

GLFHC Conference Call Notes  
December 17, 2009

Topic: EEDv detected in PA hatchery lake trout – to stock in Lake Erie or not

Attending:

Elizabeth Wright, Andy Noyes, John Coll, Martha Wolgamood (for Gary Whelan), Bill Horns (for Sue Marcquenski), Dave Meuninck, Roy Johannes, Ling Shen, Dave Insley, Larry Willis, Ken Phillips, Coja Yamashita, Andy Shiels, Greg Wright, Mohamed Faisal, John Dettmers.  
Email comments from Sue Marcquenski.

Pennsylvania Overview

Wyoming Game and Fish brood stock tested positive for EEDv. PA has been receiving eyed eggs from the WY Story Hatchery for about 10 years. WY notified PA that their lake trout tested positive for EEDv. PA followed up with UC-Davis, sending fish for testing. Fish from PA hatchery were EEDv positive.

This affects about 45K lake trout (LAT) destined for Lake Erie in fall 2009 and about 60K fish to be stocked in inland waters in spring 2010. PA will sample these inland waters to see if LAT from previous stockings are positive for EEDv to determine what to do with the springtime fish. Fish are 6-8 inches long and approximately 1 year old now. If decision is to not stock, fish will be destroyed.

PA seeking advice about what to do in Lake Erie, where samples have not been taken.

Questions asked:

Q: Is testing of fish from Lake Erie an option?

A: PA has pulled gear from Lake Erie for the season. USFWS has just gotten LAT samples from NY waters of Lake Erie. USFWS has not found the virus in follow-up samples from Pleasant Mount so work is ongoing to refine testing technique.

Q: What will be the fate of fish if not stocked into Lake Erie?

A: They will have to be destroyed because there is no capacity to hold them at the hatchery.

Q: Can EEDv-free eggs be found?

A: No obvious sources but testing not yet really ongoing.

Q: Is a hatchery eradication really necessary?

A: May not know enough to even think about such a step. Must continue to strive to look at the pathogenicity of the virus.

Q: What will be the fate of fish destined inland if not stocked?

A: Could either be destroyed or possibly stocked into Lake Erie.

Q: Are we finding production stock anywhere that are not carrying this virus?

A: Testing of federal hatcheries not yet begun.

Discussion:

USFWS – Lamar: Not a new outbreak. A new detection. No clinical signs or mortalities. Great Lakes waters may not be tested. No reason to suspend what has been going on re stocking in Lake Erie.

CORA: EEDv is around the Great Lakes and is not causing problems. OK to stock into Lake Erie.

MN: No reason to suspend stocking in Lake Erie.

MI: This might be a different virus, perhaps another herpes virus. Questions if this is the same virus that led to high mortality in the late 1980s. The inability to isolate and re-isolate the virus is puzzling. MI samples of ovarian fluid from hatchery broodstock (originating from Lake Superior in 2001-2003) were tested by Hedrick and results showed ~30% were EEDv positive. Stocking into Lake Erie is reasonable and has been going on for many years, but would not stock into inland lakes.

WI: Wisconsin feels the situation in PA is different from what occurred in Wisconsin in June 2009 because in Wisconsin there was knowledge that for at least 20+ years L. Superior was an EEDv positive water and we were not introducing the virus to a new location. In PA, the WY strain of lake trout was stocked for one year before EEDv was detected. There is currently no surveillance data for EEDv in Lake Erie. From archived tissues from adult lake trout in Lake Superior, we know EEDv has been present based on recent detections in 2001 and several years since then.

WI notes read into the conference call: recommends more testing on fish from Lake Erie, and until monitoring from the lake demonstrates EEDv is present and based on existing process, stocking into Lake Erie should not occur.

IL: Based on lack of pathogenicity, OK to stock in Lake Erie.

IN: Lack of clinical signs and because it is not practical to either test fish from Lake Erie or hold the fish in the hatchery, OK to stock in Lake Erie.

OH: Concurs with the PA proposal to stock fish into Lake Erie. This is not different from what they have been doing and no clinical disease has been found, therefore we don't know enough to stop the stocking.

NY: PA should be able to stock based on the indication that there is no clinical disease.

USFWS- LaCrosse: Some reservations until we actually know that the virus is present in Lake Erie. Although there is some uncertainty about whether this is the same EEDv, most likely is the same virus as in the 1980s. A DNA test only, we have not isolated the virus.

ON: Not supportive of stocking at present. Would like to know more about the status of fish in Lake Erie. The Lake Erie lake trout program is a restoration/rehabilitation program and ON is not in support of stocking fish that are EEDv positive into a population being rehabilitated. If PA chooses not to stock ON could possibly offset with additional stocking of ON hatchery LAT. New York indicated they would insist on ON fish be tested for EEDv prior to stocking. ON does not have the ability to test for EEDv, therefore would likely have to withdraw the offer of fish.

### Summary

Many jurisdictions believe, based on the lack of clinical signs, the likelihood that the new PCR-based test is picking up the virus that was previously extremely difficult to detect, and no change in procedures by Pennsylvania, that there is no reason to suspend stocking of lake trout into Lake Erie.

Some jurisdictions were not supportive of stocking these fish until more was understood about whether lake trout currently in Lake Erie test positive for EEDv.

Additional research to determine whether this virus truly is EEDv and to examine the pathogenicity of the virus would be beneficial.