# Update to the Brenden et al. (2012) Statistical Catch-at-age Assessment for Chinook salmon in the Main Basin of Lake Huron

QFC Technical Report T2015-01

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# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to document revisions to the statistical catch-at-age assessment for Chinook salmon in the main basin of Lake Huron. This revised assessment has been used to assess prey consumption and as a basis for interpreting effects of predators (He et al. 2015). This report does not fully document the model but only the changes in the assessment. Readers are referred to Brenden et al. (2012) for additional details.

# Changes to the model and assessment

1. The data were updated to include information through 2012. Where possible new inputs were obtained from original sources for prior years. This led to some changes in data from earlier years, likely reflecting corrections in the source data, but generally the changes were small. The one major change to the input data was the effort data. Brenden et al. reported that they used effort from salmon and trout index ports but actually used total fishing effort. This error was corrected so the assessment now uses the index port effort data. In addition, sensitivity analysis showed that the use of different effort series had little impact on the results from the original assessment of Brenden et al. (2012) in terms of population status, dynamics, and mortality, because the model allowed for time-varying catchability. As a further sensitivity analysis the model was also fit using total "salmon and trout" effort estimated based on angler reported targets for the entire Michigan non-charter fishery, and this series also produced similar results for population size and sources of mortality as the original assessment model. All data used as inputs to the assessment are given in an Appendix to this report containing the "dat file" read in when the assessment is fit.

2. The Swan Creek weir returns were down-weighted to the point that they had essentially no influence on assessment results. Concerns had been raised that the weir returns may not be reflective of lake wide changes. Earlier sensitivity analysis had suggested that the results were not sensitive to weighting but after the model was revised the results became sensitive to the use of the weir data but only if the weight on the weir data was set very low.

3. The percentage wild assumed for the 1987-1993 year classes was increased from 15% to 45%. The 15% figure had been based on the percentage wild of young fish in shore seine sampling in Michigan and this underestimated total contribution given that sampling was before complete dispersal and near stocking but not wild production sources. Assessment results were surprisingly insensitive to this input, likely because the total abundance of fish was well estimated so any change in wild fish was compensated for by an offsetting change in age-0 mortality.

4. A major change to the assessment model was to modify the model for catchability. Several biologists within the Michigan DNR and OMNR had questioned the magnitude of changes in catchability and had argued that the large estimated changes were not plausible. In particular concerns were expressed that the overall level of fishing mortality was unreasonably high in recent years and that the number of spawners that was surviving was probably not sufficient to explain the strong runs still seen in Ontario streams. Our changes moved away from a random walk approach to modeling catchability given other experiences that suggested that this can be problematic in an assessment with other time varying processes modelled by random walks (as in this model where age-0 natural mortality was influential and varied according to a random walk). Instead we developed a more mechanistic approach to modeling time-varying catchability, while still allowing some stochasticity.

In particular, the recreational fishery catchability prior to 1986 (q) is constant and estimated as a fixed parameter as in Brenden et al. 2012. Starting in 1986 the recreational fishery catchability is modeled as the product of q (catchability prior to 1986), an increase in catchability for the time block 1986 and later versus earlier years ( $\tau$ ) reflecting evolution of the fishery, a power function of the inverse of weight at

700 mm normalized to 1986 (so no effect for 1986 and catchability increases as weight at 700 mm decreases), a year-specific "area adjustment" and year specific deviations ( $\epsilon$  assumed to be normally distributed on a log scale - i.e., white noise):

$$q_{y} = q\tau \left[\frac{W_{700,1986}}{W_{700,y}}\right]^{\gamma} Adj_{y} \exp(\varepsilon_{y}) \quad \varepsilon \sim N(0,\sigma_{\varepsilon}^{2})$$
(1)

The area adjustment (*Adj*) was the proportion of total salmon and trout effort in Michigan's waters of the main basin that occurred in MH1 and MH2, normalized to 1986. Thus as the fishery became more concentrated in the northern part of the lake (as occurred later in the time series) catchability tended to increase over that seen in 1986. The conceptual model here is that the concentration of effort spatially reflects an overall concentration of fish to a smaller area, making them more catchable.

The inverse of weight at 700 mm is used as a surrogate for hunger, with thinner fish being viewed as being hungrier and more likely to strike lures. The idea with allow catchability to jump in 1986 is that this reflects a more efficient fishery than the early period and in addition starting in 1986 there is actual effort data rather than an assumed pattern.

Both weight at 700 mm and the area adjustment factor showed substantial changes over time (Figures 1 and 2) with weight being lower and the area adjustment higher in later years.

5. Some changes in the treatment of natural mortality were implemented. For age-0, natural mortality from 1982 through the next to last year with data (now 2011) followed the random walk, as described by Brenden et al. (2012) with age-0 natural mortality in the last year set equal to that in the next to last year. For years prior to 1982, however, we used a different approach, setting all values equal to the same value estimated for 1982. This contrasts with the treatment of Brenden et al. (2012) who set the natural morality equal to 0.7 in 1968, with a linear increase until 1980, at which it remained constant through the estimated value for 1982. We had little confidence in the prior estimate of 0.7 or the timing of any change in natural mortality prior to 1982. However, this change had negligible impact on results. A more substantive change was we also allowed for time varying natural mortality of age-1 and older. The model used the same assumed age-specific values from the first year through 1986 but starting in

1986 these values were multiplied by  $\left[\frac{W_{700,1986}}{W_{700,y}}\right]^b$  starting in 1987 (*b* estimated). This allows M to change over time inversely with changes in weight at 700 mm after 1986. This change made a substantive

difference in that it allowed for higher adult mortality when condition was low. Previously some modest evidence for relatively fewer older fish in later years had been interpreted by the model as evidence for high fishing rates as this was the only way the model could achieve higher mortality. The higher mortality when condition was low made sense given these fish were clearly in an unhealthy state when condition was at its lowest.

6. The objective function used to measure model fit, for which parameters were adjusted to minimize, remained structurally unchanged, but "weights" on data sources were changed. For the objective function component related to catchability deviations the equation analogous to equation T2.3 is now:

$$L_{\varepsilon} = n_{\varepsilon} log_{\varepsilon} \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{\lambda}} + 0.5 \frac{\lambda_{\varepsilon}}{\sigma} \sum_{y} \varepsilon_{y}^{2}$$
<sup>(2)</sup>

Note that the white noise deviations ( $\epsilon$ ) were defined on a log scale (with exp( $\epsilon$ ) being multiplicative errors of equation 1) so that their squares are summed rather than summing the square of their logs. This is identical to how the random walk deviations were specified by Brenden et al. (2012). They correctly coded the objective function using components of the form given in eq. 2, but incorrectly indicated in their Table 2 that sum was for squared log transformed deviations.

While the structure of the objective function was unchanged the weighting factors did change. Like Brenden et al. (2012) each component of the objective function was effectively weighted by the variance (for normal components) or the effective sample size (multinomial components). For the normal components the variances equal  $\frac{\lambda_i}{\sigma}$  where *i* indicates the type of deviation. The weights for the normal components other than the recreational fishery (set to 1 as a standard) and the Swan Creek weir return data (down weighted to 0.001 as described above) were altered iteratively so that the rough match described by Brenden et al. (2012) was achieved for catch residuals. The resulting values for  $\lambda$ were {1, 0.001, 0.5, 1} for the recreational harvest, the Swan Creek returns, the random walk for age-0 natural mortality, and the white noise catchability deviations. Effective sample sizes were fixed at the observed sample size up to a maximum of 50 as described by Brenden et al. (2012).

### **Results and Discussion**

The purpose of this report was not to present a detailed evaluation of the stock status for this updated model, but instead to document changes made to the model. Nevertheless it is worth commenting on a few aspects of the resulting model fit. First the basic diagnostics (residuals, retrospective patterns, MCMC chain properties) all suggested a technically reasonable fit. Second the overall general pattern of decline in Chinook salmon late in the time series, driven largely by a decline in age-0 survival that was reported by Brenden et al. (2012) is retained (Figure 3). The previous model had indicated that as this decline occurred abundance became so low that fishing became excessively high. The current model estimates a much less severe increase in fishing mortality and less of an increase in catchability (on the order of 7 fold rather than the 50 fold of Brenden et al. 2012), accompanied by a modest increase in natural mortality during a period corresponding with higher fishing mortality (Figure 4). We believe these results are more plausible and suggest that fishing did not reach levels of serious concern as the previous assessment was suggesting. In large picture both versions of the assement gave a similar picture of a decline in Chinook salmon abundance driven by age-0 but they do give substantially different pictures of the intensity of fishing and the revised model suggests a less extreme decline with a somewhat different timing.

- Brenden, T. O., J. R. Bence, and E. B. Szalai. 2012. An age-structured integrated assessment of Chinook Salmon population dynamics in Lake Huron's Main Basin since 1968. Transactions of the American Fisheries Society 141: 919-933.
- He, J. X., J. R. Bence, C. P. Madenjian, S. A. Pothoven, N. E. Dobiesz, D. G. Fielder, J. E. Johnson, M. P. Ebener, A. R. Cottrill, L. C. Mohr, and S. Koproski. 2015. Coupling age-structured stock assessment and fish bioenergetics models: a system of time-varying models for quantifying piscivory patterns during the rapid trophic shift in the main basin of Lake Huron. Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences 72:7-23
- He, J. X., J. R. Bence, J. E., Johnson, D. Clapp, and M. P. Ebener. 2008. Modeling variation in masslength relations and condition indices of lake trout and Chinook salmon in Lake Huron: a hierarchical Bayesian approach. Transactions of the American Fisheries Society 137:801-817.

Figure 1. Pattern of changes in weight at 700 mm over time. Weight at this length was generated from weight-length models similar to those described in He et al. (2008).



Weight (KG) at 700 mm (CHS Lake Huron)

Figure 2.





Figure 3. Estimates of biomass and age-0 natural mortality from the revised Chinook salmon model for the Lake Huron main basin.





Appendix to T2015-01. Data file used for updated assessment model

#First and last area adjustment years 1987 2012

#area adjustments for catchability
#These are calculated from SAT effort
#Inverse proportion of effort in MH1+MH2
#Normalized to proportion in 1986 [p(86)/p(y)]
# Note is code q adjusted by dividing. Same as multiply non-inverse
0.6763 0.5836 0.8942
0.7022 0.5048 0.6710 0.5734 0.6431 0.6431 0.4469 0.3337 0.3124 0.3790
0.3414 0.3582 0.3500 0.3604 0.3859 0.3891 0.2819 0.2820 0.2113 0.2932
0.2063 0.2912 0.2685

**#FIRST AND LAST WL COEFF YEARS** 

1983 2012			
# alpha beta N			
9.609E-09	3.0	0204	181
5.107E-09	3.1	1092	122
1.1383E-08	2.9	9946	244
1.0399E-08	3.0	0024	530
9.378E-09	3.0	)131	499
4.674E-09	3.1	1212	288
4.195E-09	3.1	1524	108
3.022E-09	3.1	188	54
5.27E-09	3.1	L125	147
8.813E-09	3.0	)4	202
3.093E-09	3.1	1899	279
1.955E-09	3.2	2539	137
7.076E-09 3.06	52	194	
1.414E-09 3.30	)2	253	
2.795E-09 3.18	59	327	
2.304E-09 3.20	66	314	
2.515E-09 3.21	.38	224	
3.705E-09 3.15	14	398	
4.77E-09 3.11	77	416	
3.64E-09 3.148	8	396	
9.8E-10 3.337	6	371	
2.823E-09 3.16	53	394	
1.492E-09 3.26	6	173	
2.505E-09 3.19	4	232	
4.175E-09 3.11	.81	155	
2.235E-09 3.22	51	139	
4.745E-09 3.11	28	99	
6.488E-09 3.06	83	133	
3.931E-09 3.15	51	105	
6.083E-09 3.07	'55	188	

# REF length for WL 700

#FIRST and LAST MODEL AGE 0 5

# FIRST MODEL YEAR LAST MODEL YEAR (FOR RECRUITMENT) 1968 2012

# input nat mortality at age FOR CHS (EXCLUDES MATURATION) 0.7 0.30 0.10 0.10 0.10 0.10

# Month OF YEAR FOR SPAWNING (1 To 12) Occurs at the end of the month 9

# STOCKING AND RECRUITMENT INFORMATION FOR LAKE HURON MAIN BASIN CHS
# Numbers used in 2009 assessment retained through 1978
# Numbers after 1978 based on current stocking database provided by
# Tracy Kolb early April 2013

# Numbers fingerlings stocked in LH main basin Michigan waters 1968-2012
273950 250000
643144 894000 484572 967330 776294 655484 830536 643366 1317578 1325033
1877653 1647651 2000787 2695800 3146997 2806300 3185077 3164689 3520429 4200177
3834970 3221778 3047151 3287234 3572559 3829157 3471523 3287581 3311052 2873305
3050366 3024220 2882637 2893200 2901282 2898017 1474393 1406275 1474833 1473620
1468131 1391427 657899

# STOCKING IN ONTARIO WATERS OF MAIN BASIN 1968-2012 # Data for 1985 on provided by Adam Cottrill March 2013 # Numbers are fingerlings plus any yearlings stocked the next year # Number of yearling small (6200 max, zero most years) 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 59073 45930 273596 451999 432261 0 0 0 0 0 462896 328543 488527 584464 433294 494710 438500 431663 377441 499155 153118 347843 264300 297778 258511 129479 83846 130954 220930 53667 67451 144524 151398

#ASSUMED PROPORTION WILD FOR 87-93 YEAR CLASSES #MICHIGAN RUNS OF MAIN BASIN 0.45

#ONTARIO RUNS OF MAIN BASIN 0.45

#ASSUMED PROPORTION WILD FOR THE 2000-2003 YEAR CLASSES. DATA FROM J. JOHNSON.

0.782

0.809

0.838

0.811

#Weight at age in creel survey in August.

# Estimates for 1983-2012 are averages calculated from MDNR creel biodata

# Estimates for 1973-1982 based on growth model fit to bio data from

# combination of creel and weir data by Ji He (See Brenden et al. 2012).

# 3 values for age-4 replaced by model-based values [2004, 09, 11]

# Model based values were used when N=1 or 2 and were model number

# adjusted by ratio of ave W@age 4 from creel to model averaged

# over years 1983-2012

# So data are same for 2009 earlier as previous assessment except for # two numbers.

1.85	5.22	8.26	10.41
1.90	5.64	8.92	11.24
1.79	5.17	8.63	11.05
1.73	5.14	8.43	11.08
1.65	4.96	8.35	10.94
1.75	4.93	8.11	10.64
1.63	5.05	8.54	11.40
1.73	4.67	7.55	9.76
1.90	5.32	8.21	10.46
1.61	5.97	9.76	12.40
1.32	2.74	7.79	8.50
1.27	4.20	6.40	8.22
1.31	3.90	6.90	8.02
1.45	4.17	6.16	7.19
1.87	3.40	6.24	7.22
1.28	3.52	6.76	8.08
1.69	3.40	7.90	9.38
2.23	5.01	6.62	8.96
1.40	4.02	7.69	8.85
1.56	3.95	7.15	9.25
1.13	3.86	7.51	10.31
0.81	3.53	7.33	8.56
1.04	3.33	6.82	8.55
1.01	3.87	7.78	8.88
1.05	2.75	5.80	7.51
0.93	2.15	4.39	5.79
1.83	3.70	6.13	7.19
1.02	3.89	6.67	7.22
1.24	3.71	6.62	8.37
1.14	3.33	6.19	9.36
1.05	2.48	5.34	8.83

1.05	2.33	3.83	5.90
1.05	2.46	3.60	5.75
0.98	3.04	4.55	4.24
1.04	3.10	4.80	5.10
1.68	3.61	4.99	6.81
1.40	3.32	5.58	7.17
1.10	3.29	5.47	6.19
1.86	4.67	6.67	7.06
1.21	3.65	5.67	7.47

#Proportion mature by age and year in creel survey in July and August#1983-2012#1983-1987 from original dat file. 1988-2012 calculated from growth model april 2013

0.159	1.000	1.000	0.979
0.000	0.474	0.892	1.000
0.159	0.474	1.000	0.979
0.159	1.000	1.000	0.979
0.159	0.258	1.000	1.000
0.073	0.122	0.630	0.919
0.000	0.121	0.873	1.000
0.000	0.250	0.880	0.938
0.700	1.000	1.000	1.000
0.000	0.769	1.000	1.000
0.000	0.276	0.923	0.955
0.000	0.277	0.927	1.000
0.350	0.410	0.962	0.974
0.301	0.597	0.700	0.929
0.000	0.123	0.845	1.000
0.038	0.229	0.759	0.976
0.385	0.442	0.911	0.948
0.000	0.159	0.942	1.000
0.103	0.582	0.910	1.000
0.186	0.668	0.907	1.000
0.250	0.356	0.790	1.000
0.121	0.359	0.714	1.000
0.000	0.404	0.712	1.000
0.158	0.695	0.918	1.000
0.200	0.631	0.948	0.944
0.571	0.611	0.921	1.000
0.222	0.493	0.984	0.857
0.206	0.538	0.903	1.000
0.385	0.833	1.000	1.000
0.109	0.451	0.973	1.000

#Numbers for determining proportion mature by age #1983-20012

# Ages	1-4			
#1983-:	1987 fro	m origin	al dat file.	1988-2012 calculated from growth model ap
1	1	4	1	
2	1	1	1	
1	1	1	1	
1	6	8	1	
1	31	58	114	
41	41	27	74	
11	33	55	58	
5	16	25	16	
10	26	18	14	
7	13	12	3	
10	29	39	22	
14	47	41	9	
80	134	157	38	
153	139	140	14	
20	219	168	35	
26	83	137	42	
13	104	168	77	
42	82	104	22	
29	134	166	88	
86	184	215	16	
8	239	248	9	
33	220	220	1	
6	94	111	15	
19	118	158	68	
20	84	77	18	
7	108	76	5	
9	73	64	7	
68	39	31	7	

# Δσρς 1-Λ

#### ril 2013

# **# HARVEST AND EFFORT**

# Index of directed recreational effort 1986-2012, Michigan waters of Lake Huron

# Creel and charter combined angling hours for 10 coldwater ports

# 89 and 90 filled in based on tot lakewide effort and ratio of index ports to tot during 1986-1994 1683539.474 1369016.736 922006 877321 1138103 851856 465620 302807.8578 299053 241476 304984 226765.6247 272228 320405.56

67	578	560	91	2
146	197	534	50	3
61	184	207	28	1
22	104	223	24	2
210	40	52	7	0
176	821	412	35	4
33	195	334	30	1
#2010	S			
345	70	65	7	0
130	450	244	11	0
66	162	190	31	0

 # STOCKING AT SWAN RIVER WEIR FROM 1983 to 2011

 770000
 900209
 734022
 950268
 909763
 957768
 1009142

 945948
 821783
 778822
 848484
 902243
 966725
 900738
 886161
 817361
 709169

 770862
 774842
 661719
 746428
 745071
 735403
 476381
 472955
 460387
 472629

 469652
 397700
 397700
 397700
 397700
 397700
 397700

# STOCKING AT SWAN IN 2012 NOT USED #341415

#Relative Proportion of fishing that occurs each month ( Jan - Dec) in a year (used July as standard)
0.000
0.000
0.000
0.087
0.334
0.559
1.000
0.807
0.468
0.072
0.000

	-			
# Lake Huron R	ec Age Comp fro	m Michigan Cree	el Survey, 1983-2	2012, ages 1-5
0.07904192	0.1640719	0.6718563	0.077844311	0.007185629
0.21085271	0.3581395	0.3596899	0.069767442	0.001550388
0.11013216	0.446696	0.3568282	0.078414097	0.007929515
0.06056701	0.2332474	0.5199742	0.18621134	0
0.09095238	0.2504762	0.4257143	0.23 0.00285	57143
0.12264151	0.2291105	0.3975741	0.230458221	0.020215633
0.05882353	0.2533937	0.3438914	0.312217195	0.031674208
0.08860759	0.2278481	0.4367089	0.234177215	0.012658228
0.14391144	0.2749077	0.396679	0.173431734	0.011070111
0.19275701	0.2873832	0.3598131	0.158878505	0.001168224
0.11896745	0.3041526	0.5331089	0.043771044	0

0.0403397	0.2590234	0.641189	0.059447983	0
0.12060779	0.2877493	0.4510921	0.140550807	0
0.23100616	0.3080082	0.4096509	0.04825462	0.003080082
0.09453197	0.4457831	0.3957368	0.0639481	0
0.0890411	0.3002283	0.4121005	0.196347032	0.002283105
0.09072165	0.3 0.43	329897 0.17	5257732 0.0010	30928
0.14023211	0.3491296	0.3897485	0.119922631	0.000967118
0.09775967	0.4039375	0.3788187	0.112016293	0.007467753
0.15834768	0.404475	0.408778	0.028399312	0
0.02759277	0.5185538	0.4357755	0.017126546	0.000951475
0.05968586	0.4408377	0.4942408	0.005235602	0
0.02861685	0.3449921	0.5564388	0.069952305	0
0.0872914	0.2952503	0.4261874	0.187419769	0.003851091
0.1125 (	0.4145833 0.30	666667 0.08	5416667 0.0208	33333
0.05910165	0.5437352	0.3687943	0.026004728	0.002364066
0.04884319	0.3830334	0.5244216	0.038560411	0.005141388
0.50764526	0.1926606	0.2538226	0.042813456	0.003058104
0.1637931	0.6551724	0.1781609	0.002873563	0
0.2478185	0.4118674	0.3141361	0.02617801	0

#Mature fish collected in July and August - Lake Huron Rec Age Comp from Michigan Creel Survey, 1986-2012, ages 1-5 # Note that mature age comp starts in 1986 because N assessed for maturity very small in 1983-1985 0.0000 0.4286 0.5714 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0444 0.3222 0.6333 0.0000 0.0283 0.0472 0.1604 0.6415 0.1226 0.0000 0.0345 0.4138 0.5000 0.0517 #1990s 0.0000 0.0930 0.5116 0.3488 0.0465 0.1045 0.3881 0.2687 0.2090 0.0299 0.0000 0.4000 0.4800 0.1200 0.0000 0.0000 0.1231 0.5538 0.3231 0.0000 0.0000 0.2167 0.6333 0.1500 0.0000 0.1033 0.2030 0.5572 0.1365 0.0000 0.1917 0.3458 0.4083 0.0542 0.0000 0.0000 0.1324 0.6961 0.1716 0.0000 0.0061 0.1152 0.6303 0.2485 0.0000 0.0180 0.1655 0.5504 0.2626 0.0036 #2000s 0.0000 0.0970 0.7313 0.1642 0.0075 0.0093 0.2430 0.4704 0.2741 0.0031 0.0457 0.3514 0.5571 0.0457 0.0000 0.0068 0.2901 0.6689 0.0307 0.0034 0.0166 0.3278 0.6515 0.0041 0.0000 0.0000 0.2879 0.5985 0.1136 0.0000 0.0100 0.2742 0.4849 0.2274 0.0033 0.0265 0.3510 0.4834 0.1126 0.0265

0.0276 0.4552 0.4828 0.0345 0.0000 0.0185 0.3333 0.5833 0.0556 0.0093 #2010s 0.1972 0.2958 0.3944 0.0986 0.0141 0.0500 0.7000 0.2400 0.0100 0.0000 0.0522 0.3433 0.5373 0.0672 0.0000

# SAMP SIZES FOR OBSERVED AGE COMP FOR REC FISHERY 1983-2012 1053 974 1051 955 1034 1473 

# SAMP	SIZES F	or obse	RVED A	GE COM	P FOR N	1ATURE	FISH IN F	REC FISH	ERY
14	180	106	116						
43	67	25	65	60	271	240	204	165	278
134	321	350	293	241	132	299	151	145	108
71	100	134							

#Test values -7777 -8888 -9999