Lake Ontario Fisheries Advisory Panel Meeting Agenda
April 11th, 2023

1. Welcome/Introductions
2. Pizza
3. DEC fisheries management highlights
    - Spring preyfish survey
    - 2023 stocking progress
    - Cormorant hazing
    - Lake Ontario Atlantic salmon fisheries management plan
    - Sea Lamprey control

4. Angler perspectives on the fishery
    - Discussion on how the angler perspectives match with the creel survey results

5. Chinook salmon parentage-based tagging
    - Virtual presentation by Dr. Kimberly Fitzpatrick @ 7:00pm.

NEW YORK STATE | Department of Environmental Conservation

Meeting notes

Attendance

<u>DEC staff attendance</u>

Position	Name	Present or absent
Fisheries Bureau Chief	Steve Hurst	Present
Lake Ontario Unit Leader	Chris Legard	Present
Region 6 Fisheries Manager	Jana Lantry	Present
Region 7 Fisheries Manager	Scott Prindle	Present
Region 8 Fisheries Manager	Web Pearsall	Present
Region 9 Fisheries Manager	Mike Clancy	Present
Lake Ontario Unit Biologist	Mike Connerton	Absent
Lake Ontario Unit Biologist	Jessica Goretzke	Absent

<u>Other DEC staff present</u>

None

<u>LOFAP Member Attendance</u>

Management area	Lake or tributary	Name	Present or absent
West	Lake	Vince Pierleoni	Present
West	Lake	Bob Songin	Present
West	Tributary	Frank Campbell	Present
West	Tributary	Ron Bierstine	Present
West central	Lake	Jerry Felluca	Present
West central	Lake	Rob Westcott	Present

West central	Tributary	Scott Feltrinelli	Absent
West central	Tributary	Jesse Hollenbeck	Absent
East central	Lake	Brian Garrett	Present
East central	Lake	Mike Wilkinson	Present
East central	Tributary	AJ Sinicropi	Absent
East central	Tributary	Andy Bliss	Present
East	Lake	Tom Burke	Present
East	Lake	Mike Howard	Present
East	Tributary	Jason Hamilton	Present
East	Tributary	Vacant	N/A
At large	N/A	Joe Yeager	Present

DEC fisheries management highlights

DEC provided brief updates on fisheries management in Lake Ontairo

- 2023 Spring preyfish survey
    - The survey is underway and proceeding as planned. Research vessels from DEC, USGS, and OMNRF are all participating with planned survey effort similar to 2022.
- 2023 salmon and trout stocking progress
    - Stocking is proceeding as planned.
        - Pen-rearing projects have all been stocked or scheduled to be stocked.
            - Oak Orchard – stocked
            - Olcott - Stocked
            - Wilson – stocked
            - Sandy Creek – stocked
            - Genesee River – stocked
            - Oswego river – stocked
            - Sackets Harbor – scheduled
            - Niagara River – scheduled
        - Barge stocking for brown trout and lake trout is planned for the week of May 15th and the week of May 22nd.
        - Shore stocking brown trout is planned for late April through May
        - Direct stocking steelhead is underway
- Cormorant hazing
    - DEC has a contract in place with USDA to haze cormorants at Lake Ontario stocking sites. Hazing will focus on pen rearing projects, Chinook salmon broodstock, brown trout shore stocking, and Atlantic salmon stocking.
    - The 2023 hazing schedule will be similar to 2022.

- Lake Ontario Atlantic salmon fisheries management plan
    - The final plan will be complete and published in April.
- Sea lamprey control
    - Sea lamprey numbers were exceptionally high in Lake Ontario in 2022.
    - This is not entirely unexpected because several sea lamprey control treatments were missed in 2020 and 2021.
    - Sea lamprey control in the Great Lakes is coordinated by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and they contract with the Division of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to conduct sea lamprey control treatments in Lake Ontario.
    - DFO was unable to conduct any sea lamprey control treatments in 2020 due to COVID-19. DFO treated Lake Ontario tributaries in the Province of Ontario in 2021 but was unable to travel to New York to conduct treatments in 2021.
    - DEC partnered with USFWS Lake Champlain Unit to conduct treatments on the four highest priority tributaries in New York in 2021.
        - Trout Brook, Little Sandy Creek, Salmon River, and Grindstone Creek
    - However, nine tributaries scheduled for treatment in 2020 or 2021 were not treated.
    - DFO conducted treatments on all nine of these tributaries in 2022
        - Little Salmon River, Lindsey Creek, South Sandy Creek, Snake Creek, Catfish Creek, Eightmile Creek, Ninemile Creek, Sterling Creek, and Black River.
    - 2023 treatment are based on larval sea lamprey assessments done in 2022.
    - DFO plans to treat seven Lake Ontario tributaries in 2023
        - Trout Brook, Salmon River, Little Salmon River, Little Sandy Creek, Grindstone Creek, Black River, Fish Creek.
    - Some treatments are repeats of treatments done in 2021/2022. This is not uncommon and is based on post treatment larval assessments.
    - Sea lamprey numbers may remain higher than normal in 2023.
        - Should be lower than 2022.
        - Should continue to decline and return to normal levels as treatments are now back on schedule.

Angler perspectives on the fishery

Anglers provided their perspective on spring tributary fishing and the start of the open lake fishing season.

- Brown trout
    - Brown trout fishing in Lake Ontario was just getting started. LOFAP members that had been out had good brown trout fishing. Some of age-2 fish seemed smaller than normal.
        - DEC will continue to monitor the size of brown trout in the spring fishery and report back to LOFAP on the size of the fish in 2023 compared to previous years
- Chinook salmon
    - The Chinook fishery hasn't really started yet but a few fish had been caught by anglers fishing brown trout.
- Coho salmon

- The spring fishing season is just starting but LOFPA members reported a good start for Coho.
- Lake trout
    - Early spring lake trout fishing was good in some areas and tough in other areas.
- Steelhead
    - Spring steelhead fishing in the tributaries has been okay. Oak Orchard creek had some fish stranded in the by pass reach. Overall the steelhead season at the Oak was fair.
    - The Niagara River was unfishable due to dirty water conditions for much of the spring season. Other western New York tributaries also high unfishable water for parts of the spring season.
    - Sandy Creek had been very high. Current warm weather made conditions seem like the river was transitioning to summer conditions sooner than normal.
    - Salmon River steelhead fishing was good. Fish moved upstream quickly this fall/winter and stayed in the upper stretches all season.
    - LOFAP members reported a change in steelhead behavior in several rivers recent years where fish seem to run to the upper sections of the rivers quickly and do not spread out through the river. This behavior concentrates fishing and limits success in some traditionally good areas.
- Sea Lamprey
    - LOFAP members reported not seeing as many fish with lamprey on them so far this year.

Chinook salmon parentage-based tagging

- Dr. Kimberly Fitzpatrick provided a virtual presentation on her PhD work to validate genetic parentage-based tagging as a long-term monitoring tool for assessing the proportion of wild Chinook salmon in Lake Ontario.
    - Parentage-based tagging works by taking a tissue sample from all of the female Chinook salmon used in fish hatchery production (both NY and ON). These tissue have DNA extracted from them and the samples are used to build a genetic library of all the parents of stocked fish in the lake.
    - Then a tissue sample collected from a fish caught in the lake can be genetically analyzed and compared to the library of females used in hatchery production (i.e., a maternity test), if the sample matches to one of the parents is a stocked fish, and if it does not match back to one of the parents it is a wild fish.
- LOFAP members were able to ask questions to Dr. Fitzpatrick about how the program works then DEC and LOFAP had additional conversations about the details of the program.
- DEC intends to develop a contract to implement genetic parentage-based tagging to assess wild Chinook salmon in Lake Ontario with a goal to have a contract in place in 2023.
- DEC will collect Chinook salmon tissue samples during the Lake Ontario creel survey.
- DEC and LOFAP discussed how LOFAP members and other anglers can participate in the program by collecting additional Chinook salmon tissue samples.
- The 2023 citizen science plan for Chinook salmon tissue collections is

- One LOFAP member from each lake management area (west, west central, east central, east) will coordinate sample collection from six volunteers within each lake management area.
- Additionally, LOTSA and ELOSTA will have two sample collection volunteers each.
- Samples may be collected anytime from April 1 – July 15.
- Each volunteer will collect 30 samples total.
- Volunteers will be asked to collect samples from fish in three specified size ranges to provide samples from fish that are likely to be age-1, age-2, and age-3. All samples will have a corresponding scale sample to determine the actual age of each sampled fish.
- DEC will provide instructions on how to collect and preserve samples, all required materials, and training.
- Sample coordinators are
  - West
    - Vince Pierleoni
  - West central
    - Rob Westcott
  - East central
    - Mike Wilkinson
  - East
    - Mike Howard
  - LOTSA
    - Joe Yeager
  - ELOSTA
    - Brian Garrett
- DEC will provide sampling kits and instruction by early May.