

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT: Request authorization for hearings on Fisheries Management rule proposals at the 2007 Spring Fish and Wildlife Rules Hearings

FOR: JANUARY 2007 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Joseph Hennessy

SUMMARY:

The Bureaus of Fisheries Management and Law Enforcement propose to hold public hearings on recommended fishing regulation changes at the 2007 Spring Rules Hearings, April 16, 2007. These proposals were suggested by Fisheries Management and Law Enforcement staff to address fisheries management and law enforcement issues. The proposals were reviewed and developed by the Bureau of Fisheries Management with input from Law Enforcement, Legal Services, and considerable public input. Many of these proposals have been discussed with committees or county delegations of the Conservation Congress.

At this time, the Department proposes to solicit public comment on three questions of statewide interest: 1) to eliminate the restriction on maximum allowable size of landing nets; 2) to implement a 50 inch minimum size limit in Wisconsin waters of the St. Louis River, to match action taken by the State of Minnesota, and 3) to stipulate that spears and arrows used for fishing have barbed tips. The Department will also seek comment of approximately 34 questions of local interest, which propose to make modifications to daily bag and size limits for specific species in specific water bodies.

The Department further proposes to offer three questions as Department advisory questions: 1) to extend the open season for muskellunge to December 31 in waters south of Highway 10; 2) to gauge public interest in requiring quick-strike rigs with live bait larger than 8 inches in total length; and 3) to create a legal definition of "guide" and create record keeping requirements and inspection authority. The latter question would require legislative action to initiate.

RECOMMENDATION: The Department recommends that authorization to hold public hearings on the proposed fisheries rules changes be granted.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

- | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|-----|-------------------------------------|----------|
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fiscal Estimate Required | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Attached |
| No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Attached |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> | Background Memo | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Attached |

APPROVED:

Bureau Director,

Date

Administrator,

Date

Secretary, Scott Hassett

Date

cc: Amy J. Arthur - AD/5

STAFF REVIEW - DNR BOARD AGENDA ITEM

REMINDER

Have the following questions been answered under the summary section of this form?

- -Why is the rule needed?
- -What are the significant changes?
- -What are the key issues/controversies?
- -What was the last action of the Board?

LIST OF ATTACHED REFERENCE MATERIAL REQUIRED FOR RULE PROPOSALS:

Hearing authorization:

Final adoption:

Background Memo (if needed)*
 Fiscal Estimate
 Environmental Assessment (if needed)
 Rule

Background Memo (if needed)*
 Response Summary
 Fiscal Estimate
 Environmental Assessment (if needed)
 Rule

* If all the questions listed in the REMINDER section above can be adequately summarized on the Green Sheet (and a second sheet if needed), the Background Memo may be omitted.

Unit	Reviewer	Date	Comments
Environmental Analysis and Review			
Management and Budget			
Legal Services -Program Attorney -Carol Turner			
Other (if applicable)			

PROPOSED STATEWIDE AND REGIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT RULE CHANGES

(If approved, these proposed rule changes would take effect on April 1, 2008, unless otherwise indicated.)

QUESTION 1 – Eliminate maximum size restriction for landing nets

Currently, landing nets must be 3 feet in diameter or less in order to be legal. There are many commercially available landing nets available that exceed 3 feet in diameter, particularly for muskellunge and salmon anglers. This proposal would eliminate the size restriction on landing nets and would allow the use of any size net to aid anglers in landing a legally hooked fish. Landing nets of any size are already prohibited for the capture of fish that are not already hooked.

Do you favor eliminating the size restriction on landing nets?

1. YES _____ NO _____

QUESTION 2- St. Louis River and St. Louis Bay muskellunge regulations

The St. Louis River and St. Louis Bay are large water bodies capable of producing large muskellunge for anglers. Increasing the minimum length limit to 50 inches would help meet proposed goals for 20% of angler caught fish to be larger than 45 inches and 5% larger than 50 inches.

The capacity of these waters to produce meaningful numbers of large muskellunge is currently not being realized. The population is low density, the water body is large and forage is plentiful. Recent angling reports indicate that some fish are reaching the 50-inch mark but more intensive fisheries netting surveys and angler diary reporting show that very few fish are currently larger than 45 inches. A high-quality, low-density can be maintained without impacts to other fish populations.

Minnesota has already approved and will institute a 50 inch minimum length limit for Minnesota waters of the St. Louis River and St. Louis Bay in 2008. Increasing the minimum length limit to 50" on the Wisconsin side would also maintain consistency between the states. Anglers and law enforcement agents would not have to deal with different regulations depending on what location they fished on these waters.

- **Do you favor increasing the minimum length limit for muskellunge from 40 inches to 50 inches on the St. Louis River and St. Louis Bay, Douglas County, Wisconsin (border water with Minnesota)?**

2. YES _____ NO _____

QUESTION 3– Create requirement that spears used for taking rough fish have barbed points

This proposal stipulates that spears used for taking rough fish must have barbed points, making the requirement for spears consistent with the barbed-tip requirement for arrows used for bow fishing. Law enforcement officials have encountered individuals stabbing rough fish using non-barbed implements such as knives, nails, and forks tied or taped to poles. These devices can result in injured fish that cannot be recovered by the spearer.

- **Do you favor requiring that spears used to take rough fish have barbed points, to minimize loss of injured fish?**

3. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

ASHLAND COUNTY

QUESTION 4 – Mineral Lake walleye regulations

Fishery surveys on Mineral Lake in 2005 and 2006 found a moderate- to high-density walleye population (4 adults per acre) that was dominated by abundant 10- to 14-inch fish. The total population (larger than 7 inches) was estimated at 11 walleye per acre, and natural reproduction has been providing strong recruitment for the past three to four years. The size structure of the walleye population was poor. Growth data from fish captured in spring 2006 have not yet been analyzed, but all signs indicate that walleye are growing at a below-average rate because of excessive density of fish protected by the current regulations. Further indirect evidence of over-abundant small walleye is reflected by the current low abundance of forage and panfish species and the generally poor body condition of 10- to 14-inch walleye.

The proposed regulation will allow harvest of walleyes less than 14 inches long. This will reduce density, which will decrease competition for the available forage and result in increased walleye growth rates. The lower abundance of walleye should allow panfish recruitment to increase, resulting in a more diverse fishery and stable forage base. The end result should be a moderate-density walleye population with good size structure, and a panfish community with adequate numbers of harvestable-size fish.

- **Do you support removing the 18-inch minimum length limit and 3- fish daily bag limit on walleye and replacing those regulations with no minimum length limit, but allowing only one walleye greater than 14 inches long to be harvested daily in Mineral Lake, Ashland County?**

4. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

BARRON COUNTY

QUESTIONS 5 & 6 – Beaver Dam Lake trout and smelt regulation changes

Brood stock brown trout (larger than 15 inches) will be stocked in Beaver Dam Lake, Barron County, starting in 2008 to control an abundant exotic rainbow smelt population. Rainbow smelt were illegally introduced sometime in the late 1970's and since that time, the walleye population has decreased 53%. In addition, natural reproduction of walleye is no longer occurring and walleye stocking success has been very poor. It is suspected rainbow smelt are preying on natural reproducing and stocked walleye fry and fingerlings. Similar negative interactions between rainbow smelt and walleye have been documented on several other walleye lakes in northern Wisconsin.

It is proposed that a high minimum length limit with a daily bag limit of 1 for trout be implemented to maximize predation on rainbow smelt. However, it is also felt that anglers should have an opportunity to harvest a large trout once they grow to a quality size range. In addition, a higher length limit will minimize the number of brood stock trout that need to be stocked and save the Department considerable dollars in terms of hatchery production costs. Therefore it was determined the best option would be to

pursue a 26 inch length limit with a daily bag limit of 1. This regulation option should allow the brood stock to predate on rainbow smelt for a period of 1 ½ years after the initial stocking and at that time, anglers would have the opportunity to harvest a larger fish if they desired. It is also felt that opening the season for dip netting would expedite the smelt removal process. Smelt harvest is currently prohibited.

- **Do you support a 26 inch minimum length limit with a daily bag limit of 1 fish for trout in Beaver Dam Lake, Barron County?**

5. YES _____ NO _____

- **Do you support allowing smelt harvest, by use of dip nets not exceeding 8 feet in diameter or 8 feet square and seines not more than 75 feet in length and 6 feet in depth, in Beaver Dam Lake, Barron County?**

6. YES _____ NO _____

QUESTION 7– Hay River trout regulations

The Hay River was recently classified as a trout stream in 2004 in Barron County. Currently a low density brook trout population is present with trout densities around 100 fish per mile. However, the potential for larger brook trout is present due to a low density fishery, with good physical habitat and an excellent forage base. Brook trout in excess of 15 inches were sampled in 2003 and anglers have been reported catching brook trout up to 17 inches.

When the stream was classified in 2004, the stream fell under the default regulation for Barron County of a 7 inch size limit, bag limit of 5 fish. This regulation seems to work well on local streams where trout densities are higher at 1000-3000 fish per mile. However, considering the number of brook trout present on the Hay River is very low at only 100 fish per mile, the regulation is considered to be too liberal and the potential for overharvest is high.

Fish survey data since in 2003 has further confirmed this problem and has shown that the number of brook trout greater than 8 inches has decreased 50% over the past 3 years. It is speculated that prior to the classification in 2004, very few, if any anglers were aware that trout were present in the river, which allowed fish to grow to trophy size ranges. However, after the stream was classified anglers started fishing the stream and the number of larger trout has decreased overtime likely from increased angler harvest. Given the fact that very few streams in Wisconsin have the ability to produce 15-17 inch brook trout, it is felt the Hay River should be managed for large brook trout.

In an effort to provide the opportunity to harvest a large brook trout and prevent overharvest of a low density brook trout fishery,

- **Do you support a 15 inch length limit with a daily bag limit of 1 for trout on the Hay River in Barron County?**

7. YES _____ NO _____

QUESTION 8 – Red Cedar Chain walleye regulations, Barron and Washburn Counties

The Red Cedar Chain of Lakes (Balsam, Red Cedar and Hemlock Lakes-Barron and Washburn Counties) were surveyed in 2005-2006. The current walleye management goal for the chain is an adult walleye population estimate of 3.5-4.5 fish per acre.

The 2005 adult walleye population estimate on Red Cedar Lake was only 2.0 fish per acre. This is 55% and 73% lower when compared to historic estimates of 4.4 adult fish per acre in 1992 and 7.2 adult fish

per acre in 1980 respectively. In addition, the 2005 combined adult walleye population estimate of Red Cedar and Balsam Lakes was only 2.2 fish per acre. This is once again 24% and 44% lower when compared to historic estimates of 2.9 adult fish per acre in 1992 and 3.9 adult fish per acre in 1980 respectively.

Creel census data collected in 2005-2006 indicated that angling mortality was extremely high. More specifically, projected angler harvest for adult walleye on Red Cedar Lake was 68%. In addition, combined projected angler harvest for Balsam and Red Cedar Lakes was also very high at 55% of the adult population. The potential to collapse the walleye fishery from overharvest is extremely high when total adult mortality rates exceed 35%.

It is felt the 18 inch minimum length limit will likely increase the adult population from 2 to 4 adult fish per acre over time. In addition, it will allow female walleye to spawn at least once before they get a chance of being harvested because most female walleye are not maturing until they are between 16-18 inches in the Red Cedar Chain. Lastly this regulation will increase walleye catch rates and maintain walleye harvest rates in the long term and still provide ample angling opportunities for walleye anglers.

Therefore, in effort to increase the number of adult walleye and reduce total adult mortality rates to less than 35%, and prevent overexploitation of the adult walleye population; do you support the following on the Red Cedar Chain of Lakes?

- **Do you favor changing the walleye regulations on the Red Cedar Chain of Lakes (Balsam, Red Cedar, and Hemlock Lakes in Barron and Washburn Counties) from a 15-inch minimum size limit and daily bag of 5 walleye to an 18-inch minimum size limit and daily bag limit of 3 walleye?**

8. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

BAYFIELD COUNTY

QUESTION 9 – Bony and Middle Eau Claire Lakes panfish regulations

Bluegill relative abundance has declined and average length increased over time in Middle Eau Claire Lake. Littoral zone aquatic plant loss, increase of walleye abundance and potential over exploitation by anglers are likely factors of this decline. A regulation change to 10 panfish/day should be considered to prevent over harvest of an already declining population of bluegill. Yellow perch have also become an important component of the fish assemblage in Middle Eau Claire Lake. Yellow perch undoubtedly provide an important forage fish for the lake's predators and have become the most sought after panfish by anglers. The purpose of the proposed regulation is to provide a quality panfish fishery for anglers on Middle Eau Claire and Bony Lakes in Bayfield County while protecting from over exploitation a bluegill population that has been declining in abundance due to rusty crayfish impacts on aquatic habitat and increased predator abundance. Bony Lake is connected to Middle Eau Claire Lake and is included in this proposal to facilitate law enforcement efforts.

- **Do you favor reducing the daily bag limit for panfish from 25 per day to 10 per day on Middle Eau Claire and Bony Lakes in Bayfield County?**

9. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

DANE COUNTY

QUESTION 10 – Muskellunge regulation extension to Madison Lakes connecting waters

The current restriction on harvest of muskellunge in lakes Monona, Waubesa, and Wingra is a 45 inch minimum length limit. The fish that frequent and migrate within the Yahara River, Upper Mud Lake, Murphy Creek, and other tributaries are of lakes Monona, Waubesa, and Wingra origins. This regulation provides a consistent level of protection from harvest while fish frequent these waters. The regulation allows fish to recruit into the trophy class consistent within the spirit and intent of the lake regulations.

- **Do you favor increasing the minimum length limit from 34” to 45” for muskellunge in all tributaries to Lakes Monona, Waubesa, and Wingra, including the Yahara River upstream to the Tenney Locks, and Murphy, Nine Springs, Starkweather, and Wingra Creeks?**

10. YES _____ NO _____

QUESTION 11 – Yahara River fish refuge- Dunkirk

In mid- to late-spring, many muskellunge congregate below the site of the Dunkirk Dam prior to spawning. The presence of so many large fish in a small area makes them vulnerable to accidental or intentional take during the closed season for gamefish (between the first Sunday in March and the first Saturday in May). With this proposal, the Department proposes to prohibit all fishing in the area below the Dunkirk Dam site, downstream to the Highway N bridge, between March 1 and May 15 annually.

- **Do you favor creating a fish refuge between March 1 and May 15 below the Dunkirk Dam site, downstream to the Highway N bridge? (Effective March 1, 2008)**

11. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

FLORENCE COUNTY

QUESTIONS 12 & 13 – Keyes Lake trout and walleye regulation changes

Keyes Lake now supports a large population of a non-native fish, the rainbow smelt. Keyes Lake once supported a naturally reproducing population of walleyes. DNR sampling in recent years, since smelt have become established, show that walleyes are no longer recruiting successfully to adult sizes. Similar problems with walleye recruitment have been seen in other northern Wisconsin lakes with smelt. DNR began annual stockings of brown trout fingerlings in Keyes Lake in 2002 to eventually provide some measure of smelt control by a cold-water predator during summer when smelt and trout share similar habitat. There is a possibility of Trout or Black Oak Lake strain lake trout being stocked in Keyes Lake in the future, depending on availability. Current fishing regulations (trout Category 2) allow harvest of stocked browns at small sizes and high rates, before they reach a size where they can be effective predators of smelt.

Current fishing regulations for walleye in Keyes Lake specify a daily bag limit of five and a minimum length of 15 inches. This regulation maximizes harvest opportunities, but the current management need is

for more walleyes to reduce smelt numbers. Restoring walleye to high densities through restrictive fishing regulations has been effective in reducing smelt in at least two other northern Wisconsin lakes.

- **Do you favor changing the trout regulation category on Keyes Lake, Florence County from category 2 (all trout 7” minimum length, 5 daily bag limit) to category 5 (lake trout 26” minimum length, 1 daily bag limit; brown trout 12” minimum length, 2 daily bag limit)?**

12. YES _____ NO _____

- **Do you favor changing the walleye regulation on Keyes Lake, Florence County from a daily bag of five fish, minimum length 15 inches to a daily bag of three fish, minimum length 18 inches?**

13. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

FOND DU LAC COUNTY

QUESTIONS 14 & 15 – Kettle Moraine and Long Lakes northern pike regulation changes

The objectives of this regulation proposal are to increase angler effort and harvest of northern pike from Kettle Moraine and Long Lakes, Fond du Lac County. Both lakes have an abundant population of small and slow-growing northern pike which have been underutilized since the imposition of the 26” minimum size limit in 1995. More harvest of northern pike, especially male pike, will not harm the adult population or natural reproduction in either lake and will enhance angler opportunities in eastern Fond du Lac County.

- **Do you favor a no minimum size limit and five fish daily bag limit for northern pike in Kettle Moraine Lake, Fond du Lac County?**

14. YES _____ NO _____

- **Do you favor a no minimum size limit and five fish daily bag limit for northern pike in Long Lake, Fond du Lac County?**

15. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

GREEN COUNTY

QUESTIONS 16-18 – Sugar River fish refuges

Currently, the game fish season on the Sugar River follows the general inland season framework, closing the first weekend in March and reopening the first weekend in May. Walleye, sauger and smallmouth congregate below the three dams on this river, located at Brodhead, Decatur and Albany. Anglers have been harvesting these species during the closed season, either intentionally or incidental to fishing for other species such as panfish and catfish. This is impacting breeding populations of these species and could impact future numbers.

In order to address this problem, regulatory signs advising anglers of the closed season have been posted along the river, yet anglers continue to fish under the auspices of either “practice” fishing or fish for pan, rough or cat fish. Hooking mortality continues to be a concern about fish that are released to the water.

Conservation wardens have issued more than 50 tickets for gamefish closed season violations during the past 8 years at these dams. This total does not include numerous license violations that were encountered while checking these areas. Additionally, wardens averaged 44 warnings per year to fishers in this area who had not caught any fish but were fishing with game fish-type lures.

It is recommended that refuges or closed areas be established 500 feet below each of these dams during the period between the first Sunday in March and the Friday before the first Saturday in May. This would insure protection of the majority of staging game fish and yet afford fishing opportunity for folks who are fishing for panfish, catfish and rough fish in other parts of the river.

If approved, this regulation change would also clear up the issue of “practice fishing.” It would be illegal to fish in the affected area during that time frame period. This would also protect and preserve fish that might otherwise succumb to illegal harvest or hooking mortality.

➤ **Do you favor establishing a fish refuge, from March 1 through the Friday before the first Saturday in May, on the Sugar River from the Albany Dam extending downstream 500 feet? Effective March 1, 2008.**

16. YES _____ NO _____

➤ **Do you favor establishing a fish refuge, from March 1 through the Friday before the first Saturday in May, on the Sugar River from the Decatur Dam extending downstream 500 feet? Effective March 1, 2008.**

17. YES _____ NO _____

➤ **Do you favor establishing a fish refuge, from March 1 through the Friday before the first Saturday in May, on the Sugar River from the Old Brodhead Power House site/spillway extending downstream 500 feet? Effective March 1, 2008.**

18. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

IRON COUNTY

QUESTION 19 – Gile Flowage bass regulation changes

Management Objective: A smallmouth bass population of low to moderate density with a high proportion of memorable-size fish. Specifically, during the spawning period, DNR electrofishing crews should be able to capture smallmouth bass 7 inches and longer at a rate of 20 to 40 per hour; and the proportion of those fish over 18 inches long should be 5-15%.

Summary of Justification: Smallmouth bass introduced into the Gile Flowage in 1985 have now expanded to the point that numbers exceed our stakeholder-driven objectives. High bass density is causing slower-than-desired growth rate and is preventing us from achieving our size structure objective (5-15% over 18 inches long). Allowing and even promoting some harvest of smallmouth bass under 14 inches long, while protecting a wide size range of adult fish between 14 and 18 inches long, should allow

us to achieve all management plan objectives, provided anglers cooperate and harvest only those fish deemed necessary. Our management plan objectives and the strategy we are now proposing to achieve them represents a compromise between walleye-oriented local interests and non-local interests that place a higher value on the quality of fishing for smallmouth bass. If the proposed regulation is effective, the number of smallmouth bass should decline somewhat while the average size of smallmouth bass increases substantially.

- **Should the largemouth and smallmouth bass harvest regulations for the Gile Flowage, Iron County (mostly smallmouth bass), be changed from a 15-inch minimum length limit and 2-daily bag limit to a 14- to 18-inch slot length limit (protected length range) and 3-daily bag limit, only 1 of which may be over 18 inches long?**

19. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

JACKSON COUNTY

PLEASE SEE QUESTION 34 REGARDING PROPOSED CHANGES TO NORTHERN PIKE REGULATIONS IN THE TREMPAULEAU AND BUFFALO RIVERS, TREMPAULEAU AND JACKSON COUNTIES

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

QUESTION 20 – Yellowstone River open season

Between the first Sunday in March and the first Saturday in May, the game fish season for walleye is closed in Yellowstone Lake (Lafayette County), but open in the Yellowstone River below the dam. Law Enforcement personnel have witnessed (and received many complaints of) anglers catching walleye illegally in Yellowstone Lake on the dike, then running down the stairs at the dam and placing the walleye caught in the lake in a bucket or on a stringer in the river. Currently, people are getting away with this, as Law Enforcement can not always be present. Having consistent game fish season rules on both the lake and the nearby river eliminates the opportunity for violators to sneak a fish down the steps and claim they caught it in the river. Should the rules be changed, anyone in possession of game fish on the river or the lake from the first Sunday in March to the first Saturday in May would clearly be in violation.

- **Do you support closing the season for largemouth and smallmouth bass, northern pike, muskellunge, and walleye, sauger, and their hybrids between the first Sunday in March through the first Saturday in May on the Yellowstone River Downstream of the Yellowstone Lake Dam to be consistent with the season on Yellowstone Lake?**

20. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

LINCOLN COUNTY

QUESTION 21 – Prairie River trout regulations

The problem described here is a social issue, not a biological issue. Both the existing and proposed regulations will allow for self-sustaining populations of brook and brown trout in this section of the Prairie River. The issue is about what type of bait should be allowed and what length the trout must be to harvest (high size limits and artificial lures only versus lower size limits and no bait restrictions).

Some local landowners and fishermen would like a change to more liberal trout regulations on approximately 5 miles of the Prairie River in Lincoln County. They would like regulations that allow bait fishing and allow harvest of brown trout less than 18” and brook trout less than 12”. Currently, the Category 5 regulations on this 5-mile stretch from R & H Road downstream to STH 17 are as follows:

- Daily Bag Limit: 1 Trout
- 18” Minimum Size Limit on Brown Trout
- 12” Minimum Size Limit on Brook Trout
- Artificial Lures Only

The current regulations were passed as part of the state and countywide trout regulations package voted on at the 2002 Spring Hearings.

Some anglers like the existing category 5 trout regulations and some would like more liberal regulations. This proposal is to see what rules the majority of anglers want for this 5-mile section of the Prairie River.

- **Do you favor changing the regulations on the Prairie River from R & H Road downstream to STH 17 (5 miles) from category 5 (daily limit of 1 trout; 18” minimum size limit on brown trout; 12” minimum size limit on brook and rainbow trout; artificial lures only) to category 4 (daily limit of 3 trout; 12” minimum size limit on brown and rainbow trout; 8” minimum size limit on brook trout; no bait restrictions)?**

21. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

MARATHON COUNTY

QUESTIONS 22 & 23 – Big Bass and Mission Lakes bass regulations

Big Bass Lake - The primary objective is to improve bluegill size structure and maintain the current size structure and density of the bass population in Big Bass Lake.

Mission Lake - The primary objective is to improve bluegill size structure and maintain the current size structure and density of the bass population in Big Bass Lake. A secondary objective is to improve the size structure of the bass population in Mission Lake.

The proposed regulation is intended to remove smaller bass and allow for the protection of bass most efficient as predators and spawners, while still allowing harvest of memorable category bass (18+” bass). We hope to promote faster growing bass and retain them in the lakes to thin the slow growing panfish population. In both lakes the new regulations should increase the growth rates of the bluegill populations and increase the average size of bluegills in the next 5-7 years.

- **Do you favor changing the bass regulation on Big Bass Lake from the statewide minimum size and bag limit of 14” minimum and 5 bass/day to a slot limit of no minimum size, 14” to 18” protected slot, 1 larger than 18”/day; total bag 3 bass/day?**

22. YES _____ NO _____

- **Do you favor changing the bass regulation on Mission Lake from the statewide minimum size and bag limit of 14” minimum and 5 bass/day to a slot limit of no minimum size, 14” to 18” protected slot, 1 larger than 18”/day; total bag 3 bass/day?**

23. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

PEPIN COUNTY

QUESTION 24 –Plum Creek trout regulations

Special regulations were placed on Plum Creek during 2003. The daily bag limit was changed from 3 to 2, and the minimum length limit was changed from 9 to 12 inches. Special regulations were implemented to protect and improve brook and brown trout densities, however it has been determined that trout populations have not responded, fishing pressure is light and poor habitat is the primary limiting factor regulating trout reproduction, density and size structure. Therefore, it is recommended to eliminate special regulations on Plum Creek in Pepin County (from CTH SS downstream to the Chippewa River) and revert back to the baseline regulation for the county which is Category 4 (brook trout size limit - 8 inches, brown trout size limit -12 inches, bag limit of 3). Such change will make trout regulations uniform on Plum Creek and throughout Pepin County.

Do you favor eliminating special regulation waters on Plum Creek (12 inch size limit, bag limit of 2) from CTH SS downstream to the Chippewa River and reverting back to the baseline regulation for the county, Category 4 (brook trout size limit - 8 inches, brown trout size limit - 12 inches, bag limit of 3)?

- **Do you favor eliminating special regulation waters on Plum Creek (12 inch size limit, bag limit of 2) from CTH SS downstream to the Chippewa River and reverting back to the baseline regulation for the county, Category 4 (brook trout size limit - 8 inches, brown trout size limit - 12 inches, bag limit of 3)?**

24. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

PIERCE COUNTY

QUESTION 25 – Kinnickinnic River trout regulations, Pierce and St. Croix Counties

During 2003, special Category 5 trout regulations (a 10 to 14 inch protected slot size limit, bag limit of 5, only one trout over 14 inches) were placed on the Kinnickinnic River and Parker Creek in St. Croix County and on the Upper and Lower Ponds in the City of River Falls in an attempt to improve size structure and quality sized fish. Implementation of the protected slot size limit began in spring of 2003 with annual investigations to evaluate success or failure of this special trout regulation. To date, trout population investigations show no improvement in size structure or overall quality. Based on these results the 10 to 14 inch protected slot size limit does not show promise as a technique to improve size structure on high density trout streams such as the Upper Kinnickinnic River and Parker Creek. Therefore, it is recommended that the special Category 5 trout regulation be eliminated and replaced with a Category 2 regulation (7 inch size limit, bag limit 5).

- **Do you favor eliminating the Category 5 Special Regulations (daily bag and size limit: 5 trout under 10", or 4 trout under 10" and 1 over 14") on the Kinnickinnic River and Parker Creek in St. Croix County and the Kinnickinnic River including the Upper and Lower Ponds in River Falls in Pierce County and replacing the regulation with a standard Category 2 Regulation (daily bag limit of 5 and a size limit of 7 inches)?**

25. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

POLK COUNTY

QUESTION 26 – Cedar Lake walleye regulation changes

Small walleye are quite numerous in Cedar Lake, but adult fish greater than the legal size limit of 15 inches are considered scarce. Growth rates in the lake are average or greater. Reproduction has been strong for many years. To improve walleye harvest, population size structure and angler satisfaction a 14-18 inch protected slot size limit is proposed with a bag limit of three of which only one can be greater than 18 inches. The primary objective of this rule change is to substantially increase harvest of abundant small (less than 14 inch) walleye thus reducing competition and improving growth of remaining fish. The secondary objective is to improve availability and harvest of quality size walleye (larger than 18 inches). The primary population objective is to protect brood stock, improve size structure and catch rates by increasing the number of walleye within and beyond the slot. Each objective successfully reached should result in improved angler satisfaction. This regulation proposal is also supported by members of the St. Croix County Alliance of Sportsmen Clubs, the Willow River Rod & Gun Club and the Star Prairie Fish & Game Association.

- **Do you favor implementation of a 14-18 inch protected slot size limit on walleye with a daily bag limit of 3 (only one over 18 inches) on Cedar Lake – St. Croix and Polk Counties?**

26. YES _____ NO _____

QUESTION 27 – Pipe Lake bass regulation changes

The adult walleye population on Pipe Lake has decreased 50% from 1995 to 2005. Conversely, from 1995 to 2005 the adult largemouth bass population has increased 300%. Similar decreases in walleye abundance coinciding with an increase in largemouth bass abundance have been documented on similar waters in Polk County. It is theorized that increasing largemouth bass populations are limiting walleye natural reproduction, stocking success and adult densities.

More specifically, the size structure of largemouth bass was poor in 2005. 85% of the estimated population was less than 14 inches in length. However, Pipe Lake has a moderate density smallmouth bass population with a desirable size structure with 40% of the smallmouth bass larger than 14 inches.

It is believed if the number of smaller largemouth bass in Pipe Lake can be reduced, walleye natural reproduction, stocking success and adult densities should improve to historic levels. After considering several alternatives, it is felt that a protective length/slot limit would allow harvest of the more abundant largemouth bass but maintain the size structure of the existing smallmouth bass fishery.

Therefore, in an effort to reduce the number of smaller largemouth bass, maintain the size structure of the existing smallmouth bass fishery and hopefully restore the walleye fishery to historic levels:

- **Do you support: No minimum length for bass, but all bass between 14” and 18” must be released and only one fish greater than 18” is allowed, daily bag limit 3 in total in Pipe Lake, Polk County?**

27. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

PRICE COUNTY

QUESTION 28 – Butternut Lake walleye regulations

Management Objective: With this fishing regulation and other strategies outlined in the Butternut Lake Fishery Management Plan, we seek to increase the proportion of 10-inch walleye that are also over 15 inches long from 19% (2003) to 30 to 50% on a sustained basis, directing harvest toward more small walleye in an effort to improve walleye growth rate and reduce walleye predation on young black crappie – a currently rare but highly desired panfish at Butternut Lake.

Summary Justification: Stakeholders who participated in a visioning session in April 2004 to help DNR biologists define the desired condition of the Butternut Lake fishery ranked walleye first among species of interest. All agreed to maintain a moderately high density and sustainable harvest of walleye while improving walleye size structure if possible. There was also enthusiasm for creating and maintaining good fishing for panfish, particularly black crappie and yellow perch.

In 2003, Butternut Lake contained a moderate-density population of adult walleye (4 per acre) and a very high density of walleye of all sizes (31 per acre). The population was dominated by abundant 8- to 12-inch fish, and few walleye exceeded 15 inches in length. Slower-than-average walleye growth rate and selective angler harvest of the fastest-growing walleye in the absence of a length limit are contributing factors to unsatisfactory walleye population size structure. Protecting some walleyes over 14 inches long and directing angler harvest toward smaller walleyes should help to correct the imbalance.

Black crappies have been scarce since the mid 1990s. Crappie anglers who once caught 10 to 15 quality-size fish per trip might catch a third that number now. Excessive predation by overabundant small walleye on young crappie is consistently repressing crappie recruitment and will not allow desirable crappie density to develop. Therefore, the first step toward a more desirable crappie population will be to direct more of the walleye harvest toward the abundant small walleye.

- **Do you favor keeping the daily bag limit (currently 3) and minimum length limit (currently none) on walleye in Butternut Lake, but restricting harvest to only one fish daily over 14 inches long?**

28. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

RACINE COUNTY

QUESTIONS 29-31 – Eagle Lake panfish, bass, and northern pike regulations

Eagle Lake in Racine County is currently plagued by poor water quality (clarity), extensive stands of Eurasian water milfoil, overabundance of small panfish, low numbers of northern pike, and poor largemouth bass recruitment. Recent fall electrofishing catch rates were extremely high for bluegills at 750 per hour, and for yellow perch at 500 per hour. Northern pike catch rates have fallen to 4 per hour. Largemouth bass numbers are 35% of what they were in 1995. Anglers catch lots of panfish but are frustrated by their small size. Northern pike fishing has declined and few young largemouth bass are present. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Eagle Lake Management District, and Racine County residents have worked together to formulate a multi-pronged management plan for Eagle Lake that includes management of water quality, fisheries, and aquatic plants through biomanipulation. Biomanipulation works by protecting gamefish and exerting maximum predation on panfish. Current special fishing regulations for largemouth bass (18 inch minimum size limit and 1 daily bag limit), and the standard regulation for northern pike (26 inch minimum size limit and 2 daily bag limit) are not sufficient to protect gamefish or control panfish. Special fishing regulations designed to promote biomanipulation are needed. Successful biomanipulation will dramatically improve water quality and increase the number of large bass, northern pike, and panfish available to anglers.

- **Do you favor increasing the minimum length limit from 18 inches to 22 inches for largemouth and smallmouth bass, with a daily bag limit of 1 fish in Eagle Lake, Racine County??**

29. YES _____ NO _____

- **Do you favor increasing the minimum length limit from 26 inches to 40 inches, and decreasing the daily bag limit from 2 to 1 for northern pike in Eagle Lake, Racine County?**

30. YES _____ NO _____

- **Do you favor implementing an 8 inch minimum size limit on panfish, and decreasing the daily bag limit from 15 to 10 in Eagle Lake, Racine County?**

31. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

QUESTION 32 – Crystal Lake northern pike regulations

The objectives of this regulation proposal are to increase angler effort and harvest of northern pike from Crystal Lake, Sheboygan County. Crystal Lake has an abundant population of small and slow-growing northern pike which have been underutilized since the imposition of the 26” minimum size limit in 1995. More harvest of northern pike will not harm the adult population or natural reproduction in the lake and will enhance angler opportunities in Sheboygan County.

- **Do you favor a no minimum size limit and five fish daily bag limit for northern pike in Crystal Lake, Sheboygan County?**

32. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

ST. CROIX COUNTY

ALSO SEE QUESTION 25 REGARDING PROPOSED CHANGES TO KINNICKINNIC RIVER TROUT REGULATIONS, PIERCE AND ST. CROIX COUNTIES

ALSO SEE QUESTION 26 REGARDING PROPOSED CHANGES TO CEDAR LAKE WALLEYE REGULATIONS, POLK AND ST. CROIX COUNTIES

QUESTION 33 – St. Croix County Panfish Regulations

St. Croix County contains 18 panfish lakes and lies within a short distance of the Twin City Metropolitan area. It is one of the fastest growing counties in Wisconsin and the Midwest. Most lakes are small, less than 150 acres, only 3 lakes are greater than 250 acres. Growth rates are at or above statewide averages and annual mortality rates are high on most waters. Fishing pressure on area panfish lakes has reached extraordinary levels (471 hours/acre). Exploitation rates are excessively high on bluegill, crappie and perch, often reaching 85 to 90% of the quality stock. Angler exploitation rates exceeding 50% are not recommended. Several panfish lakes that have been rehabilitated through aeration (Squaw, Pine & Hatfield) have been quickly decimated in less than three years. Anglers, sports groups and lake districts have voiced concern over declining panfisheries and continue to submit resolutions to reduce panfish bag limits on individual lakes to improve or protect panfish populations. To date, two lakes in St. Croix County (Dry Dam and Squaw Lake) already have a 10 bag panfish limit. Last spring this proposal was submitted by the St. Croix County Alliance of Sports Clubs as a local resolution and unanimously supported (51 - 8) at the 2006 Spring Conservation Hearings in St. Croix County. Cedar Lake lies in both St. Croix and Polk County and is included in this proposal. Lake George (Spring Valley Reservoir) also lies in both Pierce and St. Croix County and will be excluded from this proposal.

- **Do you favor reducing the daily bag limit from 25 in total to 10 in total for panfish in all inland waters of St. Croix County?**

33. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

TREMPEALEAU COUNTY

QUESTION 34 – Buffalo and Trempealeau River northern pike regulations

This proposal is to change the current regulation of 2 fish daily bag limit/26 inch minimum on northern pike to 5 fish bag limit/no size limit (statewide regulation north of Highway 10 boundary) in the Trempealeau River, including all tributaries, upstream of the dam in Blair (includes Lake Henry) and in the Buffalo River, including all tributaries, upstream of the Highway 93 bridge in Eleva (includes Crystal Lake and Martha Lake), in Trempealeau and Jackson Counties.

Both rivers are managed as trout streams, and the presence of northern pike in these rivers and their shallow, warm impoundments interfere with trout management.

- **Do you favor changing northern pike regulations in the Trempealeau River and its tributaries upstream of the dam in Blair (including Lake Henry) and in the Buffalo River and its tributaries upstream of the Highway 93 bridge crossing in Eleva (includes Martha and Crystal Lakes) from the current 26 inch/2 bag limit to no size limit/5 bag? This includes areas in both Trempealeau and Jackson Counties.**

34. YES _____ NO _____

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

WASHBURN COUNTY

PLEASE SEE QUESTION 8 REGARDING PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE RED CEDAR CHAIN OF LAKES.

PROPOSED LOCAL FISHERIES RULE CHANGES

WASHINGTON COUNTY

QUESTION 35 – Little Cedar Lake northern pike regulations

The objectives of this regulation proposal are to increase angler effort and harvest of northern pike from Little Cedar Lake, Washington County. Little Cedar Lake has an abundant population of small and slow-growing northern pike which have been underutilized since the imposition of the 26” minimum size limit in 1995. More harvest of northern pike, especially male pike, will not harm the adult population or natural reproduction in the lake and will enhance angler opportunities in Washington County.

- **Do you favor a no minimum size limit and five fish daily bag limit for northern pike in Little Cedar Lake, Washington County?**

35. YES _____ NO _____

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY QUESTIONS

(This question is designed to gauge public support for the idea proposed. If public response is positive, the Department may decide to move forward with a formal proposal at the 2008 Spring Rules Hearings.)

QUESTION 36 – Extension of southern zone muskellunge season

The objective of this proposal is to gauge public interest in increasing muskellunge fishing opportunity for anglers by lengthening the season from November 30 until December 31.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has greatly expanded the range of muskellunge in Wisconsin by stocking. Originally, the range of muskellunge in Wisconsin was concentrated in north central Wisconsin, waters in the Chippewa River basin, and in the Mississippi River. The expansion of the range has included southern Wisconsin waters and anglers can now enjoy fishing for muskellunge 41 lakes and 4 rivers managed for muskellunge south of Highway 10. Interest in musky fishing has also increased dramatically in recent years and we notice more fishing pressure directed at muskellunge in the fall months right up to the close of the season on November 30. Musky anglers have requested the Department to extend the season, so they can have additional opportunities to pursue muskellunge in the late fall. The Department believes that this species is adequately protected by appropriate size limits in this part of the state, so we do not think this proposal will hurt the populations.

- **Would you favor extending the muskellunge season in the southern Wisconsin zone from November 30 until December 31? The opening date of the season would remain the first Saturday in May.**

36. YES _____ NO _____

QUESTION 37 – Use of quick-strike rigs when using live bait larger than 8 inches in total length

The objective of this proposal is to gauge public interest in requiring the use of “quick-strike” rigs when fishing with large live bait for large predatory fish such as muskellunge. A recent study conducted and published by DNR scientists concluded that when single hooks are used and fish such as musky are allowed to swallow the bait, mortality was more than 80% within one year, even when the line was cut and the fish was released quickly.

Use of live bait for angling of muskellunge is popular in Wisconsin. A traditional method utilizes a large hook through the bait fish’s snout, which requires the muskellunge to swallow the bait prior to hook set. Adult muskellunge (>76 cm; 30 in) were held in lined hatchery ponds and caught while fishing with live bait on 10/0 size single hooks. The leader was cut and the muskellunge was released when hooked in the stomach. Survival was monitored for up to 1 year. No immediate (< 24 h) mortality occurred. However, 22% of hooked muskellunge died within 50 days and 83% died within 1 year. Necropsies revealed extensive trauma to the stomach and other organs from hooks, along with systemic bacterial infections. Highest mortality on both hooked and control fish occurred over winter through spring. This peak mortality may be associated with natural stressors that occur during the spring spawning period. Mortality rates observed in this study are considered unacceptable for trophy management of muskellunge. Although use of live bait for muskellunge is traditional in Wisconsin, terminal tackle such as quick-strike rigs that hook fish in the mouth should enhance the chances a released muskellunge will survive.

A suggestion is to adopt language similar to that used in Illinois:

When using live bait, all live bait in excess of 8 inches in total length shall be rigged with a quick set rig. The hook shall be immediately set upon the strike. A quick set rig is defined as follows: a live bait rig with up to 2 treble hooks attached anywhere on the live bait, with single hooks prohibited.

- **Would you favor requiring use of quick-strike rigs when using live bait larger than 8 inches in total length?**

37. YES _____ NO _____