



# Crescent Lake Association

## Fall Meeting Minutes

### September 14, 2024 5:00 pm

#### Call to order

The education portion of the Fall Member Meeting was called to order by President Donna Stone at 6:00 pm after refreshments and dinner. It was held at the Crescent Town Hall.

#### Crescent Lake Fishery – Michael Preul

Michael Preul, (pronounced "proil"), Fisheries Biologist of the Sokaogon Chippewa Community, Mole Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa joined us to share his knowledge of the Crescent Lake Fishery. Michael Preul has worked for the Mole Lake Band for 25 years and is currently Director of Mole Lake Fisheries. He has a Master of Science degree from Colorado State University.

Mike passed out copies of a booklet titled "Fishery Status Update in the Wisconsin Treaty Ceded Waters" published in 2019. He also distributed copies of the history of walleye stocking, fall survey of young walleye, adult walleye population estimates and the tribal harvest of walleye starting in 1988 to the present. The Mole Lake Band has been the sole participant in the spear fishing spring harvest since 1998. Mike mentioned the Mole Lake Band was able to complete a survey of young walleye on Crescent Lake during the week just prior to the meeting.

Mike was assigned in 1997-1998 to a toxicology evaluation project associated with the proposed Crandon Mine and its effects on walleye. This was his master's research project while attending Colorado State. After graduation he started work with the Mole Lake Band. Mike has helped develop the Mole Lake Fisheries organization in cooperation with the federal and state governments. As a result, the Mole Lake Band now participates in the monitoring of the fisheries in the eight-county area of northeastern Wisconsin. Squash Lake is the most western lake in the Mole Lake territory.

Starting in 2018, the population of young walleye in Crescent Lake dropped off dramatically. At the same time adult walleye population also decreased. Mike estimated the minimum population for sufficient longer-term reproduction of walleyes to be greater than 15/mile for age 0 and greater than 5/mile for age 1 walleyes. The current levels are 0/mile for age 0 walleyes and 21.2/mile for age 1 walleyes. The results of the most recent survey of young

walleye stocked in 2023 showed a good survival rate of the age 1 walleye fingerlings. Mike believes that many of these fish will eventually mature and contribute to the adult population. However largemouth bass and pike will reduce this immature walleye population to some extent.

In Mike's opinion, the die off of rusty crayfish reached significant levels around 2010 and is likely a factor in the reduction of the walleye population because of a change in the aquatic plant community. Rusty crayfish attack aquatic plants to obtain food. As a result of the drop in rusty crayfish, more plants survived and this led to clearer water and a better habitat for warmer water fish like northern pike, bass, crappies and blue gills. Mike pointed to a couple lakes in the region that still have large rusty crayfish populations and good walleye populations as well. Lily Lake in Forest County has a large population of rusty crayfish and walleyes.

Because of the drop off in walleyes in Crescent Lake, a public meeting was held on June 4, 2024 with the DNR, Mole Lake Band and Crescent Lake residents to discuss what has happened and what actions should be taken. The DNR decided to change the walleye regulations to further restrict the number of walleyes that can be kept and to allow more bass to be kept by anglers. The DNR is working on changing the regulations but they will not go into effect until 2026. Meanwhile Mike is encouraging the DNR to implement a temporary regulation to go back to general state regulation of walleyes on ceded waters. This is a limit of three fish that may be kept with a minimum of 15 inches and a 20 – 24 protected slot. One of the three fish may be over 24 inches. The current regulation is three fish with only one fish over 14 inches.

Mike mentioned that young walleye typically feed on young perch in the open area of the lake after about 30 days from hatch. Unfortunately, the perch population is also decreasing in Crescent Lake likely due to the increasing crappie population consuming the small perch. This loss of perch in the lake may be affecting the survival rate of young walleye.

"Fish sticks" (trees down in the water near shore) encourage the population of blue gills, crappies, largemouth bass and bullheads. This habitat along the shoreline does not help the walleyes.

Mike maintains a neutral stance of the use of ProCellaCOR herbicide. He is trying to understand it better before forming an opinion. His toxicology background would tend to make him lean more conservative, but he has not commented yes or no to the DNR regarding the use of ProCellaCOR. Mike offered to work with the Crescent Lake District regarding next year's plan for use of ProCellaCOR. Mike believes if the herbicide treatment is done after the walleye fry move out to the center of the lake, usually about 30 days after hatch, it will reduce any potential impact on the fry. By early June the fry will grow to 1 or 2 inches and be in open areas of the lake.

The tribal harvest in the spring of 2024 was voluntarily reduced from the calculated allowable amount of 201 to 90. The reduction was because of the declining adult walleye population. The average size walleye taken over the years of spearing has been 14.5 inches. There is a tribal preference for male walleyes over females since they are smaller and taste better than the females. The historical average size male harvested has been 14 inches and the female 18 inches. The tribe issues a permit in groups of 30 fish. Twenty-eight of the thirty fish need to be under 20 inches; one fish can be any size and the other between 20 to 24 inches.

The tribe can do whatever they want with the fish harvested. Most are distributed to other tribal members and consumed throughout the year.

The Mole Lake Fishery is raising the Lake Michigan strain of walleyes to help rehabilitate that strain in certain lakes. The walleye in Crescent Lake are of a different strain associated with the Mississippi River. It is likely in the future the Mole Lake Fishery could support Crescent Lake with stocking of the Mississippi River strain.

Mike closed his talk with an expression of hope that this type of open discussion can be just a beginning of building a stronger relationship with the Crescent Lake Association, Crescent Lake District and its members.

## **Walleye Catch-and-Release Proposal**

Mark Mergenthaler presented a proposal to implement a voluntary catch-and-release of walleye on Crescent Lake. This would be in cooperation with the DNR. The DNR has offered to post a sign at the boat landing asking for consideration of catch-and-release. Those attending the meeting supported the proposal.

## **Roll Call**

All board members were present except for Joan Karls. There was a total of around 40 attendees.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the Crescent Lake Association (CLA) Annual Member Meeting on 7/20/2024 were emailed to all current CLA members for review. There were no corrections or additions. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Larry McKitrick and seconded by Wendy Goldbach. The minutes were approved.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Sandy McKittrick passed out copies of the 2024 budget report dated 8/31/2024. Sandy briefly reviewed the year-to-date income, disbursements, current checking and savings account balances. There were no questions.

## **Volunteer Recognition**

Donna thanked all the volunteers that participated in the CBCW boat landing inspections, Response team, fireworks and other volunteers that helped the lake association and lake district this year. The Crescent Lake District has now taken over responsibility for CBCW.

Jim Gehrke also thanked those that helped with CBCW boat inspections. There were 33 people that worked at least one shift. At one time there were 70 people who volunteered for CBCW. Judy Thoms did 11 shifts and Mike Henry did 13. Terri Brown, mother of Kaylee, did 15 shifts and Kaylee Brown did 16 shifts. Kaylee Brown worked as the CBCW Coordinator this summer with help from her mother Terri when Kaylee was absent. It is not known if Kaylee will return next year as the coordinator.

## **Crescent Lake District**

Tim Kilgore briefly summarized the results of the Crescent Lake District annual meeting held on August 31, 2024. He also mentioned the board of commissioners was increased from five members to seven members. The two additional members are elected by the lake district. There are now five members elected by district members in addition to the two appointed members. One commissioner is appointed by Oneida County and the other by the Town of Crescent.

## **Wake Surfing**

Maria Rudesill read the results of the wake surfing survey conducted in August. Of the 175 email addresses the survey was sent to, responses were received from 114 individuals. About 68% of the responses were in favor of restrictions on wake surfing and 29% were not in favor of restrictions. The balance of the responses needed more information to make a decision. This information was presented to the Town Board at their August meeting. The Town Board decided to form an ad hoc committee to study the issue and report to the Town Board. Mike Henry was appointed by the CLA board to serve on the ad hoc committee.

Donna mentioned that the CLA board met with John Richter, Director, Last Wilderness Alliance Wisconsin Lakes at the last board meeting on September 3. John provided background information of the wake surfing issue in Wisconsin and an update on what actions are now

underway on various lakes. His organization works with lake associations and lake districts to implement wake surfing restrictions in their townships.

Mike Henry spoke briefly about the studies that John Richter presented at the CLA board meeting. The studies provided dramatic evidence of the potential negative effects on the lake ecosystem. This includes the risk of the transfer of waterborne invasive species from water that cannot be completely drained from ballast tanks in the wake boat. Mike feels that if the Crescent Town Board doesn't consider regulations for wake surfing, Crescent Lake may become one of the last lakes in the region that would allow wake surfing.

Concerns were raised about the effects on young fish that are feeding in the lake in the area where wake surfing takes place. Another concern is that wake boat owners may add antifreeze to the ballast tanks for the winter to prevent freezing. The antifreeze could then be discharged into the lake upon use in the Spring.

It was suggested any ordinance needs to be reasonable and carefully thought through.

Tim Kilgore stated it was his understanding the Town of Crescent would be the appropriate government body to pass an ordinance. Tim also mentioned the sole mission of the lake district is the control of Eurasian Watermilfoil or other invasive species. Joel Knutson suggested the Towns of Crescent and Woodboro work together on a wake surfing ordinance. He mentioned that the two town boards previously worked together to pass identical ordinances applying to ice drag racing on both Crescent Lake and Squash Lake. He also mentioned that the ordinance being considered for wake surfing should be considered as a vehicle of awareness or education to the public rather than one that needs enforcement by a Town of Crescent employee.

## **Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Jim Gehrke and seconded by Darrel Mack. Passed, meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

**Mark Mergenthaler**

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**Secretary**

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**Date of approval**