

Minutes
Minnesota 1837 Ceded Territory Fisheries Committee
9:00 a.m. July 14, 2022
Grand Casino Hinckley
(Virtual option also available)

1. Agenda Approval and Introductions (attached)

2. 2022 Spring Band Harvest Summary (GLIFWC) – Handout (attached)

Bands harvested 48,200 lb of walleye from 54,700 lb quota. Pike and perch harvests were low.

Spearing CPE increased in 2013 with change in length regulations. Gillnet CPE increased with recruitment of 2013 YC in 2017 and 2018.

3. 2022 Mille Lacs Angler Harvest Update (MnDNR) – Handout (attached)

Pressure and catch rate were low compared to the last few years. Winter kill was 6,800 lbs, and summer kill through June 30 was 6,400 lbs. Total kill as of June 30 was 13,201 lb, compared to 48,000 lb at this time last year. Summer catch rates have been about 0.15/hr, about half of last year. Effort was 1.9 million a-hrs compared to 2.5 million at this time last year. To date, water temperatures have been cooler than last year.

4. State angler Walleye regulation – proposed change (MnDNR)

The State's in-season projection estimates that State kill will be substantially lower than the kill estimated by the pre-season projection that assumed angling catchability similar to 2020. As a result, the State feels the opportunity for harvest can be expanded without increasing the risk of the State's fishery exceeding its quota. This is consistent with goals in the State's Mille Lacs Management Plan. The State considered two potential options for increasing fall (September 1 through November 30) harvest opportunity: 1) increasing the bag limit to two fish and lowering the one over to 26 inches or, 2) lowering the bottom of the harvest slot by one inch, lowering the one over to 26 inches and maintaining a bag limit of one fish. Public input favored options 2. The State sent FTC leaders a memo on July 1 describing the proposed regulation change (attached). The State has begun the rule change process, but this could be stopped.

Projections estimate that the more liberal regulation could add about 3,000 lb to total State kill. Even with this additional kill, the State will likely be close to 50,000 lb below the State quota (Missy shared a graph of State projections, attached). The intent of the regulation change is to increase fall fishing effort, which is typically a small component of total effort.

The Bands and State acknowledged that both parties have the right to manage their respective share of the harvest as they see fit (subject to the restrictions identified in Protocol 4).

The Bands requested time to caucus on this topic.

The Bands indicated that they intend to respond formally in writing to the State's regulation change proposal within the 30 days as described in the protocols.

5. 2022 Spring Electrofishing Survey for Juvenile Walleye in Mille Lacs Lake (GLIFWC) – Handout (attached)

GLIFWC and the Bands sampled approximately 60% of the shoreline. Segments 7 and 8 had highest catches. Total catch included 348 age 1 walleye and 189 age 2 walleye. The CPE for 2020 and 2021 year classes were above the mean and median CPE for the spring EF survey data set 1998-2006, 2012-21 year classes).

6. Data Exchange and Review

- a. Mille Lacs Lake – creel report and large lake report (MnDNR)
- b. Other Lakes – creel report and summer assessments (MnDNR)

Eric Jensen sent copies of the 2021 Large Lake Report and the 2021 Mille Lacs Creel Survey Report to GLIFWC (attached). Tom Jones sent 2021 survey reports for other lakes and a list of proposed surveys for 2022.

7. Resist-Accept-Direct Framework: a decision-making tool for changing ecosystems

- a. Dr. Abigail Lynch (USGS) gave a presentation on the RAD (resist-accept-direct) framework (ppt attached)
- b. Aaron Schultz gave a presentation on how the RAD framework has been applied to Minocqua Chain (ppt attached).
- c. FTC divided into 3 groups that were a mix of the various agencies and tribes. Each group was assigned a trajectory (resist-accept-direct). In addition, the virtual group was assigned all three trajectories. Each group reported back to the whole group.
- d. Colin Dassow (WIDNR) gave a presentation on a RAD decision support tool that is in development for walleye management in Wisconsin (ppt attached).
- e. Dr. Lynch introduced the concept of the ecological responsiveness and societal receptivity matrix.
- f. FTC discussed where we fall on the ecological responsiveness and societal receptivity matrix.

Overall, the FTC felt this was a highly informative and useful discussion. The FTC thanked Dr. Schultz for organizing the session and thanked the guest speakers.

8. Mille Lacs Harvest Policy

Purpose is to address loose ends on ML harvest policies. Ex. Overage plan

- a. Review & discuss current policy – current policy is year-by-year with no overage mechanism. The State noted that previous FTC minutes indicated that the current “no overage” is not considered to be a precedent. Prior to 2013 the Bands had 5-year treaty fisheries management plans, the State had plans with in-season triggers, and the Bands and State agreed to 5-year State overage plans. The State indicated that a benefit of multi-year plans with defined options is that it minimizes surprises. Jon Gilbert indicated that the Bands feel the current state of fishery makes multi-year plans pre-mature, but conditions do appear to be stabilizing. Missy Trembl suggested that by better defining plans and reactions, decisions become easier. An overage plan would help avoid unplanned closures, but the Bands are concerned that an overage plan could potentially encourage the State to use more liberal regulations and increase the chance of an overage.

State would like to return to multi-year plans. The Bands indicated that they would be willing to review new overage ideas proposed by the state.

- b. Plan for next year's harvest policy – process similar to this year will be used for next year's harvest setting.

9. Update on Management and Research Activities

a. Yellow Perch research (Research Subcommittee)

Subcommittee presented a PowerPoint on some options for establishing a new perch quota. Presentation was e-mailed to FTC members (attached).

Observations over time include declines in adults, recruitment and catch. The original quota of 270,000 lb is outdated and needs revision.

Thought should be given to the role of perch in the ecosystem. Would it be best to manage perch as a prey species or a fish for harvest? What are the trade-offs between using them to feed walleye vs provide recreation and harvest?

Potential quota methods:

1. Original method based the quota on the harvest in the 1980s and early 1990s. Applying this method to recent harvests (2013-2020), the quota would be approximately 6,000 lb.
2. MEI – This method estimates total potential yield on total dissolved solids (TDS) and depth and then partitions the potential yield by species. Perch are assigned 13% of the potential yield. This method assumes a fully developed fishery with no overharvest. Limitations of this method are that it was developed in lakes with no invasive species and on fisheries that were more fully exploited. An MEI based quota would be 76,000 lb.
3. SCAA model – This method uses survey, creel, and age data over time to estimate abundance by age. It is similar to the method used to estimate walleye abundance. This model was originally developed by Rick Madsen and was updated by Mark Luehring. This model showed substantial retrospective bias in the 2018 estimate after the four most recent years were removed, so it may overestimate the current perch abundance. Without population estimates it is difficult to fully evaluate the extent of the retrospective bias. The trend in perch abundance is more stable than abundance estimates themselves. Model estimate is 677,000 perch age 3+. Given the retrospective bias, it was suggested that the most recent estimate be reduced proportionally to the observed retrospective bias in 2018. This would reduce the age 3+ estimate to 210,119 fish. Assuming a mean weight of 0.68 lb/perch and a 10% exploitation rate, this would yield a quota of 13,440 lb.

There was a discussion over the purpose of the perch quota and the value of resetting the quota. Some FTC members suggested eliminating the quota and replacing it with something like a cautionary number or threshold that would trigger an evaluation of yellow perch population status and harvest management strategies to determine if any changes would be warranted.

The decision about the perch quota will be revisited at the October meeting with a goal of resolving the issue prior to the January meeting.

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

MLB is in the third year of collecting data. Tags were placed in juvenile walleye, smallmouth bass, and muskellunge. They are currently retrieving receivers and temperature and light loggers. About 25% of data has been analyzed. Analysis will be ramped up this fall.

c. 2023 Walleye/NOP population estimate

MN DNR expressed concern over staffing needs. GLIFWC committed to helping. No specifics were discussed. The State will send out a summary of the anticipated personnel and equipment needs (attached). Dr. Carl Schwarz will be our analyst again.

d. Other

10. Summer and Fall 2022 Survey Plans

a. MnDNR Assessments in Mille Lacs and Other Lakes

Mille Lacs sampling will include summer forage nets, zooplankton and water sampling, diving for zebra mussels, and the usual fall assessments including forage nets, walleye electrofishing, and gill netting. There will be no smallmouth bass surveys next spring to accommodate walleye and northern pike tagging/PEs.

Survey list for other lakes was sent out to GLIFWC.

b. GLIFWC Assessments in Mille Lacs and Other Lakes - Fall electrofishing for juvenile walleye.

11. Planning for Mille Lacs Lake Data Exchange and 2022 Modeling

a. Identify Dates for Exchange of Modeling Data -

- i. First data exchange Nov 1
- ii. final exchange Dec 1
- iii. preliminary model Dec 16
- iv. final model Jan 11

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

- i. Mark Luehring (GLIFWC)
- ii. Patrick Schmalz (MnDNR)

12. Next Meetings

- a. October - October 27, site to be determined
- b. January - January 18-19, State to host, location TBD.

Attendees:

Jon Gilbert

Adam Ray

Aaron Schultz

Mark Luehring

Ben Michaels

Joe Dan Rose

Kayla Lamson GLIFWC Intern

Tyler Turcotte GLIFWC Intern

Lyle Chapman

Conrad St John

Kelly Applegate

Carl Klimah

John Hoenig

Brad Parsons

Missy Trembl

Tom Jones

Patrick Schmalz

Tom Heinrich

Eric Jensen

Dan Schermerhorn

Brian Nerbonne

Abigail Lynch USGS

Collin Dassow WI DNR