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## 2013 Wisconsin Fishing Report Forecasts for Musky

Wisconsin fisheries biologists report out on recent fish survey results and other news about musky populations in specific waters. These forecasts were filed as of Jan. 1, 2013.

### Ashland County

**Day Lake Flowage** - 625 acres. 28-inch minimum length, daily bag limit of 1 fish. 1 public boat landing, camping available. This 625-acre, stained water impoundment within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in western Ashland County (near the Village of Clam Lake) presents musky anglers with a couple unique opportunities. With very high numbers of musky cruising Day Lake's waters, anglers have a realistic chance of catching a fish each time out. However, the key to catching musky here is to use smaller, bass-sized lures. In addition to experiencing high catch rates, anglers also have the opportunity to harvest a smaller-sized musky (if they so desire) because of a 28-inch minimum length limit. This regulation is applied in situations where increased harvest will likely be beneficial for the musky population in question as well as the overall fish community.

### Bayfield County

**Upper Eau Claire Lake** - 996 acres. Upper EC had a low density musky population in 2012 of 0.09/acre or about 1 musky over 30 inches for every 10 acres. Size structure was excellent in 2012, average length = 41.0 inches, range = 32.0 to 48.0, %  $\geq 40"$  = 50%. 40-inch minimum length limit. Public boat launch. Upper Eau Claire is a clear deep lake and many guides choose to fish for musky at night. In 2010 an angler caught a 55-inch musky in August.

### Brown, Door, Oconto and Marinette counties

**Fox River and Green Bay** - Since 2003, nearly annual assessments to determine the status of the Green Bay muskellunge population have been conducted on the Fox River using fyke nets. Fyke nets set in the Fox River this past May were filled with many large musky with the largest being just over 40 pounds. Many other captured fish were in the 20- to 30-pound range. Male fish appear to recruit to the population at a younger age, but female fish attain larger ultimate size. Currently this population depends on stocking to maintain the population since natural recruitment has been extremely limited. Since 2010 we have spawned ripe musky from the Fox River, raised the eggs at the Besadny Fisheries Facility and stocked over 13,000 fall fingerlings back into the river and bay to enhance the population. Most of the musky fishing occurs on the Fox River, the east side of lower Green Bay, in Little Sturgeon Bay and in the Menominee River from August through the end of November. Successful anglers cover as much water as possible while concentrating on structure of any kind. Some anglers troll exclusively, while others will cast when likely habitat is located. One fish, 50-inch minimum length limit, First Saturday in May through November 30. Most musky anglers launch their boat from the Fox Point Landing or the Metro Ramp on the Fox River, Carmody Ramp on Little Sturgeon Bay, or the Menominee River Ramp. For the first time since 2006, four fyke nets were set in the Lower Menominee River in 2012. 44 spotted musky were captured during the two weeks the nets were fished. The captured musky ranged in length from 37 inches to 55 inches with an average length of 46 inches. Approximately one-third of the captured musky were over 50 inches. The majority of muskellunge were ripe with eggs or milt. Despite the early spring of 2012, females continued to be ripe with eggs to end of the survey on May 17. All but five muskellunge were fin clipped, with almost five times as many yearling stocked muskellunge captured compared to those stocked as fingerlings.

### Chippewa County

**Round Lake** - 216 acres. Modest number of 40 inch and larger muskellunge. 40-inch minimum length limit, daily bag of 1. County boat landing is present on the east shore. Consistent stocking of the past several decades has created a good action lake with some 40 inch and larger fish present. Lake can get busy on the weekends anglers may want to target the lake during the week for best chance of success.

## **Clark County**

**Mead Lake** - 320 acres, Results based on spring 2012 netting. Total catch rate and catch rate of legal fish (40") and larger dropped slightly over rates from the last survey conducted in 2008.

## **Clark, Jackson, Monroe, La Crosse and Trempealeau counties**

**Upper Black River and Lower Black River** - Results based on electrofishing surveys and catch rates expressed as average number of fish captured per mile of river surveyed (#/ mile). Upper river total catch rate of muskellunge was up in 2012 at 4/mile over 1.7/mile in 2011. No muskellunge larger than 40" were captured in 2012 or 2011. Lower river total catch rate of muskellunge was lower in 2012 (0.9/mile) than 2011 (1.4/mile). Catch rate of muskellunge larger than 40" was similar between the two years at 0.1/mile.

## **Dane County**

**Lake Monona** - One of the premier musky lakes without the drive is Madison's Lake Monona . Lying in the heart of Dane county's urban environment, 3,274 acre Lake Monona has gained quite a reputation for big, heavy fish. DNR survey crews completed a population estimate in 2012, netting 114 fish to recapture marked fish from the previous spring. The final density estimate was .49 adult (greater than 30") musky /acre, well with in the upper crust of muskellunge waters statewide. The largest fish was 47.8" and tipped scales at over 27 pounds. The musky season runs to December 31 with a 1 fish over 45" length limit, 5 inches longer than the current statewide 40" regulation. The City of Madison provides launches on the west shore at Olin park, and the east shore at Olbrich launch. A daily fee of \$8 ( seasonal \$45 for non-county residents) is charged. Monona has had several fish over 50" caught and released in the past few years.

## **Dodge County**

### **Beaver Dam and Fox Lake**

While not actively managed as musky lakes, recent surveys on Beaver Dam and Fox Lake show a low number of 35+ inch fish present in both lakes.

## **Florence County**

The **Menominee River system** - the only place in Florence County that you can find fully developed musky populations. Along with having the highest walleye density, the Brule River Flowage also is your best chance to catch a muskellunge in Florence County. This flowage has also been known to produce trophy sized muskellunge in the 50-inch class.

## **Forest County**

**Wabikon and Riley lakes** - We are currently in the middle of a two-year survey to assess the musky population in Wabikon and Riley lakes. During the first year of netting we handled 56 different muskies ranging from 18.4 to 49.7 inches. The average length of musky captured in 2012 from these waters was 35.7 inches. Consider these two lakes action water, making it a good place to take beginners musky fishing.

## **Wisconsin River and its impoundments**

(Lakes Alice, Mohawksin, and Alexander, Grandmother and Grandfather flowages and the connecting riverine portions) 5,000 acres of prime, naturally reproducing muskellunge water; No stocking takes place on these waters; Adult population estimates range from 0.1 to about 0.3 per acre; Parts of this system may be considered more action type waters (Lake Mohawksin) but the whole system has true trophy potential that these lower adult densities help to maintain Rice Reservoir (Lake Nokomis System) 2,274 acres of naturally reproducing muskellunge water; No stocking takes place. The adult population estimate is in the range of about 0.25 per acre at full pool; Consider this more of a lower density, high size quality water with true trophy potential; Our nets routinely catch big, fat, and healthy fish in the upper 40" range on this system.

## **Green Lake County**

**Little Green Lake** - 466 acres. Little Green is one of the few lakes in this part of the State to provide a musky fishery. It is a stocked fishery and receives an annual quota of fall fingerlings from the DNR and also gets some supplemental stocking by local lake groups. Angler caught fish typically average around 38", but fish upwards of 50" have been caught in recent years. Little Green falls under the standard statewide regulation for musky; opening on the first Saturday in May and ending on December 31st. The minimum length limit is 40" with a bag of one. There are three public access points around the lake and one private landing located at Todd's Landing.

## Iowa County

**Twin Valley Lake** - 140 acres. Twin Valley Lake located in Gov. Dodge State Park. The lake has a good boat access and parking. A park sticker is required. The lake is extremely heavily fished for musky. The lake is electric motor only. Twin Valley Lake has quite possibly the highest density of 30" to 40" muskies in the state. There are very few fish over the 40" length limit. Twin Valley Lake was the first lake in the state to have the 40" length limit which has now become the statewide limit. The length limit will not be raised as the food base in this lake is not suitable for really large fish. It will continue to be managed as a high density, medium-sized fish fishery. The fishery is the result of DNR stocking.

## Iron County

**Moose Lake** - 269 acres. 40-inch minimum length, daily bag limit of 1 fish. 1 public boat landing, 1 campsite. Anglers seeking some musky action on a quiet, undeveloped northwoodslake should venture over to Moose Lake in central Iron County. Moose Lake is not for all, however; About 4 miles of gravel road and a boat landing best suited for smaller rigs stands between those willing and Moose's muskies. During a 2012 spring netting survey, 44 muskies, ranging in size between 27.1 and 39.8 inches, were captured and finclipped for a potential population estimate. Past population estimates of Moose Lake musky have resulted in over 0.4 adult fish ( $\geq 30$  inches) per acre, which is above the statewide average amongst musky populations. With the relatively-high netting catch rates experienced during this past spring's survey, it is anticipated that the population estimate will again be up around that level. Anglers will likely want to throw shallow-running and/or surface lures in Moose Lake's dark, shallow water, which may make for some exciting action!

**Turtle-Flambeau Flowage** - 13,545 acres. 40-inch minimum length limit, daily bag limit of 1 fish. 6 public boat landings, camping available.. At 13,545 acres, and with a forage base consisting of redhorse, white sucker, cisco (in some areas), etc., the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage has the potential to produce some big muskies. A recent 2011 spring netting survey captured 66 musky with less than expected effort. Of those fish, 45% were 38 inches or better and 20% were 42 inches or better. In addition, during the 2012 open-water season, there were at least two 50-inch plus fish caught, and our Mercer DNR fish team captured a 49.9-inch musky while sampling panfish! Anglers trying to locate these monsters may want to come prepared with a lure retriever to avoid losses to the many submerged stumps residing in the Flowage's stained water.

## Langlade County

**Enterprise Lake** - 505 acres. Stocked at 0.5 fish per acre in alternate years; 2006 adult population estimate of 0.48 per acre with very good size quality as shown by fish up to 46" captured.

**Summit Lake** - 282 acres. Stocked at 0.5 fish per acre in alternate years; 2010 adult population estimate of 0.43 per acre; Consider this more of an action lake with fish up to 42" common.

## Lincoln, Marathon, Portage, Wood, Adams and Juneau counties

**Wisconsin River** - The muskellunge population in the Wisconsin River has been surveyed in recent years in various flowages from Merrill downstream to Castle Rock Lake. These surveys show that muskies have great growth and the system is capable and is in fact producing trophy size (50 inch) fish. In the 2010 fish survey of Petenwell Lake, 232 muskies were caught. Based on this survey data, most age classes are growing faster than or the same as the average growth observed for musky in Wisconsin. Of the muskies that were at least stock length (20 inches), 99% were at least of quality length size (30 inches), 39% were at least of preferred size (38 inches), and 17% were at least of memorable size (42 inches). During our 2012 fall sturgeon survey on the Biron Flowage, five muskies were caught and all were greater than 40 inches and were very thick fish. The minimum length limit for muskellunge is 45 inches with a daily bag limit of one. Angler access to the Wisconsin River is excellent with multiple access points for every segment. Maps are available through DNR's online boating access site. Multiple waterbodies on the Wisconsin River system are Class A1 waters, these waters are best known as "trophy waters" for their ability to consistently produce a number of large fish, but overall the abundance of muskies may be relatively low. These waterbodies include: Big Eau Pleine Reservoir, Lake Dubai, Mosinee Flowage, Lake Wausau, Stevens Point Flowage, Wisconsin River sections in Stevens Point and Whiting, Biron Flowage, Petenwell Lake, and Castle Rock Lake. All other sections of the river are Class B waters, meaning these waters provide good fishing. A large number of muskies in the river are tagged with orange internal anchor tags, placed on their belly between their pectoral and pelvic fins. Anglers should report this valuable recapture information by calling the telephone number on the tag. The information reported should be the tag number, fish length, and as much information as they want to give about the location where the fish was caught.

## **Marinette County**

### **Caldron Falls and High Falls**

(1,018 and 1,498 acres, respectively). Both fisheries are maintained through a combination of stocking and natural reproduction. The density (fish / acre) of musky is higher in Caldron Falls but fish in the upper 40-inch range are not uncommon. 40-inch minimum length / 1 fish per day. There are 4 boat landings on Caldron Falls and five on High Falls. Shore fishing opportunities are excellent. Most of the shoreline lies within the Peshtigo River State Forest.

## **Polk County**

**Bone Lake** - 1,781 acres The Bone lake muskellunge population was estimated to be 0.42 fish per acre during the 2011-2012 survey. Although the population appeared to have decreased since the 2005 survey, the lake still offers quality musky angling in terms of numbers and size. 50-inch minimum length limit; 1 fish daily bag limit There are two public boat landings. South boat landing is off Dueholm Drive. The landing on the north end is off 250th Avenue and down Bone Lake Park Lane. Muskellunge were initially stocked into Bone Lake in 1935, and the lake has been managed for muskellunge since then.

## **Sauk County**

**Lake Redstone** - 612 acres. A survey started in the spring of 2010 and completed in the spring of 2011, estimated the adult muskellunge population at 200 with a density of 0.33/acre. Average length was 35.7 inches with a range from 12.3 – 46.7 inches. 50-inch minimum length limit, with a daily bag limit of 1 fish. Three public boat access points exist on the lake, which are controlled by the township and county. Each site has a paved launch and trailer parking available. There are shore fishing opportunities at the Fox Court boat landing on the northern part of the lake, and off of the Sauk County Park land at the southern end of the lake. The new 50-inch minimum length limit, enacted in 2012, will help create the potential for a trophy fishery.

## **Sawyer County**

**Mason and Evergreen lakes** - County in the Flambeau River State Forest 390 acres combined. Mason 190 acres + Evergreen 200 acres. Evergreen Lake had greater muskellunge abundance and higher proportions of preferred- and memorable-size muskellunge than Mason Lake. Catch rate of muskellunge  $\geq 20$  inches in fyke nets was three times higher in Evergreen than in Mason and identical to the statewide average rate sustained by natural reproduction. In both lakes combined. 87% of musky greater than 20 inches were 30 inches or longer. 20 % of musky greater than 20 inches are 38 inches or longer. 7 % of musky greater than 20 inches are 42 inches or longer. Statewide regulation. Musky minimum length 40 inches and the daily bag is 1 Unimproved, shallow-water access to Mason Lake at the end of Snuss Boulevard. Limited maneuvering and parking area at the undeveloped landing. Boat access to Evergreen Lake by water only; no boat landing. Natural variation in water level dictates the ease of launching boats from trailers and navigating through the shallow channel between Mason and Evergreen lakes. Not recommended for large boats.

**Spider and Tiger Cat lakes** - (1,454 and 1,012 acres, respectively). Both of these lakes have a really low hours/catch for muskellunge (12 and 19 hours respectively). Muskies are caught in Spider at over twice the rate of the statewide average (27 hours/catch) 28 inch minimum length limit. Spider (state launch off of Murphy Blvd.), Tigercat (boat access off of Twin Lakes Rd., some fishing areas above and below the dam) Both of these lakes have high density muskellunge populations. Great places for an angler to come and try to catch their first musky. Also a good place to take kids musky fishing because of the high likelihood of action.

## **Sheboygan County**

**Big Elkhart Lake** - 286 acres. An adult population estimate from 2011 and 2012 surveys yielded an estimate of 83 adult fish, or 1 muskellunge per ~3 acres in Big Elkhart Lake. This density coupled with an excellent forage base which includes cisco allows for very good growth. Lengths ranged from 30 - 49.4 inches and averaged 36.4 inches. Minimum length limit is 50 inches, with a daily bag of 1. A public boat launch can be found on CTH P Since 2009 the DNR has stocked the "Great Lakes Spotted" (GLS) muskellunge strain into the lake. Prior to their release, the GLS muskellunge are rigorously tested for diseases and micro-tagged to aid in identification later in life. The goal of the 50-inch length limit and stocking is to develop a population of adult fish that can be spawned to aid in the restoration of GLS muskellunge into Green Bay and Lake Michigan. Elkhart Lake was selected as a brood water because of its nearness to Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery and the lakes' proven ability to grow large muskies.

## Vilas County

**Snipe Lake** - 239 acres. A spring 2012 netting survey captured 17 musky. 40-inch minimum length limit, 1 fish bag limit. Access to the lake is by the county boat landing on the west shore of the lake off Wilderness Trail Road. This lake is one of the smallest in the state that has a musky fishery sustained completely through natural reproduction. Emma and Julia lakes, Oneida County We found high muskellunge numbers during netting surveys on Emma (223 acres) and Julia (238 acres) near Rhinelander. Both lakes have been stocked by Muskellunge Clubs Alliance of Wisconsin since 2003, and fish up to about 40 inches are fairly common. Julia had a few more 40+ inch fish, from DNR stocking prior to 2003.

## Waukesha County

**Pewaukee Lake** - 2,437 surface acres. Average Length – 34 inches. Population estimate – 0.35 adults per acre. 40-inch minimum length with a daily bag limit of 1. There are two boat launches found on Pewaukee Lake; the county park launch on the west side and Smoky's bait shop on the east side. Pewaukee Lake is home to the largest musky density in southeastern Wisconsin. Not only do the muskies in Pewaukee boast an average size of 34 inches, anglers annually catch a few fish over 50 inches. Abundant yellow perch, black crappie and bluegills make up an excellent forage base for this thriving musky population. The DNR propagation program provides an excellent muskellunge product that is stocked annually.

**Okauchee Lake** – 1,210 surface acres. Average Length – 34 inches. Population estimate – 0.2 adults per acre. 40-inch minimum length with a daily bag limit of 1. There are two boat launches found on Okauchee Lake; the DNR boat launch on upper Oconomowoc Lake and The Golden Mast Restaurant on the west basin of Okauchee. Okauchee Lake has a maximum depth of 94 feet which results in above average growth potential for top end predators like musky. Okauchee Lake also has a cisco population which provides an additional forage base making this lake a great option for catching a giant.

## Washburn County

**Shell Lake** - 2,580 acres. In a spring 2012 netting survey, 38% of the muskellunge captured were over 40 inches in length. 40 inch minimum length limit, one fish daily bag limit. There is a large public boat launch operated by the city of Shell Lake on the west end of the lake off of State Highway 63. Though one of the largest lakes in Washburn County, Shell Lake only has 10.2 miles of shoreline.

## Price and Vilas counties

**Pike Lake Chain** – 1,905 combined acres. Results from our spring netting 2012 survey found 87% of musky greater than 20 inches are 30 inches or longer (quality size) 36% of musky greater than 20 inches are 38 inches or longer (preferred size) 15% of musky greater than 20 inches are 42 inches or longer (memorable size). Our measures suggest low to moderate adult population density throughout the Chain and, as expected, musky were more abundant in the two larger lakes than in Turner and Amik Lakes. Size structure was similar among Amik, Pike and Round lakes, but our surveys revealed no musky of preferred size in Turner Lake. The minimum length of muskellunge is 40 inches. Motor trolling is permitted on Pike, Round, and Turner lakes only (permitted county-wide in Price County). Trolling is not permitted on Amik Lake. Public boat access to the Chain from two public boat landings on Round Lake. USDA Forest Service Landing off of Forest Road 144—suitable for most boats; parking in federal fee area requires annual or daily permit. State landing off of Thorofare Road near connecting channel between Pike and Round Lakes—shallow water boat access; no fees. Slow-no wake restrictions in connecting waters. In the Anishinaabe language, amik means “beaver.” DNR stocks musky as large fingerlings into Pike, Round, and Turner lakes in alternate years. Numerous log fish cribs placed throughout Pike and Round Lake about 15 years ago. A portage trail at the north end of Round Lake provides walk-in shorefishing and carry-in boat access to Tucker Lake.

