



LVFIG meeting notes: July 26, 2016

Agenda:

- Check-in and housekeeping topics
- Last meeting with discussion on walleye until draft plan review
- Walleye population goals and objectives review
- Walleye regulation change discussion

Housekeeping items:

- Note on possible additional dates in September and October

Walleye population goals and objectives review

See handout

Discussion:

- Question on whether DNR could get even better and more accurate information by getting information from Tribal harvest
 - State can't force Bois Forte to provide data from on-reservation harvest, and they don't currently have that information
 - Will include available information on tribal harvest in the narrative/background portion of the Lake Management Plan
- Suggestion to break out goals/objectives even further to specify a far-west end (Wakemup, Norwegian, H.o.t.L., Black bays...sum 8000ac.) to emphasize more harvestable fish there.
- Suggestion that the size objective doesn't address concerns about walleye on the far-west end.
- Size objective should be tied to the regulation decision because that will determine what size fish maybe harvested.
- Concern shared that anglers shouldn't leave the lake entirely just because they can't catch fish off their dock.
- DNR note that setting objectives by dividing the lake into two basins is already an exception to how management plans are written; DNR does not think it appropriate to set up goals for even smaller pieces of the lake. This doesn't mean that certain issues aren't important- survey data is still examined on a finer scale when stakeholders have concerns.

Walleye fishery actions

Pat Schmalz: Description of model

Eddie Evarts: Refresher on walleye regulation change options:

- Current regulation: 18-26" protected slot limit
- 18-22" protected slot limit
- 20-26" protected slot limit
- 1 over 18"
- 1 over 20"

Discussion on possible walleye regulations

- Some expressed strong interest in 1 over 18" or 1 over 20" for the entire lake to address the far-west end concerns
 - Concern for this regulation, as the model shows it will fall short of LV spawner biomass goal
 - Suggestion that stocking could correct for any loss in spawner biomass; DNR states that stocking should be a back-up plan
 - Suggestion to change to this more aggressive regulation for a short time, then shift to a more conservative regulation
 - Risk that even in a short time, a hot bite could see the population harvested at rates that set the lake back and result in ultra conservative regulations to correct
 - Suggestion that this regulation would have to be framed carefully to the public
 - Resort association rep is confident the association would be very likely to support a 1 over 18"
 - Concern that anglers on the east end wouldn't like the results of a 1 over 18"
 - Suggestion that we should be clear if we choose this regulation that we don't know what will happen to the population overall
 - Suggestion that adding a minimum size regulation could help balance impact of 1 over 18"
 - Comment that if this regulation took several years to impact the population, perhaps it isn't really that aggressive; DNR stated that a risk does exist for a hot bite to change things in a single season
 - Suggestion for an automatic trigger point to be set to shift to PSL regulation if we use this regulation (1 over 18") and then spawner biomass falls below goal
- Some expressed preference for the 20-26" PSL
 - Comments that it's a safer bet to address population goals, especially spawner biomass
 - Concern that PSLs don't remove enough big fish, which is a perceived problem; DNR notes that while there are many big fish in the lake, DNR data does not indicate there are too many big fish at this time
 - Comment that LV regulation change was brought to the statewide Walleye Working Group, and that they recommended 20-26" PSL and thought 1 over 18" or 20" was too aggressive

- Comment that most anglers don't keep anything below 14" or over 22"; Conservation Officer states he agrees that guides fit that description, but he sees many others keeping a lot of 12-14" and over 22" fish
 - Concern that there still would not be many fish available for anglers to harvest on the west end under 20" with a protected slot; 26" is larger than most anglers want to keep.
- Suggestion that in the ideal world, we should do a 20-26" PSL on the east end, and 1 over 18" on the west end. Recognition it would be hard to enforce, but that guides could be eyes on the water
 - Conservation Officer stated enforcement would be a huge challenge, and that DNR Enforcement leadership may determine they won't enforce it if deemed too difficult; DNR Fisheries stated they would not move forward with a regulation that Enforcement wouldn't enforce
- DNR reminder that the fishery is healthy in general with a good abundance of fish and a lot of spawner (large) walleye and this makes it possible to provide more harvest opportunity, which is the reason for the proposed regulation change.
- Group consent to take the current regulation (18-26" PSL) and 1 over 20" off the table for consideration, and given no consensus on an alternate regulation, that the remaining three (18-22" PSL, 20-26" PSL, and 1 over 18") will be internally discussed further but will likely all be presented for broader public input. If the group is able to come to consensus on a single option, that recommendation would be brought to the public input this fall.

Chris Kavanaugh: Stocking presentation

Discussion on stocking:

- Comment that we need to try something on the west end...what harm would it do to overstock fry in west end. DNR gave examples of how overstocking can actually hurt the population.
- Comment that the data DNR is showing (#s from netting) is probably accurate, but anglers are just not catching fish on the west end, and underwater cameras are not seeing walleye either
- Suggestion for a trigger to stock if regulation changes seem not to be working; DNR states that is possible with fry
- Fingerling stocking felt to be beneficial to boosting the number of small walleye on the west end and has support of some members.
- Why not stock fingerlings and see what happens; DNR states that a concern about changing regulations and stocking fingerlings in the same year is that we won't be able to learn what works (now and future) – if both are done at the same time, we can't tell which action had which effect.
- DNR noted fingerling stocking would be at a very high financial cost and not likely to increase walleye numbers to a level that would be noticed by anglers. Reasons that fingerling stocking would be ineffective include the size of the lake and the abundance of wild young walleye which is already higher than in most lakes stocked with fingerlings in the state.

Action items:

- Input Group members are strongly encouraged to discuss the regulation options with members of their communities and organizations, and send any new input to DNR staff or bring to the August meeting.
- The August meeting will focus on habitat issues, including aquatic invasive species (AIS), tournaments, and other special topics.
- One to two additional meetings will be scheduled in September and/or October to ensure sufficient coverage of key topics.