

MARCH 2011
5A - NRB

Signature: _____

Date: 3/22/11

Lead Free Fishing Tackle Pilot

Background: At the January 2011 Natural Resources Board (NRB) Meeting, Board Member Dr. David Clausen sponsored a seminar on the impacts of lead fishing tackle and firearm ammunition on wildlife health. Following the briefing, the Board discussed steps the Department might take in addressing the issue. The issue of most concern was the impacts of lead fishing tackle exposure to loons, eagles and swans.

NRB/Department Actions: NRB Chair Jonathan Ela requested John Welter and Dr. Clausen work with staff to explore education and public information initiatives, and pilot projects on state managed properties that will move the issue forward. Science Services coordinated a department effort at the direction of Dr. Clausen to identify lakes that met the following criteria:

- Lakes with shorelines entirely state owned and in the Northern Highlands American Legion State Forest
- Lakes with recent nesting loons or loon use
- Lakes with at least average angling pressure; preferably with walleye as a primary species

The only lakes that met all three criteria were Vilas County lakes Allequash and Escanaba. Given this small number of potential study lakes, the criteria were subsequently expanded to include a larger geographic area and lakes with a bass/panfish fishery. Lakes meeting the expanded criteria include Nebish, Frank, Fallison, Day, Little Rock, Emerald, Bug, Klondike, and Shannon all in Vilas County. Six of these have trail-only or no access and most have lower fishing pressure. Of these lakes that met the expanded criteria, only Nebish offer the access and viable fishery necessary to be included in the initiative.

Summary based on Preliminary Screening: Only two lakes met the initial criteria. The criteria were subsequently expanded, which added one additional lake.

Next Steps for NRB Consideration: To meet the goal of the NRB several steps need to be taken and include:

- Finalize criteria addressing the selected geographic area (Northern Highlands), fishery (walleye or bass/panfish), public access, and shoreline ownership (100% public).
- Select final lakes.
- Develop lead free tackle restrictions (i.e. consider banning use of all lead-containing tackle or banning the small tackle that presents a greater risk to loons (i.e. sinkers 1 ounce and less and jigs less than 1" in any dimension)).
- Consult with Legal Services and Law Enforcement and determine necessary rule revisions and administrative process for promulgating rules governing the use of lead fishing tackle.