

Minutes  
Minnesota 1837 Ceded Territory Fisheries Committee  
10:00 a.m. July 15, 2020  
Zoom Meeting

1. Agenda Approval and Introductions

2. 2020 Spring Band Harvest Summary (GLIFWC) – handout attached

Tribal harvest was summarized. Total Walleye harvest was about 17,000 fish, 32,000 lb. Total Northern Pike harvest was about 239 fish, 1,200 lb.

3. 2020 Mille Lacs Angler Harvest Update (MnDNR) – handout attached

State kill was summarized. Total Walleye kill was 57,600 lb or 66% of the State's 87,800 lb allocation. Northern Pike kill is at 5,000 lb out of an allocation of 50,000 lb. It was noted that Smallmouth Bass catch exceeded the population estimate and that harvest is low.

There were questions about the Safe Harvest for Cisco. There was discussion about whether tullibee harvest should be restricted or if kill is insubstantial as tullibee have declined primarily due to warming water temperatures, and reductions in harvest won't improve population. The Cisco bag limit was already reduced to 10 from 100 shortly after the year 2000. There was a discussion about whether further reductions are warranted. The subcommittee will look at available data including forage nets, standard GN, and creel to determine next steps. Potential actions include a surplus production model and calculation of relative exploitation.

Figures 47 and 51 in the Mille Lacs Large Lake Report showing Cisco and Burbot CUE over time were referenced.

4. 2020 Spring Electrofishing Survey for Juvenile Walleye in Mille Lacs Lake (GLIFWC) – handout attached

Due to Covid restrictions, only FDL was able to perform spring EF. A revised, reduced sampling protocol was followed. Stations were broken into 30 minute stations. Less than 30 small Walleye were collected in 3 nights. There was discussion on why spring EF was reinstated (identify overwinter mortality) and the utility of the survey.

5. Data Exchange and Review

A. Mille Lacs Lake

1. Creel Survey Report for 2019 Open Water and 2019-20 Winter Seasons (MnDNR) – emailed prior to meeting
2. 2019 Large Lake Sampling Program Assessment Report (MnDNR) – emailed prior to meeting

B. Other Lakes

1. 2019 Summer Assessments (MnDNR) – emailed prior to meeting
2. 2019 Creel Reports (MnDNR) – no creels were completed

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

A. Review concepts proposed by MSG

B. Discuss and identify potential components to include in new harvest policy

C. Timeframe and process for developing new harvest policy

D. Assign tasks to Modeling Subcommittee

An overview of the MSG proposed approach for development of a new harvest policy was presented (attached). This included definitions for conservation cap and target kill. The presentation included hypothetical description of how this new approach could work including equity and accountability. It was highlighted that this approach still had signification challenges as the State and Bands have fundamental differences in their views of the stock status and stock potential. This differences will require negotiations.

It was mentioned that this will be difficult without some agreement on population goals.

It was reminded that the new plan will hopefully consider fishery goals more.

There was a lengthy discussion about conservation caps and population metrics.

It was suggested that we could maybe include BPIs to evaluate population health, in addition to walleye abundance and biomass.

Concern was expressed about unsatisfactory consequences with stability in the plan. Wondered if there was a way to adjust as we go. Concern also expressed about the perception if state has to shut down and Bands continued to fish.

The State and Bands will have to negotiate target levels and conservation cap.

It was requested that the State provide sets of regulations in October that MSG could evaluate.

It was suggested that it might be useful to put together a hypothetical situation and go through it and negotiate pretend target kills and caps.

The FTC did not object to MSG starting to explore the concerns expressed during this meeting.

The question was asked if there is anything specific in the proposed path forward that makes people uncomfortable or that people like. It was mentioned we could try to redefine the system by perhaps allowing the State to do a 3-year experiment. But this would require that the Bands and State work out some significant differences. This will be the hard part – what are acceptable effects on population?

7. Update on Management and Research Activities

A. Acoustic Tagging Study (Mille Lacs Band and GLIFWC)

Receivers were retrieved, downloaded, and reset in late June. Two receivers placed in streams were lost. The study will continue.

B. DNR management planning process for State's fishery (MnDNR)

A short powerpoint (attached) on the State's management plan for Mille Lacs was presented. It summarized the objectives for key fish species. There was a discussion on the State's Northern Pike regulation and whether or not more effort should be directed to the harvest Northern Pike.

C. Covid-19 impacts – incorporated throughout

D. Other

8. Summer and Fall 2020 Survey Plans

A. MnDNR Assessments in Mille Lacs and Other Lakes

1. Northern Pike Nets

Creel survey, water samples, fall sampling hopefully as normal. Forage netting and electrofishing, fall gill nets. No Zebra Mussel survey this year. Zooplankton collected but not getting analyzed this year. No water samples are being taken because there is no one in lab to analyze the samples and they can't be preserved.

Surveys on other lakes will be reduced (Covid) this sampling season.

Pike nets were originally set to get better handle on pike population. Trends in these nets are aligned with standard 32 inshore nets. The nets are not providing new information. Spring trap netting for pike should provide better length frequency data on mature fish. The State is proposing to eliminate the Pike nets starting this fall. The State will submit formal notification to the Bands via Jon Gilbert for a 30 day review period.

B. GLIFWC Assessments in Mille Lacs and Other Lakes

GLIFWC will try to do fall EF, dependent on Covid restrictions. FDL may need to cover all fall sampling. FDL intends to provide 3-4 nights of EF.

9. Planning for Mille Lacs Lake Data Exchange and 2020 Modeling – postponed until Fall meeting

A. Identify Dates for Exchange of Modeling Data

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

10. Next Meeting – October 27, plan on virtual meeting

**Attendance List**

Tom Jones  
Patrick Schmalz  
Melissa Trembl  
Tom Heinrich  
Eric Jensen  
Brian Nerbonne  
Brad Parsons  
Robert Gorecki  
Representative Jamie Becker-Finn

Mark Luehring  
Brian Borkholder  
Ben Michaels  
John Hoenig  
Adam Ray  
Joe Graveen  
Kia Hmielewski  
Kelly Applegate  
Joe Dan Rose  
Aaron Schultz  
Katie Draper  
Conrad St. John  
Lyle Chapman  
Carl Klimah  
Carson Ackley  
Keith Wiggins  
Harvey Goodsky  
Jon Gilbert  
Biidaasige