

**AGENDA**  
**Minnesota 1837 Ceded Territory Fisheries Committee**  
**Wednesday January 19, 2022 at 9:00 am**  
**Thursday January 20, 2022 at 9:00am (if needed)**  
**Zoom**

1. Introductions

The committee noted that this was FDL fisheries biologist Brian Borkholder's last meeting before retirement. Many thanks to Brian for all of his contributions over many years on the committee.

2. Review and approve agenda (Action)

3. Distribute past meeting minutes (Information) – *Pages 3-21 of state book.*

4. Update 2021 Harvest (Information)

a. State – *Pages 23-26 and 35-39 in state book.*

2021 State kill 54,965 lb (allocation 87,800 lb)

b. Band – *GLIFWC Harvest summary 2021 fishing.*

2021 Tribal kill 51,356 lb (allocation 62,200 lb)

5. Update of 2021 assessment data (Information)

a. Annual Fall Assessment (MNDNR) – *Pages 29-34 and 40-52 in state book.*

There was some discussion about the 2013 YC not growing into the larger length groups. The discussion focused on whether 2013 YC females are growing slower or being truncated by harvest. Hoenig would like to see back-calculated lengths to verify slower growth. Fish have been in poor condition for several years. State has done several "indirect" analyses that suggest slower growth rather than truncation through harvest.

There was a discussion about whether this issue should be assigned to a technical subcommittee for review. Schmalz reminded the group that the current management approach is to let fish mature before harvest and questioned if this is a high priority need. Hoenig responded that it is related to the lake's walleye production potential. Shultz suggested that the state could move the harvest slot to a size range below the 2013YC to see if growth improves.

b. GLIFWC Assessments (Electrofishing) - *Handout 2021 GLIFWC Fall Survey*

6. Walleye modeling reports (Discussion)

a. Modeling subgroup summary

*State model results on pages 53-88 of state book.*

*2022 Walleye Model Reports PowerPoint.* Spawning stock biomass (SSB) was up slightly from last year. The 2013 and 2017 year classes make up more than 60% of SSB. Recent year classes were below average.

All models show similar trends in spawners, 14"+, and age 3+ over the time series.

7. Set 2021 walleye harvest level for Mille Lacs Lake (Discussion/Action)

a. Review Regulation Projections

Operating model approach was used to project one-year (2023) and multi-year effects (2023-2026) of harvest scenarios on mature fish and 14-in plus walleyes (numbers and biomass). The evaluated scenarios included two different open water regulations (table below) under two levels of angling catchability (moderate and high).

WINTER REGULATIONS	OPEN WATER REGULATIONS	Planned Closure
21-23 Harvest Slot Limit	Catch & Release: Catch & Release only May 14-June 30, July 16- Oct 31	July 1-15
21-23 Harvest Slot Limit	Limited Harvest: 21-23 Harvest Slot Limit: May, Sept 16 – Oct 31 Catch & Release only: June 1-30, July 16-Sept 15	July 1-15

b. Effect of 2022 harvest on 2023 spawning stock

*2022 Projection Summary PowerPoint*

State’s Fishery goals: maximize walleye angling opportunity, no unplanned closure, and allow harvest when possible.

Michaels asked if winter fishing catch rates were correlated with summer catch rates. Jensen stated that winter is correlated with early summer CPE. It was added that so far the winter CPE looks fairly slow.

Key findings:

- Limited harvest regulation is projected to keep 2022 State kill below the level of the State’s 2021 allocation of 87,800 lbs.
- Limited harvest and Catch & Release scenarios are projected to result in a similar biomass of mature fish at the start of the 2023 fishing year.
- Abundance and biomass of mature walleye are projected to decline annually through 2026 under all harvest scenarios. The “no fishing” scenario was projected to hold steady in 2023 and then decline through 2026.

There were questions about variability in projections. Trembl stated that the assumptions used in the projections are designed to encompass as many of the known sources of variation as possible and that assumptions related to effort and catchability tend to err on the conservative side (project worst case scenarios).

*Walleye Status 2022 PowerPoint.*

Luehring presented the “Decision Tree.” SSB for the 52 MNDNR assessment nets was 16.2 lb which initially put the population status category at level 4, but since SSB is not projected to increase in 2023 and the Juvenile index is less than 1, the final population status category for 2022 is level 3.

There was a discussion about current juvenile year class strength. The 2022 juvenile index, which is based on the current year observations of ages 0-3, provided a composite value of 0.39 which represents the lowest value on record. The YCSI (mixed effects year class strength model) which is based on the GN catch of ages 1-3 for individual year classes also indicated that the 2018-2020 year-classes are between the first quartile and the median, but not the lowest on record. Despite the differences in severity indicated by these juvenile indices, everyone agreed that recruitment of ages 0-3 appears to be low. Everyone also agreed that the walleye population status category is in level 3 which represents a decline from 2021 when the population status category was in level 4.

c. 2022 walleye harvest level for Mille Lacs Lake

The Bands and State agree that population status warrants a harvestable surplus level lower than last year.

The Bands and State agreed that the following conditions will apply to the 2022 fishing season (December 1, 2021 – November 30, 2022).

- Messaging should be consistent and collaborative. Work together to develop talking points and press releases.

- Regular meetings during the season for State-Tribal discussion on walleye kill and projections. First meeting will occur after completion of the winter season.
- 2022 Harvestable surplus for walleye in Mille Lacs Lake will be set at 135,000 lb with no quota overruns. The resulting quotas will be 80,300 lbs for the State and 54,700 lbs for the Bands.

This agreement does not set a precedent regarding future quota overruns.

TremI will run projections for 135,000 lb and send results to the Bands.

The State will allow the public to have a chance for input to regulation details, but the State's final regulation choice will not increase risk relative to the limited harvest scenario. If the regulation changes from what was presented at the FTC, the State will notify the Bands and provide analyses showing the risk associated with the new regulation.

Timeline for talking points and press release was discussed. The State will share any draft press releases on the 2022 harvestable surplus and the State's open water regulation with the Bands for their input prior to finalization. The timing of the press release has not been determined. Luehring has started on talking points and will distribute to FTC.

#### 8. Overrun process (Discussion/Action)

- a. Recap December 16 and January 4 discussions – did not discuss.
- b. Next steps – FTC still needs to develop an overrun plan, but it is not urgent for this year as no overage is allowed in 2022.

#### 9. Northern pike information (Discussion)

- a. Northern Pike surplus production models – GLIFWC

Handout – *GLIFWC NOPmodel2022* - 2021 pike harvest was the lowest observed. MSY is still approximately 30,000 lb. Fishing intensity is lower than MSY. The model estimated 2022 pike population is the highest observed. Model estimates of the northern pike biomass are lower than most recent mark-recapture PEs, but higher in recent years than gill net CPE would suggest. Although a harvest cap of 100,000 lb is not sustainable in the long-term, it is adequate for one year.

There was discussion about the current level of pike harvest. The State reported that State anglers want to maintain trophy pike fishery. Spearing in the past may have worked against this by removing large pike. A Season extension exists for pike in March to encourage more harvest of smaller and medium pike.

Applegate indicated that MLB would like to see another diet study and liberalized angling regulations to reduce the size of the pike population. The State indicated that both pike and walleye mark-recapture population estimates are scheduled to occur in 2023 and significant assistance from the Bands will be needed.

- b. Northern Pike 2022 harvest limit – no change. 100,000 lb total, split 50:50.

#### 10. Harvest limits for other species in Mille Lacs Lake (Action)

- a. Tullibee – stock assessment model

*Tullibee Surplus Production Model for Mille Lacs Lake January 2022* – Estimates of MSY ranged from 17,000 lb to 29,000 lb, depending on whether a rough harvest value was added for sport netting. Relative stock biomass was about 0.7-0.8 of Bmsy. The fishing mortality F in 2021 was estimated to have exceeded Fmsy.

There was discussion about the expected State fishery response to the regulation change (reduction from 10 bag limit to 5 bag limit). Jones shared results of previous analyses (not distributed) that indicated an 88% reduction if targeting anglers are redirected, but only 20% reduction if targeting anglers continue to fish.

2022 harvest limit – no declared harvest level. The State will evaluate the effectiveness of the reduced bag limit on harvest.

- b. Yellow Perch – Research subcommittee is working on new harvest level estimation method based on the general process used to set harvest levels on Lake Erie. Additional information will be provided at the summer FTC meeting with a target implementation of January 2023.

2022 harvest limit – no change. SHL 270,000 lb, split 50:50

- c. Burbot – State anglers must release immediately if caught. No harvest level set.

#### 11. 2022 Inland Waters (Information/Discussion)

Walleye harvestable surplus and threshold values – *Pages 89-93 in state book*. The Bands and State agreed to these lake-specific values, which were calculated by Tom Jones and Ben Michaels prior to finalization.

#### 12. 2022 Management and research activities (Discussion)

- a. Large Lake Assessment work – full staff at Garrison Fisheries office should allow for more thorough spring pike and smallmouth work.
- b. GLIFWC and MLB Sampling – plan to implant additional acoustic transmitter tags in muskies, and maybe some new walleye tags. Bass tags are all deployed. The plan is to pull receivers in June. A graduate student (University of Illinois) will be starting soon. The student will analyze movement data and address some physiology questions.
- c. Other – Plan a future meeting (perhaps summer 2022) where we invite some outside people with system change experience to get their perspectives. Aaron will take suggestions.

#### 13. Next meeting

- a. Set date and location for summer meeting (Action) – Schmalz – Doodle poll
- b. First creel discussion meeting will occur around March 14. State will send invite. Meeting will be open for any FTC members that want to attend. Still need to set the schedule for summer discussions.

#### Attendance

MNDNR

Brad Parsons

Missy Trembl

Patrick Schmalz

Tom Jones

Brian Nerbonne

Tom Heinrich

Eric Jensen

Dan Schermerhorn

Senator Ruud

GLIFWC

Jon Gilbert

Joe Dan Rose

Mark Luehring

Joey the Lab

Aaron Schultz

Ben Michaels

Adam Ray

Kia Hmielewski

John Hoenig

FDL

Thomas Howe

Reggie DeFoe

Brian Borkholder

MLB

Kelly Applegate

Carl Klimah

Susan Klapel

LDF

Eric Chapman – LDF Day 1

Lyle Chapman            Day 2