

Minnesota 1837 Ceded Territory Fisheries Committee (MN 37 FC)
10:00 a.m. - October 30, 2017
Fond du Lac Resource Management Building

Attendance:

Kelly Applegate, Mille Lacs Band
Bradley E. Harrington, Mille Lacs Band
Carl Klimah, Mille Lacs Band
John Hoenig, Consultant to the bands
Jonathan Gilbert, GLIFWC
Joe Dan Rose, GLIFWC
James Zorn, GLIFWC
Brian Beyerl, MNDNR
Tom Jones, MNDNR
Brad Parsons, MNDNR
Don Pereira, MNDNR
Eric Jensen, MNDNR
Patrick Schmalz, MNDNR
Melissa Treml, MNDNR
Frank Mitchell Sr., Lac du Flambeau
Joe Rose Sr., Bad River
Conrad St. John, St. Croix
Aaron Shultz, GLIFWC
Adam Ray, GLIFWC
Mark Luehring, GLIFWC
Brian Borkholder, GLIFWC
Kia Hmielewski, GLIFWC
Terry St. Germaine, Lac du Flambeau
Thomas Howes, Fond du Lac

In addition to attendees, listed below are three legislators present.

Sen. Andrew Mathews
Sen. Carrie Ruud, Sen. District 10
Rep. Sondra Erickson, House 15A, on behalf of chair Fabian

1. **Welcome and Introductions.** The meeting started at 10:15 am. Jon Gilbert welcomed and opened the meeting. Everyone introduced themselves, and a sign-in sheet was passed around. Brian Borkholder welcomed everyone to FDL.
2. **Meeting Purpose:** The October meeting is an extra meeting that allows for an initial review of the survey and harvest data to begin preparing for the January meeting. Agree on assignments to modeling subcommittee.
3. **Agenda Approval:** Approved as distributed. **Attached**
4. **Approval of minutes.** The committee discussed how to review and approve minutes. Current process is different than in the protocols. Consensus was reached on the following process: co-chairs will write the meeting report. The Fisheries Committee will review and comment. Co-

chairs will modify report based on comments and bring it back to the subsequent fisheries meeting for distribution.

5. Harvest Update

- a. **State-** (Eric Jensen) The open water creel will end on October 31, 2017. Walleye mortality was 53,256 lbs. Much of this kill was as a result of hooking mortality. Northern Pike and yellow perch poundage were also noted. Tullibee and Burbot harvest were low. There was a brief discussion of the value of counting fish houses. DNR no longer counts houses due to changes in the fish house use (more temporary houses, fewer permanent houses). Winter fishing pressure is now measured in a similar manner as the summer access-based creel by treating cars coming off the ice like boats in off the water. MNDNR noted that an internal review and external review of the creel survey have been conducted, and these can be provided to the Bands when finalized. John Hoenig suggested that continuing to track houses could still be useful for comparative information with historical data. MNDNR agreed to share the creel survey form for reference (attached). Creel summary and creel survey review attached.
- b. **Bands-** Mark Luehring. Total Band harvest to date was 14,462.6 lbs of walleye, 2,863.5 pounds of northern pike, and 794.4 pounds of yellow perch. Fall harvest so far was 526.1 pounds of walleye and 28.6 pounds of northern pike (attached).
- c. **Other-** None.

6. Fall assessment-

- a. **State-** Eric Jensen. 2016 year-class didn't look very strong in electrofishing. 2017 year-class looked reasonably strong in both electrofishing and fall assessment gill nets, but did not look strong in the forage nets. Year-classes typically are not established until age 2. Mature walleye biomass increased in both inshore and offshore gill nets. Ninety percent of the females in the 2013 year-class are mature. Historically maturity for age-4 females ranged between 50 and 90 percent. A slight increase in mature males was also observed. Age frequency histogram showed that the 2013 year-class was the dominant age class present in gill nets. Walleye over 20 inches were in very poor condition second worst on record. Condition of smaller and medium size walleye improved compared to last year. In the forage nets, age-0 yellow perch were present in good age-0 Tullibee were higher than in some years, age-1 Tullibee were very low. Forage nets cover a wide variety of habitat and area and are designed to catch fish from all over the water column. MNDNR will provide a document describing the sampling protocol for the forage gill net surveys (attached).
- b. **Bands EF results-** Mark Luehring reviewed GLIFWC fall survey results. Attached. The 2017 year-class looked fairly strong (35.8 age-0 walleye per mile in 2017; median 25.6, range 8.38-187.54 age-0 walleye per mile between 1993 – 2016), but, as noted above measures of year-class strength are highly variable until fish reach age 2. The 2016 year-class appeared weak (1.8 age-1 walleye per mile in 2017; median 5.13, range ~0.5-30.2 age-1 walleye per mile of shoreline between 1993-2016).
- c. **Other: MNDNR OTC study.** Age-0 walleye were collected by the State and Bands to assess for OTC marks. The purpose of the study to estimate wild fry production. MNDNR will continue stocking fry marked with OTC for a few more years.

11:50 break for lunch.

7. **Fall 2017 gillnet benchmarks-** Patrick Schmalz presented on the status of the walleye resource. Spawning stock biomass from 52 nets was 18.9 pounds per net. Jon G. asked about variation around the data points. Patrick Schmalz and Missy Trembl stated that a bootstrapping method has been developed to show the variance and error bars could be shown on the graph (updated graph is attached). John Hoenig noted that this years' catch only represents one data point and thus we must be cautious. Juvenile index was 1.16; an index value below 1 indicates poor juvenile abundance. Age 0, Age 1, and Age 2 metrics were above median (from 2002-2013), while Age 3 was well below the median. Attached power point.
8. **Preliminary Stock Assessment Model-**Patrick Schmalz. The number of walleyes 14 inches and longer is starting to decline since the 2013 YC has already recruited. Estimated spawning stock biomass and numbers were also shown. Male and female spawning stock biomass are predicted to increase in 2018. Male spawning stock number (SSN) is predicted to decline slightly in 2018, while female SSN is predicted to increase. Age composition graph shows high abundance for 2013 year-class (on average, >5 age-4 walleye per net), not very high for year classes (on average, <2 walleye per net for each year class). Male and female SSB are projected to increase in 2018. Attached power point.
9. **Initial Discussion on Status of 2018 Fishery-** John Hoenig suggested considering long-term policy now so that discussions are not unduly influenced by outside pressure. There was much discussion about the inter-relatedness of the state and tribal fisheries, and how fisheries would be prioritized when the population reached the recovery phase. Based on the recovery tree classification agreed to during the August 2017 meeting, the walleye population will be in the Low category for the 2018 fishing season. This is an improvement from the Very Low category for the 2017 fishing season. Specifically, the gill net survey in 2017, on average, yielded 18.9 lbs of walleye per net and the recruitment index value was 1.16. Combined these two metrics put the population in the Low category for 2018. Questions were asked by Jonathan Gilbert about whether the 2017 gill net catches would be a peak that will decline quickly in the next year as happened in 2007 and 2011.
10. **Modeling subcommittee** presented slides- asked for feedback on goals for the walleye fishery. The tribes and the State agreed to meet separately, possibly prior to the January meeting, to each develop a list of possible management actions that could be used to achieve the goal of classifying the lake in the 'recovered' status. Subcommittee agreed to provide a list of management actions that have been used in the past and some suggested for the future, and both groups agreed to consider the options and provide feedback. (Attached power point.)
11. **Other Updates** Missy Trembl gave an overview of the review of the States creel survey technique conducted by MSU (See attached). Don P. stated that this is the meeting at which the State normally provides the Bands with the rules for the winter ice-fishing season. The State is proposing a 20-22 inch harvest slot or one fish over 26 inches, with one fish bag limit. This slot size is designed to avoid the 2013 year-class. The state additionally proposed that harvested fish 26+ inches not count against the allocation. The state noted that not many anglers may be interested in harvesting fish over 26 inches. State agreed to provide data in support of the proposal that the harvest of 26 inch and larger fish not count against the quota. Bands agreed to review as quickly as possible and provide feedback.
12. **Identify steps to prepare for January meeting.** The meeting date is January 17 and 18 at the Brainerd Arboretum. Data exchange and analyses will be similar to last year.

13. **Open Discussion** - none

14. **Adjourned** at 2:10 pm