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USING STOCK ASSESSMENT INFORMATION TO INFORM HARVEST POLICY IN DATA-LIMITED FISHERIES

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PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY:

Many Great Lakes fisheries, while important, are small enough that full assessments of fishery status and development of data-driven rules for setting harvest rates or quotas cannot be justified. This can make management of these, data-limited, fisheries challenging. [FishPath](#) is a tool for guiding the development of a data collection and management strategy that is suitable for such fisheries. FishPath was developed by an international team of fishery scientists for use with data limited fisheries around the world, and has been applied to fisheries in a dozen countries. The tool is hosted by The Nature Conservancy and guided by an international advisory team. In this project we trained a group of Great Lakes fishery biologists in the use of the FishPath tool, and then hosted two workshops to demonstrate the use of the tool for two fisheries: the commercial trap net fishery for lake whitefish in Ohio waters of Lake Erie and the commercial gill net fishery for cisco in Thunder Bay, Lake Superior.

MAIN MESSAGES:

FishPath provides a structured approach to developing a strategy for data collection, status assessment, and management actions for data-limited fisheries.

The tool guides users through a series of questions that help describe the nature of the fisheries and the kinds of data that might be available, and uses the answers to these questions to help narrow a comprehensive set of potential options down to a small set that are practical and relevant to the fishery.

Application of the tool to two Great Lakes commercial fisheries identified options for more effectively using existing and readily available data to guide management of these fisheries, particularly to help identify measures that could be implemented proactively to ensure fishery sustainability.

We now have a group of biologists in the Great Lakes region who are familiar with the FishPath tool and could be called upon to guide further applications of FishPath