Fishing in Minnesota's Northwest Region

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The heavy snowfall expe- els across the region. Overall last several years. Pend- Various strong year-classes of has the following regulations: rienced this winter will result this is positive given drought ing a rapid warm up in May walleye are common across

in elevated lake and river lev- conditions experienced the water temperatures will be most of our natural walleye opener lakes that tend to have Main Street, Menahga, MN • 564-4533 expanses of shallow water and those with streams and Good Luck Fisherman! will be the best bets for the opener. Anglers fishing lakes Happy Mother's Day with local DNR Fisheries ofdid not succumb to winterkill.

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Walleye populations in our natural walleye lakes and

very cold for the opener. Fish lakes and stocking efforts spawning activity is expected have contributed to good to be about a week behind success on others. Walleye normal. Traditional walleye from good year-classes produced from 2013-2016 (14earlier ice out dates with large 20 inches) will comprise the bread and butter fish from most of our primary walleye rivers flowing through them lakes. There are also many lakes with walleye from the strong 2011 year-class which that are prone to winterkill on will provide opportunities to severe winters should check catch quality sized walleye walleye fishing on our large walleye lakes, particularly

on Leech, Upper Red, Lake many of our stocked lakes of the Woods and Cass lakes. have excellent abundance The Walleye population on and fish of a variety of sizes. Leech remains strong and anglers can expect abundant walleye from 12-26 inches.

Walleye numbers in Upper Red remain high. Multiple strong year-classes have produced many fish in the 12-18 inch size range. Walleye harvest regulations have been relaxed on Leech and Upper Red lakes to take advantage

of abundant populations of spawning age Walleye. Protected slot limits remain in effect Lake of the Woods and several secondary ba-

sins in the Region. Walleve abundance remains strong on Cass Lake. Walleye and Sauger abundance in Lake of the Woods are well above average with excellent size distributions. The Northwest Region also boasts arguably

lakes in the State of Minnesota: Lake of the Woods and Upper Red Lake. While the opening weekend is not typi-

anglers should not rule out an very good in spring and early encounter with one of these brutes. Anglers are reminded that special regulations are in place to protect large pike on both of these waters and about 50 other lakes in the region.

2019 will be the second year

with the statewide Northern Pike zone regulations. These regulations apply to pier located on Baudette Bay all waters with the exception in the City of Baudette, and the above-referenced special there is shore fishing opporregulation lakes and North tunities near most public boat new statewide Northern Pike State Park. regulations are based on manpopulation characteristics of ervoir on the Roseau River. each zone. Much of North- Hayes is located entirely

•Daily and possession limit of 10 pike

•Not more than 2 pike may be over 26 inches

•All pike from 22-26 inches must be released immediately Each year, public accesses need a considerable amount of work to repair ice heave damage and to ensure accesses are in order for the opener. With late ice-out across the region our Parks and Trails staff will have limited time to fix-up the ramps and get the from 20-24 inches. Walleye loading docks installed before fices to make sure their lakes Anglers can expect excellent the May 11 opener. Anglers are reminded to help prevent the spread of invasive species by inspecting their boats for invasive plants and animal, draining all water from their bilges and livewells and remembering to pull their drain plug before traveling down

> Here is a general opener forecast by management area, a few noteworthy lakes that could provide some exceptional fishing, and an overview of the status of the large walleye lakes.

BAUDETTE

the road.

Rainy River: Each spring, Walleye migrate from Lake of the Woods to the Rainy River to spawn. Many of those fish are still in the river when the Walleye season opens in May. fishing opportunities for anglers. And, although hundreds of anglers flock to Lake of the Woods for the annual Walleye opener, not many people the best trophy Northern Pike fish on the Rainy River at that time of the year. The Rainy River and its tributaries are also home to a high quality Northern Pike population. cally prime time for big pike, Northern Pike fishing can be summer. Besides great fishing, the Rainy River corridor can also offer some protection from the cold winds that often occur during the early part of the Walleye season. There are several public boat ramps located along the Rainy River, there is a public fishing

west Minnesota lies in the within Hayes Lake State Park "North-Central Zone" which and only electric motors are

permitted on the lake. A fishing pier is available within the park along with a paved boat ramp on the southeast end of the lake. There is also a dock and canoe access located near the campground on the south side of the lake. As Hayes Lake lies within a state park, state park vehicle permits are required. Hayes Lake offers some great fishing opportunities for multiple species. Good numbers of Northern Pike are present with the potential to catch a large fish being a possibility. Bluegill are also a popular option with decent numbers of quality size fish up to ten inches in the population. Largemouth Bass provide a third option for anglers with a healthy population present in Hayes Lake. The season for Northern Pike begins on May 11. A reminder to anglers, the limit for Northern Pike is ten and all Northern Pike between 22 and 26 inches must be immediately released. Two Northern Pike over 26 inches may be harvested. For other regulations refer to the Minnesota fishing regulations book.

BEMIDJI

General Outlook Bemidji Area: Considerable snowpack in the Bemidji Area this winter may delay ice out beyond normal. A This can lead to some great wet fall plus spring snow melt has restored lake levels and stream conditions. If ice out is exceptionally late there may be some seasonal stream closures may be in place in the Bemidji Area. Check the DNR website for a listing of stream closures. Late ice out can also delay spring maintenance work on boat landings subjected to winter ice damage. DNR Parks and Trails crews will be working to repair damaged boat ramps and installing launching docks ahead of the fishing opener

Blackduck Lake, Beltrami County (2686 acres): Blackduck Lake is no secret as a destination Walleye fishery in the Bemidji Area, but the recent 2018 population assessment confirms it. The most recent gill net catch rate Dakota border waters. The ramps and in Franz Jevne of 18.75/net marks four consecutive assessments with Hayes Lake: Located in catch rates well above the agement "Zones" that have northwestern Minnesota, median for this lake class. been tailored to the specific Hayes Lake is 108-acre res- The Blackduck Lake Walleye

(Continued on Page 5)



