U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alpena Fishery Resources Office
FY 2007 Station Activities

Cooperation with Native Americans

Conserving this Nation's fish and other aquatic resources cannot be successful without the partnership of Tribes; they manage or influence some of the most important aquatic habitats both on and off reservations. In addition, the Federal government and the Service have distinct and unique obligations toward Tribes based on trust responsibility, treaty provisions, and statutory mandates. The Fisheries Program plays an important role in providing help and support to Tribes as they exercise their sovereignty in the management of their fish and wildlife resources on more than 55 million acres of Federal Indian trust land and in treaty reserved areas. The Alpena Fishery Resources Office in Alpena, Michigan actively cooperates with Michigan Tribes regarding conservation of Great Lakes fisheries. The accomplishments listed below reflect some of the activities the Alpena FRO conducted in cooperation with Native Americans in Fiscal Year 2007 (October 2006-September 2007).

Service Biologists Co-Chair Modeling Subcommittee Meeting for 1836 Treaty Waters

Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO along with John Netto of the Green Bay FRO co-chaired the March 13-15, 2007 meeting of the Modeling Subcommittee (MSC) of the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC). The primary focus of this meeting was to generate preliminary 2007 harvest limits for lake trout in 1836 Treaty waters of lakes Huron, Superior, and Michigan, although other technical matters were discussed. As stipulated in the 2000 Consent Decree, preliminary lake trout harvest numbers must be calculated by the MSC, reviewed by the TFC, and presented to the parties to the decree by March 31 each year. The MSC will complete final lake trout harvest numbers and present them to the TFC for review at the May 4 TFC meeting.

Biologist Woldt and Ji He of the Michigan DNR presented an update of the status of northern Lake Huron (MH-1 and MH-2) lake trout stock assessment models, model diagnostic output, and preliminary 2007 lake trout harvest limits. In MH-1 and MH-2, the 2007 preliminary lake trout harvest limits decreased from 2006 levels due to changes in the lake trout population structure and survival of young fish. The MSC will continue to evaluate and monitor these changes. Preliminary limits were presented to the TFC for review on March 30.

In addition to performing model analyses, biologist Woldt helped run the MSC meeting ensuring all agenda items were discussed and kept meeting minutes. A preliminary draft of the March 13-15 MSC meeting minutes was emailed to MSC members for review.

Harvest limits produced at this meeting, when reviewed by the parties and finalized, will become binding 2007 lake trout harvest limits for 1836 Treaty waters. These harvest limits will allow lake trout fisheries to be executed while still protecting the biological integrity of the lake trout stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species while meeting the needs of tribal communities under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Cooperation with Native Americans" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Gill Net Maintenance

Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist

During the month of March 2007, Fishery biologists Scott Koproski and Adam Kowalski finished repairing bottom set gill nets fished during the 2006 fishery independent lake whitefish survey in 1836 Treaty waters. Over 10,000 ft. of gill nets were mended or slugged by Koproski and Kowalski. Mesh size ranged from 2.0" to 6.0" and increased in ½" increments. A gang of gill nets fished in the survey consists of three 900' boxes of net for a total effort of 2700'. Two to three gangs of gill nets were fished daily during the duration of this project.

The data collected from this survey is used in the catch at age models for 1836 Treaty water. Alpena FRO is responsible for collecting data from Lake Huron Whitefish Management Units (LHM) 4 and 5. Catch at age models are used to calculate harvest limits in 1836 Treaty waters for tribal commercial, state commercial, and state recreational fisheries. Allocation of harvest within each management unit is defined within the Consent Decree signed in 2000 by the State of Michigan, five 1836 Treaty tribes, and the Federal government.

This work is an example of Alpena FRO's commitment to the following Fisheries Vision for the Future priorities: "Partnerships and Accountability", "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", and "Cooperation with Native Americans".

Alpena Gillnet Repair

Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fish and Wildlife Biologist

During the month of April 2007, Fishery Biologists Adam Kowalski and Scott Koproski mended approximately 2,400 ft of assessment gillnet. These nets consist of 100 ft panels of 2" to 6" stretch mesh strung in ½" increments and are used by the Alpena FRO for the annual fishery independent

lake whitefish assessment in 1836 Treaty waters. Mending consists of inspecting every net for holes, broken floats, and broken ties. Holes are repaired by either sewing in new twine across gaps or by replacing large holes with new sections of net. If nets are damaged beyond repair, replacement nets are built. Net repair is very important for collecting accurate and consistent data during our annual fisheries assessments. Nets must be strung similarly and repaired to the same standard each year to assure consistent gear selectivity across sampling years. Net repair and construction will continue throughout the winter until spring assessments start.

Gillnets are used by the Alpena FRO from summer through fall for lake whitefish and lake trout population assessments in Lake Huron. Lake whitefish and lake trout are native species harvested in both state and tribal commercial and sport fisheries. These population assessments are consistent with Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Cooperation with Native Americans". Much of the work is also required for implementation of the 2000 Consent Decree.

Alpena NFWCO Assists Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority with Walleye Assessments in 1836 Treaty Waters

Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist

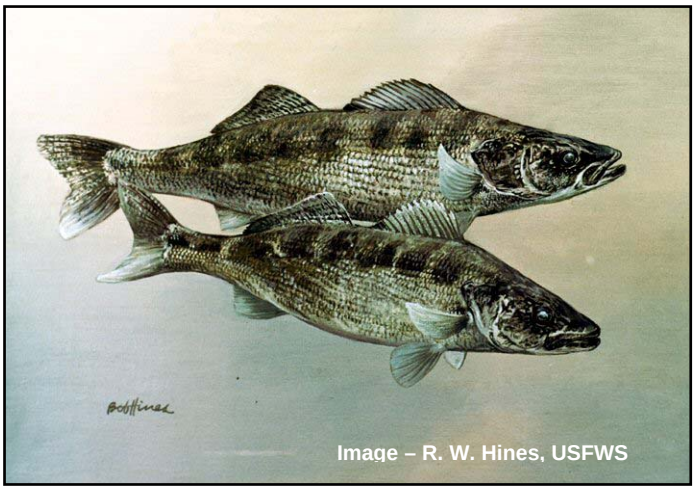
Image – R. W. Hines, USFWS

During the week of September 17, 2007, Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski traveled to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan to assist the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA) with their annual juvenile walleye assessment of the St. Marys River. Using the Alpena NFWCO's electrofishing vessel, Koproski and 2 CORA staff sampled four locations in the St Marys River system (Waiska Bay, Lake Nicolet, Lake George, Sugar Island Side Channel) over four nights. The objective of this work is to determine the percent contribution of hatchery reared walleye to the St. Marys River walleye population and to index juvenile walleye abundance. Hatchery stocked walleye are immersed in oxytetracycline (OTC) prior to release which leaves a mark on calcified structures like otoliths and vertebrae that can be detected in the lab. Data collected will also be used to determine appropriate stocking levels and stocking locations for this system. Staff from the Alpena NFWCO has been assisting CORA with this walleye assessment for the past 14 years.

Assessment of walleye in the St. Marys River is another example of the Alpena NFWCO's commitment to the following Fisheries Vision Priorities: "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Cooperation with Native Americans". Walleye are both a recreationally and

commercially important species in 1836 Treaty waters. The Alpena NFWCO will continue to evaluate stocking success by CORA in the future which will benefit the resource and all harvesting parties.

Service Biologists Co-Chair Modeling Subcommittee Meeting for 1836 Treaty Waters

Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena NFWCO, along with John Netto of the Green Bay NFWCO, co-chaired the September 25-26, 2007 meeting of the Modeling Subcommittee (MSC) of the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC). The primary focus of this meeting was to generate preliminary 2008 harvest limits for lake whitefish management units in 1836 Treaty waters of lakes Huron, Superior, and Michigan, although other technical matters were discussed. As stipulated in the 2000 Consent Decree, preliminary lake whitefish harvest limits must be calculated by the MSC, reviewed by the TFC, and presented to the parties to the decree by November 1 each year.

In addition to performing lake whitefish model analyses, biologist Woldt ran the MSC meeting ensuring all agenda items were discussed and kept meeting minutes. A preliminary draft of the September 25-26 MSC meeting minutes was mailed to MSC members for review. Preliminary lake whitefish harvest limits will be presented to the TFC for review on October 26, 2007. The MSC will complete final lake whitefish harvest limits and present them to the TFC at its December meeting.

Harvest limits produced at this meeting, when reviewed by the parties and approved, will become binding 2008 lake whitefish harvest limits for 1836 Treaty waters. These harvest limits will allow lake whitefish fisheries to be executed while still protecting the biological integrity of the lake whitefish stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species while meeting the needs of tribal communities under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Cooperation with Native Americans" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

For more information about Alpena FRO programs and activities contact us at:

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