

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Natural Resources Board Agenda Item**

**SUBJECT:** Information on updating the Statewide Walleye Management Plan, the Wisconsin Walleye Initiative, and the expanded walleye stocking program.

**FOR:** December 2013 Board meeting

**TO BE PRESENTED BY:** Ron Bruch, Fisheries Services Section Chief

**SUMMARY:**

The Department would like to provide information to the Board on the Wisconsin Walleye Initiative (WWI) and the Fisheries Management Bureau's role in updating the Statewide Walleye Management Plan, communication efforts to ensure stakeholders and partners are informed, and work being done to effectively implement the WWI.

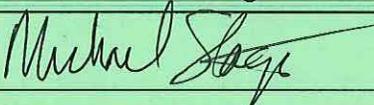
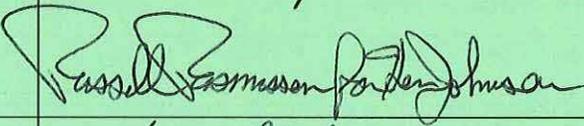
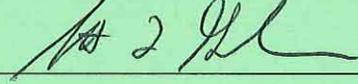
The Wisconsin Walleye Initiative was developed by the Department of Natural Resources and the Governor's office and funded by the Legislature to dramatically increase the number of walleyes in state waters by expanding production of large fingerling walleye at state, private, and tribal fish hatcheries for stocking in waters accessible to the public.

Since 1997, the Fisheries Program has been directing management of the state's walleye populations and fisheries through the Statewide Walleye Management Plan, including joint efforts and agreements with Chippewa Tribes on walleye harvest in the northern waters of the Ceded Territory. The Walleye Management Plan will encompass the objectives of the WWI, take advantage of upgrades to the state hatchery facilities, and capitalize on a growing interest by the tribal and private sector aquaculture interests in raising walleye for state waters. It will also engage Wisconsin's fishing business interests, anglers, and tribes in discussing and setting statewide walleye management objectives.

**RECOMMENDATION:** information only

**LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS (check all that are applicable):**

- Background memo
- 

Approved by	Signature	Date
Mike Staggs, Bureau Director		11/25/2013
Ken Johnson, Administrator		11/26/2013
<i>fol</i> Cathy Stepp, Secretary		11-27-13

cc: Board Liaison – AD/8

DATE: November 14, 2013

TO: Natural Resources Board

FROM: DNR Bureau of Fisheries Management

SUBJECT: Information on updating the Statewide Walleye Management Plan, the Wisconsin Walleye Initiative, and the expanded walleye stocking program

The Wisconsin Walleye Initiative (WWI) was developed by the Department of Natural Resources and the Governor's office and funded by the Legislature to dramatically increase the number of walleyes in state waters by expanding production of large fingerling walleye at state, private, and tribal fish hatcheries for stocking in waters accessible to the public.

Since 1997, the Bureau of Fisheries Management has been directing management of the state's walleye populations and fisheries through the Statewide Walleye Management Plan, including joint efforts and agreements with Chippewa Tribes on walleye harvest in the northern waters of the Ceded Territory. The Walleye Management Plan will encompass the objectives of the WWI, take advantage of upgrades to the state hatchery facilities, and capitalize on a growing interest by the tribal and private sector aquaculture interests in raising walleye for state waters. It will also engage Wisconsin's fishing business interests, anglers, and tribes in discussing and setting statewide walleye management objectives.

To date, Fisheries Management has accomplished the following in implementing the WWI:

- Launched and maintained a WWI DNR website which is our main portal for information sharing with the public: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Fishing/Outreach/walleyeInitiative.html>
- Completed review and revision of 2013 stocking quotas. Reared and stocked out of DNR hatcheries 416,506 extended growth (6-8") walleye fingerlings in 83 lakes.
- Purchased and stocked through contracts with private fish farmers 21,965 extended growth walleye fingerlings into 16 lakes.
- Developed and implemented process to engage Fisheries staff, public, business interests, tribes and private fish farmers in development of update walleye stocking guidance. Process to be completed by January 1, 2014 so 2014 walleye quotas can be finalized, and state, vs, private, vs Tribal rearing and stocking objectives can set and logistics planned and coordinated.
- Developed plans and program statements for \$8.2 million of upgrades to DNR's walleye rearing infrastructure at Governor Thompson, Art Oehmke, and Wild Rose Hatcheries for increased extended growth walleye production by 2015
- Developed and implemented a communications and outreach plan for WWI, including press releases, web page, gov delivery messages – WWI-specific header developed and used for all news, live chats, communication for lawmakers, uniform slide show with customizable slides for local conditions, harvest events at the hatcheries and/or stocking events, videos, social media posts, outreach by local biologists to civic and conservation clubs, outreach to media, both outdoors and general assignment, northern region director meet and greets, presence and presentation at Wis Tourism conference, March 2-4, 2014, Lake Geneva, WI

- Conducted Live Chat on-line on WWI
- Completed initial public video on WWI, launched online on Nov 11 (1<sup>st</sup> in a series on WWI to come out over the next year): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kPE-MDdBP4&feature=youtu.be&rel=0>
- Conducted two Fishing Business Focus Group meetings in Hayward (21 attendees) and Rhinelander (12 attendees) to discuss WWI, walleye stocking decisions, walleye management issues, and ideas for improving angling and fishing-based tourism in northern Wisconsin. Major points made by participants included support for WWI, the need to incorporate economic and social issues into walleye stocking decisions, the need to promote the good fishing that we have in the WI, especially in the north, the need for regulations that will protect and maintain the WWI restored walleye fisheries, and the need to continued funding for WWI after 2015.
- Conducted three public meetings in Hayward (38 attendees), Rhinelander (12), and Oconomowoc (32) to discuss WWI, walleye stocking decisions, walleye management issues, and ideas for improving walleye angling in Wisconsin. Major points made by the public at these meetings included the need for equitable distribution and stocking of the WWI walleye to the most important walleye waters across the state, the need to continued funding for WWI after 2015, the importance of cooperation and involvement in WWI by all walleye stakeholders including the business community, and the need for regulations that will protect and maintain the WWI restored walleye fisheries.
- Participated in two meetings with tribal interests - the Voigt Task Group, and tribal hatchery staffs - to discuss WWI, tribal walleye rearing needs and priorities, and stocking guidance. The Tribes are developing their list of stocking priorities which we will work to coordinate with DNR and private contract stocking. We have also provided details to the Tribes on the WWI grant program and potential grant opportunities, application processes, timelines, etc.
- Launched an online survey for walleye anglers and those interested in walleye fishing in Wisconsin and received 1200 responses during Oct 28 – Nov 10
  - Respondents' highest stocking priorities were restoration of walleye in lakes with formerly good naturally reproducing walleye populations and improving walleye populations in lakes that have had previous success as walleye maintenance lakes
- Developed and promulgated rules and procedures for administering Walleye Production Grants for cities, villages, towns, counties, federally recognized Indian tribes or bands located in this state, and fish farms in order to increase the capacity to raise walleye for stocking in Wisconsin waters
- Completed WWI Regulatory Review and Regulations Study that includes comments from all Wisconsin aquaculture sectors: bait, food, game fish, aquaponics, and recreation
- Completed a Fish Hatchery Stamp report to study the viability of creating a fish hatchery stamp that could be issued to fishing license holders; the intent of a stamp would be to generate revenues to increase stocking of waters of the state
- Developed a process and timeline for updating the Wisconsin Walleye Management Plan involving and engaging all major walleye stakeholder groups in the state. Following stocking guidance completion, process to complete the walleye plan update will begin in January 2014 with completion of the new plan by December 2014. Updated plan will include a complete review of statewide walleye management objectives, regulation options, assessment protocols, and public involvement and information.