

Lake Huron Committee

Eagle Crest Conference Center
Ypsilanti, MI
March 22, 2005

Executive Minutes

LHC Members

Chair David Reid (OMNR), Vice Chair Tammy Newcomb (MI DNR), Tom Gorenflo (CORA), David McLeish (OMNR).

1. Review of the December 21, 2004 Letter from LHC to LHTC and a Review of the January 2005 letter from LHTC to LHC

Representing the Lake Huron Technical Committee (LHTC), Lloyd Mohr informed the Lake Huron Committee (LHC) of the need for management agencies to re-evaluate predator stocking objectives and for more specific direction. The LHTC clarified that any successful stocking of chinook would need to include marking, strong estimates of abundance, reproduction information, reliable assessment throughout the lake (above and beyond the activities of the recreational fisheries), and a thorough risk assessment.

While the red flag system used on Lake Michigan may well be a good place to start in the creation of a similar program on Lake Huron, Lake Michigan's system mainly focuses on alewife abundance and is limited in this bias. Lake Huron's red flag system could be improved by basing it upon other fish species, but the management agencies need to describe the requirements for their system (e.g. focus on the evaluation of native fish species or invasive fish species). Tammy Newcomb suggested a system that also included green flags would be beneficial.

The LHC debated if a healthy alewife population is a suitable goal and what to do regarding stocking of chinook. Mark Ebener reminded the committee that alewife are not essential to chinook populations, giving Lake Huron's and Lake Superior's past history as examples. Mohr informed the committee that biologists and managers on Lake Huron are obtaining better understanding of the chinook population as well as gaining more information on prey abundance. Randy Eshenroder proposed that hatchery raised chinook could damage the naturalized stocks through direct competition in the lake and perhaps by diminishing reproductive fitness of the naturalized stocks. Jim Johnson recommended that all chinook should be marked, enabling researchers to distinguish between naturalized and stocked fish. Mohr and Eshenroder suggested that the fish population dynamics in the lakes are evolving and wondered if chinook will naturally suppress alewife populations. Newcomb suggested that the level of stocking could be decreased and still suppress alewife. She informed the committee that stakeholders are noticing chinook are thinner than in the past. Ebener suggested options of marking the chinook with OTC or pulse stocking the chinook, as has been recommended for lake trout, but no decision was made.

2. Lake Trout Rehabilitation: Direction of Pulse Stocking and OMNR Rehabilitation Plan

The LHTC announced it had come to consensus that pulse stocking of lake trout will not proceed at this time. The feeling is that there is not support for this proposal at this time, especially with the declines in the chinook fishery. There are concerns that lake trout abundance will decline significantly in some areas of the lake depending on the stocking schedule and therefore not provide any alternative fishery. However, David Reid informed the committee that OMNR stocking would continue in the main basin to help alleviate mortality rates associated with commercial harvest.

3. SOTL Symposium 2006 – General Directions

Reid announced that unless the committee objects, the State-of-the-Lake (SOTL) Huron symposium will proceed for 2006. Jim Bence volunteered to edit the SOTL report. McLeish will announce plans for the SOTL at the next CLC meeting in April. The LHC plans to follow the Lake Michigan Committee SOTL report format and expects the editorial job to be less cumbersome when utilizing the new guidelines. Jim Diana and Johnson will host a pre-symposium at the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Grand Rapids.

4. Lake Herring Recovery Plan – Review of Plan and Direction

The LHTC announced a recommendation for the lake herring recovery plan for adoption and implementation. They advised caution with respect to the areas of the lake where lake herring is abundant since as the population increases, so will the demand for harvest. Seasonal closure was suggested as an option for this fishery. The Michigan DNR has explored the option of hatchery production for population rehabilitation. McLeish said that OMNR is reviewing options for lower quota than what is currently in place. Comments on the plan are due in thirty days.

5. Environmental Objectives Timetable – Update on Status and Direction

The draft Environmental Objectives are posted on the Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights website and will be distributed to stakeholders and organizations for comment. Next, the LHC should decide how to incorporate the comments they receive. Lake Superior is going to create their Environmental Objectives document following the same process and formatting as Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. Lake Ontario is the only lake that has not taken any steps toward the creation of an Environmental Objectives document.

6. Research Priorities – Review LHTC List

The LHTC is still ranking some of the priorities and the final ranking will be announced in the future.

7. Scientific Writing – Discuss Need for Training

Eshenroder expressed concern that the scientific writing of agency staff is not as advanced as he would like to see. McLeish and the GLFC are discussing the possibility of a scientific writing workshop.

8. FCO's – Review what LHC Views as Future Path

Concern was expressed that re-writing the Fish Community Objectives (FCO's) at this time would be difficult, as the lake's ecosystem and fishery are changing greatly. Lloyd Mohr suggested that in order to improve Lake Huron's FCO's, the committee should investigate different types of FCO's and explore Lake Ontario's which will be produced later this year.

9. Sea Lamprey Status and Update (Handout)

Time did not permit for the discussion of this agenda item. The committee will meet with Gavin Christie and Dale Burkett outside of this meeting.

