

**Minutes of the Council of Lake Committees Meeting  
Crowne Plaza Hotel  
Romulus, MI  
October 28-29, 2009**

Attending:

*Council of Lake Committees:* Roger Knight (chair), Mike Morencie (vice-chair), Tom Gorenflo, Neil Kmiecik, Andy Todd, Steve Robillard, Stuart Shipman, Steve Scott, Bill Horns, Don Pereira, Brian Locke, Steve LaPan, Don Einhouse, Steve Hewett, Jim Dexter, Brad Eggold

*Invited guests:* Suzette Kimball, Russell Strach, Leon Carl, Kurt Newman, Jaci Savino, Mark Holey, Bill Archambault, Todd Main, Travis Brenden, Tammy Newcomb, Paul Horvatin, Mark Brouder, Pam Dryer, Mike Steeves

*GLFC Secretariat:* Michael Hansen, Chris Goddard, Marc Gaden, Chuck Krueger, Dale Burkett, Gavin Christie, Mike Siefkes, Scott Miehls, Laura Klotz, Kevin Ramsey, Gary Isbell, John Dettmers

The meeting convened at 1:07 PM.

**Revision of the GLFC's Strategic Vision.** Gary Isbell provided an overview of the commission's review of its strategic vision. Isbell reminded the CLC that the vision belongs to the commissioners. It is a strategic, not an operational, document. It has three components: healthy ecosystems, integrated management of sea lamprey, and partnerships. The commission has developed a steering committee that will lead the revision of the vision. During this process there will be input from the secretariat staff. A progress report about elements of the current vision will be prepared. From there, a draft of the next vision will be prepared. The steering committee expects to have a retreat with commissioners during 2010. After that meeting, the commission will seek review and comment from fisheries agencies and from a subset of the CLC. It is anticipated that the new strategic vision will be available during summer 2011.

**Basin-wide Research Priorities.** The CLC approved the suggested revisions to the basin-wide research priorities, which are now posted on the web. The CLC will not automatically annually review these priorities.

**Allegheny National Fish Hatchery and Region 5 Lake Trout Stocking.** The Service has received stimulus funds to proceed with reconstruction of the aeration tower. The anticipated schedule would have construction complete in early 2011, with test fish present through 2011. Lake trout eggs would be accepted in fall 2011, with the first stocking from ANFH in spring 2013. An additional \$1.5 million would allow for all outstanding infrastructure needs to be taken care of. Staff lines and operational funds will also need to be secured.

Until ANFH comes back to production status, the Service is rearing lake trout at White River National Fish Hatchery. For 2010, about 70% of the stocking request will be met, due to a shortage of eggs that were confirmed free of *Nucleospora*. Vermont has pledged that it will supply enough lake trout eggs for the full production request of 660,000 yearlings for 2011 and 2012. The Service thanks the CLC for its support through this process.

**Asian Carp Rapid Response.** Asian carp DNA has been found just below the electric dispersal barrier and in the Des Plaines River at a location above the barrier. In response, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers has increased voltage at the barrier to 2 V/in and there is expanded monitoring below the barrier with electrofishing gear and trammel nets. The electric barrier (Barrier IIA) will need to be shut down for needed maintenance for a period of 72 hours. Without barrier IIB in place, and barrier 1 being able to produce only 1 V/in, Illinois has decided to conduct a rapid response from the barrier to the Lockport Lock and Dam, a distance of approximately 7 river miles. Illinois is extremely gratified by and thankful for the support from the Great Lakes jurisdictions to make this action possible.

**CLC Advice Regarding Proposed Science Transfer Projects.** The commission's Science Transfer Program received several proposals in this funding cycle. The Board of Technical Experts has reviewed these proposals and recommended three of them for funding. The Science Program also will appreciate the perspective of the CLC on these projects as it makes final recommendation to the commissioners regarding funding. Project summaries of the three projects are included in the October 2009 CLC briefing book. The CLC concurred with the BOTE recommendations regarding these three projects and was especially pleased that two of the projects included funds to allow participants to travel to workshops as part of the project. The commission also maintains matching support to the QFC through its ongoing STP project.

**USGS Great Lakes Science Center.** Deputy Director Suzette Kimball addressed the CLC, reiterating the importance of the MOU between the groups. Dr. Kimball stated that the agency and she personally are committed to this relationship. The budget outlook for fiscal year 2010 is somewhat optimistic, although funding for the deepwater program is steady at \$5.25 million. The goal is to get to \$6 million. There are additional funds to support geologic mapping of the Great Lakes area and funds through the stimulus package for two new vessels to replace the *Musky II* and the *Kaho*, as well as to replace the anchor chain on the *Kiyi*. USGS leadership remains committed to obtaining the funding needed to provide the science needs of CLC. Dr. Marcia McNutt is the new USGS Director.

Mr. Russell Strach, Director of the Great Lakes Science Center, provided an update about USGS survey activities. At the time of this report, USGS had completed most surveys and all others were underway or about to start. USGS did not anticipate any difficulties associated with completing surveys of importance to the CLC. In addition, the center continues to deliver interesting research on all five lakes, improve vessel maintenance and safety procedures, and look for additional ways in which to work with CLC to partner on interesting research.

**Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Overview.** The GLRI funding stream is split approximately in half to a) programs in 16 federal agencies and b) competitive proposals administered through EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office. The program considers these focus areas: toxic substances and Areas of Concern; invasive species; nearshore health and non-point-source pollution; habitat and wildlife protection and restoration; and accountability, education, monitoring, evaluation, communication, and partnerships.

At this point in time, EPA could not tell the CLC when it expected the call for proposals to be released. The EPA is developing review teams to handle the proposals and hopes to award funds quickly in 2010.

**Legislative Update.** The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has been funded at \$475 million. Other appropriations of interest to the CLC include: \$1 million for mass marking operations; \$8 million for the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act; and \$4 million for the Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration Act.

Little legislative progress has been made regarding ballast water. It is likely that this will shift away from a legislative solution to regulations through the Coast Guard. Other areas of interest include keeping tabs on Oceans 21 and the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force. The ocean policy task force is seeking to provide more federal coordination of fishery management along all three coasts and including the Great Lakes. What exactly this might mean for the Great Lakes is unclear at present. The commission has written to the task force, informing it about how fishery management occurs in the Great Lakes and asking whether it understands that working relationship.

**Funding Plan for Mass Marking.** Funds have been appropriated in FY 08 and FY 09 for capital equipment. With these funds, one Autofish trailer and one manual trailer have been purchased. Some hatchery upgrades have begun, and a decision is needed about whether to buy another Autofish trailer or more manual trailers with the FY09 funds. As previously mentioned, congress has appropriated \$1 million for operations in FY10. Mass marking remains a high priority for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is developing a long-term funding plan to meet the needs of the partners. In the end, whatever funding plan emerges, making sure that those funds turn into base funding are what is ultimately needed to make the program successful.

**Update about the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act.** Since its reauthorization, the GLFWRA has funded 77 projects for over \$5 million. With the funds anticipated from the GLRI, funding for regional projects will be available for the first time (\$3.2 million). The Service is working to develop selection criteria for regional projects. It is anticipated that state and tribal directors will be the group that applies to this funding source and that basin-wide support for the project should be documented. The deadline for regional projects is likely to be early January 2010.

**Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership.** Full partnership status was conveyed earlier in October 2010. Ms. Pam Dryer has been designated the partnership coordinator. The Service is providing \$90 thousand for administration and on-the-ground projects. The partnership is also working to get a multi-state conservation grant to build science and data needs. Through the GLRI, \$1.5 million is available for administration and on-the-ground projects through a proposal review process.

**Update from the Law Enforcement Committee.** At its annual meeting in September, the officers heard about a case worked by New York and Pennsylvania officers involving illegal interstate transport of trout that were infected with whirling disease and infectious pancreatic necrosis (IPN). Essentially, this case occurred because the two states had different regulations and different places where regulatory authority lies. This inconsistency is an ongoing problem that hampers both effective law enforcement and effective fishery management. The LAW is willing to work to try to develop model regulatory principles that could be adopted by the jurisdictions in the basin. The CLC charged the LAW to work on this with respect to fish movement and disease and report back to the CLC when it has some recommendations.

**Impacts of Stocking Chinook Salmon on the Fish Communities of Lakes Huron and Ontario.** This research project was supported by the CLC for funding by the commission's Fishery Research Program. The goal of the project was to develop offshore fish community models for the two lakes, and to forecast the consequences of potential changes in Chinook salmon stocking policies. Based on the modeling work done, changing Chinook salmon stocking policies in Lake Ontario would have relatively minor implications for the fish community. Conversely, changes in Chinook salmon stocking in Lake Huron would affect both the biomass and yield of key predators such as lake trout and Chinook salmon. Lower stocking densities in Lake Huron also would reduce the risk of prey abundance declining below threshold levels. These differences are likely due to difference in productivity between lakes, and to the estimated amount of wild Chinook salmon produced in each lake.

**Status of Sea Lampreys Across the Basin.** In Lake Superior, abundance of sea lamprey spawners is slightly below the target for the second year in a row. Wounding rates remain above targets, but lean lake trout populations appear to be increasing.

In Lake Michigan, spawner targets were reached for the first time in 10 years. Lake trout wounding rates were down slightly. Changes in lake trout abundance were difficult to detect.

In Lake Huron, spawner abundance remains well above the target. Wounding rates on lake trout are not increasing but remain above target. Lake trout numbers are increasing.

In Lake Erie, the estimated abundance of spawners is well above target and in fact as high as was seen before control began. The agents are uncertain why this has occurred. The effect of the back-to-back treatments will not begin to be seen until 2011. Lake trout wounding is down and lake trout abundance is up.

In Lake Ontario, sea lamprey abundance is near the target and lake trout wounding is down. Lake trout abundance also is declining.

The agents continue to explore relationships among the various status metrics used to convey sea lamprey status and potential impacts on the fish community. As part of this, the agents are looking at how to incorporate effects of sea lamprey on the entire fish community, not just on lake trout.

**CLC Recommendation Regarding Proposed Technical Assistance Project to Mark and Recapture Transformers.** The agents have been wondering whether the survival rate of transformers has increased in recent years. Investigation of the data suggests that TFM is not affecting sea lamprey abundance during a 1998-2008 data series. As a result, the agents have proposed that a project move forward in lakes Michigan and Huron to release transformers into the lakes over a 10-year period. While this project would provide scientific insight into transformer survival, it also would intentionally result in greater consumption of lake trout and other fishes during that period.

The CLC discussed the proposal and was concerned that the effort will not produce more refined results. It also asked why both lakes Michigan and Huron would be considered. Mike Steeves replied that they are considered the same lake. Some managers thought that a 1% increase in the estimated predation on fish was a small price for additional information. However, when considering compliance with the Consent Decree, even 7,000 lbs of additional lake trout mortality creates large difficulties with compliance. It could be a huge management problem in Lake Huron. Based on this discussion, one option might be to support going forward with work in Lake Michigan, if reliable ways to capture transformers could be demonstrated without developing a lamprey farm in a stream and if the work could be done in 3 years instead of 10. CLC members will respond to the chair by November 6.

**Update about Lake-specific Sea Lamprey Management Plans.** Agents are working with the Lake Superior Technical Committee and Lake Erie's Cold Water Task Group to develop the initial two chapters. The CLC is satisfied with the process but recommends that draft plans be vetted through the lake committees before being sent to the commission for its approval.

**Determining the Next Large-scale Sea Lamprey Treatment.** As the back-to-back treatments on Lake Erie wind down, the commission must determine where another large-scale treatment may make sense. When considering treatment options in the upper lakes, it became apparent that treatment of a whole lake could not be done without jeopardizing control on other lakes. Thus, consideration of regions within a lake made sense from an operational perspective. After considering the options, the Sea Lamprey Integration Committee is recommending to the commission that back-to-back treatment of the St. Marys River and the North Channel of Lake Huron take place in 2010 and 2011. Treatment in this region will hit the area of greatest sea lamprey production in the basin at a time when natural reproduction of lake trout in Lake Huron

is increasing. It also is expected to have benefits to northern Lake Michigan because of the movement of sea lampreys between the two systems. After a thorough discussion, the CLC supported the SLIC recommendation to treat the St. Marys River and North Channel of Lake Huron back-to-back beginning in 2010.

### **State of the Lake Reporting.**

Summary of the *in camera* discussion: An important aspect of State of the Lake reports is that they provide accountability to other agencies as outlined in *A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries*. As part of this accountability, the group identified several aspects as being especially important. These include:

- The need for synthesis. This should provide additional insight over and above annual reports from the previous five years.
  - Consider ecology, climate, habitat, and other factors that affect progress toward FCOs
- The document needs to report on progress toward fish-community objectives.
- The need to produce a concise and timely report. Different lakes may have different definitions of what a timely schedule may be and how concise the document should be.
- The document must be scientifically defensible. Peer review by other lake committee members was suggested as a useful addition.

CLC members had differing perspectives about the format of the report and its length, but all agreed that these principles were important to include in any state of the lake report. Views ranged from the desire to be both accountable and simple to a recognition that a short, simple document may be no easier to write than a longer report. The CLC agreed that the principles discussed above will be incorporated into the draft report guidelines for consideration and adoption in April 2010.

**Update from the Quantitative Fisheries Center.** This update was not given due to the extensive discussion surrounding state-of-the-lake reporting. Dr. Travis Brenden did mention that the QFC is preparing to issue a call for projects of interest to the lake committees in January 2010.

**Great Lakes Regional Marking Committee.** The committee held its initial meeting in August 2009 and has met again by conference call to begin to operationalize mass marking projects and make recommendations to the CLC. Based on the recommendation of the Great Lakes Regional Marking Committee (GLRMC), the CLC requested that the Service purchase an AutoFish trailer with the FY 09 equipment funds, using the remaining \$300K to upgrade hatcheries to support AutoFish operation. The CLC agreed with the GLRMC recommendation regarding expenditures of FY09 funds and will forward its recommendation to the Service in the coming days. The CLC also approved the draft Terms of Reference submitted by the GLRMC, with the revision that the chair and vice-chair serve two-year terms.

Additional conversation recognized the need for a document that provides guiding principles for operation between the CLC and the USFWS, and in particular the Great Lakes Fish Marking Laboratory, as the mass marking process moves forward. Some representatives thought that the draft procedural guidance attached to the Terms of Reference (page 2-280c of the October 2009 briefing book) were useful, but some agencies may have different perspectives about the role of the various groups being constructed. Some individuals thought that a formal MOU may eventually be needed. The CLC asks the US Fish and Wildlife Service to flesh out its vision of the Great Lakes Fish Marking Lab for discussion at the April 2010 meeting.

**Update from the GLFER Project Review Committee.** The project review committee considered 11 projects and recommended four projects as high priority (Irondequoit Creek, NY; Harpersfield Dam, OH; Menominee River, WI-MI lake sturgeon passage; and Gay Stamp Sands, MI), five projects as medium priority (DuPont Ridge and Swale, IN; Beemsterboer and Seidner Ridge and Swale, IN; Orland Prairie, IL; Burnham Prairie, IL; Conneaut Creek, PA), and two projects with low priority (Calumet Prairie, IN; Amoco wetland, IN). The review committee also recommended that the CLC charge the lake committees to seek technical committee involvement to increase the number of fishery-related projects. This should occur during the coming winter meetings if possible. The CLC approved the proposed project rankings and agreed to charge the lake committees to consider submitting more fishery projects through the GLFER process.

**Wind Power and A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries.** With the continued interest by governments to develop green energy, including wind power in the Great Lakes, Ontario asked the CLC at what point do decisions by individual jurisdictions affect all jurisdictions under the Joint Strategic Plan? Discussion revealed that the Lake Erie Committee has put out a position statement on wind power. Agencies believed that sharing proposed best management practices at the lake committee and technical committee levels made sense to develop consistency among jurisdictions with respect to these practices. Both Michigan and Indiana suggested that a position statement by the CLC may be useful to help engage their internal machinery. Based on these discussions, the CLC agreed to 1) develop a draft position statement and 2) discuss how agencies may address impacts on neighboring jurisdictions at the April 2010 meeting.

**CLC Recommendations for Mass Marking Priorities.** The CLC previously indicated that priorities for mass marking, once operational dollars were available, included marking of all Chinook salmon stocked into lakes Michigan and Huron; marking of all stocked lake trout; marking of steelhead stocked into Lake Erie; and marking Chinook salmon stocked into Lake Ontario. With the \$1 M expected to be appropriated to the Service for mass marking operations in FY10, not all of these priorities can be accomplished. After discussion about what projects might be possible, the CLC identified the following projects as top priorities for implementation in 2010: support of ongoing Chinook salmon tagging in Lake Ontario; tagging of all lake trout stocked into lakes Huron and Michigan; fractional marking of Chinook salmon stocked into Lake

Michigan. Marking of steelhead stocked into Lake Erie remains a priority, but the need is not as pressing as the priorities selected above. CLC will forward these recommended priorities to the Service within the next few days.

**Determination of Meeting Location and Dates.** The CLC decided to hold the next October CLC meeting in Romulus, Michigan on October 27-28, 2010.

The meeting adjourned at 12:11PM.