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THE WISCONSIN FISHING REPORT



Spring 2011

An annual publication of the Fisheries Management program

fishingwisconsin.org



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Wisconsin Fishing by the Numbers:

- 15,000+ lakes
- 42,000 miles of streams and rivers
- 1.4 million anglers
- \$2.75 billion in economic activity
- 30,000+ jobs
- anglers fished combined 21 million days

RBFF Photo

2011 SEASON DATES

Early Inland Trout
March 5 (5 a.m.) to May 1

General Inland Trout
May 7 (5 a.m.) to Sept. 30

Large and Smallmouth Bass
Northern Zone Catch-and-Release
May 7 to June 17

Large and Smallmouth Bass
Northern Zone Harvest
June 18 to March 4, 2012

Large and Smallmouth Bass
Southern Zone
May 7 to March 4, 2012

Musky – Northern Zone
May 28 to Nov. 30

Musky – Southern Zone
May 7 to Dec. 31

Northern Pike
May 7 to March 4, 2012

Walleye
May 7 to March 4, 2012

Lake Sturgeon (hook and line)
Sept. 1 to Sept. 30



Dear
WISCONSIN ANGLER

We realize how critically important fishing is in Wisconsin as a cultural activity and as a part of our economy. We've worked hard to improve fishing in Wisconsin, and last year anglers saw the results at the end of their line: A new state record lake sturgeon speared from Lake Winnebago, a world-record brown trout caught from Lake Michigan, and trophy muskies by the boatload, to name a few.

As exciting as 2010 was, the signs point to more of the same for 2011. Please take a few minutes to read more about how we put your fishing license dollars to work. We're committed to make fishing even better in Wisconsin, and we hope your time on the water reflects that in 2011. Have a great season.

I'll see you on the water.

Michael Stapp
Fisheries Director

Making your fishing better

Fisheries in 2010: It was a very good year

DNR's fisheries program had 253 staff statewide and a budget of \$27.9 million for the fiscal year that started July 1, 2009, and ended June 30, 2010. Over 99% of the fisheries work is funded by fishing license sales and federal grants.

Some of the more important accomplishments in 2010:

- Restored/maintained habitat on 40 trout streams
- Performed more than 1,125 surveys to assess water quality, habitat and fish health
- Worked with local angling clubs and lake associations to improve fishing
- Raised and stocked 8,723,781 fish
- Stocked 23,000 northern pike - the first coolwater fish raised at Wild Rose fish Hatchery's renovated coolwater facilities - into three southern Wisconsin lakes
- Conducted trout surveys on Lake Superior tributaries after habitat work had been completed; trout populations have increased with more gains expected
- Taught fishing skills and aquatic ecology to 24,463 youth and served

8,500 young anglers at 47 tackle loaner sites

- Awarded construction of the new Lake Michigan research vessel to a Wisconsin ship yard; the RV Coregonus replaces a 70 year-old DNR vessel
- Provided technical support for science-based management of fish species statewide including muskellunge, walleye, bass, trout, lake sturgeon, catfish and panfish
- Initiated research to evaluate future fish passage at the Prairie du Sac dam; the first attempt to provide upstream fish passage at a high-head dam on a large warmwater river anywhere in the Midwest
- Studied climate change effects on coldwater stream fisheries, and conducted research and monitoring to develop the best strategies for trout management
- Researched walleye and musky genetics, and used findings to develop guidelines for maximizing healthy fisheries
- Continued to study angler impact on walleye age, size, and populations



TROUT ANGLERS

Wisconsin has more and bigger trout than ever. Help us decide how to continue this great fishing.

Go to - dnr.wi.gov/fish/trout - to learn what 60 years of trout surveys show, to share your ideas and feedback, and to sign up for updates.

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Find links to fishing licenses, season dates, regulations, where to fish and more at: fishingwisconsin.org

If you have more fishing questions, call toll-free 1-888-WDNRINfo (1-888-936-7463) or visit dnr.wi.gov/contact/ for a live chat.



SIGN UP for Fisheries Updates. Go to fishingwisconsin.org to sign up and stay informed on fisheries issues.



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Fabulous Fisheries Projects

Lake Soo gets a helping hand in reducing Eurasian water milfoil

Phillips – A six-foot drawdown during winter 2010/11 reduced the high densities of Eurasian water milfoil in Lac Sault Dore (Soo Lake) and is expected to improve boating and fishing for up to four years.

Eurasian water milfoil, an invasive, competes with native plants, decreasing their value as fish and wildlife habitat. Dense floating mats severely impede navigation and allow abundant panfish to avoid predators in impenetrable cover, which often impairs the panfish growth and stunts the population size structure.

Soo Lake is scheduled to be refilled before the 2011 fishing season, with final project results expected in summer 2011. An Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) grant will fund project evaluation.

Partners for this project included the Department of Natural Resources, Price County Dams Committee, Price County Land Conservation Department, Soo Lake United Property Owners Association and Onterra, LLC.

– *Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls and Jim Kreitlow, Water Resources Management Specialist, Rhinelander*

Jumbo-sized, yearling musky to make a splash in Pewaukee Lake

Pewaukee Lake is scheduled to receive 100 jumbo-sized, yearling musky in spring 2011 thanks to a new musky rearing pond and agreement between the Milwaukee chapter of Muskies Inc. and DNR fisheries staff.

Originating from the DNR hatchery system, these 12-inch musky were transferred into the new Amron rearing pond in the Vernon Marsh State Wildlife Area in fall 2010.

Studies show that spring yearling musky outperform fall fingerlings in terms of survival and growth. The musky spent fall and winter in Amron, which has excellent water quality and a maximum depth of nearly 20 feet, making it a prime candidate for over-wintering musky.

The Milwaukee chapter of Muskies Inc. has diligently worked on this venture, supplying countless hours of labor in brush and tree removal, bank mowing, shoreline weed whacking and fish stocking. On a weekly basis members check the water outflow system, check for available forage, check water quality, and manage aquatic plants.

They also watch for potential fish predation by herons, otter and mink. If nuisance predators visit the pond there is a plan to use a non-lethal predator deterrent comprised of fencing and bird netting.

The long-term project goal is to provide Pewaukee Lake with a sample of known-age spring yearling fish that are marked with PIT tags, low frequency radio tags that are implanted into the flesh of the fish, to determine how old the fish is. The information gathered from known-aged fish will help fisheries staff decide fishing regulations, fishing seasons and stocking levels.

This cooperative project ensures that Pewaukee Lake should continue to provide excellent musky angling for many generations to come.

– *Benjamin Heussner, fisheries biologist, Waukesha*



North Branch Beaver Creek Culvert Replacement Project after culvert replacement 2010. Photo: Chip Long

Enhanced access for trout on Beaver Creek

Beaver -- A collaborative project initiated by the Town of Beaver and facilitated by the Department of Natural Resources will enhance trout access and spawning on the North Branch of Beaver Creek.

In September 2010, a 60-year-old culvert on 21st Road was redesigned and replaced to allow trout better access to the upper portion of this stream to spawn. The water here remains cool enough for trout throughout the summer.

Trout Stamp revenue and the Town of Beaver provided funds for the project. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pledged \$10,000 and the Green Bay and Marinette Trout Unlimited Chapters each donated \$5,000 towards the culvert replacement.

Individuals who played a key role in this project included Robert Patz, road supervisor for the Town of Beaver; Al Stranz, environmental analysis and review supervisor; Bobbie Fischer, environmental analysis and review specialist; and Mike Donofrio, fisheries team supervisor.

– *Chip Long, fisheries biologist, Peshtigo*

Get the lead out! Use non-lead tackle.



Chinook salmon navigating the Thiensville Dam circa 1990. Photo: Robert Remy

Fish making a pass at the Milwaukee River

Milwaukee - Navigating the Mequon-Thiensville Dam on the Milwaukee River will be easier for many fish species thanks to completion of a 1,000 foot fish passage.

Fish from the lower 20 miles of the Milwaukee River will now be able to migrate past this dam and access at least another 12 miles of river.

River fragmentation has often been linked to fish population declines. Allowing resident fish to navigate around the 10-foot-tall dam should improve their overall population numbers by giving them the opportunity to find suitable habitat for spawning, young-of-the-year and over-wintering locations.

Although the fishway was designed to pass northern pike up a series of nine one-foot steps, many other species will also use the fishway to navigate around this dam. These fish include smallmouth bass, redhorse, walleye, sunfish, shiners, lake sturgeon, trout and salmon.

Since the fishway was just constructed, complete analyses of fish movement through the fishway has not been finished. However, one electrofishing event in the fishway in September 2010 yielded 450 fish including northern pike, smallmouth bass and shiners. In addition, local residents have observed trout and salmon swimming through the passage.

This project was a collaboration of federal, state and local agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Ozaukee County, Village of Thiensville and City of Mequon. Project cost was \$355,000. The main work on the fishway occurred during the winter of 2009-2010 and was dedicated on September 26, 2010.

– *Will Watorzyn, fisheries biologist, Milwaukee*



Netting sturgeon in North Fork Flambeau River downstream of Turtle-Flambeau Dam. Photo: Skip Sommerfeldt

Sturgeon raised at hatcheries return home

Mercer -- Hook-and-line anglers may someday be able to again fish for sturgeon upstream of the Turtle-Flambeau Dam thanks to hatchery-raised stocking efforts.

In early 2010, fisheries staff spawned sturgeon from the headwaters of the Flambeau

River in an effort to restore populations of this long-lived and slow-growing species.

Raised at Art Oehmcke Hatchery and Lac du Flambeau Tribal Hatchery, the new recruits were then stocked back into the same river system to conserve genetic integrity, bolster numbers, and re-colonize a community previously comprised mainly of a few large, old individuals with no evidence of natural reproduction.

This project continues earlier successful sturgeon population restoration efforts. Sturgeon raised and stocked by this method several times since 1994 have been captured as juveniles in fisheries surveys.

Recent evidence of natural reproduction upstream of the Turtle-Flambeau Dam is a positive sign as the Department of Natural Resources prepares to repeat this stocking process in 2011.

– *Jim Cox, fisheries technician, Mercer*

Science in the spotlight

Does this fish have VHS?

Researchers seek to develop new diagnostic tools to find out.

Madison - Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison recently began working on a project to develop new methods to test fish for viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS).

VHS is an invasive pathogen that causes VHS disease in fish. Symptoms of VHS include hemorrhaging, bulging eyes and bloated abdomens. Numerous fish kills throughout the Great Lakes have been associated with VHS, but infections aren't always lethal.

Antibodies within a fish's blood work to fight infectious pathogens, including VHS. These antibodies can deactivate a VHS virus and prevent disease onset. VHS-fighting antibodies likely develop only after a fish survives an initial VHS infection.

Scientists conduct diagnostic tests to determine if a fish has VHS. Current and standard diagnostic tests involve collecting kidney and spleen tissue samples for cell culture and genetic analysis. Although these methods are effective, they can be expensive, time-consuming and only detect active VHS infections.

DNR microbiologist Anna Wilson recently began preliminary research to develop a diagnostic test that will identify VHS antibodies in fish blood samples. "This research will provide DNR with a more cost-effective, non-lethal tool to identify VHS," says Wilson.

Wilson's research is being conducted for a two-year Master of Science degree in the Comparative Biomedical Sciences Program at UW-Madison under the supervision of Dr. Tony Goldberg. Wilson will develop the test at the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory under the guidance of Dr. Kathy Kurth and will also collaborate with Dr. Ron Bruch and other DNR fisheries personnel in Oshkosh to obtain fish for the study.

Wilson's results will allow the Department of Natural Resources to better understand the true geographic distribution of VHS in Wisconsin, which will guide future management decisions. Project funding is being provided by University of Wisconsin Sea Grant (<http://seagrant.wisc.edu/>).

To learn more about VHS and how to prevent its spread, please visit: dnr.wi.gov/fish/vhs/.

– *Nick Legler, fish health biologist, Madison*

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Regional fishing forecasts

Northern Wisconsin



LAKE SUPERIOR

Chequamegon Bay is a terrific destination for anglers who are seeking a variety of high-quality fishing opportunities. Fish surveys have shown the average length of walleye caught is 22 inches; however the proportion of walleye less than 20 inches has declined recently. Stocking of fingerlings and extended growth fingerlings in 2009-10 should improve the number of smaller walleye available to anglers in the upcoming years. May and June are excellent months for walleye — look for fish in shallow weeds. As the water temperature increases, walleye tend to spread throughout Chequamegon Bay and can be harder to catch. A favorite food of walleye — the yellow perch — has increased in the last few years. Improved perch fishing is due in part to reduced walleye abundance but also above average recruitment. Spring is the best time to catch yellow perch, but they can be caught all year wherever you can find healthy vegetation or other structures.

Brown trout and splake also are stocked in Chequamegon Bay to add diversity to the fishery. The survival of stocked fish has gradually declined over the last 20 years due to the resurgence of many native species. DNR staff has worked with local angling clubs to stock salmonids offshore in small boats and off the R/V Hack Noyes. Stocking fish into deeper water and spreading them in a variety of habitats appears to improve their survival and angler catch rates.

Fisheries management in Lake Superior has been gradually shifting away from stocking, to improving natural trout and salmon reproduction through tributary habitat reclamation. Improving stream habitat in headwater areas has dramatically increased natural re-



Conservative fishing regulations, closed areas, and sea lamprey control are critical to maintaining healthy lake trout populations. Photo: Steve Geving - Minnesota DNR.

production and has supplemented stocking programs that were experiencing declining success. Since the late 1990s, fisheries crews have used a technique that flushes trapped sand and sediments. Habitat crews have successfully exposed valuable spawning area in over 20 miles on Lake Superior tributaries.

On the Bois Brule, the most well-known of the tributaries, about 13,000 trout and salmon returned to the stream to spawn last season. Besides fishing for trout and salmon in the tributaries, wading from shore or fishing from boats near the river mouths in the spring and fall can provide ample angling.

Lake trout angling in Wisconsin waters is a tale of two fisheries, the Apostle Islands region and the western end. Lake trout fishing in the Apostle Islands is supported almost exclusively by natural reproduction, while the western end still needs stocking to maintain high catch rates. Lake trout are stocked in the western end each year and these stocked fish make up 20 to 30 percent of angler catch. No matter where you are fishing, June and July are great months to target lake trout. The average lake trout caught throughout the year is about 22 inches, but fish exceeding 35 inches are caught each year. Spawning surveys show the population is healthy with lake trout growing to over 40 inches and often living to be 30-plus years old. Conservative fishing regulations, closed areas, and sea lamprey control are critical to maintaining healthy lake trout populations.

Conditions on Lake Superior can change rapidly, so anglers are encouraged to check weather conditions and forecasts. While fishing on the big pond, anglers should be on the lookout for tagged fish. During many Lake Superior surveys, fish are tagged with colored and numbered tags inserted near the fish's dorsal fin. If anglers catch a fish with colored tags, they are strongly encouraged to report the fish's length, tag color and number, and capture location to the local DNR office. If the fish is released please leave the tag in the fish for future recapture. The information gathered from tag recaptures is valuable to fish managers.

Check out the following website for more specific information about the Lake Superior fishery— dnr.wi.gov/fish/lakesup/ - Michael Seider, fisheries biologist, Bayfield

BARRON COUNTY

Red Cedar Lake -- Spring surveys show a slight increase in the walleye population with most walleye in the 14- to 18-inch range. Small walleye numbers were generally low due to several weak walleye hatches the past three years. Bass populations are moderately abundant with largemouth bass mainly on the south end of the lake and smallmouth bass in the main basin. Bass in the 18- to

20-inch range are possible for both species. Pike are common but most fish are less than 28 inches. Panfish abundance is generally low, however quality fish are present. Patient anglers who spend some time learning the lake can be rewarded.

Poskin Lake — Spring surveys show a strong largemouth bass population with average growth and good size structure. There are many bass in the 14- to 16-inch range and a few in the 18- to 20-inch range. Northern pike are fat and sassy with a good number of fish in the 24- to 32-inch range and some bigger. Walleye were collected in low numbers, however several fish over 28 inches were collected. Panfish numbers are strong with bluegill and crappie slightly above local average with most bluegill in the 7.5- to 8.5-inch range and crappie in the 9- to 10-inch range. One rogue musky about 40 inches long was also collected and may provide a bonus catch for some future lucky angler.

Lake Montanis — A low-density walleye population is present; however, a few big fish were collected. Largemouth and smallmouth are common and provide a quality bass fishery. Northern pike were found in low numbers but quality fish are present.



Paul Riordan, fisheries technician, displays a Middle Eau Claire walleye taken during sampling in 2010. Photo: Scott Toshner

Panfish are slightly above average with bluegill in the 7.5- to 8.5-inch range and crappie in the 9- to 10-inch range. Carp are present and bowfishers may find this water good early and late in the bowfishing season.

Lower Vermillion Lake — A strong largemouth bass fishery is present with a good number of fish in the 12- to 17-inch range. Walleye were captured in low numbers. Northern pike provide a nice action fishery with a modest number of fish in the 20- to 26- inch range. Bluegill and crappie run about average with most fish in the 7.5 to 8.5 and 8.5- to 9.5-inch range. Carp provide anglers with another local bowfishing opportunity.

Turtle Creek — Approximately 2,500 feet of stream habitat restoration work was conducted on Turtle Creek in southwestern Barron County from Highway D, down to the mouth of Silver Creek. A new angler parking area and accessible walking trail and fish station are located near the County D Bridge. Brown and brook trout abundance is improving nicely in the project area with many trout in the 8- to 12-inch range. - Heath Benike, fisheries biologist, Barron

BAYFIELD COUNTY

Middle Eau Claire Lake — Surveys in 2010 on Middle Eau Claire Lake in southeastern Bayfield County continued to show a productive fishery. Walleye numbers have declined slightly from the last survey in 2007 but the size structure has increased. Average length was 15.6 inches and the largest was 25.7 inches. The musky population has an excellent size structure with a 53-inch fish reportedly caught and released last summer. Special internal tags similar to the tags used for pets were inserted under the skin in the cheek so individual length and weight measurements can be compared over time. The smallmouth bass population on Middle Eau

Claire could be considered a trophy fishery. It is not uncommon for anglers to catch fish around 20 inches in the catch-and-release season as well as in fall. The bag limit for panfish on Middle is 10 fish per day. Although numbers of bluegill are low, the average size is high. Rock bass, perch and black crappie are present in fair numbers. - Scott Toshner, fisheries biologist, Brule

BURNETT COUNTY

Johnson Lake — This 398-acre lake is a stand-out largemouth bass choice in a county known for bass fishing. Spring electrofishing catch of bass greater than eight inches was a respectable 56 per hour with 48 percent of the catch greater than 14 inches and 18 percent between 18 and 20 inches. Surprisingly, with so many big fish, Johnson Lake has been under a no-minimum size limit the last 39 years. Selective harvest, where anglers harvest some of the smaller bass but release most of the larger ones, seems to be the key to this quality fishery. The boat landing has only minimal improvements and the water level is low due to drought. However, if prepared, anglers can get even heavier boats in and out. - Larry Damman, fisheries biologist, Spooner

FLORENCE COUNTY

The majority of the lakes in this region contain good populations of bass and panfish along with some northern pike and walleye on many of the lakes. A more diverse fishing experience can be found in the Brule River and Twin Falls flowages, home to the typical warmwater game and panfish species.

Of the 165 streams in Florence County, 111 are considered high-quality trout streams. The headliners are the Pine and Popple rivers which are state designated "Wild Rivers." This designation protects them from development and ensures that they stay free-flowing. However, the water temperature in these rivers can rise quite high in summer, creating marginal trout water. Anglers who know these rivers can find areas with large amounts of coldwater influence and can do quite well. In search of steadier trout action, most anglers head to smaller tributaries where the water temperature is lower and native brook trout hold throughout the season.

Lamon Tangué Creek — This coldwater tributary to the Popple River was surveyed in 2010 to assess the brook trout population strength. The survey found a population just over 1,000 fish per mile. Over 12 percent of these fish were over seven inches, making it a good option for trout anglers. - Greg Matzke, fisheries biologist, Florence

Brule River Flowage — The Brule River Flowage supports a diverse fishery with ample shore fishing areas provided by WE Energies. This flowage is a short drive two miles north of Florence. This impoundment has very good panfishing opportunities with 2010 surveys indicating that 31 percent of the bluegill are over seven inches and 78 percent of the yellow perch even larger. The average size of the black crappie sampled was 10 inches. Anglers also will find plenty of legal size walleye as 54 percent of the walleye sampled were larger than 15 inches. This lake also contains a quality musky, bass, and northern pike fishery.

Twin Falls Flowage -- This flowage possesses many shoreline miles for the boat angler as well as public shore fishing areas. Twin Falls has an abundant panfish population although the size structure is smaller than the Brule River Flowage. Surveys in 2010 revealed that the average size of the large-

mouth bass was 12.6 inches and 33 percent of these fish were over 14 inches. The average size of smallmouth bass was 11.3 inches and 28 percent of those fish were larger than 14 inches. The other dominant game fish is northern pike and 23 percent of those fish were over 20 inches. WE Energies maintains a popular shore fishing platform below the dam and spring fishing for walleye and pike is very good. - *Mike Donofrio, fisheries supervisor, Peshtigo*

FOREST COUNTY

Elvoy Creek — Intensive habitat improvement projects from the 1990s designed to increase the carrying capacity of the stream are providing dividends. The habitat work has improved the brown trout population, which is now the dominant species in many stretches of the creek. Brown trout population resurgence, along with increases in the size structure of brook trout, have contributed to large increases in the number of trout over seven inches. A survey in 2010 estimated the density of fish over seven inches to be more than 300 fish per mile.

Allen Creek — This stream is benefiting from a 1996 habitat improvement project. Prior to 1996, only 2 percent of the trout population was greater than seven inches. Since completion of the habitat work, the trout size has increased, and the creek is now home to some good-sized trout. A 2010 survey captured 86 trout, 36 percent of which were over the minimum size limit of seven inches. - *Greg Matzke, fisheries biologist, Florence*

IRON COUNTY

Turtle-Flambeau Flowage — This 14,300-acre flowage is one of the most enjoyable places to fish in northern Wisconsin. With 334 miles of mostly undeveloped shoreline, 377 islands, and exposed bedrock everywhere, anglers could easily mistake this place for Canada. And the fishery, while comparable to Canadian lakes, is certainly more diverse. Because of its remote location, summer fishing pressure on the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage is four times less than on the average Wisconsin lake. The combination of scenery, solitude, and good fishing is hard to beat. In 2011, fishing should be especially interesting around many of the large trees that blew into the water off island shorelines during last summer's tornado.

The walleye population has held steady at a desirable level of about four adults per acre for more than a decade without any stocking. There is no length limit on walleye here, but more than a third of all walleye in the lake are 15 inches or longer. Anglers can expect the best fishing here in May, but walleye can be caught year-round, including mid-winter through the ice.

As spring turns to summer, smallmouth bass become a favorite angler target. Good compliance with the 15-inch minimum length limit and high, voluntary release of legal-size fish has created one of the best smallmouth bass fisheries in the Midwest. Smallies harvested by anglers in 2009 averaged 16.5 inches, and they all look like footballs, thanks to feeding on an abundant crayfish food supply. Smallmouth bass are compatible with walleye, so anglers are encouraged to voluntarily release legal-sized smallies in order to sustain what has become a world-class bass fishery.

Largemouth bass occur in very low numbers in the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. Unlike smallmouth bass, largemouth bass can and do eat young walleye and compete with them for food. Therefore, anglers are encouraged to harvest and enjoy eating the few legal-sized largemouth bass they may encounter in order to ensure that walleye remain dominant.

Musky are few but big, and getting bigger, in the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. Under a 40-inch minimum length limit, the proportion of musky 40 inches and longer has almost doubled over the past decade. More than a third of all musky encountered by anglers in 2011 are likely to be over 40 inches and as many as 10 percent may exceed 45 inches.

The musky here are robust, probably because they have so many small northern pike to eat. The skinny, hungry, over-abundant pike probably eat most young musky, forcing DNR to stock large muskie fingerlings in order to maintain the fishery. Anglers can help the pike and the musky populations by keeping their limits of five pike daily (no length limit) and releasing legal-size musky.

Because the Flowage has consistently held such a good walleye population, heavy predation by walleye on young panfish has thinned out bluegill, yellow perch, and black crappie sufficiently to promote fast growth to preferred sizes. Based on results of our 2009 surveys, anglers may have to hunt awhile to find concentrations of panfish, but eight-inch bluegill, nine- to 10-inch perch, 11-inch crappie, and even some big rock bass will be their reward. Winter fishing is particularly popular for black crappie here, which are sustained by a protective 10-inch minimum length limit. The daily bag limit for all panfish combined is 10, which should help maintain quality size structure for all panfish species. - *Dave Neuswanger, fisheries supervisor, Upper Chippewa Basin*

LANGLADE COUNTY

East Branch Eau Claire River — Record numbers of brook trout are present based on summer 2010 surveys. In 25 years of survey data from 1981-2010, including every year since 1989, the trout population estimate has never been as high as it was last year. In the better sections of the stream, there are close to 6,300, four-inch and larger brook trout per mile. That equates to one yearling or older trout for every 10 inches of stream bottom! Of course trout are not lined up nose to tail. They are in their usual lairs: woody cover, undercut banks, under overhanging brush and grasses, rocky runs, and riffles. The biggest brookies (some over 15 inches) are in the best habitat. The previous record was 5,452 brook trout per mile in 2007. Trout numbers are up in most county streams. These just may be the good old days of trout fishing!

Sawyer Lake — Sawyer Lake (149 acres) is a pretty lake on the edge of the National Forest with a mixed population of fish. Originally a largemouth bass/bluegill type lake (and a darn good one) it has become a good naturally reproducing walleye fishery following the start of stocking in the 1970s. Based on a 2010 survey, the adult walleye population is estimated at 2.6 per acre, with good numbers of fish from 14 to 25 inches. Musky are not present but if you are into toothy water wolves, there is a moderate density of northern pike present (about one per acre) with good numbers in the 15- to 30-inch range. Both black bass are present but largemouth outnumber their smaller mouthed cousins by an 8:1 ratio. The largemouth size structure is really nice with 25 percent of the adult population over 14 inches. The smallmouth population is dominated by fish from 8 to 15 inches. The usual panfish suspects are present with perch leading the way in numbers, followed by rock bass, black crappie, bluegill, pumpkinseed and yellow bullhead. Some quality-sized panfish of all species are present for skilled anglers that know how to find them and entice them to bite. - *Dave Seibel, fisheries biologist, Antigo*

LINCOLN COUNTY

Prairie River -- In 2010, trout numbers dipped 36 percent from near record numbers in 2009 to approximately 4,400 per mile. Brook trout numbers were down but brown trout numbers were up. Numbers are still very good and remain six percent above the long-term average. For instance, in 25 years of surveys on the Gleason School Forest Station, including every year since 1991, total trout numbers have only been higher in seven years! Stream trout numbers commonly fluctuate for reasons that are not completely understood. So get out there and fish! History has taught us that these above average years are special and that leaner years may lie ahead. In June 2010, a habitat project was completed on a recently purchased DNR property. The project is immediately above County J and ties in nicely with habitat work

done right below the County J bridge and immediately above this property. This work was funded by trout stamp dollars and donations from regional Trout Unlimited chapters and The Friends of the Prairie River.

Hilt Lake — Hilt Lake is a 59-acre lake in the northeastern part of the county. It is a little off the beaten path but is popular with anglers "in the know." Mostly a largemouth bass and bluegill lake, it offers good fishing opportunities for a mix of species. A 2010 comprehensive survey estimated the largemouth bass population at 8.5 per acre with most between eight and 15 inches. Toothy critters consist of northern pike (about one per acre), musky (only one was caught) and walleye (five fish — several more than once). The majority of pike ranged from 12 to 25 inches. Musky probably get to Hilt Lake via Squaw Creek and Squaw Lake where musky are stocked. The recent drought has probably limited this movement, but rains last summer and fall may have spurred fish to move. Time will tell, but anglers report catching and seeing more musky in Hilt Lake than were seen during the survey. Panfish are dominated by bluegill, with fewer numbers of perch, crappie, yellow bullhead, rock bass and pumpkinseed. Quality-sized panfish are present for anglers who can tease them into biting. - *Dave Seibel, fisheries biologist, Antigo*

ONEIDA COUNTY

Crescent Lake — A spring survey on Crescent Lake found a high-density walleye population of 5.6 per acre of mostly small to medium-sized fish. Only about 15 percent of the walleye exceeded 14 inches. We estimated 1.3 smallmouth bass per acre, while too few largemouth were captured for an estimate. Both species of bass show good size under an 18-inch minimum length limit. Northern pike and musky were at moderate to low abundance. We captured 161 northern pike, with only one fish larger than 24 inches. Most of the 49 musky captured ranged 32 to 40 inches in length, but 18 percent were over 40 and the largest was 47.2 inches. Panfish abundance was moderate, with a catch dominated by perch and rock bass. Size potential was fairly good.

George Lake — A spring survey on George Lake last year found an estimated 4.9 adult walleye per acre, with about 37 percent of the fish 14 inches or larger. About 0.5 smallmouth bass were estimated per acre, with size ranging fairly uniformly from 10 to 18 inches. Only eight largemouth were captured during the survey, and 72 northern pike with about a quarter of them exceeding 26 inches. A fairly high number of musky were captured during the survey with most less than 34 inches in length, but 25 percent over 40 inches and the largest 45.8 inches. George is a good fishery for yellow perch and crappie, while the bluegill and pumpkinseed tend to run small.

Horsehead Lake -- A comprehensive survey of Horsehead Lake found abundant northern pike and panfish. Most pike were 10 to 25 inches and averaged 18.3 inches. Only two largemouth bass were captured, suggesting that past winterkills may have decimated the bass population. There were abundant small panfish, but anglers willing to sort will find seven-inch bluegill and perch, 8.5-inch crappie and eight- to 10-inch yellow bullhead.

Swamsauger Lake — A survey of Swamsauger Lake found a high-density walleye population of 7.6 adults per acre, but only 30 percent of the fish were legal size (15 inches or larger). About 176 northern pike were captured with nine percent exceeding 20 inches. Only 17 largemouth bass were captured. Bluegill and black crappie were moderate in abundance, but size was very good.

Trout waters — Look for stocked brown trout in Dorothy Lake and Bearskin River; rainbows are planned for Perch, Hawk and Little Bass lakes. Brook trout have been requested for stocking in Mercer Springs and Brown, Gudogast, and Starks creeks. - *John Kubisiak, senior fisheries biologist, Rhineland-er*

POLK COUNTY

Horseshoe Lake (Turtle Lake) — Spring surveys showed a high-density largemouth bass population with below average growth. However, it would be an excellent action lake for a novice bass angler too. Most bass were in the 10- to 15-inch range. Northern pike are the other top predator in the lake and provide a good action fishery at this time. Bluegill generally run small (6.5- to 7.5 inches), however a strong crappie year class in the 8.5- to 9.5-inch range was present.

Big Lake — Largemouth bass are the most abundant game fish in Big Lake with a strong number of bass in the 12- to 16-inch range. Northern pike were present in low densities but the fish were generally fat and eating well. Walleye were captured in moderate numbers and are mainly a put, grow, and take-type fishery. The Big Lake District has been aggressively stocking walleye over



Fisheries technicians Greg Rublee (left) and Kendal Liebrecht hold muskellunge captured in fyeke nets in Musser Flowage, Price County—October 2010. Photo: Jeff Scheirer.

the past several years and those stocking efforts appear to be working. Panfish are about average for a Polk County lake with most bluegill in the seven- to eight-inch range and crappie in the eight- to nine-inch range. - *Heath Benike, fisheries biologist, Barron*

PRICE COUNTY

Sailor Creek Flowage — Sailor Creek Flowage, located about four miles southeast of Fifield, seems well-suited for family outings. The size and number of panfish, northern pike, and largemouth bass should please anglers of all ages. About 17 to 18 percent of pumpkinseed and bluegill in a 2010 sample were eight inches long, and 42 percent of the black crappie measured at least 10 inches. Half of the bass were 15 inches or longer, and nearly 36 percent of the pike were at least 28 inches. When windy conditions prevail, small boats can find refuge behind islands and in bays of this 215-acre reservoir. Kids can watch for waterfowl, eagles, furbearers and shorebirds if they get tired of fishing.

Musser Flowage — The incidental catch from a fall 2010 crappie survey in Musser Flowage previewed the results of stocking walleye and musky fingerlings in alternate years since 1992. Five musky 37.5 to 48 inches were caught and one walleye 27 inches, indicating that both species can survive and grow to memorable size in this productive, 563-acre impoundment about eight miles east of Phillips. The absence of black crappie longer than nine inches would probably disappoint most panfish anglers. Surveys slated for spring 2011 should reveal more about the abundance and size distribution of these and other important sportfish populations, allowing the DNR to adjust management strategies if necessary.





Fisheries technician Kendal Liebrecht holding a muskellunge (46½ inches) captured in fyke nets in Chain Lake, Rusk County—April 2010. Photo: Greg Rublee.

Lake Ten — Surveys imply that bass anglers should find fast action in Lake Ten, a 43-acre lake about six miles southwest of Phillips. Largemouth bass have been found in high abundance with 12 percent at least 15 inches, including two bass 19 and 20 inches. Survey results forecast mixed results for those seeking panfish. Among bluegill captured by electrofishing, 28 percent were six inches or longer, but none exceeded eight inches. No yellow perch were found longer than seven inches. Black crappie were moderately abundant in fall 2009 and spring 2010 samples with 63 to 81 percent at least 10 inches and 11 to 22 percent at least 12 inches. Crappie less than eight inches were absent, forecasting a decline in population abundance until the next successful year class reaches desirable size. Backing down the long, narrow boat ramp can be tricky. - Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls

RUSK COUNTY

Island Chain of Lakes (Chain, Clear, Island, and McCann lakes) — The 2010 surveys allow comparison between current status and desired condition of important fish populations in the Island Chain. High proportions of large walleye (83 percent at least 20 inches and 14 percent at least 25 inches) far exceeded expectations, but the near absence of smaller walleye, coupled with a high capture rate of largemouth bass, suggest that abundant bass may be eating most young walleye in their first summer. To help restore natural reproduction and sustain two to four adult walleye per acre, anglers are encouraged to selectively harvest largemouth bass less than 14 inches under new regulations effective April 1, 2011. Walleye planted as eight-inch fingerlings in 2010 should evade predators better than two-inch fingerlings previously stocked. Bluegill nearly attained targets for population size structure in the four lakes combined, but black crappie, yellow perch, and smallmouth bass fell short. Fewer largemouth bass should boost walleye survival, eventually improving panfish size distribution. Surveys in 2012 will measure population goal progress.

Fireside Lakes (Rice and Mud lakes) — Results from 2010 surveys characterize an “average” fishery in Fireside Lakes. Walleye planted in seven years since 1999 were found in low abundance with 80 percent at least 20 inches and 47 percent at least 25 inches. Anglers should find northern pike and musky in moderate density with respectable proportions of the sizes that anglers prefer. Three of seven musky were 38 inches or longer, and 57 percent of pike were at least 28 inches. Nearly half of the largemouth bass were 12 inches or longer, but only 11 percent were available for harvest under the 14-inch minimum length limit. About 42 percent of bluegill were at least six inches, but fewer than 3 percent were seven inches or longer. The black crappie population had low abundance, but half were at least 10 inches. Among yellow perch five inches and longer, less than 2 percent were at least eight inches. Catfish, sturgeon, and redhorse are present, but rare.

Becky Creek — Last summer’s surveillance confirmed that natural reproduction sustains a trout fishery in the upper and middle segments of Becky Creek, where 20 to 23 percent of brook trout five inches and longer were eight to 9.5 inches. Damaged habitat is gradually recovering following efforts to control cattle and beaver. No trout were found downstream from Highway 40. - Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls

SAWYER COUNTY

Sand Lake, Grindstone Lake, Round Lake, Lac Courte Oreilles and Windigo Lake

These clear-water lakes are among the best bets for walleye in Sawyer County and most also have extraordinary fisheries for trophy smallmouth bass. Because of high water clarity, walleye fishing in these lakes is most productive at low-light periods within 30 minutes of dawn and dusk; but great action for smallmouth bass can pick up the slack during daylight hours. Smallmouth bass are highly compatible with walleye in these lakes, so anglers are encouraged to voluntarily release even legal-size smallmouth bass over 14 inches. Anglers also are encouraged to harvest any legal-size largemouth bass they may encounter in these lakes in order to maintain walleye dominance.

The restoration of outstanding walleye fishing at Sand Lake is attributed to restrictive harvest regulations and several recent stockings of large fingerlings (six to eight inches) by DNR, the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Conservation Department and the Sand Lake Association with assistance from Walleyes for Northwest Wisconsin. Continued high-quality walleye fishing will require strict adherence to the 18-inch minimum length limit at Sand Lake. And at Grindstone Lake, continued angler compliance with the 14- to 18-inch protected slot limit will be key to sustaining the excellent walleye fishery there. Adult walleye will be available in moderate numbers in 2011 at Round Lake and Lac Courte Oreilles, but excellent year classes of young walleye produced over the past couple years should result in particularly good fishing in 2012 and beyond.

Nelson, Sissabagama and Whitefish lakes

— These very different waters all share one thing in common: formerly excellent walleye fisheries have been displaced in recent years by excessive numbers of largemouth bass. This species of bass is known to prey upon young walleye and compete with adult walleye for available food. As a result, natural reproduction and stocking of small walleye (one to two inches) have failed in these lakes. DNR biologists have teamed up with lake associations and Walleyes for Northwest Wisconsin to aggressively stock “extended-growth” walleye fingerlings that are big enough (six to eight inches) to avoid being eaten by most largemouth bass.

Beginning in 2011, the minimum length limit on walleye will be 18 inches on these three lakes in hopes that increased numbers of walleye will eat enough small bass and panfish to establish a desired state of balance. There will be no minimum length limit on bass on these lakes in 2011. Anglers are

encouraged to harvest largemouth bass of all sizes starting the first weekend in May in Sissabagama Lake (Southern Bass Zone) and the third weekend in June in Nelson and Whitefish lakes (Northern Bass Zone). Anglers are encouraged to voluntarily release all smallmouth bass in order to shift the bass fishery to one that is compatible with walleyes. - Dave Neuswanger, fisheries team leader, Upper Chippewa Basin

Shore fishing (Shues Pond, Lake Hayward, Nelson Lake Dam, Spring Lake and Silverthorne Lake)

— These are lakes where families without a boat can have fun fishing from shore. All have good numbers of panfish, including good numbers of bluegill over seven inches at Lake Hayward, Nelson Lake and Spring Lake. All have public access without developed facilities, but fishing piers are planned for Hayward and Silverthorne lakes. - Frank Pratt, senior fisheries biologist, Hayward

Chippewa Flowage — Anglers should be aware of some changes in fishing rules for the Chippewa Flowage beginning in 2011. Formerly, the daily bag limit for panfish was 25, only 15 of which could be crappie. This has now been simplified; the daily bag limit for all panfish combined (including crappie) is 25.

DNR also might start experimenting in 2011 with a regulation that treats largemouth bass and smallmouth bass differently on the Chippewa Flowage. If the proposal is approved,



A nice 17-inch brown caught and released by fisheries biologist Joe Krahn on the Namekagon River (Phipps) in 2010. Currently, about 20 percent of the robust population exceeds 15 inches, making big fish like this one quite common. This stream fishes best in the early season before the water gets too warm. Streamer flies, Mudlers, leech patterns, crank baits, and spinners target the biggest fish. Fly fishermen wait for the Hendrickson hatch in mid- to late-April. A bead head, articulated-body, “Hare’s Ear” is just the ticket, pre-hatch when nymphs are active in the riffle areas. After the hatch begins, usually in late afternoon, switch to a “Dark Hendrickson Compara-Dun.” Photo Joe Krahn.

anglers will be permitted and encouraged to harvest largemouth bass of all sizes starting the third Saturday in June. But the 14-inch minimum length limit will remain in effect for smallmouth bass, and anglers will be encouraged to voluntarily release all smallmouth bass, regardless of size.

This new twist to bass management is based on the belief of local DNR biologists that predation on young walleye by over-abundant, slow-growing largemouth bass has been at least partially responsible for uncharacteristic failures in the survival of young walleye over the past five years. Biologists believe fast-growing smallmouth bass have a different lifestyle and food preference that al-

low them to coexist well with walleye, and flowage anglers want a good bass fishery in the form of smallmouth. DNR will conduct a creel survey on the Chippewa Flowage in 2011, so anglers can expect to be interviewed to determine degree of compliance with the proposed experimental rule. Signs at access areas and area businesses will help anglers to distinguish between largemouth and smallmouth bass. But the best advice is, “If you don’t know it, throw it back.”

The Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Conservation Department teamed up with Chippewa Flowage property and resort owners associations to raise and stock more than 19,000 large (six to 10 inches) walleye fingerlings in fall of 2010 in order to jump start the walleye fishery. Walleye fishing can still be quite good on the flowage, but with reduced survival of young over the past several years, DNR biologists encourage anglers to voluntarily release all walleyes less than 15 inches (currently no size limit in effect). Voluntary restraint will help maximize the investment made by local partners to provide better walleye fishing for everyone in the future. Anglers who seek a quality fish fry can still expect to catch and enjoy good numbers of tasty, quality-size bluegill, black crappie and even largemouth bass in 2011. Largemouth bass, especially those less than 14 inches, are excellent table fare.

The Chippewa Flowage also boasts excellent fishing for northern pike, which anglers are encouraged to harvest. With a relatively new 50-inch minimum length limit, and less severe winter drawdowns, the adult musky population continues to improve. There are more trophy-size fish than ever in the Chippewa Flowage, but for natural reproduction to continue, northern pike and largemouth bass (both predators on young musky) must be liberally harvested. - Dave Neuswanger, fisheries team leader, Upper Chippewa Basin

SAWYER/WASHBURN COUNTIES

Totogatic Flowage — The Totogatic Flowage is a lightly-fished, under-rated water, especially for largemouth bass, northern pike and quality-size panfish. This 243-acre flowage on the Totogatic River is located immediately downstream from the Nelson Lake Dam just off South 27, about five miles north-west of Hayward. It offers ample family shore-fishing opportunities, as well as watercraft access to a wilderness-like experience in a scenic reach between the boat launch sites at the Nelson Dam and the Flowage outlet, three miles downstream.

SAWYER/BAYFIELD COUNTIES

Namekagon River — This federally designated Wild and Scenic River is one of Wisconsin’s largest trout streams. After two straight years of excellent spawning success for brown trout, the Namekagon River upstream of Hayward is carrying more trout than ever before (more than 2,000 per mile). Around 20 percent of the brown trout exceed 15 inches, making this one of the best wild brown trout fishing streams in North America. Brook trout are relatively abundant only in the short reach near Telemark Resort in Bayfield County and in some of the smaller, colder streams that feed the Namekagon.

The Namekagon River has always been much warmer than most trout streams, and it’s becoming warmer with ongoing climate changes. Anglers are encouraged to fish this stream early and late in the season when water temperatures are less than 70 degrees Fahrenheit to increase the odds of successful live releases. Restrictive harvest regulations are evolving toward a 15-inch minimum length limit for brown trout (one daily bag limit) and catch-and-release-only for brook trout. (Check signs at points of access for current, reach-specific information.) Downstream of the Lake Hayward Dam, the Namekagon is primarily a warmwater stream with good float fishing for smallmouth bass and musky. - Frank Pratt, senior fisheries biologist, Hayward

TAYLOR COUNTY

Chequamegon Waters Flowage — Surveys in 2010 showed northern pike and largemouth bass met or exceeded the targets for size structure that anglers helped define in the 2006 Fishery Management Plan for this 2,714-acre impoundment, locally known as Miller Dam. Nearly 29 percent of the bass in our sample were at least 15 inches, and 2 percent exceeded 20 inches. About 11 percent of the pike were 28 inches or longer, and 3 percent surpassed 34 inches. The proportion of bluegill eight inches or longer (19 percent) was within the desired range (15 to 20 percent), but the population does not have 1 to 2 percent longer than 10 inches as expected. In recent surveys, 9 to 20 percent of black crappie were at least 10 inches long, but the goal is for 30 to 50 percent. Current management strategies seem adequate for pike and bass, but more restrictive harvest regulations will be necessary to attain goals for bluegill and black crappie.

Wood Lake — Located about seven miles east of Rib Lake, 63-acre Wood Lake offers opportunity to introduce novice anglers to catch-and-release bass fishing as long as size is not too important. In spring 2010, we found many largemouth bass 11 to 13 inches, but very few over the 14-inch minimum length limit. Bluegills 6.5 to 7.5 inches were moderately abundant and 10 percent of those three inches or longer were at least eight inches. Expect a quiet experience with light boat traffic as gasoline-powered outboards are prohibited. Taylor County maintains a shallow-draft boat ramp, eight primitive campsites, and a swimming beach — all with no fees.

Sheep Ranch Creek — Trout anglers should not abandon Sheep Ranch Creek just because stocking was suspended last year. DNR stocked no fish from its Brule Hatchery into inland waters in 2010 due to con-

cerns over the VHS virus confirmed in Lake Superior. August 2010 surveys near Patrick Drive and Niemitz Road suggest that some adult brook trout survived and grew from recent stocking, while others appeared from natural reproduction.

Shearer Lake — Investments from local groups who raised or purchased large walleye fingerlings are working to establish a bonus fishery in Shearer Lake where largemouth bass and panfish are the main attractions. Surveys in 2010 revealed survival and growth of walleye stocked annually since 2004. Bluegill and yellow perch ranged from four to 9.5 inches, and black crappie averaged 10 inches. - *Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls*

VILAS COUNTY

Big Gibson Lake — Big Gibson Lake is a small off-the-beaten-path lake northeast of the town of Boulder Junction. It is unusual in that it has both naturally reproducing walleye and musky fisheries yet is only 116 acres in size. Most of the shoreline is public as it is located within the Northern Highland — American Legion State Forest. It has an improved public boat landing and limited parking. In addition to the gamefish mentioned, it also provides fishing opportunities for largemouth and smallmouth bass as well as northern pike. The main panfish species present are yellow perch and bluegill.

Stormy Lake — This 522-acre lake located three miles west of the town of Conover, offers a unique opportunity to fish for trout throughout the game fish season. Since the 1950s Stormy Lake has a history of being stocked by the DNR with a wide range of coldwater species including brown, brook and rainbow trout. It was even stocked with coho salmon several times in the 70s. Today, the lake is stocked each year with about 13,000 brown trout that are between seven and eight inches. These fish survive very

well in this lake and fish over 20 inches are caught every year. The current trout fishing regulation on Stormy Lake allows fishing from the first Saturday in May until the first Sunday in March. There is a 12-inch size limit on trout and a daily bag limit of five fish. Public access to the lake is by a county boat landing on the west shore of the lake.

Stormy Lake is also one of the few inland lakes in Wisconsin that contains an invasive zooplankton called the spiny water flea. This species has the potential to upset the entire food chain balance in a lake. When leaving this lake, anglers and boaters should drain all water from their boats and live wells and thoroughly dry off for several days everything that came in contact with water from the lake. This is important to prevent the spread of this species to other lakes in the area.

Big Portage Lake — Big Portage Lake is managed as a quality walleye and smallmouth bass fishery. In 1997, a protected 14- to 18-inch size limit that allows only one fish over 18 inches was placed on the walleye fishery. Surveys show that this regulation has increased the total number of walleye in the lake and improved the number and size structure of this population. Natural walleye recruitment also has remained strong since the regulation change.

The smallmouth bass population density in recent years has been low. The lake does have potential to produce a few larger fish. In 2009, an 18-inch minimum length and one fish bag limit was placed on the bass population of Big Portage Lake. The goal of this regulation is to improve bass catch rates and produce more quality size fish.

The lake is located south east of the town of Land O' Lakes and public access is provided by a paved county boat landing on the south shore with abundant parking. - *Steve Gilbert, fisheries biologist, Woodruff*

WASHBURN COUNTY

Minong Flowage — The Minong Flowage is a fertile, 1,564 acre, multi-species impoundment. Walleye is the primary species with adult population estimates of 5.5 per acre in 2010. Fifty-four percent of adults were longer than the 15-inch limit. The adult population was down some from seven per acre in 2005. However, an exceptionally large year class in 2005 will be legal size boosting harvest opportunities for the 2011 season. Largemouth bass were scarce but electrofishing catch rates doubled to 21 per hour over the last 10 years. Thirty-six percent of the bass stock is greater than 14 inches and 18 percent is greater than 16 inches. Northern pike are not real abundant but pike of 35 to 39 inches turn up regularly in surveys. Spring electrofishing catch rates on bluegill are a modest 127 per hour with 28 percent of the stock greater than seven inches but catching a 10-inch bluegill or better is possible. The flowage has a county campground with a boat landing, fishing pier and sand swimming beach. Eurasian milfoil is present so be sure to clean your boat of aquatic hitch hikers before you leave. - *Larry Damman, fisheries biologist, Spooner*



Aquatic and angler education information and materials can be found at:

dnr.wi.gov/fish/kidsparents/anglereducation/

Northeastern Wisconsin



these lakes can make finding fish a bit difficult but angler success increases when they search out any available habitat. The panfish population on Kangaroo Lake is dominated by yellow perch and rock bass, while bluegill is more common in Clark Lake. Ice fishing enthusiasts like to target northern pike and yellow perch on Kangaroo Lake. In the Forestville Flowage, largemouth bass and black crappie are targeted by anglers using small boats. Anglers looking for solitude while fishing should give Europe Lake a try. Fishing may be a little slow, but some very nice smallmouth bass or panfish may be caught with a little effort. - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot*

Tributary streams — Door County tributary streams are very scenic and provide anglers with a good small stream fishing experience. Several streams including Stony, Heins, Hibbards and Whitefish Bay creeks are annually stocked with steelhead. Increasing Lake Michigan water levels over the past several years has greatly increased the number of steelhead and other fish that can be found in



Late summer anglers reported good catches of larger yellow perch in Green Bay. Photo: WDNR

these streams during spring runs. Fall fishing is much slower with only small numbers of returning Chinook salmon. - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot*

GREEN BAY (MARINETTE, OCONTO, BROWN, AND KEWAUNEE COUNTIES)

Several consecutive years of moderate to good yellow perch year classes is good news for anglers. Open water yellow perch harvest in 2009 was 204,209 fish compared to 196,852 fish in 2008. A majority (74 percent) of the open water harvest was from the 2007 year class, while the 2006 year class comprised approximately 15 percent. In 2010, perch fishing throughout the bay was spotty during early summer but improved dramatically beginning in August. Some anglers reported good catches of larger (10- to 12-inch) perch. Harvest estimates based on creel surveys for the 2010 open water season will be available this winter.

Many anglers fishing during the 2010 ice fishing season had to sort through small yellow perch before catching a keeper. During this time, an estimated 33,070 yellow perch averaging 7.4 inches were caught. This is below the 13-year average of 45,000 perch.

2010 brown trout shocking surveys in the lower Menominee River found very few browns. Large numbers of whitefish were observed during November sampling and a few hardy anglers were successful at harvesting whitefish by hook and line. Spring walleye fishing in the Menominee, Peshtigo and Oconto rivers has been very good in recent years.

The DNR continues annual stocking of brown and rainbow trout, and Chinook and coho salmon in Upper Green Bay. DNR staff stocked most of the brown trout offshore in 2010 so hopefully the catch rate will increase in 2011. These fish will provide future opportunities for stream angling and trolling. - *Tammie Paoli, Fisheries Biologist, Peshtigo*

GREEN BAY/LOWER FOX RIVER

The DNR Lake Michigan Creel Survey estimated that anglers caught over 230,000 walleye from Green Bay and the Lower Fox River in 2009 and kept about 83,000 of those fish. Fall surveys on the Lower Fox River have documented strong walleye year classes from 2008-2009 with catch rates of young-of-the-year walleye almost three times greater than the long term average in those years. Anglers should find good numbers of 20- to 26-inch fish from the strong year class of 2003, and will have plenty of action as a lot of smaller fish from the 2008 year class begin to recruit to the fishery in 2011.

Green Bay musky fishing should be fantastic in 2011 and draw anglers from around the Midwest. While the fall of 2010 wasn't particularly great for numbers — thanks to the huge schools of forage fish comprised of gizzard shad and emerald shiners — this forage base resulted in some massive fish. There were plenty of greater than 50-inch fish caught and released that would have weighed in at over 45 pounds! DNR netting surveys in spring 2009 captured 197 adult musky of amazing size from the Lower Fox River and Green Bay. The average size of fish has continued to increase as this re-established population matures. The average fish length was 43.5 inches. Twelve fish were larger than 50 inches and 30 fish were larger than 48 inches. Anglers pursuing musky on Green Bay need to be prepared with an adequate sized landing net, a good pair of pliers and side cutters for removing hooks. Make sure to have a camera ready. - *David Rowe and Mike Donofrio, fisheries biologists, Green Bay and Peshtigo*

LAKE MICHIGAN AND GREEN BAY (DOOR, MANITOWOC, AND KEWAUNEE COUNTIES)

Chinook salmon stocking reductions in 2006 have taken full effect. Essentially all fish from that stocked year class would have been expected to have returned to the creel by 2010. Preliminary estimates suggest the 2010 angler harvest increased somewhat from 2009 levels and will likely rank above the long-term average for Chinook in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan. Results from the third year of a five-year marking study designed to estimate the level of natural reproduction of Chinook, once again indicated a substantial contribution of naturally recruited fish to the Lake Michigan population with approximately 50 percent of all jack (age one-plus) salmon being wild fish in 2009. Meanwhile, Chinook size, as measured by the average size at age of a fish returning to the Strawberry Creek Weir in Sturgeon Bay, declined somewhat in 2010 from 2009 levels. However, the size of fish returning was still considerably greater than the near historic lows measured in 2007.

The lake whitefish ice fishery in Green Bay that emerged in 2007 again provided great action for ice anglers in 2010. Barring any change in lake whitefish feeding or distribution patterns in Green Bay, the 2011 ice fishery should once again be very good. Ice anglers should keep an eye out for tagged whitefish as 2,500 fish were tagged during an assessment of a rebuilding spawning population of lake whitefish in the Menominee River. Population index surveys completed in 2010 suggest the whitefish spawning stocks in the area continue to be robust and recruitment strong. The 2009 year class observed in large numbers during juvenile trawling assessments last year made a strong showing in 2010 in Green Bay, indicating survival through the first year was very good.

The smallmouth bass fishery continues to be exceptional along portions of Door County's shoreline and the trend is expected to continue in 2011. Smallmouth size at age has been steadily increasing within the past decade resulting in some very impressive fish in the area. In fact, several fish heavier than seven pounds were reported from local fishing tournaments in 2010, including one in excess of 7.5 pounds registered during an early fall tournament. Future smallmouth fishing opportunities continue to look optimistic as sub-adult fish are well represented.

Walleye fishing in the area continues to be excellent, largely due to recent outstanding walleye reproduction in southern and western portions of Green Bay. A 2010 spring spawning population assessment in Sturgeon and Little Sturgeon bays suggests the local population is in very good condition. Many fish from this assessment appear to be from the 2003 stocked year class. This suggests that the environmental conditions that supported survival of the strong 2003 naturally-recruited walleye year class in Green Bay, also enhanced survival for fish stocked in the Sturgeon Bay area. Most of the 2003 year class fish are well into the low to mid-20 inch range. Recent young-of-the-year surveys indicate some local natural reproduction may be supporting the population as well. Walleye fingerlings stocked in Sturgeon Bay in 2010 in excess of the annual quota should provide very good local fishing opportunities, assuming adequate first-year survival. - Scott Hansen, fisheries biologist, Sturgeon Bay

LAKE MICHIGAN (MANITOWOC AND KEWAUNEE COUNTIES)

The Lake Michigan fishery offers abundant fishing for anglers who can choose to fish from piers, the shore, small or large boats, or from charter boats at the major ports of Manitowoc, Two Rivers, Kewaunee or Algoma. During April and May, anglers target brown trout and steelhead that are near shore. Summer months find anglers targeting Chinook and coho salmon, and brown trout within several miles of the shore, and steelhead farther offshore. During the sum-

mer when favorable wind conditions push warm surface water offshore and bring cold water nearshore, fishing from the piers and breakwalls can be fantastic with lucky anglers landing a mixed bag of salmon and trout. Summer fishing for yellow perch in Hika Bay off of Cleveland also can be very good. As the weather cools in fall, most anglers target Chinook salmon that begin to stage near river mouths for their annual fall run. Some anglers however, continue to fish further offshore for steelhead and immature salmon until weather conditions on the lake prevents safe fishing. During mild winters, brown trout fishing can be good from the shore or from piers. - Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot

GREEN LAKE COUNTY

Lake Puckaway — Northern pike densities are high in this productive, shallow, slightly impounded portion of the Fox River. The 32-inch size limit, which has been in effect for years, has contributed to the high catch rates and the chance for a real trophy. Walleye populations are stable and typically provide year-round action on the lake and river.

Big Green Lake — Lake trout should continue to provide action as this lake's most important coldwater species. This stocked fishery is comprised of fish mainly in the 20-inch range, although trophy fish over 30 inches are present. High catch rates reported in 2010 should continue into this year. Seeforellen brown trout have not been stocked the last few years due to VHS concerns, but are still present in low numbers and do have the potential to grow to trophy size. Domestic brown trout have been stocked in their place and add another component to this coldwater fishery. The inland cisco population also appears to be stable and continues to be a popular addition.

The warmwater component of Wisconsin's deepest inland lake, although often overlooked, contains native populations of large and smallmouth bass, northern pike and walleye. Smallmouth bass continue to thrive in this lake filled with rocky shoreline habitat. Northern pike, largemouth bass and walleye seem to be responding well to habitat improvements and their populations are doing well. All of the gamefish species in this lake exhibit good growth and trophy-sized fish are present. A small number of musky are stocked annually and these fish have begun showing up in surveys and in anglers' catches. Anglers have expressed interest in this fishery addition and it is being managed as a low-density, trophy fishery. Panfish species, particularly bluegill, have also responded well to habitat improvements and have provided outstanding action the last few years. Water quality and habitat improvements are expected to continue on this lake.

Fox River — This large, productive river system contains walleye, small and largemouth bass, northern pike and panfish. Channel and flathead catfish are very popular and doing well. Channel catfish populations are high and remain one of the most sought after species on the river. Flathead management over the last few years has protected this species and new regulations are helping this species thrive. - David Bartz, fisheries biologist, Montello

KEWAUNEE COUNTY

Inland lakes and streams — Lakes in Kewaunee County are small and dominated by bass and panfish communities. East Alaska, West Alaska, Heidemann, Krohns and Shea lakes offer public access and are great places for family fishing. These lakes can be fished from small boats and because of their small size (all less than 60 acres), can be fished in almost any weather condition. Panfish are abundant so the fishing action can be very good, however large panfish may be hard to find. Most lakes have fair to good largemouth bass fishing and the possibility of a trophy bass or two lurking in their waters. Many anglers also like to target panfish in these lakes during the winter months. East Alaska Lake is stocked with small numbers of musky that provide a unique fishing op-

portunity for Kewaunee County anglers. Although the number of fish is low, anglers catch several 40-plus-inch musky nearly every year. Krohns Lake located southwest of



Anglers continue to target channel catfish in the Fox River. Photo: WDNR

Algoma is stocked with rainbow trout yearly and is an excellent place to take a kid fishing. Several streams, including Scarboro and Little Scarboro creeks and the upper East Twin River have either stocked brown trout or native brook trout that provide anglers with trout fishing opportunities. These streams are small, receive very little fishing pressure, and are scenic as they flow through rural Kewaunee County. - Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot

Tributary streams — Fishing in tributary streams is open year round, but most of the fishing occurs between mid-March and the end of November. Following the spring melt, anglers target migrating steelhead in the Kewaunee and Ahnapee rivers and Stony Creek. The steelhead run begins in late March and may continue through the end of April. Recent spring runs have been shorter than past runs, however the number of returning fish has improved. Other anglers target northern pike and suckers that are also in streams at this time. While many anglers focus on fishing the large streams, anglers should not overlook small stream fishing opportunities such as on Silver and Stony creeks.

Anglers fishing the tributary streams during summer can catch a variety of fish. Smallmouth bass fishing should be very good in lower sections of the Kewaunee and Ahnapee rivers. Those seeking catfish, bullhead, panfish or a few yellow perch should try fishing the Algoma or Kewaunee harbors.

The fall salmon run begins in mid-September when Chinook salmon return to local streams. Most anglers use spawn sacs or spinners when fishing these impressive fish in fall. Return rates continue to be good and if stream flows are good, fishing should be excellent in most tributary streams. The Chinook run is followed by the coho salmon run, then by brown trout and steelhead until the rivers freeze in December. Most of the late fall fishing activity is on the Kewaunee River.

Anglers looking for ice fishing opportunities for steelhead and brown trout should try fishing the lower reaches of the Kewaunee River. Always check ice conditions before walking on the ice. - Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot

MANITOWOC COUNTY

Inland lakes — Inland lakes in Manitowoc County offer fishing opportunities for experienced anglers and for families. Lakes are small and easy to fish with small boats under most weather conditions. Recent surveys have shown most lakes in the county are dominated by largemouth bass and panfish. Larger lakes (maximum size of 140 acres) such as Long, Cedar, Pigeon and Wilke have bass populations that feature a size mixture that will provide anglers good angling action as well as the potential for a trophy. Bass also are present in the smaller lakes but in lower numbers. Panfish, mainly bluegill,

yellow perch, and rock bass are popular with local anglers. Most lakes have abundant panfish although in some lakes they average less than six inches. Walleye are stocked in several lakes including Bullhead, Pigeon, Silver and Harpts lakes. Walleye fishing in these lakes is fair with low numbers of walleye harvested. Northern pike fishing is good in several lakes including Silver, Cedar and Long. Many families find ice fishing for rainbow trout that are annually stocked into Horseshoe Lake very rewarding. It's a great place to take the kids ice fishing. - Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot

Tributary streams — Following the spring melt, anglers can hook steelhead, brown trout or northern pike in the Manitowoc, Branch, East Twin and West Twin rivers. Although the best fishing is in late March through April, excellent fishing can continue through mid-May if water levels remain high. While many anglers focus on fishing the large streams, anglers should not overlook the opportunities in small streams such as Silver and Fischer creeks. Anglers looking for a unique fishing experience may want to try dip netting suckers or smelt as the fish migrate upstream in April.

Summer fishing in tributary streams offers many opportunities for anglers whether casting for bass or using a bobber for panfish. Smallmouth bass fishing should be very good in lower sections of the Manitowoc and Branch rivers based on recent survey results. Northern pike anglers should try fishing the Manitowoc or West Twin rivers to hook some possibly very large pike. Those seeking catfish, bullhead, panfish or a few yellow perch should try fishing the piers and the shoreline in the Manitowoc and Two Rivers harbors.

By mid-September, salmon spawning migrations begin and if stream flows are good, fishing should be excellent. The Chinook run is followed by the coho run, then by brown trout and steelhead until the rivers freeze in December.

Anglers looking for ice fishing opportunities for steelhead and brown trout should try fishing the lower reaches of the larger rivers such as the Manitowoc and West Twin. Ice conditions can vary greatly in these areas. Always check ice conditions before walking on the ice. - Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot

MARINETTE COUNTY

High Falls Reservoir -- High Falls (1,498 acres) has a good panfish population. Black crappie between seven and eight inches are abundant and a few nice bluegill and yellow perch also can be expected. Between 2007 and 2008, walleye stocking switched from stocking fry to stocking large fingerlings. The increased size at stocking is expected to improve survival. Seventy-five percent of the small walleye collected during the fall 2010 were fish stocked earlier in the year.



Fox Valley Technical College student, Derrick McGee, holding a large walleye captured during a fyke net survey in Shawano Lake Outlet Channel. Photo: Elliot Hoffman.

It's hopeful that the walleye fishery in High Falls will improve over the next several years.

Thunder Lake — Thunder Lake is primarily a largemouth bass and bluegill lake. The large number of bass between eight and 12 inches has kept the panfish populations under control and produced some nice-sized bluegill up to 8.5 inches. Even though not many bass over 14 inches were collected in 2010, that will likely change within the next year or two. Anglers can expect to catch northern pike or rock bass as well.

White Rapids Flowage — White Rapids boasts a good smallmouth fishery with lots of fish between 15 and 16 inches for anglers to test their tackle. But bluegill and walleye fishing also can be good with quite a few 14-inch walleye and bluegill up to nine inches collected in early 2010. The occasional musky may also be caught in this flowage.

Streams — Miles of trout stream divide the Marinette County landscape. In 2010, sev-



Large Waupaca River brown trout captured during electrofishing surveys. Photo: Al Niebur.

eral streams were surveyed but Eagle Creek and Upper Middle Inlet proved to be promising destinations for anglers seeking brook trout. For other trout streams in Marinette County, visit the link below to plan your next outing: dnr.wi.gov/fish/species/trout/viewer/marinette.htm - Chip Long, fisheries biologist, Peshtigo

MARQUETTE COUNTY

Many small pothole lakes, along with small impoundments and portions of the Fox River, diversify this county's fisheries. Most of these small lakes contain largemouth bass and panfish species, with some having low-density northern pike populations. Some may contain small walleye populations present due to stocking efforts.

This part of the state also provides for some of the best trout fishing anywhere. Healthy populations of native brown, brook and rainbow trout, combined with stream regulations provide for a variety of trout fishing opportunities. The Mecan, Chaffee and Wedde are very popular streams during the "Hex" hatch. Large tracts of state ownership along with an ongoing trout habitat improvement program, has helped to protect and maintain these top-notch trout streams. Most have good access, but always ask permission to cross private land. - David Bartz, fisheries biologist, Montello

OCONTO COUNTY

White Potato Lake — Walleye management is the focus at White Potato Lake. A study is underway to compare natural reproduction versus stocking large fingerling walleye. Walleye fishery and panfish survival monitoring will continue through 2015. White Potato also has become a local hotspot for musky. While their abundance is lower than in some other lakes, survey results indicate musky average around 40 inches.

Streams --The South Branch of the Oconto River is a popular destination for trout anglers in northeast Wisconsin. With access to the river at County Highways W, T, AA and State Highway 32, finding a secluded spot to fish shouldn't be difficult. The 2010 survey of the South Branch turned up several brown trout over 20 inches. Compared to other streams in the region, the South Branch supports quite a few brook trout between 10 and 12 inches. - Chip Long, fisheries biologist, Peshtigo

SHAWANO COUNTY

Shawano Lake — Comprehensive fisheries surveys on Shawano Lake in 2010 showed a promising outlook for several fish species.

Anglers should continue to have good fishing for largemouth bass with a good chance of catching a trophy-sized fish. Spring surveys sampled high numbers of largemouth bass with an average size of 14.4 inches and some bass up to 21 inches. Approximately 56 percent of the bass catch was over 14 inches. Panfish abundance and size appear to be holding steady. Bluegill up to 9.2 inches were sampled with 53 percent of the catch over six inches in length. Walleye abundance was down from past surveys;

however, the population is now comprised of mainly larger adults in the 18- to 24-inch size range. Beginning in 2011, the DNR intends to stock large fingerling walleye to improve walleye population abundance. Musky continue to provide a great fishery with several 45- to 50-inch fish captured or observed during surveys.

Trout streams — Surveys on several Shawano County streams indicate trout populations at moderate density and size. Surveys in the Mill Creek and North Branch Embarras River show adult brook trout abundance in several areas at or above 1,000 fish per mile with 32 percent of the population exceeding seven inches. Often overlooked streams are the smaller headwater tributary streams where trout densities can be much higher than the larger trout waters. Anglers can expect to catch many trout but the average size will tend to be smaller. - Al Niebur, fisheries biologist, Shawano

WAUPACA COUNTY

Shadow Lake — Anglers looking for action might want to consider Shadow Lake. Located in the City of Waupaca, Shadow Lake has ample shore fishing access and a floating dock at the city park. Recent surveys indicate an abundant bluegill and pumpkinseed population with over 33 percent exceeding six inches. Largemouth bass populations are above average with some bass up to 20 inches.

Trout (Nace) Creek — The habitat work completed on Trout Creek will help maintain this quality fishery. Wild Rose operations crew completed maintenance of several hundred feet of overhead bank cover in the Trout Creek Fishery Area. Trout population surveys indicate trout relative abundance at 1,568 per mile with over 20 percent of the trout larger than nine inches (the legal minimum length). Trout Creek has multiple areas for anglers to access the stream.

Waupaca River — Novice trout anglers may want to try the Waupaca River within the Waupaca City limits and downstream. This section of the river is managed as a put-and-take fishery and is annually stocked with 3,000 yearling rainbow or brown trout. Good shore access is located at Riverview and Riverside parks and much of the water is easily wadable. In addition, a shore fishing trail for challenged anglers is located near the Water Street Bridge.

In the special regulation water (18-inch minimum length limit, artificial lures only, one daily bag) section of the Waupaca River, recent surveys indicate trout populations have been holding steady. Since the regulation was enacted in the mid-1990s, we have

seen a four-fold increase in the numbers of 15-plus-inch brown trout. Anglers fishing this section of water have a very good chance of catching a trophy-sized brown trout. In other sections of the Waupaca River, young-of-year numbers are down slightly from past years, however, a strong year class produced from 2009 should provide good fishing in years to come.

Radley Creek — Anglers looking for action-oriented fishing should try Radley Creek. Recent surveys show above average density with over 29 percent of the adult catch over the legal size limit (nine-inch minimum for this stream). Anglers have ample opportunities to access the stream with multiple properties and parking areas located throughout the Radley Creek Fishery Area. Anglers interested in fishing Radley Creek can obtain maps from the DNR website or contact the local DNR office. - Al Niebur, fisheries biologist, Shawano

WAUSHARA COUNTY

Nearly 100 lakes, most with clear water, reside in Waushara County providing some challenging, but good fishing opportunities. Almost all of these lakes are highly developed with heavy recreational use in the summer. Bluegill and largemouth bass are the most common fisheries in Waushara County lakes. Most of the lakes contain some very nice-sized bluegill. The potential for overharvest does exist because the lakes are clear and generally small. Good quality largemouth bass fisheries exist on Big Silver and Mount Morris lakes. There are also a handful of lakes with no size limit, such as Little Hills and Witters, that provide an opportunity to harvest small, abundant largemouth bass. Stocking efforts by local clubs and the DNR provide some walleye fishing opportunities. Walleye numbers are low in these lakes with populations less than one adult fish per acre. Trophy potential does exist, though, with some fish in the 13-pound range sampled in recent surveys. Trout fishing opportunities also exist on some lakes in Waushara County. Trout are annually stocked in lakes such as Spring, Johns and Long. Their season coincides with the statewide gamefish season (first Saturday in May – First Sunday in March).



A couple of handfuls of largemouth bass are displayed from a recent survey of Silver Lake, Waushara County. Photo: Scott Bunde

With approximately 160 miles of trout stream, Waushara County provides good opportunity to catch natural reproducing brook, brown and rainbow trout. Clear water and wild trout make it a challenging pursuit for anglers with all degrees of experience. Large tracts of state ownership along these streams provide good public access and protection of this resource for future generations. DNR habitat crews along with local clubs are actively working to enhance the trout fisheries on these streams. Trend sites on the White River, Willow Creek, Pine River and Mecan River show the trout are holding their own despite the low water conditions the past few years. Catch rates were slightly higher than average on the Mecan and Pine River sites. - Scott Bunde, fisheries technician, Wautoma

WINNEBAGO SYSTEM (WOLF AND UPPER FOX RIVERS, LAKES WINNEBAGO, BUTTE DES MORTS, WINNECONNE AND POYGAN)

The Winnebago system is expected to produce nice walleye catches in 2011. Low water levels last spring contributed to a poor spring run in 2010 and set the stage for the summer. Highly-abundant forage in 2010, led by the second largest hatch of gizzard shad ever recorded, contributed to some pretty poor fishing on this great system until last fall when fishing on the Wolf River was outstanding for three to four weeks because the abundant forage had disappeared by then. The number of fish in the river also suggested that a lot of fish stayed in the rivers and upper lakes last year or there was a large upstream fish movement in fall.

Despite last year's off season, the walleye fishery on the system is in very good shape. This past spring, 11,624 fish were tagged despite the low water. At the time, males averaged 16.7 inches and 1.73 pounds, and females 20.80 inches and 3.86 pounds. Based on assessment work, the walleye population in 2011 should be composed of good numbers of medium-sized fish and an abundance of smaller males from the 2008 year class.

Fish from the 2008 year class, the second largest ever recorded, are now in the range of 13 to 15 inches, due in large part, to the abundance of forage last year. Tens of thousands of males from that year class will mature and should be migrating up the Wolf and upper Fox rivers to spawn this spring. With normal spring river levels, the potential is there for a great spring run. Females from that huge 2008 year class will be in the range of 15 to 17 inches this year and while they're a year or two away from being mature and entering the spring run, they should provide for some good catches in 2011, barring another forage explosion. Continue to report any tagged fish that you catch to the nearest DNR office, reporting when and where you caught the fish, whether you kept it and the number on the tag. Reporting tagged fish is an important management tool. Thanks for your cooperation!

The uncommon combination of early ice-out, a quick warm-up and low runoff/turbidity, created ideal plant growth conditions. Aquatic plants grew out to 12 feet of water in 2010! Most shorelines, bays and channels had abundant aquatic vegetation, in many cases reaching nuisance levels. While troublesome for boaters, this clearer water and vegetation benefits almost all fish species by providing more spawning, cover and feeding areas. Bass and panfish are one of the biggest benefactors. The bluegill hatch, based on the number of young-of-year seen in the trawl, was the highest ever: 3.5 times the next closest hatch in 2007! The crappie hatch last year was also the highest recorded. If clearer water is here to stay for a while, anglers can look forward to having a pretty good panfishery on the system to complement the walleye.

Bass anglers should find the fishing in the system to be on par with the last couple of years, with small- to medium-size fish common. Most anglers will see fish in the 12- to 16-inch range, however don't rule out the occasional 18-plus-incher. Smallmouth on Lake Winnebago continue to show increases in both number and size, while the clearer water and abundant vegetation have helped to provide more largemouth habitat.

With a strong walleye fishery, lots of small to medium fish and the occasional "whopper," a respectable bass fishery, and an up and coming panfish population, the Winnebago system has something to please any angler. Be versatile in your location and techniques when fishing it. Change your tactics to change your luck. - Kendall K. Kamke, senior fisheries biologist, Oshkosh



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Southeastern Wisconsin



KENOSHA COUNTY

Elizabeth Lake — Elizabeth Lake is the largest lake in the county at 638 acres. It is located within the Village of Twin Lakes in southwest Kenosha County. Anglers will want to try this lake for largemouth bass and panfish, especially black crappie. A 2010 fish survey found healthy populations of largemouth bass, northern pike, bluegill, black crappie and yellow perch. Rock bass, pumpkinseed, and warmouth also are present. Walleye and smallmouth bass are present but not abundant. Largemouth bass are the most abundant gamefish and bluegill are the most abundant panfish. Bass up to 20 inches were collected in the survey. Most bass were between 10 and 12 inches. There are eight- and nine-inch bluegill in this lake but most are between five and seven inches. Good numbers of eight- to 10-inch black crappie were collected during the survey. Public boating access is available at the south east end of the lake. The DNR stocks northern pike and walleye. Standard fishing regulations apply on this lake.

Lake Andrea — This 110-acre lake is located within the Village of Pleasant Prairie in southeast Kenosha County. A public launch ramp with parking is found on the lake's northeast end. The no-outboard-motor use restriction on this lake will attract anglers who prefer a quieter fishing experience. Largemouth bass are the most abundant gamefish. A 2010 survey sampled largemouth bass up to 18 inches. Most bass in this lake are between 12 and 14 inches. Northern pike also are present and most are 20 to 24 inches. There are walleye in this lake and most are right around 17 inches. Bluegill is the most abundant panfish and most are five to six inches, although there are eight-inch bluegill present. Rock bass up to 10 inches and yellow perch round out the panfishery. The DNR stocks walleye and northern pike. Standard fishing regulations are in effect.

Camp, Center, Hooker, Mary, Paddock, Powers, Silver and Vern Wolf lakes — All of these lakes in Kenosha County have public boating access with parking and they range in size from the 464-acre Silver Lake to the 87-acre Hooker Lake. These lakes support good populations of largemouth bass, northern pike and bluegill. Anglers looking for lots of action on northern pike would do well to try Camp Lake. Northern pike in Silver Lake are protected by a 32-inch minimum size limit, one daily bag limit. Largemouth bass are protected by an 18-inch minimum size limit and one daily bag limit. Anglers wanting to catch larger northerns and bass will want to try this lake. The DNR stocks Silver Lake with musky and fish up to 48 inches have been sampled. Vern Wolf Lake is 115 acres and is located within the Bong State Recreation Area. It offers boating and shoreline fishing opportunities. Motor boat use is prohibited and most of the shoreline is undeveloped making this a quiet spot for anglers. A barrier-free fishing pier is located on the lake's west end. An 18-inch minimum size limit and one daily bag limit on bass and a 10 daily bag limit on panfish apply. Walleye are stocked into Camp, Center, Hooker, Mary, Powers, and Silver lakes. Northern pike are stocked into Hooker, Mary, Paddock, Powers, Silver and Vern Wolf lakes.

Standard fishing regulations apply on Camp, Center, Hooker, Mary, Paddock and Powers lakes. -*Doug Welch, senior fisheries biologist*,

SOUTHERN LAKE MICHIGAN INCLUDING SHEBOYGAN, OZAUKEE, MILWAUKEE, RACINE AND KENOSHA COUNTIES

Open lake fishing — In Lake Michigan, Chinook salmon harvest rates in recent years have been below the record-setting years of 2003-2007. In 2010, however, the Chinook harvest rate rebounded somewhat, likely due to good fishing conditions in June and July. In 2010, Chinook seemed larger, with reports of more 20-plus pound fish being caught than in recent years, and this trend should continue into 2011.

In addition to the roughly one million Chinook stocked annually in Wisconsin, this fishery is enhanced by natural Chinook reproduction in Michigan streams. Since 2006, Wisconsin has participated in a lakewide Chinook study, and the first few years have shown that about 55 percent of all one-plus, year-old Chinook caught in the lake were naturally reproduced in Michigan streams. This bodes well for Wisconsin anglers, provided Michigan streams continue to contribute to Chinook recruitment.

In spring 2010, coho were abundant, and they grew to quality size throughout the summer. Spring coho fishing can be some of the fastest salmon action on Lake Michigan, with multiple strikes common. Wisconsin's Lake Michigan coho fishery begins in the south (Kenosha and Racine) in



A new state record brown trout weighing 41 lbs. 8 oz. was caught in July off Racine. Photo submitted: Roger Hellen

April and May. The coho fishing gradually moves north as water temperatures rise, typically reaching Milwaukee in May and Port Washington and Sheboygan by June.

Steelhead catches in recent years have been average at best, and steelhead strain management in Wisconsin has been altered. Historically, adult Skamania were transported in the fall from the Root River Steelhead Facility to the Kettle Moraine Springs Fish Hatchery, where they were held until they were ready to spawn the following January/February. VHS rules now prohibit the transfer of live fish to a hatchery. Skamania were last stocked in 2008, but additional numbers of Chambers Creek and Ganaraska strains have been stocked to make up the difference.

Nearshore fishing — Shore anglers enjoyed some good fishing in July and August working harbors and river mouths for Skamania steelhead. These fish are staging in anticipation of their early fall spawning run. The Chambers Creek and Ganaraska strains should also provide some action for anglers in late winter and early spring.

The Arlee strain of rainbow trout has contributed to the nearshore fishery in recent years. Arlees were first stocked in 2001 and were selected for their nearshore waters adaptability. They quickly reach catch-

able size, as reported by the Lake Michigan creel survey, and DNR will continue to stock approximately 60,000 per year. It is hoped that this strain of rainbow trout will continue to augment the nearshore fishery in coming years.

Brown trout fishing in southern Lake Michigan was productive in 2010. A new state and world record 41.5-pound brown was caught in July off Racine. Browns also provide a consistent nearshore fishery during cold months, especially at warmwater discharges and near river mouths. Diet studies in the Milwaukee Harbor show that brown trout are feeding on round gobies and the browns stay in the harbor for an extended period. This continues to draw good numbers of both shore and boat anglers who target brown trout throughout the year.

Yellow perch numbers in Lake Michigan are slowly showing signs of improvement, but overall the population is still low. The 2005, 2006 and 2007 year classes now contribute most significantly to the sport harvest, and the 2005 year class is dominant in annual DNR surveys. The 2005 year class of perch now averages over 10 inches and should contribute significantly to the 2011 sport catch. Perch fishing remains closed from May 1 through June 15 to protect mature females before spawning, and the daily bag limit remains at five fish.

Tributary fishing — In fall 2010, low water levels in area tributaries led to a mediocre Chinook salmon run, but flows improved in time for a stronger coho return. Good returns of Chinook and coho are expected for fall 2011, provided river water levels remain conducive for upstream fish migration.

In recent years, spring and fall steelhead runs have been average at best. Anglers can generally look for Skamania in the Sheboygan, Milwaukee, and Root rivers as water temperatures start to cool in mid-September. Chambers Creek usually follow in late fall and can be found through March and early April. Ganaraska enter the streams as early as late November and December and again from late March through April. A good run is expected with suitable river conditions in spring 2011.

For up-to-date fishing information, call the Southern Lake Michigan Fishing Hotline at (414) 382-7920. To read information about the Lake Michigan program visit dnr.wi.gov/fish. - *Pradeep Hirethota and Cheryl Peterson, southern Lake Michigan fisheries, Milwaukee*

OZAUKEE COUNTY

Milwaukee River — A 1,000-foot-long fish passage around the Mequon-Thiensville dam on the Milwaukee River presents new fishing opportunities. The passage is designed for northern pike and other fish not capable of leaping over barriers. Many fish species including walleye, redbreast, sunfish and sturgeon from Lake Michigan are expected to enter areas of the river that were previously not accessible. Salmon and trout from Lake Michigan will now have no trouble getting around the dam. Though salmon are known to be able to jump the 10-foot-tall dam, they now deal only with a series of nine steps, each step raising about one foot. The fish passage at the Mequon-Thiensville dam, along with removal of the Lime Kiln dam on the river at Grafton, and construction of a fish passage around the Bridge St. dam in Grafton, will reconnect an impressive 158 miles of streams. Fish will be able to move freely upstream an additional 35 miles in the main river, 11 miles in the North Branch and 112 miles in smaller tributaries. This should improve the already productive smallmouth bass fishery, as well. Surveys from 2008 showed catch rates of up to 41 smallmouth bass per mile, with maximum sizes reaching 17 inches and average sizes around 10 inches. - *Travis Motl, fisheries biologist, Plymouth*

RACINE COUNTY

Bohners Lake — This 135-acre lake in southwest Racine County provides boating access with parking at a town-owned public launch ramp on the lake's north side. Anglers seeking good bass and panfish action will want to fish this lake. A 2010 fish survey found plenty of largemouth bass, bluegill, pumpkinseed and warmouth. Northern pike also live here. Most of the bass in this lake are between 11 and 14 inches and there are some up to 18 inches. Forty-five percent of the bass population in this lake are legal size (14 inches) or larger. Panfish anglers will find lots of bluegill but most are less than six inches, although some seven inchers are out there. Larger panfish including warmouth up to eight inches, pumpkinseed up to seven inches, and big bullheads up to 12 inches, add to the fun fishing this lake. The DNR stocks Bohners Lake with northern pike. Standard fishing regulations are in effect.

Browns Lake — This 396-acre lake in western Racine County is popular with anglers looking for good northern pike action and good-size largemouth bass. The special 16-inch minimum size limit on bass in Browns Lake results in more and larger fish than in most lakes in the three-county area with the standard 14-inch minimum size limit. In a 2010 fish survey, 68 percent of the bass in the survey sample were 14 inches or larger! Ten percent of the bass were legal size (16 inches) or larger. Most of the northern pike in this lake are between 20 and 24 inches. The DNR stocks walleye here and many of these fish are between 18 and 19 inches. Lots of bluegill swim here but most are on the small side. Big bullhead up to 14 inches, rock bass up to 10 inches, pumpkinseed and black crappie round out the panfishery. Public boating access with parking is located in the county park on the lake's southeast side.

Eagle Lake — Eagle Lake is a shallow, 515-acre lake located in western Racine County. All the fish were removed in 2008 as part of a rehabilitation project and the lake was stocked with fry and fingerling northern pike, and fingerling and adult largemouth bass in 2009 and 2010. These fish are protected by special regulations designed to grow big fish. There are no legal-size fish in this lake yet, but anglers will find good action on northerns and bass in 2011. Fish surveys found northern pike between 13 and 20 inches, and largemouth bass between seven and 16 inches. One angler recently caught and released a 31-inch northern! Yellow perch are scheduled to be put into the lake in 2011. Signs are posted at the public boat launches on the lake's north and west sides informing anglers that the minimum size limits and daily bag limits are 40 inches and one for northern pike, 22 inches and one for largemouth bass, and eight inches and 10 for panfish.

Tichigan, Waubeesee, Wind and Rockland lakes — Public boating access with parking or carry-in access is provided at these other Racine County lakes. They range in size from the 1,132-acre Tichigan Lake (includes the Waterford Impoundment) to the 40-acre Rockland Lake. These lakes support healthy populations of largemouth bass, northern pike, bluegill, pumpkinseed, black crappie and yellow perch. All but Rockland Lake are stocked with northern pike and walleye, and Waubeesee Lake is also stocked with brown trout. Standard fishing regulations apply except for Rockland Lake where bass from 12 to 16 inches cannot be kept. - *Doug Welch, senior fisheries biologist, Sturtevant Service Center*

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

Onion River — Anglers in Sheboygan County may be surprised to find Class I trout streams close to home. In 2008, the DNR reclassified all of Mill and Ben Nutt creeks and the stretch of the Onion River from County Highway N upstream, to Class I trout streams. This indicates that these

streams contain naturally reproducing wild trout and they do not require stocking. The latest survey results suggest that from 1997 to 2006, the trout population increased over tenfold. This population increase is likely due to the tireless restoration efforts of the DNR and public partners like the Lakeshore Chapter of Trout Unlimited who have worked on five miles of stream. Along with trout habitat restoration, public land acquisition has opened up opportunities for anglers to enjoy this outstanding resource with ease. Whether you're looking for brook or brown trout, get your boots wet and give the Onion River a shot. - *Travis Motl, fisheries biologist, Plymouth*

WALWORTH COUNTY

Whitewater Lake -- This 640-acre lake is situated within the Kettle Moraine State Forest in northwest Walworth County. A DNR barrier-free boat ramp with boarding dock and parking lot, and barrier-free fishing piers are located on the lake's west side. Anglers after a quality bass fishing experience will want to fish this lake. A survey in 2010 produced largemouth bass up to 21 inches and northern pike up to 35 inches. Nineteen percent of the bass and northern pike sampled were legal size or larger. Walleye are also present. Bluegill is the most abundant panfish, with gills up to 7.5 inches sampled. Yellow perch, black crappie, warmouth, pumpkinseed and green sunfish round out the panfish population. Standard fishing regulations apply here with the minimum size limits for bass at 14 inches and northern pike at 26 inches. The daily bag limit on bass is five and on northern pike is two. Whitewater Lake is stocked with walleye and northern pike.

Delavan Lake — At 2,072 acres, this lake is the second largest lake in Walworth County and the fourth largest lake in the Southeast Region. Anglers are still reaping the benefits of the extensive 1989 rehabilitation project. A 2010 survey confirmed that Delavan Lake supports excellent populations of largemouth bass, northern pike and walleye. Smallmouth bass and musky also are present. The DNR stocks this lake with walleye and musky. The 2010 survey and other recent surveys produced largemouth bass up to 20 inches, and northern pike up to 39 inches. Anglers frequently catch largemouth bass between three and five pounds and northern pike between 26 and 35 inches. One angler caught a 50-inch, 37-pound musky in fall 2010! The walleye population is in such good shape that hatchery crews collect eggs from Delavan Lake walleye every spring. These eggs are hatched and the young are raised and stocked back into Delavan Lake and many other southern Wisconsin lakes. Surveys conducted in spring 2010 sampled female walleye up to 26 inches with an average length of 22 inches. Male walleye were up to 23 inches and the average length was 17 inches. Bluegill, black crappie and yellow perch are the most abundant panfish. Recent surveys collected gills between six and seven inches and up to eight inches long. Yellow perch up to 11 inches and black crappie up to 13 inches also were collected. Pumpkinseed, rock bass, warmouth and green sunfish also are present. Special fishing regulations help protect this lake's fisheries. The minimum size limit on gamefish is 32 inches for northern pike; 40 inches for musky; and 18 inches for walleye, largemouth bass and smallmouth bass. Daily

bag limits are one for northern pike, one for musky, one for bass and three for walleye. Public boating access with ample parking is provided at the Town of Delavan launch ramp on the lake's northeast end.

Geneva Lake — Geneva Lake is 5,262 acres of crystal clear water and is the largest and deepest lake in the Southeast Region. Mimic shiners, cisco and panfish provide a healthy forage base that supports excellent populations of warmwater and coldwater gamefish. Anglers come here to fish for lake trout, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, northern pike, bluegill, yellow perch, black crappie and rock bass. Brown trout also are present. Lake trout up to 35 inches and weighing 20 pounds are caught by anglers using downriggers in the summer. Big walleye are caught using large minnow imitation lures at night. A 2009 survey collected walleye up to 30 inches and 13 pounds, with many between 22 and 28 inches. Fishing the shoreline and around piers in the early morning and evening in the summer with artificial surface and underwater lures, night crawlers, and leeches will produce plenty of nice size largemouth and smallmouth bass. Northern pike are



A very robust smallmouth bass was taken from 2010 sampling on Nagawicka Lake, Photo: Ben Huesner

commonly caught in the summer and early fall by anglers using suckers, and through the ice by anglers using tip-ups and shiners. A brand new fishing opportunity in Geneva Lake is on the horizon. For the first time, 3,492 musky were stocked into the lake in 2010. These musky were all fin-clipped, which will help the DNR track how fast these fish grow. The forage base in this lake should produce excellent growth rates and great musky fishing in the future. The DNR also stocks lake trout, brown trout, and walleye. Standard fishing regulations are in effect, except for northern pike. The minimum size limit on northern pike is 32 inches and the daily bag limit is one. Public boating access is available at municipally owned facilities at Fontana, Lake Geneva, Williams Bay and Linn Township.

Pleasant, Turtle, Beulah, Como, Lauderdale, Potters, Rice, Cravath and Tripp lakes — Anglers seeking largemouth bass or northern pike, or who just want to catch some panfish for the table, will want to try these lakes, ranging in size from the 946-acre Lake Como to the 68-acre Cravath

Lake. All of these lakes have public boating access and support native populations of largemouth bass, northern pike, bluegill, black crappie and yellow perch. Smallmouth bass are present in Lauderdale. The DNR stocks walleye in Pleasant, Turtle, Beulah and Lauderdale lakes. Northern pike are stocked in all these lakes. Brown trout are stocked into Lake Beulah. Standard fishing regulations apply, with the exception of Lake Beulah, where the bass regulation does not allow harvesting bass from 12 to 16 inches. - *Doug Welch, senior fisheries biologist, Sturtevant*

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Big Cedar Lake — If a diverse fishery is what you're looking for then Big Cedar Lake is the spot for you. This lake offers everything from bluegill to walleye to lake trout. Big Cedar offers diversity because of its varying habitat. The north basin of this 1,000-acre lake is shallow, with a maximum depth of 37 feet. The southern basin is much deeper, with a hole that drops to 105 feet and two shallow bars, one off the yacht club on the west shore and another off the Cedar Creek outlet on the east shore. The last comprehensive survey of Big Cedar Lake in 2005 indicated that the northern pike population is beginning to rebound. A 40-inch minimum size limit enacted several years ago seems to be working. More yearling pike were found in the lake in 2005 than observed in the recent past and anglers are beginning to report catching many more small pike. Walleye populations should also be rebounding due to annual stocking efforts by the DNR and area walleye clubs. Anglers may hook into the occasional lake trout with the last DNR stocking of approximately 24,000 fish taking place in 2004. There also are nice largemouth bass and panfish opportunities for anglers to enjoy on Big Cedar Lake. If one keeps a sharp eye on the water, they might even catch a glimpse of the lake's remnant sturgeon population. Eighteen sturgeon were stocked into the lake around 1936 and a few are still swimming around. Public access is available on Gonring Drive off of State Highway 144 at the lake's north end. - *Travis Motl, fisheries biologist, Plymouth*

WAUKESHA COUNTY

Nagawicka Lake — Nagawicka Lake was surveyed in 2010 and revealed a diverse gamefish population consisting of northern pike up to 39 inches, smallmouth bass up to 20 inches and many good-sized walleye that averaged 19 inches. Largemouth bass are abundant with an average size of 14 inches with the largest fish caught being over 21 inches. The dominant forage base in Nagawicka is white suckers, which show strong annual migrations up the Bark River. The 2010 survey also showed a panfish population of bluegill and black crappie with impressive size structure.

Lower Genessee Lake — Lower Genessee Lake is a quiet little lake nestled a few miles from the interstate. It is tailored for small boats or canoes. Hang on to your fishing pole though, there are some really nice-sized pike lurking in these waters. Lower Genessee also has big bluegill with a few fish measured near the 10-inch mark during a 2010 survey. Lower Genessee is annually stocked with trout prior to opening day. Many of the trout stocked survive

another year in this high-quality groundwater seepage lake.

Lower Phantom Lake — Lower Phantom Lake is a shallow lake connected to the Mukwonago River that sports a rich diversity of fish species. Longear sunfish and lake chubsuckers are just a few of the many rare species found in the Phantom lakes and the Mukwonago River. They are among the most diverse waterbodies in the state and have 58 documented fish species. Phantom lakes also have excellent largemouth bass fishing with a few fish over 18 inches. Northern pike populations are on the rise as are many area lakes thanks to a premium large fingerling product from DNR's hatchery system.

Big Muskego Lake — This is a great place to take a kid fishing. The restrictive length and bag limits on all panfish and gamefish species do not allow much for harvest, but surely provide fast angling action. This year brings a northern pike 40-inch minimum length limit and a daily bag limit of one that are sure to provide some memorable angling opportunities for future generations. This lake tailors to the nature enthusiast providing abundant wildlife viewing and excellent water quality. Three deep fishing holes are found near waterfowl nesting islands along the lake's east side. Ice fishing is extremely popular as anglers set tip-ups for pike and jig for panfish.

Oconomowoc Lake — This is one of Waukesha County's highest quality fisheries hosting superior angling opportunities for musky, walleye and smallmouth bass. A 2009 fall walleye stocking evaluation revealed excellent natural reproduction of this fine table fare. Walleye on Oconomowoc Lake have a special 18-inch minimum length limit and daily bag limit of three. In the spring, large musky may be seen near the public boat launch on the Oconomowoc River.

Pine Lake — Pine Lake provides the county's best chance to land a trophy walleye. A 2009 fall survey showed excellent largemouth and smallmouth bass potential for anglers. In addition to the many gamefish, Pine Lake also provides some awesome black crappie fishing.

Lac LaBelle — Lac LaBelle has the highest walleye abundance of all Waukesha County lakes because of its restrictive size and bag limit. There are only a few musky lurking in LaBelle, but the ones that do, are big — averaging 42 inches as revealed by a 2009 survey. This unique waterbody is host to some large flathead catfish, which is a closed fishery year round. Giant buffalo fish are found in the spring near the outlet of the lake near the physical carp barrier. Bowfishing for buffalo and carp on Lac LaBelle is a very popular practice due to cloudy water, creating a less spooky fish.

Pewaukee Lake — Pewaukee Lake is still Waukesha County's premier musky water thanks to a successful stocking program. Pewaukee is scheduled for a comprehensive fisheries survey starting in 2011. The DNR will examine length, age, growth and abundance of all fish species including musky. The Milwaukee chapter of Musky Inc. is raising spring yearling musky to supplement the existing stocking program. - *Benjamin Heussner, fisheries biologist, Waukesha*

ENJOY YOUR CATCH

SAFE EATING GUIDELINES FOR MOST OF WISCONSIN'S INLAND WATERS

<p>Women of childbearing years, nursing mothers, and all children under 15 years of age may eat:</p> <p>1 meal per week - bluegill, crappie, yellow perch, sunfish, bullhead, inland trout, and</p> <p>1 meal per month - walleye, pike, bass, catfish, and all other species</p> <p>Do not eat - musky</p>	<p>Women beyond their childbearing years and men may eat:</p> <p>Unrestricted - bluegill, crappie, yellow perch, sunfish, bullhead, inland trout:</p> <p>1 meal per week - walleye, pike, bass, catfish, and all other species, and</p> <p>1 meal per month - musky</p>
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There are 148 waters where exceptions to this advice apply, including the Great Lakes. More stringent consumption advice applies where fish have higher concentrations of mercury, PCBs or other chemicals. Go to dnr.wi.gov/fish/consumption for more information.

South Central Wisconsin



COLUMBIA COUNTY

Lake Wisconsin/Wisconsin River —The 20- to 28-inch no-harvest size limit regulation on walleye and sauger is producing good catches of walleye and sauger over 20 inches, with anglers reporting increasing numbers of walleye over 28 inches and 24-inch sauger. In October 2009, the Wisconsin River set the Wisconsin record fish for an eight-pound, 14.7-ounce saug-eye measuring 28.5 inches.

A 74.5 inch lake sturgeon, one of the largest registered from Lake Wisconsin during the fall angling season, was caught in 2010. Fall lake sturgeon population estimate work continues on Lake Wisconsin and the Wisconsin River below the Prairie du Sac dam. The 2010 population estimate showed 126 fish over 50 inches, compared to 133 fish in 2009, both significantly lower than the 2008 estimate of 211 fish. The fall 2010 harvest was eight fish, representing 6 percent of the population. This is slightly higher than the recommended 5 percent harvest limit for this species. Surveys also have shown that the lake sturgeon that congregate below the dam are predominately fish that will spawn the following spring.

An ongoing radio tracking study of 16 adult sturgeon shows that the fish overwinter at two locations below the dam. Fish are also showing seasonal movement between the Wisconsin River and the Mississippi River, with fish moving to the Mississippi in the spring and back to the Wisconsin in the fall. An egg and larval lake sturgeon survey is planned for spring 2011.

Swan Lake — Swan Lake is a natural lake formed on the Fox River with depths of 80 feet, primarily good water clarity and a very diverse fishery including many riverine fish species. Fishery surveys show a decent population estimate of 675 adult walleye ranging from 14 to 26 inches and abundant largemouth bass with many over 20 inches. Smallmouth bass and white bass provide additional angling opportunities, as does a stocked musky fishery with fish over 45 inches available.

Lake Columbia — High water levels have eliminated DNR survey boat access to the lake and prevented annual lake surveys over the past two years. The lack of funding also prevented the purchase and stocking of hybrid striped bass into the lake. Hybrid stripers are an openwater feeder that prey heavily on the gizzard shad population inhabiting the warmwater cooling reservoir, and have been the signature fish of this unique environment and very popular with anglers. The most recent fall surveys continue to confirm a major change in this fishery, due to warm lake temperatures for a longer time period (April – November). The once dominant largemouth and smallmouth bass fishery has declined to near zero levels. No recruitment has been noted since 2004. No stocked hybrid stripers were sampled in the 2008 fall survey, but several anglers reported excellent catches during 2008. Large hybrids are known to be impacted by higher temperatures, which hold less oxygen. Channel

catfish numbers were similar to 2007, but less than previous years and flathead catfish numbers, which had been increasing over the last several years, declined. Shad and small bluegill are abundant. The lake is open year-round and allows for carry-in boats and outboard motors at the public access on the lake's south end. A fish refuge is present near the power plant on both sides of the center dike. The daily bag limit for catfish is 25 with no size limit.

Park Lake — A near breach of the lake from heavy June 2008 flooding, along with a partial drawdown and refilling for inspection of the dam, likely resulted in flushing of fish from the lake. Fish survey work has been discontinued because of a decline in the fishery due primarily to increased numbers of shad and carp. This increase in rough fish began in 2000 and has already been well documented. Lake restoration will require reducing the phosphorus entering the lake from the watershed, chemical eradication of the fishery and a commitment by lake users to actively manage the lake, including periodic water level manipulations. Park Lake is scheduled for surveying this year.

Tarrant Lake — This 25-acre impoundment within the Village of Cambria was refilled during spring 2007. The dam washed out in June 2004 and the lake was drained to allow for reconstruction and some nearshore dredging. Bass and bluegill restocking is complete. The 2007-09 fall surveys indicate that the fishery is coming back. This used to be a phenomenal little fishery especially used by local kids.

Silver Lake — This 70-acre, groundwater-fed lake has always been plagued by stunted bluegill, but they provide good action for kids. It has low-density largemouth bass (though some are dandies), low-density natural-reproducing northern pike and limited large walleye from volunteer stocking. There will be three to four boats casting for musky on any given summer evening. Poor forage base results in slower musky growth but 40-plus-inch fish are present.

Lake George — This 36-acre, groundwater-fed lake is south of Portage off Highway P. Boat ramp use on the lake's north side depends on adequate lake level. Access is provided off Highway G on the lake's south side. No outboard motors allowed. Largemouth bass, northern pike (smaller sizes), bluegill, yellow perch and crappie comprise the fishery. This is a nice lake to take a kid tip-up fishing in the winter. There are lots of small northerns to keep the flags tripping.

Long Lake — There is a little bit of everything in this 69-acre lake in the Wisconsin River floodplain west of Portage. It's noted for bass, northern pike, crappie and bluegill. Musky also are present. Atypical low winter oxygen was noted during the severe winter of 2007-08 and again in 2008-09 because of deep snow depth, with some dead fish observed. But the lake is "restocked" with Wisconsin River floodwater. There is a poor boat access on the lake's east side.

Spring Lake — Just below Park Lake in Pardeeville is the deep 25-acre Spring Lake. There is a boat ramp on the lake's south side. No outboard motors allowed. Fish from downstream Swan Lake can enter by the Fox River connection. A fall 2004 survey found the lake to be "alive with fish" including nice bluegill, some crappie, largemouth bass, walleye, northern pike and a few musky. A spring survey is slated.

Lake Wyona — Lake Wyona is a 93-acre shallow impoundment of the Duck Creek system at Wyocena. A ramp is located at the upstream end of the lake in the county park. Heavy rain during June 2008 caused the dam to fail. The dam repairs are completed and the lake was refilled in summer 2010. Bluegill and northern pike have been restocked. Additional stockings of largemouth bass, channel catfish, crappie and bluegill will take place in the fall. The

2008 "pre-flood" survey found a very nice largemouth bass, crappie and bluegill fishery to be developing, following years of carp domination. The lake historically supported a decent northern pike fishery that spawned in the upstream wetlands. The goal is to restore the fishery to its pre-flood state.

Crystal Lake — It requires a half-mile walk to reach this 27-acre, groundwater-fed lake located southeast of Pardeeville. There is no developed access, but aesthetics are worth the effort. The lake is deep with clear water and good vegetation. Bass, bluegill, crappie and perch are present. — *Dan Fuller, fisheries technician, Poynette*

DANE COUNTY

Madison Chain of lakes (Mendota, Monona, Waubesa and Kegonsa) — The 2011 open water season will offer excellent angling for popular species.

Spring 2010 surveys focused on generating a population estimate for northern pike on Lake Mendota. With over 700 pike caught, the pike resource was estimated at 0.6 adult fish per acre, which is a relatively



Nice-sized bluegills can be taken from Lake Mendota by those anglers willing to spend the time to find them. Photo: Kurt Welke

good number for a big lake with heavy fishing pressure. The survey noted increasing numbers of fish at or near the 40-inch size limit. Mendota walleye numbers are modest for a stocked fishery; however 30 percent of all 1,343 fish handled in spring 2010 exceeded 18 inches.

Largemouth and smallmouth were common with impressive numbers of 20-inch bass found in and around quiet and warm shorelines and side channels such as marinas and boat launch areas. Catfish have become increasingly prevalent on Lake Mendota with the average cat in the 22- to 29-inch range and pushing 12-plus pounds.

Spring netting often "misses" the bluegill, crappie and perch fisheries but at 9,842 acres, Mendota's sheer size ensures that many fish escape angling pressure to reach quality size. While not abundant, Lake Mendota consistently produces 9-plus-inch bluegill for anglers who spend the time required to find them.

Elsewhere on the chain, anglers have nothing but good things to say about Madison musky. With high size limits of 45 inches, at least three fish greater than 50 inches were reportedly caught from Madison lakes in 2010. Whether trolling, spoon plugging, tossing jerk baits or running spinners, strong musky numbers and miles of quality shoreline and weed-edge habitat exist.

Crappie and perch numbers on the lower lakes have been good with anglers enjoying some really nice late spring and summer catches. Fall anglers typically return to fishing walleye along the Tenney Park breakwall on Mendota and along the John Nolen causeway bridges of Lake Monona. Ice fishermen continue to harvest consistently nice fish in both size and number

from Monona Bay, the "Triangles" and Squaw Bay on Lake Monona. Those ice fishing on Lake Waubesa will find the rock piles popular for perch and the greenweed edges off Goodland and Lake Farm parks are popular destinations for bluegill and crappie.

Trout fishing —The sport in Dane County just gets better and better thanks to improving habitat and the successful survival and growth of wild source fish used in stocking. Virtually all fish stocked are fingerlings measuring two to four inches! Surveys find good numbers of fish in great condition with large fish (over 13 inches) being fairly commonplace. Dane County has a range of stream types to suit fishing preferences and styles. The general default regulation allows harvest of three fish of nine-inch minimum length on virtually all waters except where signed and posted differently. Recent intensive habitat work to create more favorable living conditions for trout and coldwater species such as sculpin have taken place on Kittleson Valley, Pleasant Valley, Vermont, and Black Earth creeks.

For fishermen who prefer "eaters," Story Creek and the West Branch Sugar River are healthy resources with lots of access. Finding truly large fish requires some walking but they are present in the Upper Sugar River and Mt. Vernon Creek.

Access maps are available at dnr.wi.gov/fish/faq/wheretofish.html and for Dane county lands at: countyofdane.com/lwr/parks/fishing.aspx. — *Kurt Welke, fisheries biologist, Fitchburg*

Crystal Lake (boardsers Dane and Columbia counties) — This 500-acre wetland suddenly became a lake when the underlying hydrology broke loose in the mid-1980s raising the water level nine feet. Twenty years later, the fishery has settled down and is starting to experience change. In 1999 a population estimate found the largemouth bass greater than 10 inches at 37 per acre, a very high level. The bluegill numbered 185,000 (greater than 5.5 inches) in mid April 1999, with angler harvest of 85,000 documented by the end of June. Another 5,000 to 15,000 gills die annually from the late spring bacterial outbreak of *Columaris* and likely another 20,000 are harvested or die from natural causes the rest of the year. This means that two-thirds of the harvestable size fish are gone by year's end, only to be replenished by next year's recruitment and an outstanding growth rate of 8.2 inches in five years. The huge bass population also plays a role in thinning out numbers of bluegill less than five inches.

Another bass population estimate was conducted in 2004. Numbers (greater than 10 inches) had dropped from 37 per acre in 1999 to 22 per acre, still a high level compared to other waters. The largemouth bass virus (not VHS) was not detected in tests during 2001, but was found in 2006. Possibly this played a role in the decline. With the declining bass number, the bluegill growth rate dropped to 7.6 inches after five years.

An increase in growth of curly leaf pondweed which grows earlier in the spring has also made it more difficult to harvest bluegill.

Green toxic algae blooms have increased on the lake caused by high nutrient loading from high water and runoff events. Carp numbers also have increased dramatically and yellow bass are showing up in angler catches, demonstrating change. A large year class of yellow bass died off in fall 2010, which may help the lake.

Crystal still supports an above average bass population with better than average growth. In 2009 and 2010 the lake experienced very high lake levels that closed adjoining roads and limited boat access and shoreline access to the lake. It is yet to be seen how this low harvest period will affect future fishing success.

Fish Lake — The most recent survey in 2003 found a good opportunity to catch and release largemouth bass under the 18-inch length limit. Largemouth bass in Fish Lake have slow growth rates because the predator-prey relationship with panfish is hampered by dense milfoil beds allowing bluegill to escape predation, thus they are abundant but don't grow to quality size, though a fair number of seven-inch fish exist. Although the largemouth bass are slow-growing, they are long-lived and fish up to 16 years of age are present. Carp are abundant and nutrient levels from agricultural runoff over the years have decreased water quality. Water levels fluctuate, impacting boat ramp use. Mud Lake, connected by a road culvert, contained good populations of quality-size yellow bullheads and seven- to nine-inch crappie in 2003. Oxygen typically gets very low in Mud Lake during the winter. - Dan Fuller, fisheries technician, Poynette

DODGE COUNTY

Beaver Dam Lake — A survey was conducted on Beaver Dam Lake in 2010. Spring fyke netting indicates that the current 18-inch minimum length limit and three fish daily bag regulation is increasing the density of moderate and large adult walleye. Walleye sampled ranged from 6.1 to 27.3 inches. An impressive number of bluegill was sampled with fish reaching over 10 inches. Channel catfish averaged 19.4 inches and should continue to offer angling opportunities into 2011. Walleye catch rates for fall 2010 were a respectable 115 fish per hour compared to the most recent fall survey conducted in 2004 where catch rates were 23 per hour. The number of young-of-the-year walleye under 10 inches was 36 per hour, compared to five per hour in 2004. Fall electrofishing indicates the presence of an extremely large year class of four-inch yellow bass, which will provide excellent forage for many species of fish, but may make ice fishing more challenging this winter.

Fox Lake — Walleye catch rates during a 2010 fall survey were an impressive 160 fish per hour, compared to 128 per hour in 2009, 57 per hour in 2008 and 54 per hour in 2007. The number of young-of-the-year walleye under 10 inches in length was 21 per hour, down from a record high in 2009 of 78 per hour, 7.2 per hour in 2008 and 15 per hour in 2007. The majority of walleye sampled were 10 to 11.9 inches, representing the large year class of fish produced in 2009. Largemouth bass catch rates were high in 2010 at 123 per hour, compared to 109 per hour in 2009, 25 per hour in 2008 and 43 per hour in 2007. The majority of largemouth bass (59 percent) were seven to 9.9 inches, representing the large year class of fish produced in 2009.

Lake Emily — Northern pike abundance on this small fertile lake is high at an estimated 4.8 fish per acre with fish up to 32.4 inches present. Small size and heavy aquatic vegetation make this lake challenging to anglers, but good growth rates and the presence of multiple year classes should provide for abundant angling opportunities. - Laura Stremick-Thompson, fisheries biologist, Horicon

GRANT, IOWA AND RICHLAND COUNTIES

The trout populations are in the best shape by far for overall numbers, average size and distribution in 40-plus years. Brook trout reproduction and distribution also appears to be at an all-time high. These improvements should continue as long as the base water levels remain elevated. The entire coulee region should provide outstanding trout fishing for the foreseeable future.

It should be noted, however, that wild populations, which make up the vast majority of trout populations now, are significantly different from the historic, planted, domestic populations. While there are greatly improved numbers of fish in the streams, these fish are more wary than their domestic brethren and therefore require more skill to catch. Also, since these trout are

predisposed to survive and reproduce in the wild, their size and body conformation is much different than historic domesticated planters. These wild fish have a thinner, racy build. In the southwest part of the state, adult wild brown trout can be found averaging 10 to 14 inches, with big trout measuring 14, 15, 17, and 18 inches, and trophies measuring 19 or 20 inches. Wild trout in excess of 18 inches are very scarce in the small streams of this part of the state but some of the larger waters contain a fair number of 18-inch-plus fish.

Over the past few years over \$1 million has been spent on coldwater stream habitat improvement in the state's southwest corner. This action resulted not only in trout habitat improvement, but improvements for all coldwater stream related organisms in these areas.

The Lower Wisconsin River — The overall fisheries of the Lower Wisconsin River (LWR) are in very good shape. The walleye population has seen a significant increase in the number of 15- to 18-inch fish. This increase is the result of the protection afforded by the newly established 18-inch length limit. A fair increase in the number of 19-inch and larger fish also has been noted in the surveys. Anglers report that the number of medium, and to some extent, larger walleye caught downstream has improved significantly since the 18-inch length limit went into effect.

Channel catfish populations are in good shape and continue to be the most important fishery on the lower part of the LWR. The smallmouth bass population has a good number of fish with some medium and larger fish. Almost all bass anglers on the LWR practice catch and release and the population is improving to reflect this practice.

There also are decent populations of bluegill and crappie in the river's quiet stillwater areas. These are little utilized fisheries and would provide good fishing for those who want to specifically target these fishes.

Northern pike throughout the LWR and musky in the uppermost part of the LWR provide pretty good action for anglers targeting these species.

IOWA COUNTY

Blackhawk Lake — The lake's largemouth bass population has positively responded to the special "no length limit" regulation accompanied by a voluntary harvest slot of nine to 12.9 inches that has been in effect for several years. The overpopulation of medium bass has been reduced and the current population consists of good numbers, but the fish are much heavier for their body length and there are more large fish. The current regulation will be kept in place for the upcoming year.

The crappie population is in good shape for number and size distribution. The bluegill population is in very good shape with good numbers of all sizes of fish. The number of large gills might be a little lower than recent years but remains pretty good, while the numbers of medium and smaller fish are up. All of the fish are in excellent condition.

A local fish farmer, the local bait shop, anglers and a co-op DNR project has led to purchasing large young-of-the-year walleye and stocking them in the lake. This effort has been very successful in developing a decent bonus walleye fishery. There is an 18-inch walleye length limit on the lake.

A recently developed northern pike population with a significant number of large fish has provided an excellent ice fishery for the past couple of years, but the population has been very heavily harvested and is not expected to continue its recent success in upcoming years. Over the past two years, private purchase has led to stocking 400 large northern pike fingerlings per year. Their survival should be very good because of their large size, but it will be at least three years before these fish contribute significantly to the fishery.

Cox Hollow Lake — Cox Hollow Lake has had the special largemouth bass "no length limit" regulation in effect for the past several years. The severely stunted population of bass has been eliminated and a decent population of medium-sized bass has started to develop. As with Blackhawk Lake, a recommendation is being developed to implement either a protected slot or size limit in the near future.

The bluegill fishery continues to contain a moderate number of medium and larger fish. The number of smaller fish in the lake is increasing. There is currently a 10 panfish daily bag limit on the lake.

A DNR program to evaluate the success of stocking large young-of-the-year walleye as opposed to small young-of-the-year walleye is complete. The plants of large young-of-the-year resulted in development of a walleye population in the lake, which



Smallmouth bass can be caught from a variety of streams and rivers in southwestern Wisconsin. Photo: Karl Scheidegger

it was never able to develop when plants of small walleye were made. A few of these fish have made the legal 18-inch size limit on this lake.

The lake also contains a number of yellow perch. Most of these fish are small but there are some decent-sized fish.

There is an excellent population of pumpkinseed sunfish in the lake in numbers and size. These fish readily bite, battle hard and are very colorful. They do have a tendency to be a little grubbier than bluegills and have very large rib cages and therefore less "meat" than the bluegill.

Twin Valley Lake — Twin Valley Lake has experienced a dramatic change in its panfishery in the last year. It had developed a massive population of medium-small crappie, which had started to suppress the overpopulation of bluegill. However, a massive summer kill of crappie in 2008 reduced the crappie population to only a fraction of what it had been. This will result in larger fish, but significantly reduced catch rates.

Bluegill numbers, while reduced, remain very good on the medium to small size fish. Numbers should still provide for a very good catch rate. These fish will run from 5.5 to 6.75 inches with a few fish up to 7.25 inches. There are a decent number of yellow perch in the lake with some being large enough to keep. There is an unlimited bag limit on crappie, bluegill and yellow perch on this lake. The number of largemouth bass is not particularly high but there are a good number of large fish.

The lake has developed a decent walleye population of fish 12 to 15 inches that resulted from a cooperative walleye stocking program of extended growth young-of-the-year fish. While these fish are growing well, they have not been in the lake long enough to reach the legal 18-inch length limit. There are a few very large walleye in the lake.

The number of musky stocked in the lake has been reduced. This has resulted in catch rates that are more normal, along with fish in much better condition and heavier bodied. While not a producer of trophy musky, the number of 36- to 40-inch fish is outstanding for a small lake. The lake has a 40-inch musky length limit.

Fishing pressure on musky in this lake can be described as extreme. Hopefully as the musky populations continue to improve in other southern Wisconsin waters including the Madison chain, Lake Wisconsin, the Lower Wisconsin River and Lake Redstone, some of the pressure on Twin Valley Lake will disperse. - Gene Van Dyck, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

Little Grant River — The upper Little Grant River supports a good brown trout fishery. There are 2.5 miles of public fishing easement from a half-mile downstream of Badger Road upstream to Milner Road. Current regulation is catch and release with artificial lures only. Surveys conducted in 2009 indicate a high-density brown trout population with a good number of fish over 14 inches present. Bank fishing is made easy with a majority of the area pastured. There is also a mix of woodlands, row crops and tall grasses.

McPherson Branch — The McPherson Branch is a Class II brown trout stream located 7.5 miles west of Platteville off Route 81 just outside of Ellenboro. There is a contiguous one mile public easement from the confluence with the Platte River upstream. Brown trout up to 15 inches are present with trout eight to 12 inches common. Larger brown trout may be found in the Platte River. Open-pastured banks make this small stream easy to fish. A nine-inch minimum length limit with a daily bag of three trout is the current regulation.

Platte River — The lower portion of the Platte River offers good float fishing for smallmouth bass. Bass anglers can expect to catch an occasional walleye as well. As the river approaches the Mississippi River, the Platte River supports a stable channel catfish fishery. While there are no public easements, anglers can gain access via public roads and permission from private landowners. There is boat and trailer access located at the Banfield Road crossing. This boat landing is one mile downstream from the confluence of the Platte and Little Platte rivers. The lower Little Platte River offers similar angling opportunities.

Smith Conley Creek — Located just south of the Village of Ridgeway, Smith Conley Creek has over five miles of public fishing easement. Anglers can expect to catch brown trout in the eight- to 13-inch range with some fish over 15 inches. With trout densities near 400 trout per acre, anglers can expect good success. A nine-inch minimum length limit with a daily bag of three trout is the current regulation.

East Branch of the Pecatonica River — The upper portion of this system above County Road HK supports a low-density, big-fish, brown trout fishery. Much of the water is covered in tree canopy with many log jams and tree falls. Anglers can expect to catch lower numbers of brown trout but the average size will be larger than other streams in the area. There are no public fishing easements in this area. A nine-inch minimum length limit with a daily bag of three trout is the current regulation. - Bradd Sims, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

GREEN COUNTY

Spring angling opportunities for walleye and northern pike can be found in the dam

tailraces below the Albany and Brodhead dams. Anglers are reminded to observe and respect fish refuge areas where spawning fish aggregate. As summer progresses, trout fishers can find solitude and fish along the Little Sugar River (New Glarus branch), and Dougherty and Story creeks. Stream mouth confluences also are attractive locations as fish seek these mixing zones.

More localized opportunities for smallmouth bass can be found along the Sugar River below Belleville. The Honey Creek/Richland Creek systems near Monroe also provide some nice stream smallmouth bass fishing. Anglers need to respect private property and obtain landowner permission to access the water.

Beckman Lake in the Browntown-Cadiz Springs State Recreation area and **Lake Montesian** in the Village of Monticello provide easy shore fishing for panfish. These are great locations to take young beginner anglers! - Kurt Welke, fisheries manager, Fitchburg

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Rock Lake — Fall electrofishing in 2010 produced largemouth bass up to 18.1 inches, and smallmouth bass up to 19.2 inches. Largemouth bass catch rates were 29 fish per hour compared to 15 per hour in 2009 and 31 per hour in 2008. Smallmouth bass catch rates were 14 per hour in 2010 compared to 32 per hour in 2009 and 30 per hour in 2008. Overall catch rates for walleye remain low at 1.4 per hour, compared to 3.7 per hour in 2009 and 2.5 per hour in 2008. Walleye ranged in length from 12.3 to 23.5 inches and no young-of-the-year walleye were sampled. Bluegill were the most abundant panfish sampled in 2010 at 263 per hour and ranged in size from 1.6 to 9.8 inches in length. Rock bass were the second most abundant panfish at 36 per hour with a size range of 2.6 to 11.1 inches. Yellow perch rounded out the panfish sample at 23 per hour with a size range of 2.7 to 9.9 inches.

Rock River — Enjoy the simplicity and excitement of white bass fishing on the Rock River in northern Jefferson and Dodge counties in late April through early May. Boat launches in Fort Atkinson and Jefferson offer good access to the Rock and Crawfish rivers as this species moves upstream from Lake Koshkonong each spring. While angling for these plentiful fish, keep an eye out for tagged fish, part of an ongoing fish study aimed to evaluate the Jefferson dam fish passage effectiveness. The fish passage serves to improve movement, reproduction and recruitment of fish species, such as sauger and walleye, by providing uninterrupted river access from the Indianford dam at Lake Koshkonong to the lower Watertown dam.

Tags used in the study resemble two-inch, fluorescent pink pieces of spaghetti and are located near the base of the fish's dorsal fin (the fin along the top of the back). Each tag contains a unique number that identifies the fish. Anglers should report tagged fish, along with catch date and location, tag number, length, whether the fish was kept or released, and angler's name and address to Laura.StremickThompson@wisconsin.gov or (920) 387-7876. Anglers are asked to not remove tags from fish they release.

In 2009, underwater cameras were installed within the fish passage to monitor fish movement. To date, white bass, walleye, northern pike, channel catfish, bullhead species, bigmouth buffalo, white sucker, common carp and freshwater drum have been documented using the fish passage. The public can access live streaming video from the cameras via www.biotactic.com, click on BRAVO, then select Node 6. - Laura Stremick-Thompson, fisheries biologist, Horicon

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

East Branch of the Pecatonica River — Anglers looking for walleye, bass, channel catfish, or northern pike can fish the Lafayette County portions of the East Branch

of the Pecatonica River. Fishable populations of these species can be found from the confluence with the Yellowstone River downstream to the confluence with the Pecatonica River. Anglers have historically had success catching early spring walleye on riffles and below the dams at Argyle and Blanchardville. Channel catfish are the most abundant fish species and are readily found throughout the entire lower river system. Recent river conditions have been favorable for northern pike reproduction. Anglers have been reporting catches of many small northern pike, but there are northern pike approaching 40 inches as well. There is boat and trailer access available at Argyle and Woodford. Bank fishing is available at Argyle, Blanchardville and Woodford. The entire East Branch of the Pecatonica River within Lafayette County is open to hook-and-line fishing all year for walleye, bass, catfish, northern pike and panfish. Regular statewide seasons apply for musky and trout.

Yellowstone Lake — Yellowstone Lake has a stable fishery for bluegill, largemouth bass, walleye, and channel catfish with increasing smallmouth bass population. Anglers can expect good to excellent fishing for bluegill, walleye, channel catfish, largemouth bass and smallmouth bass. Depending on the calendar season, anglers can expect smallmouth bass and walleye in the fall; walleye, bluegill and channel catfish in spring; and bluegill, channel catfish, and largemouth bass in summer. Ice fishing will primarily be a bluegill bite with a few crappie. Bluegill sunfish continue to grow with seven- to eight-inch fish present. Musky and northern pike populations are considered low-density, high-quality fisheries. Musky up to 45 inches have been sampled with some anglers reporting catches near 50 inches. Yellowstone Lake is managed under special regulations, so be sure to read the hook-and-line fishing regulations before fishing at Yellowstone.

Accessible bank fishing — Area clubs and communities along with the Lafayette County Sportsman Alliance have installed handicapped accessible bank fishing pads throughout Lafayette County. For a general locations map of communities and parks offering handicapped accessible bank fishing, please visit: lafayettecounty.org/images/PecatonicaRiver.pdf. While not shown on this map, handicapped accessible bank fishing is available at Yellowstone Lake. - Bradd Sims, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

SAUK COUNTY

Devil's Lake — The two-story brown trout fishery continues to grow in popularity. Typically 15 to 20 percent of the catch is comprised of two-year-old trout (14 to 17 inches) that have survived one summer, by seeking out the four-foot layer of oxygenated water just under the thermocline. Stocked at nine inches in April, they grow to 12 inches by fall. Open season is from the first Saturday in May until March 1, size limit is nine inches, daily bag is three and an inland trout stamp is required. Anglers enjoy ice fishing for trout by using fathead minnows. In 2011, there will be 5,000 rainbow trout stocked into Devils Lake, but because of staff shortages the number of brown trout stocked could be limited to any surplus trout that become available.

The lake touts a trophy northern pike fishery with its 32-inch length limit. A 2006 ice-out netting survey found low density, but a stable number, of northerns over five years of similar netting since 1993. The survey noted good representation of large females, 32 to 41 inches, and good recruitment of the 2004 year class. Largemouth, smallmouth bass and jumbo bluegill also are present. Only electric motors are allowed.

DNR has been operating a 24-inch siphon the past five years to withdraw phosphorus from the hypolimnion before the lake turns over in the fall. Over time (10 to 15 years), the goal is to return the lake to a more pristine state, which will be most noticeable to lake users as they see less filamentous algae and increased water clarity. Slower fish growth will likely be a trade-off.

Lake Redstone — A comprehensive lake survey was conducted on Lake Redstone in 2010. Survey results show an impressive walleye population in size structure and numbers. The adult walleye population was estimated at 2,627 or about 4.3 per acre, which is well above the statewide average of 1.7 per acre for a stocked walleye fishery. The average size was about 18 inches and numerous large walleye were surveyed. A preliminary population estimate of 211 adult true musky are present in the lake with several fish over 30 pounds. Smallmouth bass are now thriving in Lake Redstone with numbers similar to largemouth bass. They became established from stocking in 1998-99 by a local club and are now naturally reproducing. Lake Redstone was once dominated by white crappie, but now black crappie are more numerous and both species make up the lake's most popular panfishery. Decent numbers of bluegill also are present. Channel catfish are numerous and under-fished. The red stone bluffs that line the southern shoreline of the lake make it a scenic destination.

White Mound Lake — This small lake surrounded by Sauk County park lands is pastoral and provides a pleasant setting, in which to relax, while fishing for largemouth bass, bluegill and crappie. The largemouth bass population is excellent with lots of fish over the legal size limit of 14 inches. Good-sized black crappie and bluegill provide plenty of action. A nice trail around the lake and a revamped beach provide activity for the whole family.

Lake Virginia — The super-size aeration system, installed and operated by the lake district, has prevented the winter and summer kills that had been continually setting the lake fishery back. The bluegill fishery has responded and there are continued reports of nice bluegill being caught. The largemouth bass are numerous, but their numbers consist mainly of smaller fish.

Mirror Lake — A fall 2009 survey on Mirror Lake revealed a very good panfishery, probably the best size structure along with the best numbers of black crappie and bluegill that DNR crews have seen in the last 20 years on the lake. This 137-acre state park impoundment continues to support an excellent largemouth bass population as well. Native northern pike are also present and a very decent and improving stocked walleye population supports a good fishery. A township boat landing on the lake's northwest side provides nice access in the state park. The name Mirror Lake is very appropriate because the lake is well protected from winds by beautiful sandstone bluffs lined with white pine and oak trees, making it reflectively placid. Because of the narrow canyon that Mirror Lake flows through, it is a nice destination for canoes, kayakers and anglers using small boats.

Lake Delton — The first fish stockings into Lake Delton in spring 2009 included large numbers of forage fish such as white suckers, fathead minnows and golden shiners. These bait fish provided the food for the extensive gamefish and panfish stockings that followed. Walleye, largemouth and smallmouth bass, channel catfish, and bluegill were then stocked. A fall 2010 shocking survey showed excellent survival and fabulous growth rates on all stocked fish and large numbers of young-of-the-year black crappie, yellow perch and white bass established by adult fish reproduction from the upstream impoundment of Mirror Lake. In just two years, some walleye have reached the legal 15-inch size limit, along with some largemouth bass reaching the 14-inch minimum size limit. Numerous 20- to 30-inch northern pike were surveyed as well. Large numbers of five- to six-inch black crappie and four- to five-inch yellow perch are present. Unfortunately, the numbers of bluegill are lagging and have been the focus of additional stockings this fall, although some seven-inch gills were surveyed. Again, no gizzard shad were found which was a relief as they often outcompete other desirable juvenile fish for food. The Lake Delton fishery is off to a fantastic start and it should provide excellent fishing in the years to come. The public boat landings on the lake were reconstructed and several

rock fish reefs were added. This lake is poised to become an awesome fishery.

Leland Pond — Record rainfall (500-year flood) during August of 2007 flooded out this 14-acre impoundment on the North Branch of Honey Creek in the Village of Leland. The lake and fishery survived, but another record flood in June 2008 caused major damage and the lake was de-watered in order to make necessary repairs. Thanks to donations from the private sector and the efforts of the Honey Creek Rod and Gun Club, the repairs to the pond's infrastructure were completed and the pond was refilling in October 2010. Prior to closing the dam, carp were removed from Honey Creek and some lake bed improvements were made. Some bluegill from the Genoa Federal Fish Hatchery were restocked late this fall, with additional gamefish and panfish stockings to follow in 2011.

Dutch Hollow Lake — This very deep, clear-water impoundment (210 acres) occurs because of pumping make-up water to offset leakage through the dam. The clear water can make daylight fishing difficult. A bass survey was completed in 2006 for 1993 survey comparison. In 1993, numbers were very high (256 per hour of eight-plus inch fish collected by electroshocking). The 2006 value was 164 per hour, down 36 percent. However, the 2006 population estimate of 13 per acre of 10-plus inch fish is still high for local lakes. The lake is noted for large size bluegill and crappie. The 2006 survey found a good number of 16- to 24-inch walleye, supported by small fingerling stocking.

Sauk and Columbia county trout streams

— Record rainfalls coupled with several winters of heavy snowfall have caused incredible groundwater recharge. The number of surface springs has increased along with a dramatic increase in spring flow outputs. The streams here are flowing higher and colder. This increase has extended the trout water on many streams several miles farther downstream, beyond what was traditionally classified as trout water. As the water stays colder farther down these systems, the larger the stream is, the bigger the trout that it can support. DNR also is switching its stocking regimens from a domestic-strain trout to a wild-strain trout, which has been a huge success and the tremendous survival has turned around many of our area trout streams. About 80 percent of the streams are stocked. The better streams in Columbia County are Rowan, Rocky Run, Jennings and Lodi Spring. While in Sauk County try Dell, Honey, Rowley and Manley creeks for native brookies. Habitat work conducted on four stretches of Honey Creek (Class II brown trout) in western Sauk County is showing positive response and receiving high angler use. More work was done in fall 2009. Deeper water along with habitat features has created living space for larger fish. A project on 800 feet of a feeder stream to Lodi Spring Creek in southwestern Columbia County was conducted during April 2007. Here a channelized drainage ditch for 50 years was converted back to a trout stream. It responded by August 2007 with increases in the native population of brown trout of 10 times for young-of-the-year and yearlings, five times for nine- to 11-inch fish and doubling of the number of 12-plus inch fish. The summer 2008 survey found another two times increase in both the nine- to 11-inch and 12-plus inch size groups. This is an example of "if you build it they will come."

Kids fishing — The Plenke Pond in Reedsburg continues to provide a fishing opportunity for kids and anglers with disabilities. The Pauquette Pond in Portage is home to the Elks Club kids fishing day, usually held the first Sunday in June. The event gets bigger every year. - Dan Fuller, fisheries technician, Poynette

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West Central Wisconsin



ADAMS COUNTY

Information on Petenwell and Castle Rock Lakes is located under Juneau County.

Lake Arrowhead — Spring 2010 surveys on Lake Arrowhead found walleye and largemouth bass were the dominant predator fish. Walleye ranged in size from 8.7 to 21.8 inches and largemouth bass ranged in size from 6.3 to 16.2 inches. Panfish were plentiful with bluegill and yellow perch being the dominant species. Bluegill ranged in size from three to 6.9 inches and yellow perch ranged in size from three to 7.6 inches.

Neenah Creek — Neenah Creek was surveyed in 2010 upstream from the confluence of Peppermill Creek. The survey captured 154 brown trout ranging in size from four to 15.8 inches with an average length of eight inches. These results are similar to those found in the 2008 and 2009 surveys. The healthy population in this portion of the Neenah Creek is supported through natural reproduction and habitat improvements started in 1983. Good trout fishing should be expected at this site. - *Justine Hasz, senior fisheries biologist, Wisconsin Rapids*

BUFFALO COUNTY

Mississippi River — Whether you prefer backwaters for bluegill, largemouth bass and northern pike, or flowing channels for walleye, sauger, smallmouth bass or catfish, recent surveys and angling reports predict that good fishing should continue. Surveys found good numbers of bluegill, largemouth bass and northern pike. Anglers generally harvest Mississippi River bluegill in the six- to eight-inch range, with a few exceeding nine inches. Although the river rarely produces 10-inch bluegill, fast growth and adequate habitat continues to produce healthy bluegill populations that satisfy anglers. Healthy largemouth bass populations also continue on the Mississippi River, with good numbers of largemouth both above and below the 14-inch size limit. Many largemouth in the 15- to 17-inch range are available, while surveys have found fish up to 20 inches. Large northern pike also are available in good numbers, as recent surveys found 36 percent of the pike were at least 28 inches with some tapping near 40 inches.

It will be a great year to fish the Mississippi River in 2011. Don't forget your camera. To help ensure success when fishing the river, adapt to the changing conditions such as water level, water temperature, flow and forage location. Use the fishery resource wisely, follow advice about the number of fish meals you can safely enjoy, support conservation efforts and introduce fishing to someone you'd like to see enjoy fishing as much as you do. - *Brian Brecka, fisheries biologist, Alma*

Mississippi River backwaters include all sloughs, lakes, ponds and side channels in this river's floodplain. From Prescott, Wisconsin to Dubuque, Iowa, the Mississippi contains more than 131,000 acres of backwaters swimming with warmwater fish species including largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, northern pike, pumpkinseed and yellow perch. The Mississippi offers the greatest sport fish variety anywhere in Wisconsin and most fish have year-round open seasons.

Fall fish surveys throughout many of the river's 10 navigation pools bordering Wisconsin in 2007 through 2010 showed consistent backwater gamefish. However, there were differences between pools and waterbodies within pools. The highest catch rates per hour of backwater gamefish greater than three inches were found in the northeast portion of Pool 9 (272), followed by the backwaters and just upstream of the City of La Crosse (249), Lawrence and Target lakes area in Pool 8 (231), upper Pool 5A (194), the Trempealeau Lakes area in Pool 7 (191), and the Goose Island and Stoddard area of Pool 8 (190). Following, is a rundown of various species:

Northern pike — There is good news for northern pike anglers for 2011, as well as for anglers fishing years beyond. Surveys in 2010 show consistent northern pike catch rates similar to the long-term average. There are good numbers of northern pike greater than 18 inches, with a few northern pike measuring greater than 40 inches. For northern pike less than 18 inches, 2009-2010 surveys show a four-fold increase in abundance over the long term. These fish will be entering the fishery during 2011, resulting in better pike fishing. Over the last few years, anglers, particularly ones targeting bass, have reported catching more northern pike than usual.



Fisheries technician, Jake Schweitzer with northern pike from Pool 8, Mississippi River. Photo: Kevin Mauel.

Overall, it is suspected that recent cooler summers have increased northern pike growth, survival and reproduction. Typically, the heat of summer is the most stressful time for these coolwater fish. Northern pike can be found in shallow, weedy backwaters just after ice-out in early spring for about one month. During the summer they are found in various locations, but prefer the coolest water available. Often they are found near cooler tributary mouths, deeper backwaters and under vegetation canopies. As with many other backwater fish, northern pike congregate in backwater areas with no or little flow to overwinter. Typical open water baits include large spinners, spoons and casting plugs. Successful winter anglers often tip-up fish with large shiners.

Yellow perch — Look for yellow perch fishing to continue to improve during 2011 and over the next several years. A 2009 sampling found an eleven-fold increase in abundance of perch from previous years. Most of this increase was from small fish, although perch larger than seven inches increased as well. During fall 2010, perch abundance was about half as much, but was still substantially higher than almost all years back to the early 1990s. With the increasing number of harvestable perch, yellow perch fishing should be excellent in 2011 and beyond. Size structure will improve, with some fish reaching 15 inches. It is suspected that greatly increased water clarity over the last few years has favored perch growth and reproduction. The highest catch rates for large perch per hour were found in lower Pool 10 (6.8), followed by the backwaters at and just upstream of the City of La Crosse (5.7), upper Pool 6 (4.5), upper Pool 5 (3.8), and

the Cassville Slough area in upper Pool 11. Perch can be found in various locations in the early spring. During April, soon after ice-out, look for them near their spawning beds in shallow, weedy water. During summer, they frequent clear, weedy backwaters. As with many other backwater fish, perch congregate in backwater areas with no or little flow to overwinter. Typical baits include small minnows, worms, night crawlers and small artificial baits.

Largemouth bass — Bass anglers can look for continued good fishing on the Mississippi River. Catch rates from surveys of both large and small fish have remained fairly steady over the last three years and have generally increased about five-fold over the last 10 years. The greatest catch per hour of large fish was in upper Pool 5A (14.8), followed by backwaters upstream of Prairie du Chien in Pool 10 (12.4), backwaters near the mouth of the Wisconsin River in Pool 10 (9.5), backwaters across from Lansing, Iowa in lower Pool 9 (8.5) and, upper Pool 6 (8.1). A number of bass over 20 inches have been caught in the Goose Island area in Pool 8, the waters surrounding the City of Prairie du Chien in Pool 10 and in the Cassville Slough area in upper Pool 11. Largemouth bass can be caught in the spring in various locations including the main channel and in backwaters. During fall, these fish congregate into over-wintering areas and by ice-over can be caught on jigs and minnows using a pole or tip-up. They can be more difficult to catch later in the winter.

Bluegill — Mississippi River bluegill anglers can expect average fishing during 2011. According to results of a fall sampling, the catch rate of fish over seven inches has stayed about the same over the last four years while fish three to seven inches have declined over the last two years by about 22 percent. The recent decline in small fish may be due, in part, to an apparent poor 2009 spawn from cool June weather. Although there was an apparent recent decline in small fish, the good news is that for bluegill of all sizes, catch rates have generally increased over the last 10 years. Fall surveys indicate average catch rates of bluegill over seven inches was greatest in upper Pool 5A (10.2), followed by the northeast portion of Pool 9 (8.3), upper Pool 5 (8.0), the Trempealeau Lakes area in Pool 7 (7.5), upper Pool 6 (7.1) and the Lawrence and Target lakes area of Pool 8 (4.7). Bluegill can be found in various locations in the early spring after ice-out. During late May and early June, look for them on their spawning beds in backwater lakes. Local anglers often use a fly rod rigged with poppers to catch spawning fish. When the weather gets hot and spring flows subside, larger bluegill migrate to the main channel and side channels, and are often caught on wing dams and in woody snags in or near flowing water. As with largemouth bass, in the fall bluegill congregate in backwater areas with no or little flow to overwinter. Typical baits include worms, night crawlers, wax worms, small minnows and jigs.

Crappie — Mississippi River crappie anglers can expect below average fishing during 2011. The total number of crappie appears to have generally declined over the last 18 years. From the most recent 2010 fish surveys, catch rates of large crappie declined by 83 percent from 2007. Smaller crappie, between three and 10 inches had a 60 percent decline. The greatest catch rates of large fish were found in upper Pool 5 (7.1), followed by the Harpers Slough area near Harpers Ferry, Iowa, in Pool 10 (6.4), upstream of Prairie du Chien in Pool 10 (2.8), backwaters across from Lansing, Iowa, in lower Pool 9 (2.5), the northeast portion of Pool 9 (2.4), and lower Pool 4 (2.1). Crappie can be found in various locations in the early spring. During May, look for them for a brief period on their spawning beds in shallow water. After spawning, crappie migrate to the main channel and side channels, and are often caught in woody snags in flowing water. As with many other backwater fish, crappies congregate in backwater areas with no or little flow to overwinter. Typical baits include small minnows and jigs.

Channel catfish — Mississippi River catfish angling should be good again during 2011. Over the last four years, summer catfish surveys showed consistent numbers of channel catfish. During 2010 the river yielded the largest average size of channel catfish recorded since routine surveys were started in 1982. Channel catfish larger than 31 inches and flathead catfish larger than 43 inches lurk in the deep waters. Years following 2011, may see fewer large fish because of a recent decline in small fish. This decline may be due to extreme floods during the summers of 2007 and 2008. Anglers can find channel catfish during the summer using worms, night crawlers, minnows and stink baits fished in deep, flowing water, often around snag piles in side channels. Flatheads or mud cats are frequently fished using large fish, often bluegill, at night just upstream of snag piles. During 2001, the state record 53-inch flathead catfish, weighing over 74 lbs. was caught in the Mississippi River. - *David Heath, senior fisheries biologist, La Crosse*

CHIPPEWA COUNTY

Cornell Lake — Cornell Lake is a 194-acre seepage lake located about 12 miles north of the City of Chippewa Falls. It has a gravel boat landing with parking limited to the shoulder of the access road. Cornell Lake is managed primarily as a largemouth bass and bluegill fishery. It also has a decent northern pike population, a small number of mature musky, and is stocked on alternate years with walleye fingerlings to provide an additional gamefish species. Black crappie, pumpkinseed, rock bass, yellow perch and several species of bullhead make up the rest of the fishery. A spring 2010 fish survey found that largemouth bass were the most common gamefish sampled with nearly 8.5 percent of those measuring over the 14-inch minimum length limit. The biggest largemouth bass collected in the survey measured 19 inches. Twenty-eight percent of the northern pike captured were over 25 inches, with the largest measuring 36 inches. Seventy-two walleye were collected averaging 20.2 inches. All of the walleye sampled were over the 15-inch minimum size limit. Six of the eight musky captured were over the 34-inch minimum with the largest measuring 40 inches. Bluegill were abundant and averaged 6.7 inches. About 30 percent of the 934 bluegill collected were over eight inches. More than a third of the 342 black crappie captured measured over nine inches. In 2009, the Cornell Lake Sportsman's Club placed 17 fish cribs around the lake to provide deep water fish cover and recently began building spawning reef to improve natural walleye reproduction.

Lake Hallie — Lake Hallie is a 79-acre seepage lake located in the Village of Lake Hallie, between Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire. There is an improved boat landing with ample parking available for vehicles with trailers. A handicap access pier, public golf course and road right of way along 106th Street provide shore fishing opportunities. A spring 2010 fish survey found largemouth bass to be the most abundant gamefish. About 216 largemouth averaged 11.6 inches, with the largest measuring 16 inches. Approximately 7.4 percent captured were over the 14-inch minimum size limit. Ninety-eight northern pike collected ranged in length from six to 34 inches and averaged 15 inches. Growth rates for both gamefish species are slightly below average. Bluegill is the dominant panfish species in Lake Hallie, followed by yellow perch, black crappie and pumpkinseed. Bluegill ranged from three to 9.5 inches and averaged seven inches. Almost 18 percent of the bluegill measured over eight inches. Yellow perch averaged nearly six inches, with the largest measuring 11.5 inches. The Lake Hallie Lake Association stocked 4,000 yellow perch fingerlings in fall 2004. Look for yellow perch numbers and size to improve as they become more established. Black crappie and pumpkinseed numbers were relatively low in this and prior surveys. Dense weed growth and low winter dissolved oxygen levels were limiting Lake Hallie's potential as a fishery. The



Lake Hallie Lake Association began a weed harvesting program in 2000 and installed a permanent aeration system in 2008. These efforts should improve the fishery.

Otter Lake — Otter Lake is a 661-acre impoundment on Otter Creek in Eastern Chippewa County. It is a fertile lake managed primarily for largemouth bass and panfish. Several bass tournaments are held here every year. The DNR conducted an electrofishing survey in spring 2010 to look at largemouth bass size structure and abundance. Over 1,100 largemouth bass were collected in two days of electrofishing. Largemouth bass ranged from three to 21 inches and averaged 11.2 inches. Nineteen percent were over the 14-inch minimum length limit. In a 2005 survey, northern pike up to 40 inches and walleye up to 29 inches were collected. Natural reproduction of walleye in Otter Lake is limited and the fishery is maintained through DNR and Otter Lake Booster Club stocking efforts. Otter Lake is considered a panfish factory and receives year round fishing pressure. Growth rates of largemouth bass, northern pike, walleye, bluegill and black crappie in Otter Lake beat the statewide average for these species. - *Dean Johnson, fisheries technician, Eau Claire*

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Anglers fishing Crawford County trout streams should experience great fishing in 2011. Excellent natural reproduction in 2007 and 2008 produced two huge trout year classes. These fish have grown to catchable size and will provide for great fishing this season. DNR fish crews stationed in La Crosse surveyed 21 sites on 9 streams in 2010. Good trout populations were found in Plum, Rush, Copper, Tainter and Sugar creeks. Anglers looking for trophy trout should work these streams and the Kickapoo River.

In addition, nearly one mile of trout stream improvement work was done this past year, including installation of rock vortex weirs, LUNKER structures, in-channel logs, rip-rap and boulder abutments. - *Jordan Weeks, fisheries biologist, La Crosse*

DUNN COUNTY

Red Cedar River — The upper Red Cedar River is an outstanding, under-utilized warmwater fishery. "Upper" is defined as upstream from Tainter Lake which includes 61 miles of free-flowing water in Dunn and Barron counties. This section of river has an exceptional walleye and smallmouth bass fishery and a mix of other sport fish such as large northern pike and panfish. DNR tagging studies during 1992 show most large gamefish winter in Tainter Lake or in deep holes within the river. During early spring massive spawning migrations occur and many of these gamefish remain in the Red Cedar River throughout spring and summer before returning to wintering sites late in the fall. Annual electrofishing index runs confirm the upper Red Cedar rates as an "exceptional" fishery for smallmouth 14 inches and greater and has the highest rating for all large river monitoring stations in west central Wisconsin. The Upper Red Cedar River in Dunn County averages 200 feet wide and is an excellent river for float trips. Because there are some shallow riffle areas, boats should be limited to small craft such as canoes, kayaks, or small rowboats with motors under 15 horsepower that can be easily tilted when passing through shallow areas. Boat access is available at Myron Park near the Dunn/Barron county line, Village of Sand Creek, South 64, County W or 22-Mile Ford Park, Felland Park near the Village of Colfax and Russian Slough just upstream from Tainter Lake. Anglers should focus fishing effort during May and June before river vegetation becomes heavy. - *Marty Engel, senior fisheries biologist, Baldwin*

EAU CLAIRE COUNTY

Chippewa River — Want variety in your catch? The DNR conducted electrofishing surveys on the Chippewa River from the

Dells Pond Dam in Eau Claire down to the I-94 bridge the past several years. Over 30 species of fish were collected. They included walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike, musky, lake sturgeon, white bass, bluegill, black crappie, rock bass, yellow perch, channel catfish, carp, sheepshead, gar, buffalo, burbot, mooneye, and 11 sucker species. The mouth of the Eau Claire River at Phoenix Park is a popular spot for shore fishing as warmer water from the Eau Claire River attracts and holds walleye during the spring spawning run. Boat anglers can launch at the landing next to Hobb's Ice Arena at the end of 10th Avenue. Smallmouth bass up to 20 inches were the most abundant gamefish species caught and are commonly found along rip-rap and fallen trees. Look for northern pike and musky along current breaks.

Rod and Gun Club Park Pond — Spring-water cascades down a hill into an earthen pond at the Rod and Gun Club Park located in the City of Eau Claire on the west shore of Half Moon Lake. It is stocked annually with 500 yearling rainbow trout that average about nine inches. The park grass is mowed and several benches are placed along the banks of the pond. A paved walkway provides easy access. The pond is the ideal place to introduce kids to fishing after the fishing opener in May. Worms or small spinners should get them to bite. Anglers also can fish the shores of Half Moon Lake from the park for bluegill, crappie, yellow perch, largemouth bass, walleye, bullhead and dogfish. There are slides and playground equipment when the kids need a break. - *Dean Johnson, fisheries technician, Eau Claire*

JACKSON COUNTY

Lake Arbutus (Jackson and Clark counties) — A 2010 spring survey, including both netting and electrofishing, was conducted on Lake Arbutus. The last such effort was conducted in spring 2006. Most notable results for gamefish include an increased electrofishing catch of legal-size (15 inches and greater) walleye from 0.8 per mile in 2006 to 3.3 per mile in 2010. Netting catch results for walleye were similar between years. For panfish, black crappie net catch for all size fish dipped slightly in 2010 (7.6 per net lift in 2006 to 6.2 per net lift in 2010) and even more for electrofishing catch (54.4 per mile in 2006 to 9.7 per mile in 2010). However, both net and electrofishing catch rates of black crappie 10 inches and larger increased. Net catch went from 0.2 per net lift in 2006 to 4.3 per net lift in 2010 and electrofishing catch went from 0.4 per mile in 2006 to 2.5 per mile in 2010. Bluegill came on strong in 2010. Net catch increased from 0.4 per net lift in 2006 to 1.9 per net lift in 2010 and electrofishing catch rate went from four per mile in 2006 to 41.7 per mile in 2010. Yellow perch electrofishing catch rates also increased from 0.6 per mile in 2006 to 6.3 per mile in 2010. The Hatfield Sportsman's Club stocked yellow perch in Lake Arbutus and this effort should improve creel opportunities for perch.

Accessible fishing facilities are available (or under construction) at some area lakes. These include Lake Wazee, Black River Flowage, and Teal Flowage in Jackson County; Mead and Arbutus in Clark County; and Second Lake and Arctic Springs Pond in Trempealeau County.

Area Rivers — Black River (Clark, Trempealeau, Monroe, and La Crosse counties), Lower Trempealeau River (Trempealeau and Buffalo counties) and Lower Buffalo River (Buffalo County) — Abundant rainfall and elevated water levels prevented recent annual surveying of these rivers. However, some surveying was accomplished in spring 2010 on the lower Black River. This survey was part of a continuing walleye tagging study. This is an ongoing study, initiated in 2008, to determine walleye population characteristics and migration patterns in the lower Black River. To date, 1,042 walleye were tagged, ranging from 10 to 29 inches. One walleye, tagged within 10 miles downstream of the Black River Falls dam, was captured by an angler

in the St. Croix River near the mouth of the Kinnickinnic River. Please report catching any tagged walleye. More tag returns will improve results and guide future lower Black River fish management.

Trout streams (Buffalo, Jackson and Trempealeau counties) — Ongoing trout stream surveys in these counties from 2007 to 2010 found better overall reproduction of brook and brown trout and more 10- to 12-inch brook trout in area streams than in the previous few years. This reproduction increase was reflected in 2010 surveys, which found stable to higher adult and legal size trout densities — most notably for brook trout. Also, abundant rainfall in 2010 resulted in higher water levels, increased base flow, scouring out of pools and other trout cover, and exposing spawning gravel. These improved water and habitat conditions, in addition to the increased adult trout densities, should provide anglers with better fishing conditions and more legal and larger trout in 2011. DNR and cooperative hatcheries will stock 35,000 brook, 37,000 brown and 16,000 rainbow trout to area waters prior to the 2011 season opener.

Improved fishing conditions in a number of streams also await anglers as a result of habitat restoration projects. Streams receiving restoration efforts in the past few years were Pine, Traverse Valley, Borst Valley, and Bruce Valley creeks, all in Trempealeau County; Pigeon and French creeks in Jackson County; and Trout and Swinns Valley creeks in Buffalo County. These projects were initiated and completed through cooperative efforts among landowners, local conservation clubs, county land conservation staff, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Trout Unlimited and the DNR. Restoration activities include creating overhead cover, pools, and spawning habitat as well as stabilizing streambanks to minimize erosion. Each project area has a public fishing easement, graciously granted by the landowners, which allows anglers to access the stream by land as well as water. Cooperative projects like these are occurring all over the state and are essential to increasing trout habitat restoration and providing better stream access and fishing. - *Dan Hatleli, fisheries biologist, Black River Falls*

JUNEAU COUNTY

Petenwell and Castle Rock lakes — Petenwell and Castle Rock lakes are bordered by Adams, Juneau and Wood counties and provide the angler with a variety of fishing



Fisheries technician, Jake Thompson, with a Petenwell Lake musky from spring 2010 netting. Photo: Justine Hasz

opportunities. The most common gamefish species sought in these lakes are walleye, musky, catfish and white bass. Black crappie and bluegill are the most commonly found panfish species. Anglers will expect to face new challenges in the 2011 fishing year as many of the known habitat and structures for fishing were displaced with the heavy flood waters the area received in fall 2010.

In spring 2010, a netting survey was conducted on Petenwell Lake. A total of 222 walleye ranging in size from 8.5 to 27.7

inches were captured. A total of 254 (21 recaptures) musky were captured during the survey and ranged in size from 29.3 to 47.7 inches. From the 254 musky captured, 171 had a PIT tag inserted into their cheek. Black crappie is the dominant panfish species and ranged in size from 3.2 to 13.9 inches. Channel catfish and carp were the most numerous fish captured during the survey.

The musky fishery continues to grow stronger in numbers of fish and the number of anglers targeting them. Stocking of musky continued in 2010 for Petenwell Lake with the addition of 996 large fingerling stocked from DNR hatcheries, 400 large fingerling stocked from private hatcheries by the Petenwell Musky Challenge tournament and an additional 350 yearling Leach Lake strain stocked from private hatcheries supported by Consolidated Musky Club Inc. Since 2000, the DNR has stocked a total of 32,718 large fingerling and 100,000 fry-sized musky into Petenwell Lake. Stockings from local musky groups add an additional several thousand large fingerling musky to the lake.

A gillnet survey was carried out in fall 2010 to assess sturgeon in Petenwell Lake. A total of 94 sturgeon were captured ranging in size from 29 to 52 inches. The sturgeon population in Petenwell Lake got an additional boost with its first sturgeon stocking event in many years with 7,337 large fingerling (six-inch) fish raised at the Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery. These sturgeon were raised from eggs of sturgeon captured from the Wisconsin River below the Wisconsin Dells dam in spring 2010. - *Justine Hasz, senior fisheries biologist, Wisconsin Rapids*

LA CROSSE COUNTY

DNR fisheries survey crews sampled 10 county sites on four streams, two rivers, and one lake in 2010. Trout anglers looking for some action may want to try Mormon Coulee and Burns creeks. Of the two, anglers after a trophy may want to concentrate on Mormon Coulee Creek. The Lower La Crosse River (below Lake Neshonoc) is a consistent producer for catfish, smallmouth bass, northern pike and walleye. Good numbers of these species should be available to both shoreline and small boat anglers. The Lower Black River (downstream of North Bend) holds good numbers of walleye and smallmouth bass with the occasional musky thrown in. Anglers looking to fish Lake Neshonoc near

MARATHON COUNTY

Wisconsin River (Marathon and Portage counties) — The Wisconsin River from Wausau to Stevens Point consistently provides great year-round fishing opportunities in Marathon and Portage counties. Recent surveys provide good trend data indicating 2011 will be similar to past years. Summer river sampling is especially a good indicator of fishery quality for fish such as bass and catfish. In 2010, the most abundant fish in the catch were smallmouth bass making up 49 percent of the total catch, followed by channel catfish (28 percent), then walleye (10 percent). Largemouth bass were seven percent of the catch and have clearly become a larger percentage of the catch over the last two years.

The musky stocking program on the Wisconsin River between Wausau and Stevens Point has been very successful and local fishing has benefited. The stocking program continues to improve with local musky club assistance. Also, most stocked fingerlings now receive an elastomer jaw tag, which is used to determine if the fish was stocked or naturally reproduced. These tags are invisible to anglers; however a large number of adult musky are now marked with orange internal anchor tags, placed on their bellies between their pectoral and pelvic fins. Anglers should report this valuable recapture information by calling the telephone number on the tag. The information reported should be the tag number, fish length and as much information as they want to give about the location where the fish was caught.

Mosinee Flowage — In 2010, DNR completed the first comprehensive survey since 2001 of Mosinee Flowage — a 1,000 acre flowage on the Wisconsin River. This survey provided useful information from a very popular local fishery. The most common species caught was walleye (6.3 fish per net-night); followed by black crappie (5.7), channel catfish (4.6), bluegill (4.3), northern pike (1.1), smallmouth bass (0.7), and musky (0.4). The most common gamefish, walleye, ranged from seven to 28.6 inches and averaged 15.8 inches. About 45 percent of the 564 walleye caught were 15 inches or larger; nine walleye were larg-

er than 28 inches. Another popular fish on the flowage is the smallmouth bass, which ranged from 10.5 to 20 inches. The most common panfish, bluegill, ranged from 3.5 to 9.5 inches and averaged 6.9. Black crappie ranged from 5.5 to 12.6 inches and averaged 9.3. The musky population yielded 40 fish ranging from 20 to 53 inches with 33 percent greater than 34 inches and 8 percent greater than 45 inches. The Mosinee Flowage is a popular fishery for summer and winter fishing. The Wausau Paper Company constructed a new boat landing off River Road on the east side of the flowage in 2009 and the DNR landing at Half-Moon Bay was renovated in 2010. —*Tom Meronek, senior fisheries biologist, Wausau*

MONROE COUNTY

Monroe County anglers have several hotspots to try. DNR surveys at 25 sites on 10 streams show trout present in good numbers and excellent average size. Anglers looking for action may want to visit the Little La Crosse River, while those looking for a whopper should concentrate on the La Crosse and Kickapoo rivers. Don't forget the angling opportunities inside the boundaries of Fort McCoy, where several great streams and lakes are found. Special licenses are needed to fish on this federal property and can be purchased on the DNR website, or contact Ft. McCoy directly at: www.mccoymilitary.com

Lake Tomah is on its way back thanks to chemical treatment to remove carp, and restocking of fish in 2009 and 2010. Current lake residents include largemouth bass (average four inches), bluegill (fry), black crappie (fry), and numerous forage fish like white sucker creek chub and fathead minnow. While the fish in Lake Tomah are not large now, they should provide anglers with some action in years to come. —*Jordan Weeks, fisheries biologist, La Crosse*

PEPIN COUNTY

Chippewa River — The mighty Chippewa River dominates inland fishing opportunities in Pepin County. Take the time to get to know the main and backwater channels and lakes for some great fishing opportunities. Public boat access points can be found in Durand, Ella and on Highway 35 near Nelson. If you're looking to get away from the crowds and enjoy a wild scenic river, try a float trip through the Tiffany Wildlife Area. The Chippewa features a large game fish variety, including walleye, sauger, smallmouth bass, channel and flathead catfish. As water temperatures rise above 70 degrees catfish become active and the Chippewa is known to harbor trophy flathead catfish. Annual electrofishing surveys confirm the regular presence of flatheads over 40 inches. Concentrations of catfish are best in waters closer to the Mississippi River. Try fishing out of the Ella or Highway 35 boat landings. Since most of the river is sand, look for deeper water and structure such as rock or wood for best results. During low water periods river access can be difficult. —*Marty Engel, senior fisheries biologist, Baldwin*



Regional Fisheries Supervisor Bob Hujik holding a 40-pound flathead catfish caught from the Chippewa River near Durand. Photo: Marty Engel.

PIERCE COUNTY

Nugget Lake — Pierce County has few inland lakes and fishing news is often dominated by large boundary waters such as Lake Pepin and the Mississippi River.

Nugget Lake is a small 116-acre, 50-foot deep reservoir located in a heavily wooded coulee just north of the village of Plum City. It offers a slow paced, scenic setting and great place to go fishing. The lake shore is undeveloped, and lies entirely within Nugget Lake County Park. Camping, hiking, boating and fishing are available for a small daily or annual entrance fee. Boat motors are restricted to electric only. A playground and handicap accessible shore fishing stations are also available. Nugget Lake is known for outstanding panfishing, abundant bass fishing and an occasional large walleye. Fisheries surveys during spring of 2010 sampled 210 walleye up to 28.4 inches, most of which were over 15 inches. Largemouth bass were captured at a rate of 90 per mile of shoreline electrofishing and ranged up to 17 inches. DNR crews sampled over 2,400 bluegill up to 9.4 inches, 730 perch up to 10.4 inches and 550 crappie up to 12 inches. Quality bluegill are common, along with lesser amounts of quality-sized crappie and yellow perch. Nugget Lake is a worthy destination for the 2011 season.

Area trout streams — Pierce County is known for its outstanding concentration of high quality, blue-ribbon brook and brown trout streams. Last year proved to be another great year for trout fishing. It saw a 100-year-flood during August 2010, however fall fishing reports indicate trout populations were relatively unaffected. The flood did alter and rearrange habitat on the Lower Kinnickinnic and Rush rivers, so anglers may have to search out the new habitat that trout now occupy on those waters. Anglers seeking brook trout should focus on Plum, Cady or Pine creeks and the South Fork of the Kinnickinnic River. Brown trout opportunities are best on the Kinnickinnic, Rush, Trimble or Eau Galle rivers and Isabelle or Plum creeks. —*Marty Engel, senior fisheries biologist, Baldwin*

PORTAGE COUNTY

Trout streams — Central Wisconsin trout streams got some much needed rainfall in summer 2010. Local streams are still showing the effects of past rainfall shortages as results on the Tomorrow River have been mixed. Some areas show a decline in trout numbers and others are similar to past years. In the Richard Hemp Fishery Area, brown trout numbers are down from about 430 to 230 per mile. Similarly, brook trout dropped from 200 to 100 per mile. Further downstream at Nelsonville, though, both brown trout (850 per mile) and brook trout (125 per mile) were similar to 2009 numbers. Below Amherst, brown trout numbers were not much different than in 2009, averaging 100 per mile, with about 10 percent of the population coming from annual wild brown trout stockings. Surveying several sites on Ditch 4 in the Portage County Drainage District last summer found on average about 2,000 brook trout per mile. The most common brook trout size was seven inches on Ditch 4, and six inches on the Tomorrow River. The consistent rainfall should benefit the local trout resources as young-of-the-year trout were common to abundant in both of these river systems. Survival should be excellent and enhance the population in the next three to five years. —*Tom Meronek, senior fisheries biologist, Wausau*

ST. CROIX COUNTY

New Richmond Flowage — It is often difficult to maintain quality sport fisheries in shallow flowages. This 236-acre flowage was drained for dam repairs in 1994. The water levels were restored in 1997 and a fishery re-established by stocking in 1998. Recent surveys were surprising. The 2010 electrofishing surveys revealed a high quality sport fishery here. Northern pike are common and were found up to 38 inches, averaging 18.5 inches. Largemouth bass also are common, ranging up to 18.5 inches with a 13-inch average. Panfish are abundant, especially bluegill, which ranged upward to 9.3 inches. Quality sized yellow perch and crappie are available but in lower densities. Due to the nature of this shallow,

weedy flowage, navigation becomes more difficult as the summer progresses. Boat anglers are encouraged to get out early in the season. Boat access and shore fishing opportunities are available at Mary Park within the City of New Richmond. —*Marty Engel, senior fisheries biologist, Baldwin*

VERNON COUNTY

Many Vernon County streams show high trout populations. Surveys at 35 sites on 10 streams confirmed that anglers looking to catch trout could find paradise here. Good starting places for quality fish are Bishop Branch Creek, the North and South Forks Bad Axe River, Timber Coulee Creek, Springville Branch Creek, Elk and Spring Coulee creeks. For a chance at a trophy, head to the Kickapoo River or the South Fork of the Bad Axe River. Although the aforementioned streams are highlighted, it is hard to find bad trout water in Vernon County, and those anglers looking to explore may find a pleasant surprise on some of the numbered streams in the county. —*Jordan Weeks, fisheries biologist, La Crosse*

WOOD COUNTY

Information on Petenwell Lake is located under Juneau County.

Lake Wazeecha — A spring shocking survey was carried out on Lake Wazeecha and captured a good species variety. Walleye and largemouth bass numbers were low, a total of 20 walleye were surveyed ranging in size from six to 14.6 inches and 14 largemouth bass ranging in size from 9.9 to 17.2 inches. But the panfish captured showed high abundances of bluegill, black crappie and yellow perch. Bluegill ranged in size from 3.3 to 7.5 inches, black crappie ranged in size from 5 to 8.6 inches, and yellow perch ranged in size from 3.4 to 8.2 inches. Wazeecha Lake provides the angler a variety of species with the chance of catching good numbers of panfish, though of small average size. —*Justine Hasz, senior fisheries biologist, Wisconsin Rapids*



Lake maps and other lake information available at the click of a mouse

Whether you're looking for a new place to wet a line, want to explore other waters a particular county has to offer, or just learn about the picnic areas and beaches where you can take the kids when the fish aren't biting, a new online lakes portal can help meet your needs.

Find it on the Department of Natural Resources website at:

 dnr.wi.gov/lakes/findalake/

You'll be able to search by county, by lake name or even by the fish species or waterfront amenity you're seeking.

Get contour maps, basic details about lake size, the fish species found there, and click on links that show you where public boat launches and other facilities are located. And keep checking back, as improvements are being made to this web site all the time.



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