

Agenda  
Minnesota 1837 Ceded Territory Fisheries Committee  
10:00 a.m. July 11, 2023  
Mille Lacs Casino

1. Agenda Approval and Introductions
2. 2023 Spring Band Harvest Summary (GLIFWC) – Handout  
WAE 28,155 @ 60,470.8 lb. NOP 1420 @5900.9 lb. YEP 1440 @ 1044.8 lb  
Tribal Gill net CPE for YEP highest since 2012.  
Some harvest at Green, Rush, and Goose in Chisago Co.
3. 2023 Mille Lacs Angler Harvest Update (MnDNR) – Handout  
WAE 37,933 lb, YEP 4340 lb, NOP 3998 lb, TLC 597 lb, BUB 0 lb
4. State angler Walleye regulation – proposed change (MnDNR) Handout  
State had proposed expanding harvest slot if kill was below 40,000 lb at end of June. State intends to change regulation if there are no red flags after July 1-15 creel period. New slot would be 20-23 with 1 over 28.  
  
Some concern was expressed that increased harvest would prevent further growth of the stock. A counterpoint was raised that the change in SSB would likely be small, and that reproduction does not seem to be limiting the population.  
  
Expectation is that increased kill from implementing regulations will result in total kill below pre-season projections for the initial regulation.
5. 2023 Spring Electrofishing Survey for Juvenile Walleye in Mille Lacs Lake (GLIFWC) - Handout  
Age 1 CPE above median for third consecutive year.  
  
High wind affected sampling efficiency and prevented the northwest corner of the lake from being sampled.  
  
Jon Gilbert remarked about the pattern of catches this year, and how Age-1 CPEs were different than harvest distribution. Group proposed looking at distribution of CPE over time to see what patterns are.  
  
Brian Nerbonne asked about the size of juvenile fish compared to past years. GLIFWC will summarize those numbers for the October FTC meeting.
6. Data Exchange and Review
  - a. Mille Lacs Lake – creel report and large lake report (MnDNR) – sent out
  - b. Other Lakes – creel report and summer assessments (MnDNR) – sent out
7. Resist-Accept-Direct Framework: follow up from 2022 discussion – looking for state committee rep to co-chair development of this process in terms of eco-systems, species specific, terrestrial extensions. Social side as well. State thinks there may be staff not part of the 1837 FC that may be better co-chairs. State will discuss and provide some suggestions by Aug 1.
8. Mille Lacs Harvest Policy

a. Review & discuss current policy

There was a good discussion about various walleye harvest policies and management strategy evaluations. GLIFWC and the tribes expressed a desire to see what capability the stock has for further increase. MNDNR expressed a desire for transparency to the public. This would help with setting expectations after assessment results are reported. MNDNR also noted that keeping harvest low represents an opportunity cost to state and tribal harvesters. In general, the committee seemed to agree on many aspects of a harvesting policy, but have not nailed down a firm plan. The question of whether the committee wants a harvest policy should be considered prior to determining what elements it should include. Mille Lacs Band discussed the importance of considering the lake as a gift, and setting policy that considers the ecosystem and the balance of the lake. Concern was expressed about a policy creating a commitment that would inhibit the committee from being flexible if conditions change. MNDNR noted that the policy would not necessarily have to be overly prescriptive.

b. Plan for next year's harvest policy

9. Update on Management and Research Activities

a. Yellow Perch research (Research Subcommittee)

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

c. MNDNR Musky Plan

MNDNR noted that constituents unhappy with MUE catch rates on Mille Lacs. Catch rates dropped as stocking was reduced to maintenance levels. Stocking densities are very low compared to other lakes Minnesota manages for muskie. Looking for feedback on potential changes to muskie management.

Prey items of MUE tend to be larger than pike's, but diet compositions do overlap.

Muskie do reproduce naturally in Mille Lacs, but a previous genetic study indicated that the majority of adult fish are derived from stocking.

Feedback from anglers on muskie management is mixed depending on preference of species they are targeting.

Kelly suggested that Mille Lacs Band might be able to rear muskies in their hatchery. Brian indicated that the State would be willing to share information with the Mille Lacs Band about their rearing methods. It was noted that the Bands would like to provide input and be involved in muskie management. This could help in establishing some muskie harvest opportunity for the Bands. Currently, there is no targeted netting or open-water spearing harvest allowed for muskies except for any ceremonial harvest activity that the Bands may specifically authorize. The state and bands could collaborate on increased stocking and sharing harvest, but would like to keep it relatively simple.

Feasibility is a question, and Mille Lacs Band was not sure if they could rear muskie every year or not. Carl was pretty sure they couldn't raise musky and walleye at the same time.

Pit tags would be useful.

Joe Dan asked about how increased muskie density could potentially impact tullibee. MNDNR noted that muskie diet data is being collected from other lakes. Using bioenergetics to estimate consumption rates. Stable isotope to look at niche overlaps.

Discussion to continue...

d. 2023 Walleye population estimate

Fieldwork is done.

Tagged approximately 2,200 pike and about 13,500 walleye. Sampled around 400 pike and 4000 walleye during recapture sampling, numbers that should result in reasonable confidence intervals for the estimate.

Strong E winds limited distribution of recapture.

Hopefully tentative results by October.

e. Other – Zebra mussels continue to taper down. Approximately 1/3 of maximum observed in 2012.

10. Summer and Fall 2023 Survey Plans

a. MnDNR Assessments in Mille Lacs and Other Lakes

Mille Lacs – Regular assessments plus summer forage netting. Zebra mussel sampling at end of July, monthly water and zooplankton sampling. Creel survey through October.

Other Lakes – Long 58-0107, Eleven 33-0001, East Rush 13-0069-01, S. Center 13-0027, Green 13-0041

b. GLIFWC Assessments in Mille Lacs and Other Lakes

GLIFWC – Plans to complete 12 of 18 electrofishing stations on Mille Lacs during the 2023 fall juvenile walleye survey..

11. Planning for Mille Lacs Lake Data Exchange and 2023 Modeling

a. Identify Dates for Exchange of Modeling Data

Final Data Dec 1

First model Dec 22

Final model Jan 10

Meeting Jan 17,18

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

Regular suspects – Patrick, Mark, Adam

12. Next Meeting

a. October 26 Fond du Lac

b. January 17-18 State