Apostle Islands Sportfishing Association
Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Superior Rivers Watershed Association
Bodin Fisheries
Brule River Sportsmen's Club, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
Charter Captain
Chequamegon Food Cooperative
Clean Wisconsin
Douglas County Fish & Game League
Isaak Walton League/Duluth Chapter (W.J. McCabe Chapter)
Lake Superior Steelhead Association
Northland College
Northwest Rod & Gun
Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Western Lake Superior Trollers Association
Wild Rivers Chapter Trout Unlimited
Wisconsin Sea Grant

Participant

Al House
Bruce Prentice
Rob Jones
Lorrie Salawater
Tony Janisch
Beta Bodin
Ken Lundberg
Darryl Fenner
Steve Sandstrom
Susan Hedman
Tom Johnson
John Carr
Mike Pitan
Randy Lehr
Dave Sorenson
Chad Abel
Jim VanLandschoot
Luke Kavajecz
Titus Seilheimer

Panel Members Absent

Organization

Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce
Bayfield County Land and Water Conservation Department
Douglas County Land and Water Conservation Department
GLIFWC
Lake Superior Commercial Fishing Board
Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve
Office of Great Waters – DNR

Participant

Mary McPhedridge
Ben Dufford
Christine Ostern
Bill Mattes, Ben Michaels
Craig Hoopman
Shon Schooler
Michele Wheeler

DNR Fisheries Management Staff Present

Name

Willie Fetzer
Terry Margenau
Brad Ray
Paul Piszczek
Tim Parks

Title

Great Lakes Fisheries Specialist
Lake Superior Fisheries Supervisor
Lake Superior Biologist
Lake Superior Tributaries Biologist
Lake Superior Nearshore Biologist

Purpose: Familiarize Board with available reports and plans such as the State of the Lake Report, Lakewide Action and Management Plan, and Lake Superior Action Plan; Modify vision statement and goals to reflect Board's feedback; Discuss information preferences for next meeting relative to Goals 1 and 2.

Summary

Paul Piszczek called the meeting to order and asked Board members to introduce themselves. Paul also asked the members if any major omissions or errors occurred in the September 7, 2017 meeting notes that were previously distributed to the Board. No comments were made, and Paul went on to explain the meeting agenda and the primary themes that emerged from the September 7, 2017.

Willie Fetzer gave a presentation that summarized the elements of the State of the Lake Report, particularly regarding fish community goals and objectives, and whether these have been "achieved, partially achieved, and not achieved." Willie noted that Sea Lamprey is considered in need of work, which is important now that Sea Lamprey in Lakes Huron and Michigan are considered "down." Dave Sorenson asked how this is determined, and Willie replied that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission operates a lamprey control program. Dave also expressed interest regarding the geographic scope of lamprey numbers, and Willie replied that lamprey numbers are not necessarily "up," but are higher than desired. Ken Lundberg noted that Splake are not included in the State of the Lake Report, and Willie stated that Splake will be considered in the Lake Superior Fisheries Management Plan.

Willie continued his presentation by describing some objectives in the Lake Superior Lakewide Action and Management Plan (LAMP). He noted that the Lake's overall status is considered "good," yet tributaries, are regarded as "fair." Al House asked if the objectives are generic and whether we will have a chance to focus on specific areas. Willie affirmed and noted we want to start generating ideas to discuss at the next meeting. Tom Johnson called attention to the "fair" designation and the need to maintain focus on the tributaries, particularly when considering management alternatives such as stocking, as imprinting is imperative to successful adult fish production/returns. Steve Sandstrom asked if we will have time to discuss ecological objectives. Willie affirmed and mentioned that future discussions can involve people that can provide specific information for those objectives. For example, Paul Piszczek can discuss tributaries and what makes for good fish and fishing.

Willie concluded his presentation with an overview of the Lake Superior Action Plan, and noted areas that need work and what we are going to do.

Brad Ray continued the meeting by projecting the vision statement on the overhead screen. He invited the Board to begin discussing potential modifications to the vision statement, which emerged from the previous meetings. A comment was made to include "social and cultural" terms in the statement, and perhaps begin the statement with a verb. Brad replied that a verb is not necessarily needed, as it directs an action; a vision statement is actually an outcome, something we desire. Chad Abel commented that native species should be included, with a focus on native community. Jim VanLandschoot noted that this would negate the need to include the term "balance." In light of this good conversation, Brad cautioned

that the vision statement can get really big, and it is important to remember that goals help describe the vision. In other words, specific interests could be addressed as goals, rather than the vision. As these and other comments were made, Willie Fetzer made real-time changes to the draft vision statement as comments and suggestions were voiced. General discussion regarding native, non-native, and “balance” continued, with specific attention to defining “balance.” The term will be defined as the process progresses. We need to be aware of whether we make decisions regarding non-native species that would be to the detriment of native species. Paul Piszczek suggested the vision statement include language relative to fulfilling needs, as all Board members are at the table with specific needs for the resource and their respective organizations. Brad Ray concluded by noting that the vision statement will take time to develop and can be wordsmithed as we discuss the goals.

Brad Ray transitioned the discussion toward the six draft goals listed below, which emerged from previous meetings. Ken Lundberg asked if the plan can be used as a tool to discuss with developers, or if the Board can advocate for or against proposed projects. Willie Fetzer replied that it is not within DNR’s scope, although other groups can do so. Brad led the discussions for each draft goal and the group offered suggestions, of which Willie made real-time changes as comments and suggestions were voiced. Specific comments/discussion is provided, below, for each draft goal.

Goal 1: Protect and maintain diversity and connectivity of habitats through best management practices and land use that minimize threats to aquatic habitats.

No specific comments.

Goal 2: Identify and implement strategies to support diverse and sustainable sport, commercial, and subsistence fishing.

Dave Sorenson strongly suggested that the goal should be more specific; we need to draft a goal that is achievable (e.g., have a fishery similar to that from 1985 through 1991, which was due to DNR, USFWS efforts toward stocking, breeding grounds, etc.). The term “sustainable” is too general and should not be used, particularly since it could imply no harvest, which should not be a goal. Brad inquired as to whether it is possible to recreate those conditions, since the lake has changed since then. Lorrie Salawater noted the need to include “tribal,” since tribes are a major part of the plan’s development. Otherwise, the goal reads as if the tribes were not involved. Brad assured that tribes are involved as indicated by the attendance/Board membership list.

Goal 3: Improve tributary and coastal habitats to support Lake Superior’s fish community.

The geographic scope of “coastal” was questioned, and Willie replied it is something on which we could take action. There seems to be some overlap between this and Goal 1, and perhaps we could consider merging the goals and decide what is appropriate.

Goal 4: Enhanced monitoring to better understand ecology of Lake Superior fish populations and communities, including salmonid life stages in streams (recruitment dynamics), cool-water fish community dynamics, drivers of lake herring recruitment, and lake sturgeon early life history.

Dave Sorenson suggested possibly merging Goals 4, 5, and 6. Brad noted the primary difference among these is monitoring people vs. monitoring fish, implying that the goals should be retained.

Goal 5: Enhancement of sport, commercial, and subsistence fisheries monitoring (harvest, catch composition, etc.) and enforcement of existing fishing regulations.

The premise of this goal was questioned and discussed. Willie responded that general mistrust of data and reporting currently exists, and the intent is to improve and enhance, and promote transparency in data and reporting. A suggestion was made to identify in this goal the specific fishing groups (i.e., commercial, sport, subsistence). Adding “tribal” is redundant. Dave Sorenson added that we do not necessarily need a goal for this, since it currently exists as a legislative action. Other comments by the group included adding “trust” to the goal, as trust is a key aspect for the success of the plan and the resource. Also, “communication” could be added to the goal.

Goal 6: Develop, evaluate, and implement adaptive strategies (e.g., habitat enhancement, environmental regulations) that incorporate economic metrics into measures of management success to improve resilience of Lake Superior to climate variability, invasive species, and additional ecological perturbations.

This goal requires additional work to better reflect the concept/intent. Further, a need exists to incorporate transparency, adaptive management, capacity, and economic insight into the regulations. Dave Sorenson noted that the high lake level will need to be dealt with, although it is not clear as to what can actually be done; we are facing calamities. The Soo Locks are fully open, along with the hydropower canal, and nearly three months’ time is needed to sluice water to decrease lake elevation by one inch.

Brad Ray began to close the meeting by noting the dates of the next two meetings:

- Wednesday, November 15, 2017
- Monday, December 18, 2017

The primary action items for the next meeting are to think about any goals that have not yet been expressed and start to dissect the goals toward developing objectives and tasks. DNR will distribute the draft goals that were reviewed during this evening’s meeting. A reasonable task for the next meeting is to review Goals 1 and 2.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Notes by Paul Piszczek