

Whitefish Stakeholder Engagement Zoom Meeting
September 28, 2021

The presentations by Brad Eggold, Tom Meronek and Scott Hansen were recorded and will be available on DNR website.

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

Brief intro by Brad, then history by Tom.

Presentation on results of monitoring by Scott. Recommendations section by Brad.

Questions on presentation/data/results:

- Charlie - why didn't we include gillnet effort previous to 2020?
 - A: The data are available and in annual reports, weren't added here to help be concise. Scott noted that this (2020) is an enormous jump/amount of discards. Check to see if 2020 is the anomaly year.
- Michael - Mortality number for undersized whitefish in GB, how does this compare with Lake MI numbers?

Discussion/comments:

- Jjsguideservice - what did we have before emergency rule, during the rule, and where we want to go?
 - A: summarized the early part of the ppt (JJ may have joined after this part).
 - Q2: What was the poundage before e-rule, during and after?
 - Zone 1 prior to emergency ~360k, e-rule to mid 500k, this future proposed rule up to 800k. Zone 2 goes way down from previous. Total TAC from all zones about 2 million lbs. Questioner wants to see the history of the TAC changes over time (before during and after current rules) (good to show for future meetings?) The quota was very large previously, but the zones were different. How big of a jump is the change in TAC with the permanent rule?
- JJ - noting all the businesses that benefit from the sport ice fishing industry. Will this be factored in in the rule making?
 - A: to the extent that this is appropriate to look at in a commercial fishing rule, yes.
- Charlie - Commercial is operating under the idea that commercial isn't taking fish from the sport fishery. Hard to digest all the information, can a pdf be distributed? Would like to get the same presentation at the LMCFB meeting next week.
 - A: all these meetings are recorded and available online as soon as we post them. Welcome to re-watch or distribute to others. Have been posting presentations, but it could be done along with the recording.
- Dean - Frustrated at the fast speed of the process, the increase in the TAC. Feels the commercial fishery has more influence. Concerned about the level of TAC being too high too fast. Wants more time seeing how the population will respond to the emergency rule TAC changes.
 - A: this was an independent research project, outside of the commercial fishing industry. Commenter noting he is not questioning the data. Concern is over the rapid increase in the quota.

- Keith - There's an astronomical amount of whitefish out there. They aren't bigger, may be food limited. Doesn't see the same concern as the previous commenter. Q - restricted zone with numbers - can you repeat?
 - A: looking at restricting areas for LW trap nets due to bycatch.
- Charlie - This isn't a fast process/rush to judgement, been at this for 7 years, data collection for fewer years and encountered some issues, that's what led to the graduate study. Commercial side didn't have any involvement in the study plans, seeing the data tonight for the first time.
- Jerry - Will there be some economic study regarding this proposed rule relating to GB and surrounding areas? Is it concerning to the commercial industry and others, the amount of whitefish mortality due to bycatch?
 - A: no economic study planned to look across all user groups. We are looking at the discards and mortality of whitefish and incorporating that data in next model run.
- Jerry Comment - a study isn't done in 6 months. Concerned this is rushed, as we won't know the effects of e-rule before we move to the permanent rule.
- JJ - Seems hasty. Guide reporting - can't get compliance with this, and that's concerning. Moving forward with a permanent rule. Encouraging us to look at the economic component across sectors, the rec sector could be affected.
 - A: guide reporting and e-reporting for guides is moving forward and coming on line this winter.
- Titus Seilheimer - economic study would be useful, incorporate sport and commercial. That's probably a long project to do well though, might be a grad project. Scale of the whitefish population is large - that's a lot of discards, but in the scale of the whole population (40 million fish give or take), this level of discards doesn't seem so high.
- Keith - Concerned about the increase in quota with the permanent rule, too much too fast. Wants to see some review of impacts from e-rule first. Large quota in zone 2 - could it be reduced there to see if the fishery comes back and see if the population can catch up with zone 1 population?
- Scott Hansen - context - abundance is very high...but recall that this rule was designed to better managed Wisconsin whitefish management, Lake Michigan. This rule will help us catch up and provide safeguards on the redistribution of effort into GB. This is still a move in the right direction, we have data to support this. We will continue monitoring and processing data. We need to learn more about trap net soaks. Don't lose sight of the progress we are gaining with this rule.
- Charlie - Commercial fishery has been providing data for years, every net lifted with details on catch, discards, etc. Always looking to improve, they are in this for the long haul and want to protect their future fishing opportunities. Commercial is part of the economy too.
- Michael - Bothered by the up to 20-25% mortality of whitefish and other species too. Effort increasing for gillnetting, will also add to bycatch. Wastage is bad. Economic study - Walleyes for Tomorrow supported a study - found \$70 million economic benefit to areas around GB...so a study has been done. Donofrio has a copy, Boyarski too. This looked at walleye only.
 - A: From the study¹ it states "Creates over 264.3 million in annual economic benefits, generates over 14.8 million in annual state and local taxes and supports 2,711 full-time jobs"
 - A: The mortality rate shown on the whitefish bycatch slide was much lower. It was only around 4,500 for June not 45,000
- Keith - Q: what percentage of the total estimated TAC is present in Green Bay, compared to the population estimate in Green Bay?
 - A: 35% of the most vulnerable year class...is the exploitation rate. Lower exploitation on fish lower than that maximally exploited size/age.

- Charlie - TAC 2.2 million, population size of 30 million. Commercial not likely to take the whole TAC. No limits on the sport fishery, they won't catch half the TAC either.
- Brad - timeline...e rule will be hopefully extended through end of 2021. Will propose 2nd rule the same as current for consistency. Hope that will cover until the permanent rule becomes effective. Permanent rule has to go to the economic impact statement in two weeks, to allow for the rest of the process. There will be many more opportunities to comment as we proceed.
- Rebekah - attending for a class. What is the conclusion of the data and meeting?
 - A: continue efforts to require trap net coordinates and individual nets sets (fishing duration), we do see discards and we will integrate this into our population model, because of increased gradient in discards and bycatch as you move south we are considering a restricted area. And continue to look at data and monitor.

Chat comments/question

2021:702.3k

RebekahToEveryone

7:00:29 PM



I was wondering how to access the recording of this meeting

Tom MeronekToEveryone

7:15:58 PM



The meetings are uploaded online to the Lake Michigan whitefish page. This may take sometime to get posted.

Will HenriksenToEveryone

7:31:23 PM

200,000 alive

4500 dead

smoenToEveryone

7:34:28 PM



I really appreciate Charlie's comments. Thank you for providing fish to people who for, whatever reason, are unable to access this sustainable protein without you. Creating a state and national food system that is equitable and sustainable is important to me.

Participants (31 during the presentation, including DNR and staff from other agencies/universities)

WDNR

Brad Eggold
Meredith Penthorn
Scott Hansen
Tom Meronek
Nick Legler
Kari Fenske
Al Blizel
Derek Apps
Jacob Steckmesser
Mike Donofrio

Other Agencies/Universities

Susan Wells – US Fish & Wildlife Service
Chuck Bronte – US Fish & Wildlife Service
Taylor Hrabak – UW-Green Bay
Titus Seilheimer – UW Sea Grant

Participants

Bill
Charlie
Dean
Gary
Jay
Jerry
JJ
Keith
Keith
Kevin
Mike
Rebekah
Smith
Smoen
Steve
Todd
Will

¹The Economic and Fiscal Impact of Green Bay Recreational Fishing. Fiscal and Economic Research Center, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Hyland Hall, 809 W. Starin Road, Whitewater, WI 53190