

Sea Grant Regional Fishery Workshop --- Ludington, MI

Saturday, January 8, 2011 at Ramada Inn Convention Center

Workshop was called to order at 9AM by Dan O'Keefe, SW Extension Educator.

1. Chinook Salmon and Forage Base Update, Dave Clapp, MDNR
 - a) Three million salmon are being stocked in Lake Michigan
This is a reduction in Chinook stocking and reemphasis on other fish species --- coho, steelhead & lake trout.
 - b) Red Flag Analysis
 1. Evaluate the variables compared to historic levels
2010 --- 33% of the variables showed an imbalance
 - a. Salmon Abundance
 1. Catch Rate Indicator (Charter Boat Catch Rate 10 fish/100 hours); (Amateur Catch Rate 10 fish/100 hours)
 2. Salmon weir returns were slightly down in 2010
 - b. Reproduction
 1. 42% to 72% of the fish are naturally reproducing. 55% of the Chinooks are one year olds.
 - c. Growth
 1. Age three returns are down and average 11.5 lbs
 - d. Prey fish biomass
 1. Two years of increases in Alewife levels
 2. Smelt still low in all sampling
 3. Round gobies increasing
 4. Returning Jack Coho are showing a bit of decline in length
 5. Alewife showing up more in stomach samples
 - e. Ecosystem
 1. General condition is still sound; Alewife numbers look good for 2011 barring a severe winter. Gradual increase in brown trout catch rates, Coho same as 2010.
 2. Mass marking summary to increase from 1000 to 10,000.

Fisheries Management Update, Jim Dexter, Basin Coordinator, MDNR

- a) Lake trout regulations
 1. Three fish daily bag limit
 2. January 1st opening date for fishing for lake trout
 3. September 30th close date for MM 1-5
 4. October 31st close date for MM 6-8
 5. Size limits – Keep 20-25” (1 greater than 34”s)
- b) Natural Reproduction Study is ending
- c) Future Strategy evaluation now taking place to work proactively with the other states and tribes. Hold public meetings and surveys and partner with federal government.

- d) Mass marking will begin in March
- e) Fish Division Budget \$28.5 million---down from \$30 million in 2008.
- f) Early out saw a reduction of 20 people and only ten positions will be filled---overall down 80 positions.
- g) Cormorant Activity
 - 1. Increase take to 20,000 birds
 - 2. Citizens group cooperation coordinating stocking and bird harassment to save as many fry as possible.

Great Lakes Water Levels, Mark Brederland, Sea Grant

- a) Lake Superior
 - 1. Lake Superior long term Lake Level Average (LLA) IS 183.4 ft.
 - 2. Since 1999 to 2011 we have been below LLA
 - 3. Less precipitation has resulted in lake being down 7ft from LLA
- b) Lake Michigan
 - 1. Lake level is down 9ft from LLA
 - 2. Still above record low level in 1964
 - 3. Less precipitation has resulted in lake being down 9ft from LLA

Spatial Distribution of Salmon and 3-D Thermal Mapping of Lake Michigan, Ed Rutherford, NOAA

This was a very technical presentation of the science of sonar modeling. NOAA has developed a methodology of monitoring water temperature by partitioning the water column to gather information on the migration patterns of fish and in particular Coho salmon. The idea is that this methodology, accessible via the internet, predicts areas where the fish are based on the measurable factors in the model. Coho are genetically predisposed to migrate south in the spring and around to Chicago in summer then north up the Wisconsin shoreline and return to access the Platte River.

Invasive Species on the Horizon

- a) There are 75 species that are poised to enter the Great Lakes ecosystem from Europe and South America. The Spiny Water Flea is the most voracious consumer of zooplankton followed by quagga mussels.
- b) Focus on the five species likely to arrive next.
 - 1. Snakehead (aka Frankenfish, Fish-zilla)
 - 2. Golden mussel
 - 3. Killer Shrimp
 - 4. Monkey Goby
 - 5. New Zealand Mud Snail
 - 6. Oxygen Weed
- c) How will they get into our ecosystem?
 - 1. Need multiple introductions
 - 2. Suitable environments
 - 3. High reproduction rates and few predators.
- d) Asian Carp may not be sustainable in the Great Lakes because of quagga mussels.
- e) Report all invasives!!!

Offshore Wind Legislation & GLOW Council Report, Dennis Grinold, MCBA

Dennis summarized the recommendations of the GLOW Council which identified five wind turbine areas, 500 square miles, that if only 2% were developed, would provide 30% of Michigan's electrical power requirements. HB 6564 was introduced in the state house and died in the lame duck session. Leases would have provided Michigan taxpayers with three main revenue sources; site auctions, annual rents and royalty charges. Seventy per cent of these revenues would have gone to protect and enhance the Great Lakes aquatic environment.

Environmental & Social Dimensions of Offshore Wind Development, Erik Nordman, GVSU

Erik summarized the current public issues and concerns both in support and in opposition to the establishment of wind farms in the lakes and went beyond the recommendations of the GLOW Council to cover how communities up and down the lakes could eventually have offshore wind turbines off their coasts.

How Should We React If Asian Carp are found in Michigan Waters? Dan O'Keefe, Sea Grant

Dan conducted a Turning Point feedback and facilitated discussion on what should be done if we discovered an Asian Carp in Pere Marquette Lake. Opinions varied based on factors that impact on other fish species and the threat level as perceived by those present. He will be summarizing his survey results at the completion of the Sea Grant workshops later this year.

MDNR Fisheries Q & A, Jim Dexter, MDNR

Jim covered a number of questions but got the most reaction when discussing brown trout plants. Predation was high because brown trout smolts stay close to shore and not far from the area they were released. Birds feast on the small fish. Jim suggested that we need to consider the value added proposition and perhaps use the raceways for steelhead rearing. Great Lakes Musky planting will take place this year. Twenty thousand spotted & northern muskellunges will be planted in Michigan and Wisconsin as a result of these states partnering on egg taking and raising the fry.

Charter & Tournament Fishing Economic Impacts, Dan O'Keefe, Sea Grant

MCBA Random Drug and Alcohol Program, Capt. Dean Hobbs, LMCF

Workshop concluded at 4:00 PM.