

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Division of Fish and Wildlife, Great Lakes Section

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Lake Ontario Fisheries Advisory Panel Meeting Agenda March 7, 2024

1. Welcome
2. Pizza
3. Chinook salmon parentage based tagging
4. Angler perspectives on the winter brown trout fishery (open lake and tributary)
5. Angler perspectives on the tributary steelhead fishery
6. LOFAP meetings and attendance

Meeting notes

Attendance

DEC staff attendance

| 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 | Jim Markham | Present |
| Lake Ontario Unit Biologist | Mike Connerton | Present |
| Lake Ontario Unit Biologist | Jessica Goretzke | Present |
| | | |

Other DEC staff present

None

LOFAP Member Attendance

| Management area | Lake or tributary | Name | Present or absent |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| West | Lake | Vince Pierleoni | Present |
| West | Lake | Bob Songin | Absent |
| 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 | Charlie Knauf | Present |
| West central | Tributary | Jesse Hollenbeck | Absent |

| | | | |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|---------|
| East central | Lake | Brian Garrett | Present |
| East central | Lake | Mike Wilkinson | Present |
| East central | Tributary | Wayne Weber | Absent |
| East central | Tributary | Andy Bliss | Absent |
| East | Lake | Tom Burke | Present |
| East | Lake | Mike Howard | Present |
| East | Tributary | Jason Hamilton | Absent |
| East | Tributary | Jim Marscher | Present |
| At large | N/A | Joe Yeager | Present |

Chinook salmon parentage based tagging (PBT)

- DEC staff provided a brief update on the Chinook PBT program
 - A contract for processing and analyzing tissue samples is in the approval process. We hope to have a contract in place this summer.
 - LOFAP volunteers collected over 600 tissue samples in 2023. We hope to have results from these samples in 2024.
 - LOFAP members agreed to coordinate sample collections in each lake area again this year.
 - Sample kits will go out by April
 - LOFAP coordinators are
 - West – Bob Songin
 - West central – Jerry Felluca
 - East central – Brian Garrett/Mike Wilkinson
 - East – Tom Burke
 - LOTSA – Joe Yeager
 - ELOSTA – Brian Garrett
 - DEC will set up a meeting with the volunteers once we have results from the 2023 collections.

Angler perspectives on the winter brown trout fishery and the steelhead fishery

LOFAP members were asked to provide their perspective on the winter brown trout fishery and the steelhead fishery in Lake Ontario and tributaries. The following bullets summarize their comments.

Brown trout

- Anglers target brown trout in Lake Ontario during the winter when weather conditions allow.

- Fishing for brown trout can be extremely good, with high numbers of fish caught, during the winter months.
 - An average angler can easily bot 20+ browns on a good day fishing in the winter.
 - More fish tend to be released in the winter compared to spring/summer.
- Winter 2023-2024 has been mild and a lot of anglers have been fishing browns.
 - 30 trailers at Mexico Point on March 2/3
 - Anglers are fishing all along the lake but are not as concentrated as they are at Mexico Point.
 - Fishing effort in the Rochester/Irondequoit area has been moderate.

Steelhead

- Eighteenmile Creek
 - Steelhead fishing was poor in 2022 and is shaping up to be worse in 2024.
- Irondequoit Creek
 - Good spring run this year but many fish moved up to the headwaters.
- Maxwell Creek
 - Good numbers of fish this spring. Mix of dark and chrome.
- Genesee River
 - Good steelhead fishing this year when water conditions allow.
- Oak Orchard Creek
 - Fall Browns and salmon were good so there were fewer reports of steelhead in the fall.
 - The largest runs of steelhead in Oak Orchard Creek tend to be in February and March during periods of high water.
 - Steelhead fishing this spring has been good compared to the previous few years.
 - Recent low flows have led to lower fishing effort.
 - The past few years were tough at Oak Orchard.
 - Fish have come in when there is a good run of water but the fishery has been short lived. It has looked like the beginning of the run but has turned out to be the whole run.
 - There appeared to be more targeted Chinook fishing in the lake this year with less targeted effort on steelhead. This may have contributed to improved steelhead fishing.
 - Steelhead spawning seems to be happening earlier.
 - On low flows the only place for fish to be is the dam pool.
 - The overflow channel remains an issue. There are dozens of fish in the pool currently.
 - Marsh Creek had good flows in February and good fishing.
 - Direct stocking location near Marsh Creek may result in fish running Marsh.
- South Sandy Creek
 - Lower returns of fall steelhead in 2023
 - Good returns this spring, however, the fish seem to be smaller.
- Stony Creek
 - Returns good as well, but fish only come in when there is a push of water.
- Salmon River
 - 2021 fishing was poor.

- 2022 was improved but the fish were small.
- 2023 fall fishing was much improved for numbers and with larger fish.
- Steelhead seem to be holding more in the upper river in recent years. Prior years fish were distributed all along the river.
- When steelhead are concentrated in the upper river it makes fishing other parts of the river difficult.
 - Water level fluctuations on the Salmon River can impact fishing, with high water events drawing fish to the upper river.
 - When Chinook move to the upper river steelhead seem to follow them up.
- Some LOFAP members feel that harvest of steelhead over the daily limit may have a negative impact on the fishery.

ACTION ITEM – DEC will look at Salmon River creel data to see if the distribution of angler effort along the river has changed.

DEC and LOFAP developed the following description of the Lake Ontario steelhead fishery.

- Steelhead fishing in Lake Ontario tributaries was slow 2020-2021. Fishing improved in 2022-2023. However, the fishery has become more of a quick run fishery, where fish run to upper stream reaches quickly and less fish hold lower in the system. Fish were of a smaller size in 2020/2021 and this is also improving in 2022/2023. In the open lake fishery, the offshore steelhead fishery has declined over the last ten years and has not seen the same improvements as the tributary fishery.

LOFAP attendance

Steve Hurst reiterated the meeting attendance requirements outlined in the LOFAP charter. Some members will be dismissed based on attendance.

ACTION ITEM – DEC will schedule all 2024 meetings in spring 2024 so that members have adequate notice prior to meetings.