

ELOSTA Monthly Membership meeting

Wednesday March 15, 2006

Minutes

(Also available on www.elosta.org)

- Vice President Doug Fuegel turned the first monthly meeting of 2006 over to Dan Bishop of DEC at 7:00 PM on Wednesday March 15. Fifty five members/guests were on hand in the McCrobie Building (Oswego Civic Center) to hear NYDEC's report on the current state of Lake Ontario's fishery resources. Outside, 30 -50 MPH winds whistled around the eaves and spectacular 10-12 foot waves leaped over the harbor breakwall. Mac MacKenzie served in his capacity as Secretary.

- Doug took a moment to explain ELOSTA and its objectives and affiliations with other organizations across the State. He called attention to the ongoing raffle for a Lowrance GPS/Sonar unit and available membership applications. Attending ELOSTA Board Members and Officers were also introduced. The readings of the October meeting minutes and Tom Lott's Financial Report were tabled. Refreshments were provided with the compliments of ELOSTA.

- Dan Bishop then took a moment to outline DEC's Power Point presentation which featured proposed 2006 - 2008 fishing regulations, stocking updates, prey fish status, boating census, stream census update, salmon updates, Lake Trout status, warm water fish assessment, and a cormorant update. A few of highlights are as follows.

- Bill Culligan noted that the final public comment period for the proposed 06 -08 fishing regulation changes ended February 14th and a final package is ready to be filed with the Secretary of State. The new Regulations can be viewed on DEC's website. Bill also recapped the Federal hatchery 04 – 05 issues that severely impacted our current lake trout stocking efforts. Over 500,000 yearlings destined for Lake Ontario were lost. Approximately 110,000 yearlings from NYS's Bath Hatchery will be diverted from the Finger Lakes to help offset a total loss of the 06 year class. Lake Ontario's 2007 fish (500,000 K) will be obtained from Federal hatcheries at Pittsford and White River in VT.

- Brian Lantry (USGS) went into great detail on prey fish netting returns. In general, alewife numbers are down – probably due to low 04–05 winter temperatures and die-off. This last summer and winter have been relatively warm

and it is expected that the 07 year class will be much improved. There was a good return on age one smelt. However, most of the young of the year are eaten by lake trout. The jury is still out on the round goby. They are showing up in the diets of bass and lake trout and there are a lot of them out there to eat. On the good side they do not contain the toxins that adversely affect lake trout spawning. On the bad side they are highly prolific and competitive with preferred indigenous species. Trawls are also picking up more deep water sculpin – an important fish in the food chain.

- 2005 Fishing Boat Census highlights.

- “There were 85,576 fishing boat trips – 3rd lowest in 21 years.”
- “22,108 boat trips for smallmouth bass.”
- “59,000 boat trips for trout and salmon
- “Charter catch/hour all trout and salmon – 2nd highest.”
- “61% of all trout and salmon caught were Chinook.”
- “Chinook catch/hour record high; 3 times higher 1985-2002.”
- “Age-3 chinook size 2nd lowest on record.”
- “Declining record low catch for RT and LT.”

- Chinook Summary – The 2004 year class of Chinook appears to be weak to moderate based on jack returns to the Salmon River Hatchery and from the Fishing Boat Census. In general 2005 Chinook growth rate was poor. Wild production in the Salmon River was above average.

- The first phase (September – November) of a two year creel survey on 28 tributaries entering the Lake Ontario reach between Twelvemile Creek and the Black River has been completed. The following is a summary of the highlights.

- “256,907 tributary angler trips or 805,419 angler hours.”
- “Salmon River was 60% of total hours and 30% of trips.”
- “Salmon River, Oak Orchard Creek, Eighteen Mile Creek, and Oswego River accounted for 73% of the trips.”
- “Salmon River effort down slightly from 2004 (75,985 vs. 90,825 trips).”
- “Chinooks were most frequently caught species – 158,029.”

- Pen Rearing Evaluation Summary.

- “Pen rearing steelhead at Oswego resulted in a nearly 7:1 advantage.”
- “Pen rearing Chinook at Oak Orchard is beneficial.”
- Disproportionate numbers of unmarked fish observed at both sites.
- “Pen rearing Chinook at Lower Niagara River did not prove beneficial.”
- A steelhead evaluation was initiated in 2004.

- “Chinook straying to Salmon River not an issue.”
- In general warm water species numbers (black bass) are down. Probably due to cold water (upwelling) mortality. Cormorant management (oiling and culling) are continuing and target population levels should be attained next year.
- Dan Bishop thanked those who attended and Doug Fuegel adjourned the meeting at 9:15PM. Everyone is reminded that our next meeting will convene on Wednesday April 19th at 7:00 PM at Gander Mountain’s Lodge in Cicero. *Mac MacKenzie*