

# Fishing in Minnesota's Northwest Region . . .

(Continued From Page 5)

31.3 inches with a mean length and weight of 23.2 inches and 2.9 pounds. The Black Crappie and Bluegill populations are also abundant and possess good size structures. Black Crappie up to 13.4 inches were sampled and fifty-three percent of the Black Crappie sample was 10.0 inches or greater in length. Bluegill up to 8.9 inches were sampled and twenty-seven percent of the Bluegill sample was 7.0 inches or greater in length. Pelican Lake also has low

density trophy Smallmouth Bass and Muskellunge angling opportunities.

Norway Lake (484 acres): Norway Lake is located in south-central Otter Tail County two miles north of Underwood. A DNR owned concrete public access is located along the east shoreline. Data from a spring trapnetting survey conducted in 2018 indicate that several species possess excellent size structures with the potential to catch a trophy-sized fish. Walleye ranged in length from 12.2 to 30.2 inches with a mean length and weight of 23.2 inches and 4.7 pounds. The Walleye population is sustained by the stocking of large multi-aged fish. Bluegill up to 11.0 inches were sampled and sixty-three percent of the Bluegill sample was 7.0 inches or greater in length. Black Crappie up to 15.2 inches were sampled and seventy-nine percent of the Black Crappie sample was 10.0 inches or greater in length. Anglers should

be aware that a set of special regulations are in effect for Norway Lake. Specific regulations included are: a protected slot length limit for Largemouth Bass - 14.0 to 20.0-inches with one over 20.0 inches in possession, a reduced bag limit for Sunfish - 5 fish, and reduced bag and length limits for Black Crappie - 5 fish in combination with a 10.0-inch minimum length limit. Statewide limits apply for Walleye, Northern Pike, and Yellow Perch.

**GLENWOOD**

General outlook for Glenwood Area lakes: Heavy snowfall this winter resulted in oxygen depletion and severe or partial winterkills of fish populations in many shallow lakes. Loss of fish in walleye fingerling rearing ponds is welcome and will help restore lost production capacity caused by older walleye and other fish populations in those waters. Unfortunately, winterkill conditions have likely extended to a number of shallow, but productive fish lakes that have been good bets for early season Walleye fishing. Glenwood staff will have a busy spring completing winterkill assessments to document occurrence and severity of winterkills in managed fish lakes. Anglers are encouraged to contact the Glenwood Area Office at (320) 634-7321 if considering fishing lakes such as Gilbert Lake in Douglas County; Lightning and Thompson Lakes in Grant County; Goose, Johanna, Malmadal, and Westport Lakes in Pope County; and Hattie, Long, and Charlotte Lakes in Stevens County. We will get up-to-date status reports on winterkill losses and fishing opportunities in advance of the May 11 opener.

As of late March, there is still one to two feet of snow on the ground. With snowmelt, the lakes will be full and streams flowing at time of the opener. The snow cover insulated the lakes, thus there is less ice thickness than last year. With projected warm ups, it is reasonable to assume that lakes within the Glenwood Area will be ice free well in advance of the fishing opener. Lake survey information gained last summer and fall affords optimism for good fishing. Two lakes are highlighted as good choices for the fishing opener.

Pelican Lake (3,761 acres) is a large, shallow, fertile lake

located in northeast Grant 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.

Walleye are abundant. Gill net catches during the 2017 survey averaged 13.3 fish/net. Age structure of gill net captures and fall electrofishing surveys revealed that strong year classes of young Walleye were established in 2014, 2015, and 2017. A fair year class also established in 2018 from natural reproduction. Four-year-old captures caught during the June 2017 survey averaged 16.6 inches. Five-year-old cohorts of the 2014 year-class should exceed 17.0 inches early in 2019. Due to contributions of natural reproduction supplemented with effective alternate year fry stockings, Walleye fishing opportunities look very promising for the near future.

Pelican Lake also supports a good crappie fishery. Both Black and White Crappie exist in the lake. Crappie densities are currently elevated in response to good reproductive success and recruitment in 2012, 2014, and 2015. Five year old black crappie captures averaged 11.6 inches at time of capture in 2017. Anglers can expect to see fish from 11.0 -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 Reno (3,808 acres) is a popular fishing destination. The lake is eight miles south of Alexandria on the west side of State Highway 29. The lake is shallow with a maximum depth of 23.0 feet. Average depth is estimated at 17.0 feet. Public access sites exist on northeast shoreline off State Highway 27 and the southwest end of the lake. Anticipate some vehicle congestion on the access sites and plenty of company with fellow anglers.

The most recent standard fisheries survey was completed in early July 2018. Walleye continue to be abundant in response to natural reproduction and alternate year supplemental fry stockings. Gill net catches averaged 18.4 fish/net. Length of captures ranged from 7.4 to 25.5 inches and averaged 17.4 inches. Annual recruitment was good in 2013, 2015, and 2016, thus there is promise of good harvest potential for 15.0 – 19.0 inch Walleyes in 2019.

Black Crappie fishing success was exceptional for an extended period with recruitment of very strong 2010 and 2011 year classes to a harvestable size. Catches have moderated with harvest and loss of those year classes to old age. Age frequency distribution of 2018 crappie catches describes establishment of a fair year class in 2015, followed with a very strong year class produced in 2016.

Lake Reno also supports good fishing opportunities for Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, and Northern Pike. Length distribution of bass captures caught during the spring electrofishing survey extended to 17.6 inches. Forty-nine percent of bass captures measured at least 15.0 inches in length.

Anglers are reminded of Northern Pike harvest regulation changes and encouraged to take full advantage of expanded harvest opportunities for pike within the North Central Harvest Zone. Many lakes in west-central Minnesota hold an over-abundance of small pike. Increasing harvest and reducing densities of 22.0-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: Although we had a significant snow pack, long-range forecasts are predicting spring temperatures fluctuating around normal. That may mean a normal ice out, around mid-April on most lakes. Northern Pike spawning begins as the ice is going out and Walleye spawning begins a week or more later, so most fish will likely be in post spawn patterns by fishing opener. Plenty of snow may help increase water levels on some area lakes and ponds. Because of the longer winter, and ample snow some smaller or shallow lakes may have experienced partial or full winterkills this year.

Anglers are reminded that new statewide Northern Pike regulations were implemented last spring. In the Park Rapids area, anglers can keep up to 10 Northern Pike, but not more than two pike can be 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).

Some Park Rapids area lakes have special or experimental regulations that differ from statewide 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 11, as long as they release all bass during the first two weeks (until May 24).

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. 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. The regulation was intended to improve natural reproduction of Walleye. Evaluations indicate that more young Walleye are being naturally produced, and abundance in 2017 was the highest ever observed at Kabekona. There were plenty of Walleye in the protected size range, but there are also more 15 to 20 inch fish in recent years than there ever have been.

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

Upper and Lower Bottle Lakes (459 and 641 acres) have maximum depths of 55 and 110 feet. They are located about eight miles northeast of Park Rapids. A state owned public access is located on the north end of Upper Bottle Lake. Additional access is available off County Road 40, through Emma Lake and the Sand River to Lower Bottle, but it may be difficult for larger boats.

During assessments of the lakes in 2013, walleye abundance was higher in both lakes than any previous sample. Abundance declined in 2018 samples, but was still higher than other similar lakes. Strong year classes of walleye

(Continued on Page 7)

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