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Today you will be involved in the fishery management decision-making process. In managing a large, dynamic system that has multiple user groups there are other considerations that come into play beside the data when making decisions. So, I'd like to make you aware or maybe just remind you of what some of those considerations are as you contemplate different management strategies.

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Lake Michigan is a shared resource. Since actions by a particular state can have impacts on other states and the system as a whole, we **seek consensus** among the involved parties before any actions are taken. Consensus is different from majority rules. In obtaining a consensus opinion, a group attempts to reach an agreement which all can accept (now that doesn't necessarily mean that you are in favor of it but that you can live with the result).

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Copies of the FCOs were sent out to each of you. This document provides not only specific objectives, such as the capacity to harvest 6 to 15 M lbs of salmon and trout per year. But also contains two important overarching goals. The first of which is to **provide fish communities that are stable, maximize productivity, and meet the needs of society.**

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The second goal is to **maintain the integrity of the system.** That is, try to protect it from invasive species; make sure that there is enough food for the fish that we stock, make sure that the fish that we stock can be utilized by anglers; and make sure that the food web stays intact.

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So, why do we stock fish? In the 1960s we stocked fish to control the invasive alewife – mission accomplished. Now we primarily stock fish to **provide for fisheries** that developed but also so that we have **eggs to maintain our hatchery stockings.**

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The lake has significantly changed since 1900 and it is not our intention as Fishery Managers to try and reestablish that lake. There are species that no longer exist and several new species that were not present back then. **Our goals are to provide a diverse fishery and to promote fish species that are adapted to the lake to ensure some type of stability** and lake trout are a vital component of that species mix.

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This also isn't the same lake as the 1960s - the food web is much more complex. It isn't the same as the hey-days of the 1980s when guys caught 30+ lb Chinook. This isn't even the same lake from 10 years ago. The lake and its components are constantly changing and our management strategies need to change to adapt to it. Zebra mussels, and now quagga mussels, have irrevocably changed this lake. It is not as productive as it once was and not as productive as we would like it to be. **Management strategies should be based on the current condition of the lake and not on memories of the past.**

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Fish don't obey state lines. They move throughout the lake. We've even collected Chinook with coded-wire tags from Lake Huron in the southern part of the lake. We all familiar with the early spring fishery in Indiana waters where the lake warms up quickest. And you can follow those

movements up the shorelines, on both sides. **Seasonal movements require that we consider the lake as a whole rather than by jurisdictions.**

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There are competing interests. The best species mix for shoreline anglers may not be the best for boat anglers, stream anglers, charter operators. As Fishery Managers we strive to satisfy all the demands on the lake. In our deliberations today, keep in mind that the guy seated next to you may not have the same view of what the fishery should be so I ask that you consider the **welfare of angling in general rather than your specific views** as we develop strategies.

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As Fishery Managers, we try to get the most out of what is available – it's our job. But it's also our job to ensure the integrity of the system. We operate very close to the edge. Too close, according to some. Our goal should be to **pro-actively manage and tend to be a little conservative** because when things go bad our reactions and the effects of those actions may take a few years to remedy the problem.

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We attempt to utilize the available bait fish and stock fish accordingly. These graphics are just for illustration so you don't be too concerned about them. They're just here to make a point. The point is that not all fish species eat the same things and not even in the same proportions. I think we all agree that Chinook salmon prefer alewife. **A diverse species mix is the key to full utilization of the forage.**

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I'm sure you are all familiar with the 10% rule. 10% of the anglers catch 90% of the fish. What you're seeing here is the corollary - "Ensuring that all anglers achieve a bag limit each time is unrealistic". This is charter boat catches from IL in 2009. I used charter boats because their catch rate is typically twice that of regular sport anglers. These are guys that fish frequently, follow the bait fish, sometimes work in teams. **Management strategies should be designed to achieve reasonable goals.**

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There are trade-offs in any decision. As you will see in the following presentations, there is a limited supply of food. At the last stocking conference in 2005, anglers opted for more but smaller fish rather than fewer but larger fish. **An important part of the decision process is to be aware of the pros and cons of different strategies.**

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Finally, you will be asked to **develop management strategies based on incomplete information.** It is not that we are withholding this information from you but rather it just is not available. We would love to know exactly what each fish is eating in real time. We can't tell you exactly how many fish are out there. Our data mostly tend to be relative – that is they show changes through time – is it more this year than last?

In the following presentations you will see the available data and we're asking for your thoughts on what management strategies may be best for the lake.

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In summary, - **slide text.**