



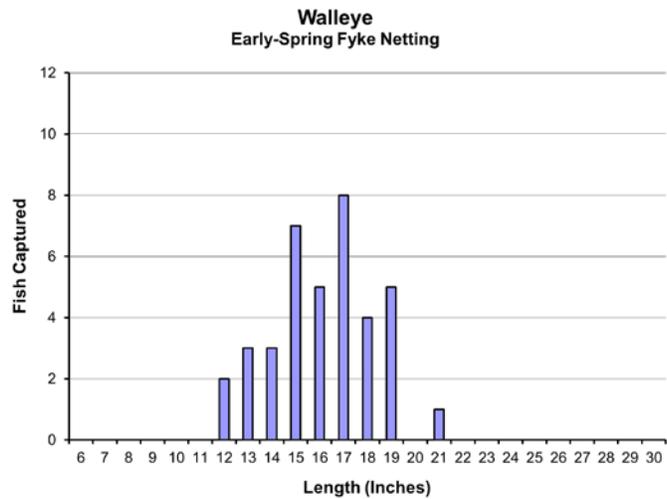
Early-Spring Fyke Netting Survey Summary Windigo Lake, Sawyer County, 2012

The Hayward DNR Fisheries Management Team conducted a fyke netting survey on Windigo Lake during April 4-5 to assess the walleye, northern pike, and perch populations. Eight nets were set overnight for two nights. An electrofishing survey conducted in early June documented the status of largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and bluegill. Those results are summarized in a separate survey report. Quality, preferred, and memorable sizes referenced in this summary are based on standard proportions of world record lengths developed for each species by the American Fisheries Society.

Walleye



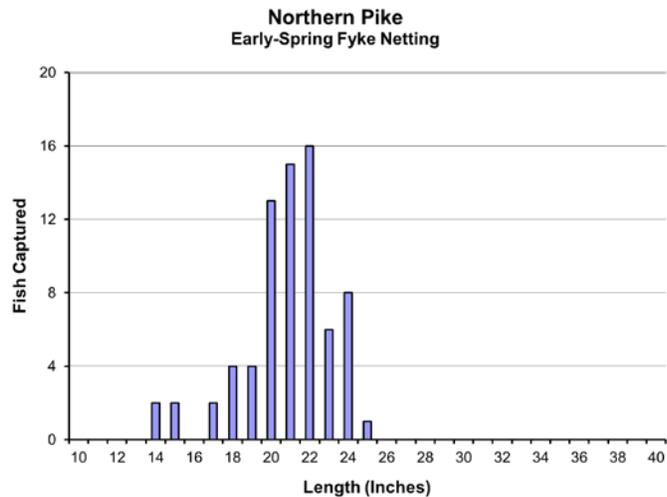
Captured 3 per net-night $\geq 10''$	
Quality Size $\geq 15''$	79%
Preferred Size $\geq 20''$	3%



Northern Pike



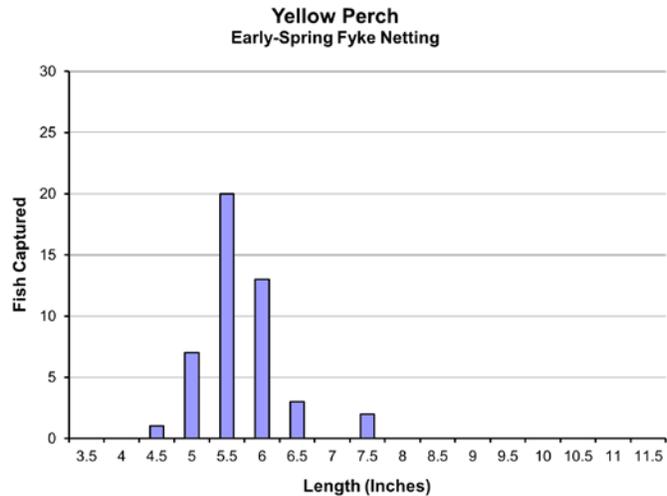
Captured 5 per net-night $\geq 14''$	
Quality Size $\geq 21''$	63%
Preferred Size $\geq 28''$	0%



Yellow Perch



Captured 3 per net-night $\geq 5''$	
Quality Size $\geq 8''$	0%
Preferred Size $\geq 10''$	0%



Summary of Results

Water temperature during this survey was 48°F, effectively covering the spawning range for all target species.

Walleye capture rate was well below average in comparison to other lakes in the Ceded Territory that, like Windigo, have traditionally sustained natural reproduction of walleye. Most walleyes were over 15 inches long, indicating very weak natural recruitment in recent years. Survival of young walleyes may be declining due to competition with or predation by relatively abundant northern pike (5 per net-night) and increasingly abundant largemouth bass (12 per mile of shoreline electrofishing in early June). It would be in the best interest of the Lake Windigo fishery if anglers and tribal harvesters alike would voluntarily minimize harvest of walleyes until fish community balance can be restored. Individuals determined to harvest walleyes from Windigo Lake should focus on the smallest legal-size fish available (just over 15 inches) to avoid consuming too much mercury, which is known to be high in this lake and is particularly high in older, larger predatory fish.

Northern pike were captured at a moderate to high rate. As would be expected in a dense population, size structure was relatively poor; we captured no pike over 25 inches long. It was also noted that pike during this survey were in visibly poor condition (slender for their length). The forage base available to pike was comprised of white suckers (most too large to consume), yellow perch (preferred prey), and bluegill (prey of last resort for pike). Our low capture rate of yellow perch and the near absence of perch 6-8 inches long (optimal size meal for pike 20-24 inches long) helps to explain the poor condition of pike, which seem to have exhausted their supply of preferred prey and left no perch of desirable size for anglers to catch. In other lakes where pike density is too high, we have promoted harvest through educational outreach. However, predatory fish in Windigo Lake have high levels of mercury, so advocating increased consumption is not advisable. A biological control on pike is needed in this lake.

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