

## FISHERIES & HABITAT COMMITTEE

### Virtual Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2023

**Members Present:** Phil Resch, Grant Reed, Ed Smith, Kayla Reed, Julie Janquart

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#### I. 2022 Fall Walleye Survey Results

The fall survey showed the year-class numbers for walleye to be at 6.5 age-0 walleye/mile which Greg Matzke indicated that “it was not a strong year” as he had hoped for. However, the 2021 year-class “survived quite well with relative abundance at 7.7 age-1” which means many of those will make it to adulthood. Everyone recognized a little disappointment in the results with Kayla reminding the group that it will take time to increase the reproduction levels as it had in the past also. Ed also reminded us that the other conditions including weather, ice-out, aquatic environmental, etc. play a role and these are things we do not have control over. Phil did question if there was any intent to look at stocking walleye through Mole Lake fisheries which the general response was that Greg Matzke and Mike Preul feel it is not warranted and their focus is on improved reproduction which will be more impactful and sustainable in the long run.

#### II. Bullhead Removal Project

##### A. 2022 Project Review (Pros & Cons)

Overall, the general consensus from committee members was that it was a successful year yielding lots of data from people who brought their minnows to the collection site. Julie brought up the topic of disposal to the group explaining that Deward Ison, would stop some days to take our collection site minnow for his trapping activity which worked out well and other days Gary Mueller picked them up for disposal. A brief discussion took place over proper disposal with most members believing burying was the best option. All members agreed that the timeline and process for the collection site operation was very good and should be continued in the same manner for 2023 with Ed urging us to put more emphasis on the importance of harvesting eggs prior to the hatch when publicizing the 2023 Bullhead Removal Project.

##### B. 2023 Minnow Removal Project Planning

###### 1. Bullhead Actual Observations: Large Schools Southeast Side in October (Ed Smith)

Ed explained that while out fishing last fall he observed an extremely large school of Bullheads (“size of a bus”) in the southeast part of the lake around Charlie’s and outside of the deep hole with Grant confirming seeing the same thing in other years as well. Ed wondered if this information should be shared with Mike Preul with Julie Janquart asking if electroshocking is an option to do in the fall. Kayla and Ed explained that it likely wouldn’t be an option as bullhead go deep in the fall.

###### 2. Adult Bullhead Removal Plan (Information from Mike Preul)

Julie reported to the committee that Mike Preul indicated in a recent message received that he is planning for removals again this spring, will be the crew leader himself and will give it a good effort. He also confirmed that this will be the last year of a significant effort. Julie reminded the committee that Mike would likely accept “ride along” volunteers as was an option last year. Ed then suggested that we possibly work on getting a volunteer crew to help and save on costs for Mike with no further planning for this discussed. Ed also suggested that in the future, if electroshocking needs to happen again and Mike is unable to do so, LMA may have to contract and fund the entire operation.

###### 3. Pursuit of “LMA Blanket Volunteer Agreement” Update

Julie explained in greater detail, an email exchange between herself and Greg Matzke (forwarded to committee members prior to this meeting), in which she asked that Greg approach his supervisors once again this year requesting a blanket “volunteer agreement / approval” for LMA in lieu of individual agreements. This request would cover LMA 2023 members and I proposed a “tradeoff” whereby LMA would be willing to confirm active members (names only) upon request or in advance of the project to ensure the DNR would know people who were eligible to harvest bullhead minnows and eggs.

###### 4. Data Collection Planning

With a brief discussion related to the importance of data collection and with Phil emphasizing our success in gathering data for use by Greg Matzke (DNR), the consensus of the committee is that we need to continue to do so. Grant then asked the committee’s opinion on not sending blank log sheets along with volunteer agreement forms, given the fact that most data gathered at the collection site with only 3 log sheets submitted last year. The committee agreed to drop sending the blank log sheets with the volunteer agreement. Grant also asked that when the 2023 individual blank volunteer agreement form is received from the DNR that the watermarks be put in prior to sending to him to which Julie agreed to do.

###### 5. Collection Site Decision: Yes or No & Preliminary Planning & Preparations

With Phil explaining that he will not be in the area until late June, Kayla informing the committee that she will not be available all summer and all in favor of continuing the bullhead removal project for 2023 with the same general programming, the following decisions were made and agreed upon:

- *Articles need to be written for the LMA newsletter (likely out in late May/early June) and the local paper (same timeline): Kayla agreed to do these in near future and send to Julie for editing a submission to paper and LMA newsletter. [\*Emphasis should include harvesting eggs.]*

- *Julie informed the committee that the budget for 2023 is the remaining balance of approximately \$3,700, from the \$5,000 budget approved by the LMA board for the 2022 project which she informed the LMA board as being adequate. She indicated that expenditures will be limited to that total amount.*
- *With Phil's arrival being late June, Julie agreed to take care of getting Yeti and Eats-n-Treats \$10.00 coupons for the collection site distribution with committee agreeing to continuing this incentive.*
- *Julie suggested waiting to acquire raffle prizes until later in the summer but before the conclusion of the bullhead minnow harvest.*
- *Collection site start date will be July 8, 2023 and last until approximately August 12, 2023 (dependent upon observation of minnow schools)*
- *Ed volunteered to dispose of minnows/eggs dropped off at the collection site that don't get picked up by Deward Ison.*
- *Details related to the actual collection site setup and volunteer schedule were postponed until shortly before the start with Phil volunteering to handle the first couple dates.*

### **III. New Projects Discussion**

#### **A. Shoreline Restoration Discussion (See flyers sent in earlier email)**

With shoreline restoration being a project acknowledged by experts as having impact on fisheries, Julie sent out a couple examples of pamphlets in advance of the meeting to committee members for their review and consideration for purchase and distribution at the 2023 Annual Meeting. With a brief discussion pertaining to the idea of doing this and Phil summarizing by saying education is the key, Grant offered to send a more complete list of this type of informational flyers he received from Kayla to Julie for her review. The committee then agreed to have Julie review them and make the final decision of which ones would be selected and purchased for distribution at the upcoming annual meeting. Phil mentioned fertilizer and chemicals put on lawns not only affect lake water but ground water also, making it important to remind property owners of this problem.

#### **B. "Fish Stick" Project Discussion**

With this being a topic brought up in the management plan as a possible intervention to be used to enhance fisheries, Julie added it to the agenda to come to a decision regarding its applicability for fisheries enhancement on Lake Metonga. Ed reminded the committee that wood debris along the shores would serve to enhance the Bluegill and Crappie populations which would be a deterrent to increased perch and walleye to which Julie mentioned that Mike Preul and Greg Matzke expressed concern that this not be done on Metonga for this very reason. Grant then explained that when cribs were placed in the lake years back that it served to increase the rock bass population which is also a detriment to preferred perch and walleye population. With that the committee unanimously agreed to drop any further planning for this type of project.

#### **C. Other Projects to Enhance the Fisheries**

Julie asked the committee if anyone was aware of other possible interventions that could be utilized to help increase the desired perch and walleye populations with no other ideas brought up. She then asked if native plant restoration was an option and Kayla responded explaining that this type of project for a lake the size of Metonga would be very ineffective and not worthy of the expense.

**Next Meeting:** A virtual meeting will be set up for the middle to late May by Julie Janquart with an agenda sent prior to the meeting.