

Date:            August 9, 2018  
To:              Douglas Lake Improvement Association members  
From:            Holly Gedert, President, DLIA  
Subject:         2018 Walleye Stocking in Douglas Lake

Douglas Lake Improvement Association (DLIA) likes to stay in touch with state and local entities. We have close ties with the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, the Little Traverse Conservancy, the U-M Biological Station (UMBS), Munro Township, and the Michigan Loon Association. We also communicate with the Cheboygan County Road Commission, the DEQ, and the DNR. Over the years of attending environmental presentations by the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB), it seemed important that we include them in our connections. Our Vice President Mary Ellen Sheridan invited Kevin Donner, Great Lakes Fisheries Program Manager, Fisheries Program, Natural Resources Department, Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, to speak at our Annual Meeting this year and he accepted. A general meeting invitation is planned but has not yet been extended.

The President of DLIA, Holly Gedert, received a phone call this summer that the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians stocked Douglas Lake with walleye fingerlings. She began asking questions of many different people (MDNR, LTBB, UMBS, DLIA members) to see who knew what when and exactly what happened. It has taken some time to pull information together. It is better to take a little time to publish more information rather than less.

A big concern was the lack of communication. DLIA and UMBS knew nothing about the walleye stocking plan before it happened. The Michigan DNR knew about the plan last February and neglected to inform people on the lake. Neal Godby, Fisheries Biologist, MDNR, is not required to inform DLIA, but he felt it was an oversight and apologized. On July 24, Patrick Hanchin, Tribal Coordination Unit Manager, Charlevoix Fisheries Stations, Michigan DNR, stated that at a recent meeting with tribal biologists a decision was made "to make efforts to improve communication among all three (association, State, and tribe) on future projects". A meeting will be planned in the near future to bring together the MDNR, LTBB, UMBS and DLIA.

A look at history. I encourage you to read the History section of the *Status of the Fishery Resource Report 2014*, by Neal Godby and Tim A. Cwalinski, Fisheries Biologists, MDNR. The document is found under Publications on our website [www.douglaslake.org](http://www.douglaslake.org). It states that fisheries management began on Douglas Lake in the 1920's, and reports stocking activity over the years. Walleye were stocked in Douglas Lake in 1937, 1954, 1955, and 1957.

In 1995, the DNR denied a DLIA request to stock walleye in Douglas Lake.

In 2008, a group of fishermen wanted to do a private walleye plant at an estimated cost of \$15,000 to \$20,000. They asked DLIA for seed money. In informal discussions at UMBS, they discouraged the plant noting that they did not think it could be sustained and would need to be repeated. A vote went to the DLIA membership by mail. It was voted down.

This summer 2018 Douglas Lake was stocked with walleye on June 27. A list of questions was presented to the MDNR and the LTBB. All responses to questions came from Maxwell A. Field, Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Biologist, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Natural Resource Department.

If after reading this document you have questions or concerns, it is preferred you send them to [info@douglaslake.org](mailto:info@douglaslake.org). Telephone contact may be made with Holly Gedert-DLIA President at 231-537-3269 or Dave Thompson-DLIA Fishing Chair at 810-334-9381.

### **Douglas Lake Walleye Stocking - Questions and Answers**

1. Who worked together to plan the walleye release in Douglas Lake?
  - a. Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians – Natural Resource Department – Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Program and Fisheries Enhancement Facility.
2. Who was informed of the walleye release before it happened?
  - a. The 5 Tribes within the 1836 Ceded Territory and MDNR were notified of LTBB’s intentions to stock walleye into Douglas Lake by March 1, 2018 when our Inland Fisheries Assessment and Enhancement Plans were due (as required by the 2007 Inland Consent Decree). Neal Godby was also notified during February 2018 just prior to sharing the 2018 LTBB Fisheries Assessment and Enhancement Plan with the 5 Tribes and MDNR.
3. When was the release?
  - a. On June 27, 2018 LTBB NRD released 21,600 2-inch walleye into Douglas Lake.
4. Why was there a walleye release in Douglas Lake? Game, commercial, research, other ... Explain.
  - a. Tribal citizens can and do fish (subsistence/recreational) on Douglas Lake and, as such, LTBB NRD has incorporated it into a list of lakes which we prioritize for fisheries monitoring and management. Recent fisheries monitoring by MDNR revealed relatively low levels of walleye abundance thus, in 2018, LTBB initiated what we consider an “experimental stocking event” to determine if we can bolster the small remnant walleye community into a self-sustaining walleye fishery for the benefit of both Tribal and non-Tribal fishers. The last attempt by MDNR occurred in the 1970’s. The results of this stocking activity will lend additional insight into the population’s bottleneck(s), provide insight on ecological changes in the lake, and help guide future fisheries management decisions. The stocking event will be followed by active walleye recruitment monitoring this fall by LTBB NRD staff and fisheries monitoring into the future (e.g. fisher reports, repeated sampling, etc.). This is the approach LTBB follows in any waterbody we stock (including the Great Lakes and the Inland Waterway) and for species other than walleye.
5. Why release at night?
  - a. Time-sensitive release process. The fish need to be stocked ASAP once the ponds are drained and the stocking tanks are loaded onto the truck. It doesn’t matter if it is 3am or 3pm. The fish must be stocked once they are ready. In addition, stocking at night can greatly reduce avian predation on the walleye fingerlings.
6. Where did the walleye fingerlings come from?
  - a. Walleye gametes were collected during Spring 2018 from the Cheboygan River for this production. After hatching inside the LTBB Fisheries Enhancement Facility, the walleye were grown in outdoor ponds prior to stocking.
7. What is the invasive species risk with a fish release?
  - a. While it is impossible to fully eliminate the risk of invasive species transfer for any activity, stocking these fish would pose almost no risk. The LTBB Fisheries Enhancement Facility follows all relevant fish health and safety procedures prior to the stocking of fish. The walleye ponds used for rearing are raised earthen-berm style ponds and are drained and

- dried annually. Stocking equipment is dried and sanitized after use. Pond water is sourced from ground water (e.g., no chance of contamination from river sources). Ponds are monitored daily by staff and, though no invasive species have ever been detected, they would be quickly detected and addressed if present. Overall, the protocols used by LTBB to manage and eliminate fish health risks are also effective at managing and eliminating any threats of invasive species transfer. LTBB even has strict rules for actively sanitizing equipment (including boots and personal protective gear) with iodine immediately after a stocking event and prior to storage even if it wasn't in direct contact with the receiving waterbody.
8. What else is planned for Douglas Lake?
    - a. Fall Walleye Recruitment Survey – Electrofish the shoreline via boom-shocking boat in an attempt to capture Age-0 walleye and confirm that they are LTBB stocked fish which are marked with Oxytetracycline (OTC).
  9. What else has been done to Douglas Lake?
    - a. During Fall 2016, LTBB set fyke (impoundment) nets to collect fish for the LTBB Fish Consumption Advisory Project in an effort to determine mercury levels of fish. MDNR has conducted several similar fish community surveys of varying levels of intensity in the past.
  10. What other lakes received a walleye or other type of fish release?
    - a. LTBB stocked walleye fry into Cheboygan River, Round Lake (Emmet County) and Lake Charlevoix during 2018. MDNR and another tribe have also stocked fish into other waterbodies during 2018. In the recent past, walleye have also been stocked into Paradise Lake. LTBB didn't have the capacity to rear walleye prior to 2014. MDNR has stocked walleye into numerous nearby waterbodies, including Douglas Lake, in recent decades. Stocking records can be accessed online via the MDNR Fish Stocking Database.
  11. What effect can this planting and possible reestablishment of walleyes have on our existing fish species?
    - a. The young growing walleye will likely serve as a food item for bass, pike and/or other predators in the lake. As far as re-establishment of walleye in Douglas Lake, walleye can affect other species both positively and negatively from a management perspective through predation and competition. However, this is usually the case when enough adults have established either naturally or because of much higher stocking densities of walleye per acre in inland lakes (25 to 100 per acre). Due to the limited number that were stocked (21,760, 6.4 per acre) as spring fingerlings and the low predicted survival rate to first Fall (Average 5%), that would yield at most ~1,080 surviving to Fall 2018. Survival from stocking at this size to second Fall is only 2%, thus yielding at most ~435 Age-1 walleyes in Fall 2019. Overall, I believe that other fish species in Douglas Lake would not be significantly affected by the re-establishment of walleye if stocking efforts were continued by LTBB at this rate into the future. Another interesting thing to think about is the Lake Kathleen Dam Removal and what part that will play in the movement of walleyes (and other fish species) within the Inland Waterway in the future.
  12. Has anything changed on the lake to make you believe the walleyes will succeed now unlike the past?

- a. Nothing specific no. Besides the most recent MDNR report from 2014 for Douglas Lake, the only prior information that LTBB obtained on Douglas Lake was through the Fish Consumption Advisory Project in 2016.
13. Do the zebra mussels in Douglas Lake impact walleye?
  - a. Yes, zebra mussels can impact all fish species negatively by removing zooplankton that is utilized by small growing fish.
14. You mention in your email that Douglas Lake has been added to a list of lakes that you prioritize for fisheries monitoring and management. Can you explain further what that means?
  - a. Douglas Lake was chosen primarily because of its close proximity to our Fish Hatchery. LTBB has been refining our walleye production process since we began stocking them in 2015. Once a lake is stocked by the LTBB Fish Hatchery, it is our desire to conduct follow-up monitoring (usually through a Fall Walleye Recruitment Survey).
15. Do you have an overall plan for the lake regarding all of its fish species?
  - a. No, not at this time. Right now all we have is our stocking proposal that was submitted to the State and 5 Tribes on March 1 of this year as required by the 2007 Inland Consent Decree.
16. Would northern pike be something you look at in the future?
  - a. Potentially yes. Although we have not conducted pike-specific surveys, we do conduct overall fish community surveys intermittently along with our walleye-specific surveys (Spring Adult Abundance Estimates and Fall Walleye Recruitment Index). A fish community survey would be similar to what the MDNR did on Douglas Lake in 2014.
17. How does your organization manage the overall fishing success similar to what the MDNR has been doing?
  - a. LTBB NRD doesn't manage for fishing success, we manage for resource or production success of stocking efforts through a Fall Walleye Recruitment Survey in which we electrofish the shallows of the shoreline to determine year-class strength of walleye. Since the stocked walleye are all marked with OTC, we can sacrifice a subsample of Age-0 walleye collected in the fall (~20 to 30) and extract the otoliths to determine if they are of stocked origin.
18. How will you communicate your findings for fish monitoring and management to the DLIA and these other organizations?
  - a. Results from all of our assessments are shared on an annual basis with MDNR and the 5 Tribes within the 1836 Ceded Territory as a requirement of the 2007 Inland Consent Decree. In the past when I've been contacted by Lake Association folks, I have been able to share results over e-mail or if time was available, I have given a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes the result of a particular fish survey.
19. Will the lake be fished commercially or with nets?
  - a. Commercial fishing is not allowed on any inland lakes under the 2007 Inland Consent Decree. LTBB NRD Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (my program) have set nets for assessment purposes (Fish Consumption Advisory Project). Under the 2007 Inland Consent Decree, tribal members could have set fyke (small trap) nets for subsistence purposes on inland lakes, but to my knowledge this activity has never occurred since the signing of the 2007 Inland Consent Decree on Douglas Lake.

**Patrick Hanchin (MDNR) had additional comment:**

I would like to add some context from the 2007 Consent Decree. The State of Michigan does have the ability to oppose restoration, reclamation, and enhancement activities proposed by the tribes, but we would be required to consult with the tribes and articulate a legitimate interest for doing so. While “legitimate interest” is not defined for this section (XXII) of the Decree, my interpretation is that it would have to be a considerable issue.

As an FYI, at a recent meeting with tribal biologists we discussed communicating with lake associations and interested groups. Several people recognized the positive aspects of communicating with lake associations. We generally consider a lake association to be a constituent of the State so the primary communication responsibility would lie with us. However, that does not preclude the tribes from engaging lake associations on their own. In general, we decided to make efforts to improve communication among all three (association, State, and tribe) on future projects.

- end 8/9/2018 -