



LVFIG meeting notes: April 20, 2016

Agenda:

- Introductions
- “Housekeeping”: Orientation & discussion of group agreements
- Overview of Lake Vermilion fisheries
- Overview of large lake management planning process
- Discussion of input group members’ key interests and concerns

Housekeeping items:

- Staff roles
- Public/private data
- Mileage reimbursements
- Input Group Framework
- **Group agreements:**
 - Critique ideas, not people
 - Have one conversation at a time
 - Ask one question at a time
 - Don’t interrupt
 - Check for understanding before responding
 - Respect schedules, but be flexible when needed (with group’s permission)
 - Nothing is wrong with disagreement
 - It’s OK (even encouraged) for Input Group members to communicate outside of meetings; do your best to include all members
 - If problems arise, let someone know!
 - Input Group members will communicate about the plan and the planning process with their communities and the groups they represent
 - DNR will keep high-level meeting notes; these will be provided to Input Group members to review within one week following each meeting; once reviewed and confirmed by members and staff, a final version of these notes may be shared with the public
 - DNR will demonstrate how members’ input is incorporated into final decisions

Overview of Lake Vermilion Fisheries

- See presentation handout: “Lake Vermilion 2015 Summary Presentation LVFIG 2016_04_20.pdf”

Overview of large lake management planning process

- See handout: “LVFIG Monthly Agenda 2016_04_21.docx”
- Note that this handout reflects the proposal to change original order of planning meetings. New order will be:

- May: Walleye
- June: Habitat issues
- July: Yellow perch & cormorants
- August: Northern pike, bass, muskie & panfish
- September: Finalization of plan

Discussion of key interests and concerns

The following items were submitted by Input Group members as key interests/concerns. Items were submitted via a brainstorm discussion during the meeting, as well as by email. Members are invited to continue submitting additional ideas to DNR; these will be further discussed and prioritized at a future meeting.

Management Plan:

- Setting target goals by species (e.g. angler hours, trophy size, etc.)
 - Annual report card to track progress toward goals
- Explore new ways to measure lake health
 - Involve guides in data collection
 - Increased test netting
 - Updated vegetation surveys
 - Other tracking measures
- How to speed up management responses
- Plan should include:
 - triggers to allow quick responses (with care to avoid knee-jerk reactions)
 - built-in milestones to measure health and respond to changes
 - mission statement that includes objectives defined by the planning committee; include encouragement to build a strong working relationship between the Tower Office and stakeholders
 - Objectives for maintaining a balanced walleye fishery with adjustments on a regular basis
 - Templates by species that include: objective/management goal by species; methods of measurement of year class (annual); what indicators would be considered a crisis or crash; report card/annual update.

Individual species:

- Walleye
 - Recruitment on the West End
 - West of Niles Bay
 - Understand gillnet data
 - Too many large walleye – impacts on small walleye and perch
 - Protected slot
 - Keep, change, or eliminate?
 - Minimum slot size

- Impact of regulation on size ratios
 - Stocking of fingerlings
 - Tribal netting of walleye
- Northern Pike
 - Special regulations
 - Keep, change, or eliminate?
 - Impact of regulation on size ratios
- Muskies
 - Stocking
 - Population assessments
 - PIT tags
 - Partnership/involvement with Muskie clubs
 - Public education about muskies
- Bass
 - Smallmouth increase on West End
 - Consideration of a continuous bass season
 - Whether to allow bass tournaments during the spawning period
- Panfish
 - Review regulations, consider potential adjustments
- Forage fish
 - whitefish, cisco
 - incident by-catch of game fish
 - other data, future research on forage fish

Habitat:

- Aquatic invasive species (AIS)
 - Prevention
 - Relationship to tournaments, movement of anglers & boats
 - Zebra mussels
 - Rusty crayfish
 - Impacts on aquatic vegetation, fish populations (esp. West End), spawning habitat, etc.
 - System for monitoring
 - Consider inviting speaker from Sportsmen's club to discuss their efforts at AIS prevention and control
- Data and assessments
 - Water quality monitoring
 - Vegetation surveys
 - Dissolved oxygen (DO) levels monthly by basin

Special topics:

- Tournaments
 - Consideration of a closed season
 - Safety, especially during Walleye Classic
 - Bass: consideration of catch & release (C&R) only, sorting and livewells
- Cormorants
 - Future management, potential changes
- Tribal harvest
 - Communication with Bois Forte and Fond du Lac
 - Data on tribal harvest
 - Fond du Lac's harvest plans and state's response
- Data on trends in fishing pressure
 - Statewide
 - How Lake Vermilion compares to other large lakes
 - Changes in pressure on Lake Vermilion in response to the situation at Mille Lacs
- Stocking data
 - Use of fry, fingerlings, etc.
- Hatchery
- Understanding biology
 - Cannibalism among fish
 - Correlations between biology & economics
- Fisheries management by individual basin, for all species
- Economic impacts of fishery on local community
- Impact of new Lake Vermilion State Park
 - Data on # of visitors, impact on fishery
- Speed & noise of boats on the lake (e.g. banana boats)
- System for communication between the DNR, Input Group, and general public
- Tower Fisheries Office operating budget
 - provide Input Group members with an understanding of financial limitations

Action items:

- Input Group members continue to submit additional ideas/concerns to include in the planning process. These will be reviewed and prioritized at a future meeting.
- Any requests for fisheries information should be directed to Edie Evarts; please submit requests as early as possible as it may take time to assemble and provide the requested information. Please understand that we may not be able to respond to every request, and will prioritize those that are most relevant for the current planning process.
- Media contacts and questions about the Lake Vermilion Management Plan update process should be directed to Edie Evarts (edie.evarts@state.mn.us) or Katie Clower (Katie.clower@state.mn.us).