

DNR 2018 Fishing Opener Outlook for Northwest Region

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County near Ashby. Maximum depth is 21 feet. Average depth is 10 feet. Due to its irregular shape, the lake has nearly 28 miles of shoreline. An improved public access is located on the northwest shore off State Highway 78.

Walleyes are abundant. Gill net catches during the 2017 survey averaged 13.3 fish/net. The population sample included representatives of six age groups. An exceptionally strong year class established in 2014. Three-year-old captures averaged 14.5 inches. Most cohorts of this strong year class should exceed 16.0 inches early in 2018. Annual fall electrofishing surveys conducted to determine presence and abundance of young-of-year Walleyes yielded exceptionally high catches of young Walleyes in 2015 and 2017, so fishing should remain good for a few years.

Pelican Lake also holds good crappie fishery. Both Black and White Crappies occur in the lake. Total crappie catches were lower in 2017 with loss of an exceptionally strong year class that established in 2010. However, annual recruitment of young Black Crappies into the population was relatively good in 2012, 2014, and 2015. Five-year-old captures from the 2012 year class averaged 11.6 inches at capture. Three-year-olds from the 2014 year class averaged 8.0 inches during the 2017 survey and should be near 10.0 inches early in 2018. The largest crappie captured during the 2017 survey was

a fast growing five-year-old fish measuring 13.5 inches.

Bass anglers can take advantage of quality catch-and-release fishing experiences. Good numbers of 15.0 inch and larger bass were captured during the spring 2017 electrofishing survey. Length frequency of Largemouth Bass captures extended to 18.3 inches.

Lake Mary (2,450 acres) is a popular fishing destination. The lake is located approximately four miles southwest of Alexandria off State Highway 27. It has a surface area of 2,450 acres. Maximum depth is 40.0 feet. The basin averages 17.0 feet in depth. Public access sites exist on north and south ends of the lake. The north access is shallow and it can be challenging to load boats particularly if a south wind is blowing. Caution is warranted when utilizing to south access in Little Mary due to boulders in the narrows leading into the main lake. A slow, no wake zone is in place to address this potential navigation hazard.

A fisheries survey was completed in mid-August 2017. Walleyes continue to be abundant. Gill net catches averaged 13.3 Walleyes/net. Annual recruitment from natural reproduction and fry stockings was relatively good in 2014, 2015, and 2016. Average size of Walleye captures was 14.3 inches. Many of the four-year-old Walleyes from the 2014 year class will have grown to 17.0 inches in 2018.

Black Crappie are moderately abundant. Age distri-

bution of crappie captures extended to age seven. Those older fish averaged 12.1 inches. Reproductive success and annual recruitment was relatively good in 2014 and 2015. Cohorts of the 2014 year class should average 10.0 inches in 2018.

Lake Mary also supports fair fishing opportunities for Largemouth Bass, Bluegill Sunfish, and Northern Pike should Walleye fail to cooperate early in the fishing season.

Anglers are reminded of Northern Pike harvest regulation changes and encouraged to take advantage of expanded harvest opportunities with the 2018 fishing opener. Many lakes in west-central Minnesota hold an overabundance of small pike. Increasing harvest and reducing densities of 21.0-inch and smaller pike is projected to improve growth and average size of Northern Pike and increase survival and effectiveness of Walleye stockings.

Park Rapids

General Outlook for Park Rapids Area: Ice out looks like it will happen in late April on most area lakes. Northern Pike spawning begins as the ice is going off, and Walleye spawning begins a week or more later. Fish will likely be in both pre and post spawn patterns depending on the lake on fishing opener. Good precipitation throughout the winter and early spring may result in water levels picking up on area lakes. Because of the longer winter, and ample snow some smaller or shallow lakes may experience partial

or full winter kills this year. Check with the area fisheries office, or local bait shop for the condition of these lakes.

A new state-wide Northern Pike regulation is taking effect this spring. There are three zones state wide, but the Park Rapids fishery area will follow one rule. Anglers here will be able to keep 10 Northern Pike, but not more than two pike longer than 26 inches, and all from 22 to 26 inches must be released. This will affect all lakes that do not have special Northern Pike regulations already (see below).

Anglers should remember Park Rapids area lakes with special or experimental regulations that differ from state-wide regulations. Please note specific regulations in the current Minnesota Fishing Regulations Booklet.

- All Species: Lester and LaSalle
- Bass: Little Mantrap and George.
- Crappie: Big Mantrap and Spider
- Northern Pike: Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Crow Wing; George; Big Mantrap (Mantrap) and Blueberry.
- Walleye: Big Sand and Kabekona

Anglers can also fish for bass statewide starting May 12, as long as they release all bass during the first two weeks (until May 25).

Kabekona Lake (2,433 acres) is located about three miles south of Laporte in northeastern Hubbard County. It has a maximum depth of 133 feet. A county owned access is located at the west end of the lake, off highway 64. Kabekona has had an experimental Walleye regulation since 2006. The regulation was intended to increase natural reproduction of Walleye. Evaluations indicate that it is accomplishing that, with more young of the year Walleye in fall sampling, and fewer stocked Walleye but record abundance. The regulation was relaxed in 2016. Currently, all Walleye between 20 and 26 inches must be immediately released. Anglers are allowed to harvest Walleye less than 20 inches and one over 26 inches in a possession limit of four. An abundance of Walleye in the

protected size range should provide good catching, but there are plenty of fish in the 12 to 16 inch size range if anglers want a meal.

Northern Pike have never been abundant in Kabekona, but they can reach good sizes. Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass, Black Crappies, Bluegills and Pumpkinseed sunfish can also be found in this lake, but those species are not abundant.

Fish Hook Lake (1,643 acres) Fish Hook Lake is located two miles north of Park Rapids. Fish Hook has a maximum depth of 76 feet. A county owned public access is located on the southwest shore of the lake off US Highway 71. There is an additional access on the Fishhook River in Heartland Park.

Fish Hook Lake was sampled in 2017. Northern Pike numbers were high with an average size of 21.5 inches. Most fish were 18 to 24 inches, with the largest sampled at 37.5 inches. This may be an opportunity to take advantage of the new state wide Northern Pike regulation. Walleye numbers were also good and most are a great size for anglers of 15-22 inches, with a number of smaller fish for the future.

Both Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass are found in Fish Hook Lake. Largemouth Bass were sampled in higher numbers and from 6 to 19 inches. Black Crappie numbers were similar to past surveys, but most fish were small. Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds were sampled in higher numbers than recent years. The majority were 3-7.5 inches, but some were sampled up to 9 inches.

Curly leaf pondweed is an aquatic invasive species (AIS) that has been identified in Fish Hook Lake. To avoid spreading AIS, lake users are required to remove all aquatic plants or animals from their watercraft and drain all water from their boat before leaving the access.

Garfield Lake (960 acres) Garfield Lake is located in Laporte. It has a maximum depth of 32 feet. A city owned public access is located off of 1st Street, on the point on the northeast side of Laporte. Garfield was last surveyed in 2015, and it appears to be a

great lake to take advantage of the new Northern Pike regulation.

The Northern Pike were abundant and had an average size of 20 inches and 1.6 pounds. This is a great opportunity to catch or harvest pike under 22 inches. Walleye are modestly abundant with the majority 12-17 inches. There were also a number of smaller Walleyes from 6-11 inches for the future.

The southern part of the lake has most of the shallow water and may provide the best opportunities for bass and panfish. Largemouth Bass were abundant, with most fish 12 to 17 inches. Panfish were sampled in lower number, but had some great size for anglers with 10-12 inch Black Crappies, and Bluegills and Pumpkinseeds over 8 inches.

Big Mantrap (1618 acres) Mantrap Lake is two miles east of Emmaville. Mantrap is 1618 acres with a maximum depth of 68 feet. There are two state owned public accesses, one is located on the south side of the west basin and the other one is located on the south end of the north arm.

Mantrap is a popular lake for panfish, especially for Black Crappies. There is a special regulation for crappie of a five fish possession limit. Black Crappies were sampled in good numbers and all sizes from 5 to 14 inches. There are ample bulrush beds along the shoreline that crappies use in the spring, and are popular for anglers to target for crappies.

There is a special regulation for Northern Pike, with a three fish limit and all 24 to 36 inches in length must be immediately released, with one allowed over 36 inches. Anglers can expect to find an abundant population of Northern Pike with an average size of 24 inches and 3.3 lbs. Northern Pike were sampled in good numbers up to 34 inches long, with most fish 19-28 inches.

Muskies are a very popular fish in Mantrap, but season does not open until June 2. Special spring sampling has taken place in recent years, and has shown the population

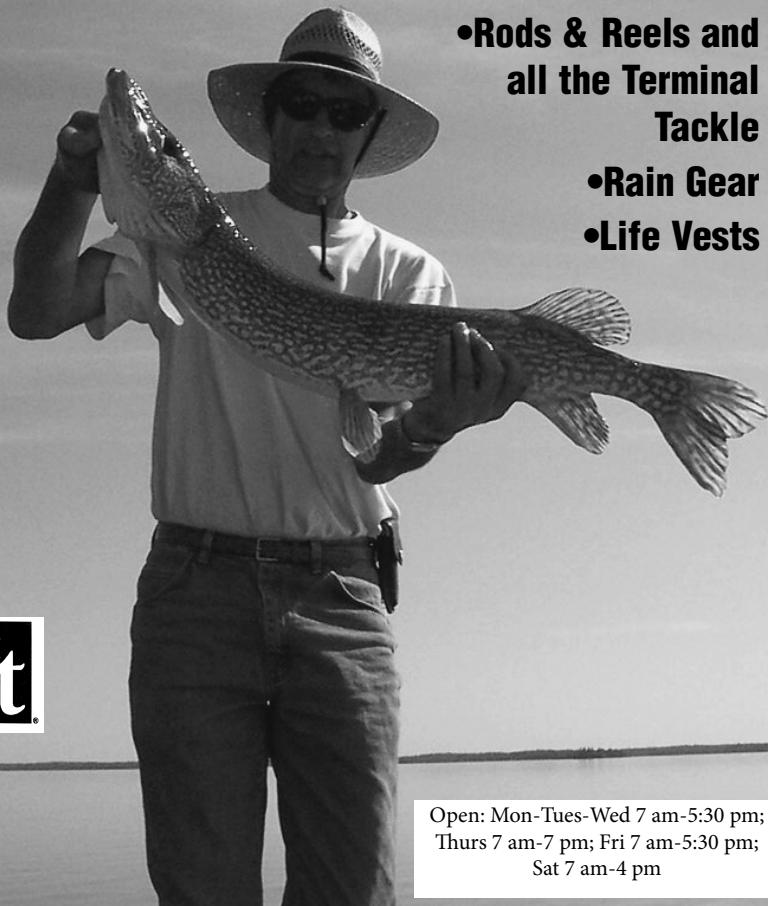
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