

SLPOA BOD Meeting Minutes  
September 10, 2020  
Home of Arnie Schenck

Board Members Present: GPM, GH, JK, AS, RF & KR  
Board Members Absent: TP  
Guest Present: Howard Fullhart, MN DNR Fisheries Biologist

Gary Miller called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

- (1) The meeting minutes from the August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting were distributed and reviewed. JK made a motion to approve the minutes and RF seconded the motion; all were in favor.
- (2) Gary introduced Howard Fullhart, MN DNR Fisheries Biologist, to the board. Howard received copies of the communication from Gary on behalf of the SLPOA regarding our concerns about the Sunfish population. Howard spoke with the board about a number of items. A full recap of the discussion is in a separate attachment to these minutes (as prepared by President Gary Miller). It was a very informative discussion and Mr. Fullhart was extremely knowledgeable and very eager to work with us towards improving Star Lake's fishing resource. Our thanks to MN DNR and Howard Fullhart for taking time to attend our meeting.
- (3) Treasurer's Report – JoLene reported that the balances in our accounts are as follows: \$7,731.70 in checking, and \$26,087.78 in the money market. The total of both accounts is \$33,819.48. The funds dedicated for the Lake Protection Fund reported on 9-10-2020 is \$18,088.95.
- (4) Membership Update – Jolene and Gail reported that the total number of paid memberships for the 2020-2021 membership year is 190. The board discussed ideas to increase paid memberships. One of the challenges this year was the number of members that chose to renew through the online membership and our lack of having a method for paying electronically. It makes it difficult for both the members and our Treasurer to match up online forms with hard-copy checks that come in separately. We will look into adding a payment option to our website so that members can complete the registration process along with the payment through the website. Kelsey also suggested that we have a Member Referral program and offer some type of incentive to the referring member. Kelsey will put together some ideas and bring them to the next board meeting.
- (5) We discussed the Digital Speed signs for State Highway 108 and County Highway 41 as well as the idea for a walking trail along State Highway 108. This process will be complicated as it involves 4 Government entities: MN DOT, Dora Township, Star Lake Township, and Otter Tail County. The following are items as they currently stand:
  - a. A speed reduction along State Highway 108 is not likely as it will require an extensive Speed Study. The MN DOT would be more apt to consider extending the existing reduced speed limit so that it ends at East Rosewood Drive.
  - b. We will check with the Lake Lida Property Owners' Association to determine their level of involvement with the Digital Speed signs along State Highway 108.

- c. We will alert Otter Tail County and Dora Township of our intent to pursue the installation of Digital Speed signs.
  - d. We will begin the process of putting together a formal request that will include full details to support the need of alerting drivers to the reduced speed limit areas.
  - e. We will work to put together a petition for all residences and businesses along State Highway 108 and County Highway 41 that are within the reduced speed limit areas.
- (6) Fall Adopt-A-Highway Clean-Up – the date for the clean-up along County Highway 41 is Saturday, October 10th. Gary is coordinating and will include the information in the email communication to membership.
- (7) Since the last SLPOA meeting in August, there was an explosion and fire on the Franks Memorial Bridge on County Highway 41. The bridge has been closed and traffic has been detoured. At this time, we do not have any information on the status of the bridge and potential date it will be opened.
- (8) The Fall 2020 Newsletter is scheduled for distribution to members in early October. The following are articles that we are planning to include:
- a. President’s Letter
  - b. Swam Shark Tournament Article
  - c. Sunfish Survey Results
  - d. Article on use of Barbless Hooks
  - e. Treasurer’s Report (financials and membership update)
  - f. Copy of Article from Pelican Rapids Press regarding SLCCG Donation
  - g. Invasive Species Information
  - h. Directory Advertisers Listing
  - i. Winter Ice Thickness Chart
- (9) Recap of action items:
- a. Prepare overview of ideas for a membership referral program - Kelsey
  - b. Contact Otter Tail County and Dora Township regarding Digital Speed Signs – Gary
  - c. Contact Lake Lida POA regarding Digital Speed Sign on Hwy 108 - Gary
  - d. Write an article for the newsletter to provide members an overview on the speed concerns on State Highway 108 and County Highway 41 and our actions to pursue Digital Speed signs – Dick

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM. The next board meeting will be at 6:30 PM on October 15<sup>th</sup> at Gary Miller’s, 33023 380<sup>th</sup> St, Dent.

Gail Hagen  
Secretary, SLPOA

Discussion With Howard Fullhart  
MN DNR Area Fisheries Assistant Director/Biologist

Mr. Fullhart attended the 9-10-2020 SLPOA Board of Directors meeting to review and discuss the results of our 2020 sunfish limit reduction survey as well as the effectiveness of other approaches to fishery improvement. Although our association sunfish limit reduction survey favored a limit reduction by a 2 to 1 margin, only 54 responses were recorded. Therefore, the SLPOA Board decided to pend a final decision on support for a limit reduction until spring of 2021. More feedback will be attempted to be gathered during this period.

Based on data gathered around the state, Mr. Fullhart shared the the department's position favors a limit reduction as the best way to increase the number of large bull male sunfish in a population over a period of time. A size restriction (like requiring any over 9 inches to be returned) is difficult to monitor and enforce. The test netting results for Star Lake indicate the overall number and size of the sunfish population in the lake is good. The limit reduction to ten has helped the overall population number. To increase the number of large sunfish, the department would favor the reduction of the limit to five. This has proven successful on other lakes that have put it into effect. Based on research data, that would be the recommended change if the goal is to restore the number of large male bull sunfish to the population.

Discussion was also held on the crappie fishery. Crappie numbers are good. But, there is a life expectancy difference between the crappie and sunfish. Sunfish live longer. Once a crappie reaches seven years, it is approaching the end of its life. Therefore, returning the large crappie's to the lake may not significantly improve the population of large fish. While practicing "catch and release" is good conservation, it does not have the same impact for every species. There is a mix of factors that enter into the panfish harvest discussion. The SLPOA Board will revisit the sunfish discussion in the spring. Mr. Fullhart responded to other related items. He noted that our request for more conservation officer checks on the south arm in the winter has been passed on to enforcement. The topic of "slot size" for walleyes was discussed at length. The DNR has had mixed results on the effectiveness of a slot size restriction in Minnesota waters. When the state regulations were changed to include the taking of only one walleye over 20 inches, it effectively became a slot size type of action. At this time, the DNR does not support a specific lake slot size restriction. A statewide walleye limit reduction is under review. There may be more changes in this area in 2021. We will stay in touch with COLA and the MN DNR fisheries group on those discussions. The good news for Star Lake is based on our test netting results, natural walleye production has been strong. There is a balance in the age class distribution. While the creation of rock/sand reefs has been done in some lakes, their actual impact on natural spawning has been mixed. There definitely appears to be sufficient natural spawning areas in Star Lake to support a healthy walleye population.

More discussion was held on the stocking of walleyes. Star Lake is stocked by the DNR every even year (every other year) with millions of walleye fry. The greatest early threat to the fry are the panfish (until about one inch). Later, our large small northern population becomes the main threat. It is possible for lake associations to buy fingerlings or fry from commercial hatcheries. The survival rate for fingerlings is greater, but they cost approximately \$1.00 per fish to stock. The survival rate is impacted by many factors. The health of the forage base, the number of other predators, water quality, fishing pressure, etc. all play a role in the survival of stocked fish. The possibility of buying additional fry to add to those stocked by the DNR was discussed. Mr. Fullhart will explore that idea with Jim Wolters. The SLPOA Board is trying to pursue projects that are supported by fisheries biologists and underpinned by existing research. We will continue to work closely with the DNR in that regard.

Finally, the impact of zebra mussels on fishing was reviewed. Existing research is mixed and more research data needs to be compiled. As examples, Pelican Lake has a large infestation of zebra mussels.

The lake's fish population for walleyes has actually improved. North Lida also has a large infestation. That lake's walleye population has declined. More study is needed, as there are multiple variables involved in managing a specific lake's fish population. Mr. Fullhart shared that based on current experience, it may take several years to see a large spread of the mussels in Star Lake. The DNR continues to study and research the impact of the zebra mussel on fish populations. Our thanks to Mr. Fullhart for sharing his time, knowledge, and passion with the Board! It was a great evening of discussion. The SLPOA Board of Directors will continue to work closely with the MN DNR and local fisheries office on the best ways to improve our tremendous fishing resource.

Gary P. Miller, SLPOA President