

Smelt FIP Meeting

Date: September 2, 2020

Time: 3:00 pm

Video Conference (Zoom)

Meeting Participants: John Neate (President, Great Lakes Food Company), Brian Locke (Lake Manager, OMNRF), Rich Drouin (Lead Management Biologist, OMNRF), Michael Thorn (Fisheries Biologist, OCFA), Colleen Hawthorne (Administrative Assistant, OCFA), Jane Graham (Executive Director, OCFA)

Regrets: Ulysses Pratas (Director, Presteve Foods)

Agenda Items:

Jane thanked everyone for participating and asked Michael to review the items on the Agenda.

1. Progress Update:

Michael reported that work has continued on Action 1 of the workplan, which is to develop a harvest strategy with harvest control rules. More specifically, Michael noted that a smelt low trophic level (LTL) evaluation has been completed using the process provided in the MSC Fisheries Standard (v. 2.01). A Productivity and Susceptibility Analysis of the smelt fishery has also been completed in the event that we decide to proceed under a risk-based framework instead of a more rigorous quantitative approach.

2. Recommendations regarding smelt LTL evaluation:

Michael explained that smelt were not a key LTL species after completing the LTL evaluation using the MSC process. This determination was based on the formal analyses provided by the MSC along with some auxiliary data on current diet compositions. The smelt LTL evaluation had been forwarded to the MNR for review and we are waiting for the Ministry to provide feedback. Receiving MNR support of the evaluation would be the final step in the process.

Rich explained that he has received comments back from the internal review of the LTL evaluation conducted by Lake Erie Management Unit biologists and the main suggestion was that the LTL evaluation be reviewed by an expert in aquatic food webs, namely Tim Johnson (OMNRF Research Scientist).

Michael expressed concern over making the October FIP deadline for the LTL evaluation if an additional expert review is required.

Brian mentioned that the MNR can conditionally agree with the evaluation until more data is

available if an expert review is not conducted in time for October.

Rich offered to reach out to Tim Johnson about conducting a review of the LTL evaluation by the end of the week.

3. Next Steps for progress report in October:

Upcoming workplan items that are to be completed by the next annual report in April of 2021 are:

- Development assessment model with reference points
- Develop harvest strategy options
- Create plan to develop fishery-specific management objectives relating to stock health and environmental impacts

Michael explained that the development of an assessment model with reference points has been delayed in part because of the pending LTL evaluation. The possible suite of reference points that could be used with the assessment model will depend on the outcome of the LTL evaluation.

Rich asked whether we are still considering a workshop to develop and review harvest strategy options for the smelt fishery.

Michael said that we still want to hold a workshop with experts to review the assessment model and help develop harvest strategy options. The workshop will likely have to be limited to a few experts and occur online due to the on-going pandemic. Michael hopes to have a workshop early next year (2021).

Jane requested the Michael put together a workplan to achieve the upcoming smelt FIP milestones within the required time frame.

4. Feedback from Fishery Progress regarding the Draft Social Policy:

Michael noted that Fishery Progress had sent out a draft Social Policy earlier this year and that OCFA had responded to the draft. The major concerns were the resources and cost to implement the Social Policy as it had been drafted, also noting that the policy as presented was more stringent than what is required by MSC. Fishery Progress is revising the Social Policy based on all the comments that had been received and will send out an updated version sometime in October of this year.

5. Other:

Michael noted that he will be working on the Lake Erie assessment model concurrently with the development of harvest control rules because they are necessarily linked.

John Neate indicated that their company is doing size analyses and will send this information to Michael. The information could also be shared with Tim.

There being no further business the call adjourned at 4:00 p.m.