

Agenda
Minnesota 1837 Fisheries Committee
October 25, 2018, 10:00am
Fond du Lac Resource Management Building, Cloquet, MN

1. Welcome and Introductions

The group was welcomed to FDL. Introductions were made.

2. Meeting purpose (Leadership Team)

The group noted that the main purpose for this meeting was to review the recently acquired survey data, and prepare for the January meeting.

3. Agenda approval

The agenda was approved. The group agreed to discuss the State's winter fishery under item 9.

4. Approval of July minutes & discussion on timeframe/process for future minutes

The group noted that the timeframe and process for future minutes has been agreed to and is working well. This agenda item was a carry-over item from the fall 2017 meeting.

5. Harvest update

a. State (Eric)

Eric J. reported on the State harvest for the 2018 fishing season. Total walleye kill was estimated at 44,082 lbs, yellow perch kill was 2,895 lbs, and northern pike kill was 12,876 lbs. Eric noted that burbot and tullibee catch and kill was very low. Most of the walleye kill from the State fishery occurred as a result of hooking mortality during the summer months. There was a thorough discussion hypothesizing why the State kill was lower during 2018. Some of the main reasons for the lower kill included lower catch rates, and lower effort during the summer compared to past years. The group also discussed that the number of fish released is derived from angler interviews with creel clerks. The modelling subcommittee was assigned the task of exploring the potential biases in the release numbers. State underage was approximately 43,000 lb (creel survey still in progress at time of meeting). Anticipate that 2018 fishing season underage will offset all previous State overages under the Consensus Plan.

b. Bands (Ben)

GLIFWC passed around the harvest summary for the Bands' 2018 fishing season. As of October 23, 2018, the Band harvest was 28,028 lbs of walleye, 708 lbs of northern pike, and 36.2 pounds of yellow perch. GLIFWC noted that a small amount of additional harvest may yet occur prior to ice up.

c. Other

6. Fall Assessment Results for Walleye

a. State (Eric) GN/EF/Forage results

Eric J. reviewed the fall assessment results. He noted that the lbs per net of spawners in the 52 gill nets was 27.7 lbs. This is the first year since 2010 that this metric has exceeded the 20 lbs per net long term goal agreed to by the committee. Many of the walleye population metrics looked positive in the fall assessment. Gillnet catches for the 2016 and 2017 year-classes were near average. Electrofishing CUE of YOY walleye was similar to last year and forage net CUE of YOY walleye were higher than last year. Eric also noted that the forage index netting showed lower catches of some key forage fish than in 2017, and that condition of small and medium size walleye was lower than in 2017.

b. Bands (Mark) EF results

Mark L. reviewed GLIFWC fall electrofishing results. GLIFWC was able to survey most of the shoreline in 2018. Overall, catch rates of Age 0 and Age 1 walleye were slightly below average for the GLIFWC fall survey.

7. Spring population estimate

Tom J. reviewed an initial summary of the walleye population estimate generated by Carl Schwarz. The preferred estimate was the estimate stratified by sex only (727,000 walleye over 14 inches). This estimate is similar to what the split-sex SCAA model was predicting last January (709,000). MNDNR will share the final report when it is completed.

8. Discuss Fall 2018 gillnet benchmarks for walleye relative to Walleye Recovery Decision Tree

a. Mature spawning stock

The group noted that the mature spawning stock gill net catch of walleye in the 52 assessment nets (27.7 lbs per net) was above the 20 lbs per net long-term goal set by the committee, and also above the 26 lbs per net benchmark meant to indicate a substantial adult population.

b. Juvenile recruitment index

The juvenile index of age 0-3 walleye was 1.13 which is above the level (1) that could be cause for concern. The 2016 and 2017 year-classes were caught at average to above average levels in the 2018 gillnet assessment, bringing the index above 1. There was much discussion about potential simulations of the Mille Lacs walleye population with different juvenile index values. The subcommittee will consider an analysis to review the population response to different juvenile indices.

9. Initial discussions on status of the 2019 fishery

Brad P. discussed the State's plan for the 2018-2019 winter fishery. He noted that the increase in walleye spawner biomass shown in the assessment gillnets was encouraging, and provided hope for an increased harvestable surplus in the upcoming fishing year. He also noted that the State kill in 2018 appears that it will be low enough to offset overages from the 2016 and 2017 fishing seasons. MNDNR wanted to have a conservative winter season that would allow some harvest, but still preserve some open water opportunity for the summer fishery. Brad noted that he was leaning toward implementing a 1 bag limit with a 21-23 harvest slot. He estimated that this regulation package would result in a winter harvest of 8,000-16,000 lbs. The Bands expressed appreciation that the State was taking a fairly conservative approach to the winter fishery, and did not object to the proposed regulations.

10. Modeling Subgroup Update

a. Update on management strategy evaluation process

The subgroup updated the full committee on its progress on the management strategy evaluation assigned in July. Overall, the committee has agreed to an operating model framework to evaluate management strategies. In the lead up to the meeting, a hard drive failure prevented the committee from having some example simulations available to review. The modeling subgroup will have some example scenarios for the full committee for the January meeting. The group will consider some potential harvest control rules to implement in the operating model, and seek input from the full committee for additional rules that could be simulated.

11. Other updates

12. Identify steps to prepare for January meeting

The group set dates from modeling data exchange in accordance with previous years' deadlines. A webex meeting was scheduled for January 8th at 10:00 am to review model results and prepare for the January 23 and 24 meeting.

13. Open discussion

Robert G. noted that the GLIFWC warden for the Minnesota 1837 Ceded Territory area was moving to another position. He expressed support for GLIFWC to fill this vacancy as quickly as possible so that the law enforcement presence around the lake would remain strong.

14. Adjourn

Meeting Attendees

MNDNR

Tom Jones
Patrick Schmalz
Missy Trembl
Brad Parsons
Eric Jensen
Tom Heinrich
Robert Gorecki

GLIFWC

Adam Ray
Joe Dan Rose
Mark Luehring
Jon Gilbert
Kia Hmielewski

St. Croix

Conrad St. John

Fond du Lac

Brian Borkholder
Reggie Defoe

Mille Lacs

Carl Klimah

Band Consultant

John Hoenig

MN State Senator

Carrie Ruud