

Lake Trout Commercial Harvest Stakeholder Group Meeting #1
February 21, 2023

Agenda

6:00PM **Welcome** – Jean Romback-Bartels

- Introductions
- Lake Michigan Lake Trout Commercial Harvest Stakeholder Group Charter
- General Meeting Series Overview

6:20 **Lake Michigan Commercial Fishing Board** – Charlie Henriksen

6:25 **Lake trout population status and metrics** – Laura Schmidt

7:00 **Questions / Comments**

7:55 **Wrap up and next meeting** – Jean Romback-Bartels

8:00 **Adjourn**

CM	Cheryl Masterson (Host, me)		
BE	Brad Eggold (Co-host)		
	Kelsey Pickart (Co-host)		
AT	Angelo Trentadue		
	Brad Eggold		
CB	Charles Bronte		
CH	Charles Henriksen		
DP	Dan Pawlitzke		
EM	Edward Michael		
EH	Eric Hauke		
JM	Jason M		

JJ	Jory Jonas		
MK	Matthew Kornis		
MP	Meredith Penthorn		
ML	Michelle Lawrie		
PS	Paul Smith		
RJ	Richard Jones		
SH	Scott Hansen		
SW	susan wells		
TB	Tom Burzynski		
TC	Tom Couston		
WH	William Henriksen		

WE	WiWF ED Mark LaBarbera		
W	WS		
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Additional Zoom participants
Scott Otterson
Scott Meyer
John Janssen
Steve Roach
Nick Legler

In person stakeholder group members

Jerry Fetterer
Arnie Arredondo
Todd Stuth
Titus Seilheimer
Dale Maas

Lee Haasch
Jamie LeClair
John Anderson
Dennis Hickey
Bob Wincek

Other in-person participants

Jason Woda
Dan Lindal
Tom Nowack

Dale Maas – why the disparity between the spring and fall survey data?

- The spring survey is a coordinated effort among agencies; it covers multiple days, multiple areas, and multiple depth ranges during a time when the lake trout population is mixed. The fall survey is a one-day snapshot, targeting adult spawning lake trout.

Jerry Fetterer – where are we with the stock of mature fish (spawning stock biomass)?

- This topic will be addressed at the April meeting with population models.

Lee Haasch – spring surveys seem to be the most complete and accurate. We should put more weight on the spring check marks (meeting the benchmarks) vs the fall check marks. Looking at the north and south regions, it looks like there are few lake trout in the north along the lakeshore. Can the spring survey results be split between north and south?

- We agree about the spring survey being more complete; lake trout are more mixed and gives us a better indication of the whole population vs the fall survey, which is just the spawning population.
- We haven't surveyed all along the lakeshore (e.g. Kenosha), but maybe that is something we can do in the future.

Titus Seilheimer – how and when were the metrics set? Have they been revised since the food web has changed?

- The metrics were created in the late 2000's – probably 2010 timeframe. Metrics have not been adjusted, but that needs to get done at some point.

Jamie LeClair – do the trout migrate? It seems like they would migrate to follow the food.

- On average they don't move more than 60ish miles from their stocking location. They do move, but regionally. Matt Kornis will present more details at the March meeting.

Dennis Hickey – are there any assessments north of Clay Banks?

- Washington Island is surveyed by USFWS now. DNR did it prior to USFWS.

Todd Stuth – year over year, where are they migrating vs. where they are stocked? How do you account for spatial distribution of the stocks?

- 85% of lake trout caught in mid-lake refuge were stocked there. Some stay there year-round. Laura could put together a figure on this for the next meeting. The Klondike Reef strain is a deep water strain; typically they do not move off the reef. The lean strains like Seneca move off the reef and to nearshore areas.

Jerry Fetterer – What happens if the 82,000 lake trout harvest number is met in July? Is latent mortality factored in?

- The safe harvest limit of 82,000 was developed in the 1980s. The modeling done at that time was designed to keep mortality at 40% or less. The more recent population models will help us determine a more relevant number that should give us a safe harvest level for WI waters. That work is in progress. The hypothetical scenario of hitting 82,000 in July and whether that would trigger a season closure would depend on how the framework is set up. The model design will be discussed during the meeting April.

Lee Haasch – will there be offset of what commercials might take by stocking additional lake trout? Could we stock Clay Banks?

- All of that is up for discussion and would depend on the framework.

Lee Haasch – how are commercial fishers proposing to divide this quota up? By Zones like whitefish, or spread evenly along whole area?

- Charlie Henriksen – We see it as a racehorse fishery then allocated. The fishery would be bycatch and not targeted.

Scott Otterson via Zoom chat – I find it difficult to believe that accommodating a handful of commercial harvesters on reducing a resource enjoyed by thousands is the way to go. Should we be supplementing the buggy whip manufactures or tobacco farmers? The business of harvesting and recreational fishing has changed significantly and we need to focus on the current best use. Let me know when we have an overabundance of lake trout that are negatively impacting the recreational industry. There are too many unknowns in salmon production not to mention invasives impact to make a change in reducing a resource now. Lets talk about it in ten years.

- Charlie Henriksen – we provide fish for all people of WI. Sport fishery should not be valued over commercial.

Arnie Arredondo – who did the aging of lake trout shown on the figure?

- It was a combination of USFWS and WDNR.

Lee Haasch – how would you use your gear to target lake trout and not brown trout or other salmonids?

- Todd Stuth – lake trout are fish we encounter in our regular gear fishing for whitefish. We would be able to keep them when we encounter them – we wouldn't be changing gear or regular fishing practices.

Titus Seilheimer – what would be a desirable size/condition lake trout?

- Todd Stuth – 4-6 pound is most marketable.
- Jamie LeClair – agreed, based on the larger fish being fattier.

- Dennis Hickey – wild lake trout are more lean than the hatchery raised fish.

Todd Stuth – no one wants to downgrade data collection or analysis, but commercially caught fish could enhance the data set. We can validate the models with more data.

Jamie LeClair – We do not sell as much lake trout as we do whitefish. For smoked fish, the top seller is salmon, then whitefish, then trout. We don't want a lot of trout because of that. The lake trout they sell comes from Kings Fishery in northern MI.

Charlie Henriksen – Mike Holmes runs a progressive restaurant in Ellison Bay and has conflicts and can't be here as part of this group. Everyone we deal with would love to have a WI based product. Healthy, sustainable, local fish.

Dale Maas – Todd Stuth mentioned they wouldn't change gear. Would that be written into the rule? In addition, regarding the preferred marketable size of lake trout – if you catch one of the 28 year old lake trout and it is dead, you would waste the resource if you don't keep it.

- Todd Stuth – the majority of lake trout that will be encountered will come out of trap nets (80% trap net vs 20% gill net). The gill nets will be targeting whitefish and will still need to meet mesh size requirements.

Bob Wincek – there is currently a health advisory on fish due to PFAs and PFOs. If the fish are small enough, we are okay, but can they market fish that are larger? Secondly, patrolling commercial activity by wardens in the past has been paid for out of the general hunting and fishing license fund. We have to find a different way to pay for this. Camera footage is not publicly available.

- Jamie LeClair – we have cameras on our trawling boat. If that would appease others, we could install cameras on other boats.

Charlie Henriksen – the 4th meeting is supposed to result in whether or not to make a recommendation to create a scope statement. The scope statement would work through regulations. Contaminants and funding shouldn't be in the purview of this group.

- Point of clarification – group is charged with providing input, not making a recommendation.

Titus Seilheimer – There were some issues with the PFAs study. None of the fish in the Great Lakes were over the PFAs limits except some rock bass in Green Bay.

Steve Roach via Zoom chat – What is the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System's interest in commercial fishing and why are they promoting commercial harvest of Lake Trout on eatwisconsinfish.org/ ?

- Titus Seilheimer – There is currently a commercial fishery for lake trout on Lake Superior.

Tom Couston via Zoom chat – It would seem that the data shows a decrease in sportfishing harvest of lakers in the last ten years. Even with a bag increase to 5 lake trout. It would seem that, to some extent, it would be a result of more overall pressure on silver fish. Also, are some of the caught lakers being possibly released?

- Yes, some of the lake trout are being released. Laura's presentation today included only fish harvested, not released.
- There is an inverse relationship between chinook/coho fishing vs lake trout. When "silver fish" fishing is productive, fewer numbers of lake trout are caught.

Dan Lindal – Are sport harvested fish caught by the average angler not on a charter boat accounted for in the data presented today?

- Yes, those anglers are captured in our creel survey. Today's data was a combination of charter, moored boats, and creel surveys.

Bob Wincek – Most tournaments on Lake Michigan are collecting, keeping, and cleaning fish for food pantries like the Hunger Task Force.

- Jamie LeClair – There are more fish consumers than there are anglers. Some people can't afford to go fishing.

Angelo Trentadue via Zoom chat – Funding is a main concern if we are to move forward.

Scott Otterson via Zoom chat – is the Lake Superior harvesting only tribal?

- Mostly tribal, but there are some state commercial fishers also.

Paul Smith via Zoom chat – Can you please provide a link to the charter or charge of the Lake Michigan Lake Trout Commercial Harvest Stakeholders Group? Thank you.

- <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Fishing/lakemichigan/LakeMichiganLakeTroutManagement>

Jerry Fetterer – How many trap nets allowed per license holder?

- Charlie Henriksen – 12

Comments and Chat via Zoom

scott otterson to Everyone 6:57 PM

I find it difficult to believe that accommodating a handful of commercial harvesters on reducing a resource enjoyed by thousands is the way to go. Should we be supplementing the buggy whip manufactures or tobacco farmers? The business of harvesting and recreational fishing has changed significantly and we need to focus on the current best use. Let me know when we have an overabundance of lake trout that are negatively impacting the recreational industry. There are too many unknowns in salmon production not to mention invasives impact to make a change in reducing a resource now. Lets talk about it in ten years.

Steve Roach to Everyone 7:04 PM

What is the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System's interest in commercial fishing and why are they promoting commercial harvest of Lake Trout on eatwisconsinfish.org/ ?

Yeah okay. I have the volume way up though

Tom Couston to Everyone 7:05 PM

It would seem that the data shows a decrease in sportfishing harvest of lakers in the last ten years. Even with a bag increase to 5 lake trout. It would seem that, to some extent, it would be a result of more overall pressure on silver fish. Also, are some of the caught lakers being possibly released?

You to Everyone 7:08 PM

Once we get thru the group and audience we will turn to zoom chat.. Tom, steve and Scot you can raise your hand and state your comments and questions, the room will be able to hear you.

scott otterson to Everyone 7:45 PM

is the Superior harvesting only tribal

Charles Henriksen to Everyone 7:46 PM

no

Charles Bronte to Everyone 7:50 PM

it is mostly tribal

Angelo Trentadue to Everyone 7:51 PM

Funding is a main concern if we are to move forward.

scott otterson to Everyone 7:51 PM

Consider me the elephant in the room and don't bother expressing my side of the topic

Paul Smith to Everyone 7:52 PM

Can you please provide a link to the charter or charge of the Lake Michigan Lake Trout Commercial Harvest Stakeholders Group? Thank you.

scott otterson to Everyone 7:53 PM

no

You to Everyone 7:53 PM

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Fishing/lakemichigan/LakeMichiganLakeTroutManagement>

Next meeting Monday, March 20 at 6PM at LTC and via Zoom.