

Minnesota 1837 Ceded Territory Fisheries Committee Meeting Notes

Date: July 10, 2019

Location: McQuoid's Inn Isle, MN

1. Agenda Approval and Introductions

Agenda approved

2. 2019 Spring Band Harvest Summary (GLIFWC) - handout

Walleye kill to date is 24,391 fish/45,169 lb. Quota balance is 17,031 lb.

Northern Pike kill to date is 446 fish/2,080 lb. Quota balance is 47,920 lb.

Yellow Perch kill to data is 155 fish/145 lb. Quota balance is 134,855 lb.

3. 2019 Mille Lacs Angler Harvest Update (MnDNR) – handout

Period 3 catch rates for Walleye were very high, over 1 fish per hour.

Harvest off Northern Pike and Yellow perch were low at 4,863 lb and 3,817 lb, respectively.

Water temperatures were cooler than in 2018 which helped keep hooking mortalities down.

There was some discussion about the reported average size (~38 lbs) of Muskie reported in the creel. This is likely due to low sample size of Muskie in the creel.

4. 2019 Spring Electrofishing Survey for Juvenile Walleye in Mille Lacs Lake (GLIFWC) - handout

The 2017 YC was sampled at median levels.

The 2018 YC was sampled at below median levels.

The Tribes are considering changing their EF sampling method as they probably don't need to sample the whole shoreline to get adequate data to evaluate relative over winter juvenile survival. They are considering dropping some segments.

5. Data Exchange and Review – done electronically prior to meeting

A. Mille Lacs Lake

1. Creel Survey Report for 2018 Open Water and 2018-19 Winter Seasons (MnDNR)

2. 2018 Large Lake Sampling Program Assessment Report (MnDNR)

B. Other Lakes

1. 2018 Summer Assessments (MnDNR)

2. 2018 Creel Reports (MnDNR)

6. Development of a new Harvest Policy (post Consensus Plan)

A. Review current harvest policy – described in the Consensus Plan

Plan runs through the 2020 fishing season. The FTC has agreed that after we do not want to return to the method currently described in Protocol 5 (24% of vulnerable biomass).

There was a brief discussion on methods used in the years leading up to the Consensus Plan.

B. Review of Safe Operating Space analysis (Hansen et al. 2019) – if/how to use
Safe Operating Space model developed by Dr. Gretchen Hansen was discussed. The SOS model was used to analyze how walleye carrying capacity and safe harvest relate to Walleye thermal optical habitat area (TOHA). TOHA in Mille lacs varied annually and declined over time due to increased water clarity. Maximum safe harvest was shown to decline with declining TOHA.

C. Discuss and identify potential components to include in new harvest policy - powerpoint
Components of new harvest policy – power point given by Hoenig.
Described how a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process could be used to test various harvest policies for yield vs risk. For the MSE the FTC would develop a suite of potential control rules. The performance of these control rules under different population scenarios would be evaluated using an operating model approach. Model outcomes would be compared to identify control rules that produced desired population and fishery responses. Population scenarios will include historic and recent productivity levels (recruitment). Recruitment patterns in the operating model will be described using the recruitment epochs developed by the Modeling Subgroup. Concerns expressed over the potential workload. But we think it is manageable, at least for now.

D. Timeframe and process for developing new harvest policy
The MSE will take considerable time to conduct. It is unlikely that it will this be ready in 2020. The FTC will likely need to develop a shorter term harvest plan for the 2020 fishing season. This will be discussed at the Fall FTC meeting.

C. Assign tasks to Modeling Subcommittee
Modeling subcommittee will begin working on MSE.

7. Update on Management and Research Activities

A. Acoustic Tagging Study (Mille Lacs Band and GLIFWC) – handout & presentation
15,000 detections per receiver since January.
Individual Walleye were observed to move around lake wide.
Receivers were placed in rivers to see if Walleye go into them.
MLB has tagged some perch, pike, and will tag some tullibee.
Future work includes habitat mapping.

B. DNR management planning process for State's fishery (MnDNR)
MNDNR is holding public meetings to give stakeholders a voice in how we manage our allocation. This process will cover multiple game species, including non-treaty managed species such as Smallmouth Bass.

C. Update on Research Sub-Committee – handout
The committee is looking at how zebra mussels effect the population and community dynamics of Walleye. White paper outline distributed.

D. Muskellunge production and stocking update (MLBO) – handout
Muskie were stocked in Elder Pond to provide a put & take fishery

E. Proposed changes to Conservation Code (ice fishing)
Tribes will submit their intent to eliminate the size restrictions on the size of ice fishing/spearing holes. The State does not restrict the size of ice fishing/spearing holes.

F. Other

MLB shared that there has been increased interest in harvesting Muskie in open water by spearing. The current Tribal Fisheries Management Plan does not allow open water spearing for Muskie. The FTC will review the current Conservation Code, Protocols, and Management Plan to determine the current rules and restrictions related to Muskie harvest. Currently there is no method described in the Protocols to set a safe harvest for Muskie. The Protocols only define the process. MLB will likely submit a proposal for open water Muskie spearing.

Hoening suggests looking at contaminant levels.

8. Summer and Fall 2019 Survey Plans

A. MnDNR Assessments in Mille Lacs and Other Lakes

Water quality and zooplankton sampling. Light sampling. Zebra mussels counts. Fall sampling, EF, forage gn, standard gn. Did some SMB sampling in spring EF.

B. GLIFWC Assessments in Mille Lacs and Other Lakes

Fall EF in Mille Lacs. Perhaps some other lakes as well.

Tullibee tagging, fall data download from receivers.

9. Planning for Mille Lacs Lake Data Exchange and 2019 Modeling

A. Identify Dates for Exchange of Modeling Data

Final model Jan 15, first model Dec 20, data exchange Dec 6

B. Identify Staff Contacts for Joint Mille Lacs Lake Walleye Modeling

Staff contacts for Mille Lacs Walleye modelling – same as past

10. Next Meeting

October 24, 2019 - Fond du Lac hosts

January 22 & 23, 2020 - GLIFWC hosts