

Minnesota 1837 Ceded Territory Fisheries Committee  
Draft Meeting Minutes  
10:00 a.m. August 12, 2024  
Eddie's Resort, Mille Lacs

1. Agenda Approval and Introductions
2. 2024 Spring Band Harvest Summary (GLIFWC)
  - Walleye- 25,335 @55,920 lbs. (~85% allocation)
  - Northern Pike – 1,847 @ 8,775 lbs.
  - Yellow Perch – 1,652 @ 1,256 lbs.
3. FDL tribal harvest reporting protocols

FDL would like more time to ensure proper data collection and entry before submitting daily harvest reports. Daily harvest reports are important for GLIFWC and the tribes to determine permit availability for tribal fishing and for MNDNR to respond to public inquiries. MNDNR will use GLIFWC daily reports as a preliminary with weekly updates for any corrections.
4. 2024 Mille Lacs Angler Harvest Update (MNDNR)
  - Walleye- 26,500 lbs (29% allocation)
  - Northern Pike – 5,000 lbs (10% allocation)
  - Yellow Perch – 3,000 lbs (<10% allocation)

Observations: Winter angling effort was the lowest observed due to poor ice conditions; however, catch rates were the highest observed. Open water angling catch rates declined substantially in late June due to high forage abundance.
5. State angler Walleye regulations for the remainder of the season – (MNDNR)

Catch and Release regulation to start the open water season likely reduced effort and pressure. Contingency regulations with thresholds were determined prior to the start of open water angling. Because estimated take was below thresholds, on August 16<sup>th</sup>, state regulation will change to 2 bag 18-20" harvest slot to allow for more opportunity. Even with the more liberal regulation, MNDNR predicts it will take <50% of their allocation.
6. 2024 Spring Electrofishing Survey for Juvenile Walleye in Mille Lacs Lake (GLIFWC)

Low catch rates of age 1 (~0.6/mile) and age 2 (~1.4/mile) walleye. This was not entirely surprising given the small size of age 0 walleye in the previous fall survey (~4.5").
7. Data Exchange and Review
  - a. Mille Lacs Lake – creel report and large lake report (MNDNR)

Data shared with GLIFWC via email
  - b. Other Lakes – creel report and summer assessments (MNDNR)

Data shared with GLIFWC via email
8. Resist-Accept-Direct Framework update

Update will be provided at the October meeting.
9. Modelling subcommittee updates

Reviewed the age 0 component of the juvenile index metric.

Compared two different parameters as proxy for age 0 condition factor, which was not as strongly correlated to age 2 gill net catch rates as previously believed: 1) Age 0 yellow perch in the forage nets and 2) Proportion of age 0 walleye >6" in the fall survey. Age 0 yellow perch was better

correlated with age 2 gill net walleye catch rates, but it did not significantly alter the outcome of the Juvenile Index. The Modeling Subgroup will need to reevaluate how best to use the juvenile index with regards to the decision tree.

Review Safe Harvest Levels from the last 10 years.

There is not a strong relationship between exploitation rates and spawning stock biomass although in general, exploitation rate has been lower when the spawning stock biomass is lower. However, in recent years (2018-2024), there is a slightly negative relationship between exploitation rates and spawning stock biomass. These results suggest a need to develop a harvest policy.

Review SCAA models for retrospective biases.

MNDNR performed an extensive review of its SCAA to identify any problematic parameters in the model. There is little retrospective bias in the model when using more recent data (10 years). Population estimates are important to ground the model, however the frequency of estimates could be adjusted. The model may be improved by including time-varying parameters of catchability to account for within and between season variations.

Guiding principles for setting safe harvest levels

Goal of agreeing to guiding principles is to provide some consistency in setting safe harvest levels. Consists of fundamental principles to address high-level concepts and actionable principles to inform safe harvest limits. A conceptual model of the Mille Lacs walleye population and its management is also being developed.

10. Mille Lacs Walleye Harvest Policy:

a. Updates to the decision tree; potential for use of other tools to set harvest levels.

- Discussion of tools used to inform harvest policy. The committee is considering whether additional tools should be used, and if the decision tree should be updated.

b. State of MN desire for an overage plan or multi-year plans rather than annual harvest limits.

The State was encouraged to meet separately with Mille Lacs Band and Fond Du Lac to discuss multi years plans.

11. MUE management: Discussion of potential change in State of MN's muskie stocking and band's interest in harvesting this species.

Interest in state anglers to increase musky population in Mille Lacs Lake. Mille Lacs Band may have interest in hatchery production. GLIFWC questioned the amount of available habitat in Mille Lacs and if habitat rehabilitation/protection is part of the plan. There is some potential interest in tribal harvest of musky. If the population is increased, reliable population estimates might be needed to establish a quota system for harvest.

12. Updates on Management and Research Activities

a. Yellow Perch research update (Research Subcommittee)

No update at this time.

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

Receivers were lifted and downloaded again in 2024. Mille Lacs Band and GLIFWC plan to continue the telemetry project for the near future. Progress is being made to summarize and analyze data related to specific questions. Mille Lacs Band and GLIFWC expressed a willingness to explore questions that MNDNR might have that could be answered with current data.

c. The State provided funding to the Minnesota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Minnesota to conduct research related to Mille Lacs. Dr. Lynn Waterhouse hired a M.S. student (Levi Suchla) to pursue that work. Levi is still in the process of developing a specific project, with

specific interest in examining how body condition and environmental factors may affect yield per recruit. Levi is also interested in helping with assessments to gain experience and insight.

13. Summer and Fall 2024 Survey Plans

a. MnDNR Assessments in Mille Lacs and Other Lakes

Standard field season for MNDNR, forage nets, gill nets, zooplankton and zebra mussel surveys.

b. GLIFWC Assessments in Mille Lacs and Other Lakes

The fall juvenile walleye survey is planned for September.

14. Next meeting planning; interest from the state in occasionally flipping hosting the winter meeting due to state purchasing constraints.

Next meeting Oct 31<sup>st</sup> in Brainerd

DRAFT