

REPORT ON MEETINGS WITH DNR AND MN LEGISLATORS ON MUSKIE STOCKING OF OTTERTAIL LAKES October 29, 2015 at Otter Tail Power Community Room, Fergus Falls, MN



A town hall meeting was held in the Community Rooms of OtterTail Power Company in Fergus Falls, MN on October 29, 2015. In attendance were James Wolters-Areas Fisheries Supervisor, Bud Nornes- MN State Representative, Bill Ingebrigtsen- MN State Senator, Tom Landwehr-MN DNR Commissioner, MN State Representative, Mary Franson, East Otter Tail county, representatives from Lizzie, Loon, Franklin, Pelican lake associations, representatives of Muskies Inc. and other concerned and interested persons.

A 5:00 p.m. meeting was held people representing the Lizzie, Loon, Franklin, Pelican Lake, Otter Tail Lake and OTC COLA the opportunity to address the DNR and state legislators directly in a small-group setting. The session seemed to go well with the legislators listening attentively to the presentations from each lake. This meeting was cut short and disrupted by noise from the adjoining room where the town hall meeting was to be held; as only a thin partition separated the rooms.

The town-hall meeting began at 6:00 p.m. Of the estimated 175 attendees, the pro-muskie faction far-outnumbered the anti-muskie groups by 4:1. The Muskies Inc. organization was predominantly represented by not only professional muskie fishing guides and authors but also

officers, directors and members of numerous Muskie Inc. chapters in Minnesota. Busloads of these individuals came from numerous areas of Minnesota. They brought signs to be displayed in front of the room exclaiming their opinions on muskie management.

The purpose of the meeting as intended by the PLPOA was to influence the DNR to at least suspend stocking muskies in the Otter Tail County, and especially Pelican, lakes. The position of the Otter Tail Lake associations is that additional stocking should be suspended until sufficient data has been collected and compiled, providing assurance that the continued stocking of muskies will not be ultimately detrimental to walleyes and small fish species in the lake and will not present an ever-increasing danger of injury to humans.

The dominance of the meeting by the numbers and attitudes of the pro-muskie side was obviously apparent. There was a definite preponderance of opinions on the side of trophy fishermen with lesser consideration given to family fishing.

It was announced that the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) filed with the DNR had been denied that day. Also it was stated that because of the pending litigation filed by the PLPOA no remarks addressing that litigation would be made at the meeting.

In the end the DNR and state legislators appeared to politely listen but did not give any indication of any agreement with the position of the lake associations. They appeared to be satisfied with their own data and the interpretation of the data by the DNR supporting their current program of muskie management.

The obvious attempt by the pro-muskie side to loudly support their statements and opinions, and to be critical of lake property owners and any rights they might have, shows the tactics and methods they have used to bully the legislature and citizens of Otter Tail County. As property owners, tax payers, business owners and fishermen, we need to come together and contact our legislators, county officials, and local officials to make sure we are heard. Make sure your voice and vote gets a place on the stop muskie stocking issue.