

DRAFT
LAKE MICHIGAN COMMERCIAL FISHING BOARD
MEETING

June 24, 2025

In Person and Zoom Meeting

1. Establish Quorum:

Members Present: , Mark Maricque, Mike LeClair, Rick Johnson, Todd Stuth, Dan Pawlitzke, Brett Schwarz

Member Absent: None

DNR Staff Present: Nick Leger, Brad Eggold, Scott Hansen, Jordan Resap, Miranda Westphal, Robert Stroess,

Others present: Dennis Hickey, Jay Virlee, Will Henriksen, Roxanna Miller USFWS, Ben Breaker USFWS, Susan Wells USFWS

2. Call to Order:

Chairman Todd Stuth called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

3. Approval of Agenda; All Aye on a voice vote.

4. Minutes: Mike LeClair made a motion to approve the February 22, 2025, LMCFB meeting minutes, seconded by Mark Maricque, all present voted to approve these minutes.

5. Discussion Items:

- A. The Larson Reef Habitat Mapping update (USFWS). Roxanna Miller, of USFWS provided a power point presentation regarding reefs in the Great Lakes which was focused on the Bay of Green Bay using NOAA ocean charting operations – multibeam animation.

Phase 1: Physical Habitat Mapping with a) Bathymetry maps, b) Backscatter Mosaics, c) Derived Products using Bathymetry contained 25 samples, with 821 transects and 25km² surveyed. The Backscattered diagram had contours and WI DNR Restricted Fishing Zone areas.

Phase 2: Biological Assessments with a) Spawner Surveys, b) Egg Disposition, c) Egg Predator Densities, d) Invertebrate Inventory. These assessments contain Calibrated Multi-beam Echosounder and Lakebed Validation. The presentation included previous maps of Larson's Reef in 1981. The USFWS Coregonine Egg Traps used to collect egg disposition and larval emergence across spawning habitat gradients.

Conclusion: 1) Larsons Reefing Mapping Surveys: Completed. 2) Bathy & Backscatter Mosaics of Larsons Reef: Completed. 3) Ground Truthing: In-progress. The USFWS are assessing reefs for habitat quality and fish utilization. They found eggs plus Gobies in these traps. Future work will involve monitoring changing conditions plus Leveraging partnerships for future analysis.

B. Commercial Licensing in Go Wild (DNR Update). Mirand Westphal mentioned that Tyler Technologies provided the programming to date for the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) with future updates from DOA from August 2025 through December 2025. Miranda updated the LMCFB on the progress of registering commercial fish caught. There will be a \$25 annual license fee for Rough Fish plus \$900 annual Commercial License fee. If a License Transfer is requested that will cost \$50 per transfer. Further, the commercial fisher needs to identify 4 ports: 2 open ports plus 2 ice ports per License.

C. Whitefish updates and Informational Questions & Answers Sessions (Scott Hansen, DNR). Lake Michigan Whitefish population model of Trap Net catch has never been lower verses Green Bay. HOWEVER, Zone 3 primarily use Trawls to catch Whitefish. The number per Trawl Hour dropped from 500 to 180+/- pounds per hour. The Green Bay Southern Zone has significantly increased during the last 20 years. The Sports Whitefish Quota harvest was 15,000 pounds.

- The 2022 – 2024 Creel Survey was conducted on all weekends plus 3 days per week.
- The Green Bay juveniles Trawl Index found 20" whitefish were 10+/- years old. From 2010 – 2024 the number caught per trawl hour as follows:
 - Age 3 Whitefish were 12.3" in length
 - Age 4 Whitefish were 14" in length
 - Age 5 Whitefish were 14.1" in length
 - In 2024 the average Whitefish age caught in the Bay of Green Bay was 13 years old
 - The major issue was not enough food to sustain the Whitefish population, with the next issue being increasing water temperatures.
 - The current Whitefish Harvest Quotas of are as follows:
 - Zone 1: 776,647
 - Zone 2: 888,785 with G.B. 365,887(41.16%); Lake 522,898 (58.83%)
 - Zone 3: 351,487

D. Lake Trout Scope Statement Update (Brad Eggold, DNR)

The Lake Trout Scope Statement is currently under discussion within the DNR. The new DNR Secretary with DNR staff, USFWS as well as Sports fishers, Commercial Fishers to evaluate the CURRENT Scope Statement with 3 options:

- DO NOT forward the current Lake Trout Harvest Scope Statement to the NRB.
- Forward the current Lake Trout Harvest Scope Statement to the NRB
- PULL the Current Lake Trout Scope Statement from the NRB and start over.
- Brad will update the LMCFB how the DNR Secretary office wants to proceed.

E. Lake Whitefish Quota Allocation Calculation by Zone (Brad Eggold, DNR).

LMCFB Members wants to know the process of Northern Zone 2 Quota is divided within Zone 2 Green Bay (G.B.) verses Lake Michigan (Lake) Zone 2 Quota. Zone 2 Quota: 888,785 total splits between G.B. 365,887; Lake 522,898. Use the Commercial Fishers Quota divided by the Total Quota for that Zone to derive the

percentage Quota for that Fisher. EFHRS does not breakout the Quota caught in Zone 2 Green Bay or Lake Michigan Quota to clarify the process. The rule says that the NRB could change the Quota between Green Bay/Lake Michigan, however that change could change the total quota. Maricque commented regarding the low recruitment in Zone 1 and its' effect on the "excess quota percentage" applied to Zone 1 TAC and the potential change of Quota in Zone 2 Green Bay portion? Brad mentioned if Zone 1 Quota decreases the Quota in Zone 2 that Quota could potentially increase at some point in the future. The fishers retain the exact percentage of Zone 1 Quota they always retained, even though the Zone Quota could change.

- F. Discussion: How can the Commercial Fishing assist the DNR with information data gathering on Whitefish, Yellow Perch, Chubs and Lake Trout to ensure the most accurate and current data inputs to these models are obtained. The issues involve what the commercial fishers could do to enhance the research studies of Green Bay and Lake Michigan such as the Trawl Study completed on Lake Michigan. Assisting the government agencies with tagging, genetics, catch composition, basic food nutrients, Thiamine deficiency, latent mortality of Whitefish, and Walleye as well as other fish stocks. Brad believes the DNR, and all stakeholders have an adequate amount of information from ALL sources to complete studies, by referencing data in the historical studies.

New Quotas: DNR wants 3 years of data plus 3 years of commercial fishers catch data to adjust the quota. The DNR wants to look at quotas on a 3-year time sequence. The NEW quotas will take place in 2026. The quota information will be forthcoming in September to October 2025. The data is assembled but not yet finalized. The quota recommendation would be submitted to the NRB at either October or December 2025. The commercial fishers' concerns were to INCLUDE the LMCFB input into the upcoming quota realignment, however no data has been presented to the LMCFB.

6. Old Business: None
7. Board Member Matters:
8. Comments and announcements
9. Adjournment:
 - Motion - Moved by Rick Johnson seconded by Mike LeClair.
 - Motion passed unanimously at 7:51 P.M.