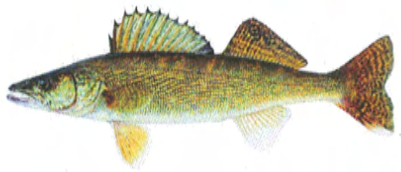
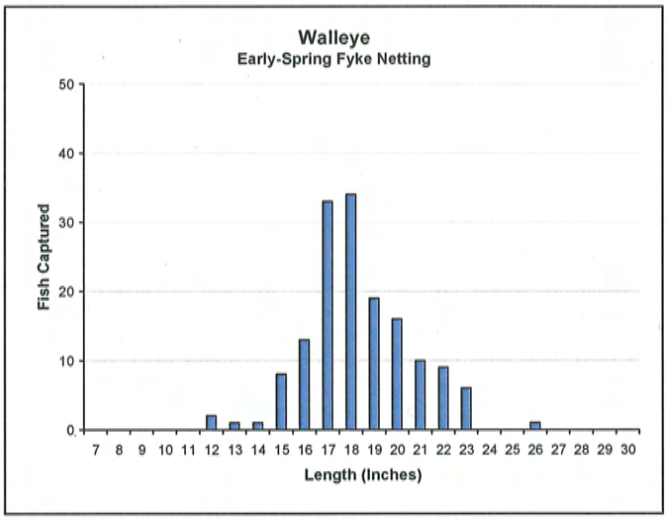
Early-Spring Fyke Netting Survey Summary
Lac Courte Oreilles, Sawyer County, 2010

The Hayward DNR Fisheries Management Team conducted a fyke netting survey on Lac Courte Oreilles during April 12-14, 2010 as part of our baseline monitoring program. Eight nets were set overnight for two nights, resulting in 16 net-nights of effort. Primary target species were walleye, muskellunge, northern pike, black crappie and yellow perch. An electrofishing survey conducted by our team in late May documented the status of smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, bluegill and other species. Those results are summarized in a separate survey report. Quality, preferred, and memorable sizes referenced in this summary are based on standard proportions of world record lengths developed for each species by the American Fisheries Society.

Walleye

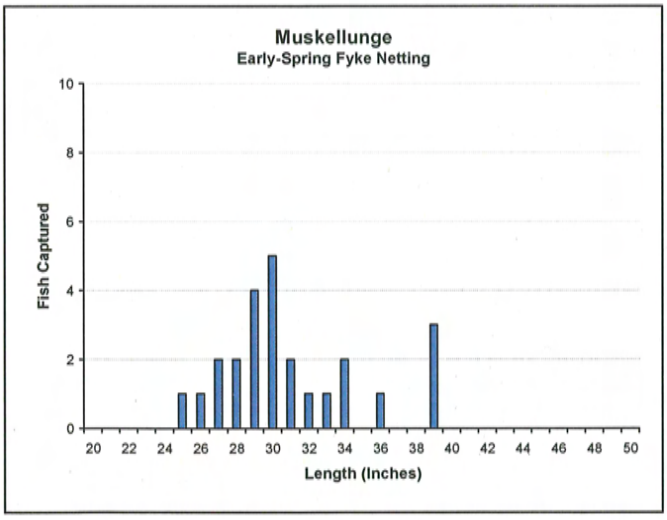


Captured 10 per net-night ≥ 10”	
Quality Size ≥ 15”	97%
Preferred Size ≥ 20”	27%



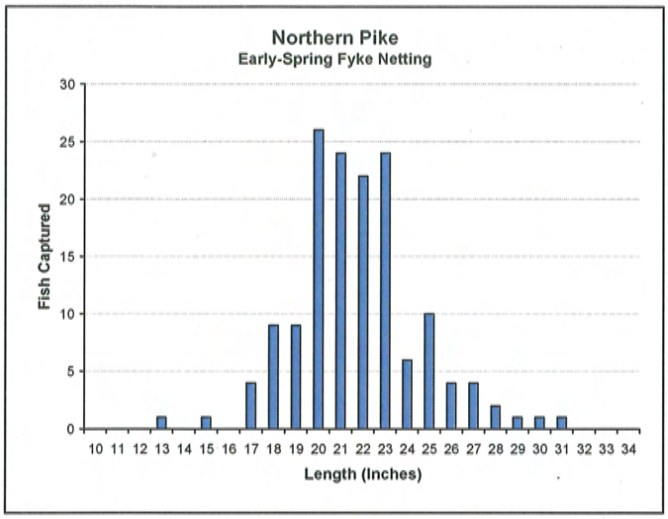
Muskellunge

Captured 1.6 per net-night ≥ 20”	
Quality Size ≥ 30”	60%
Memorable Size ≥ 42”	0%



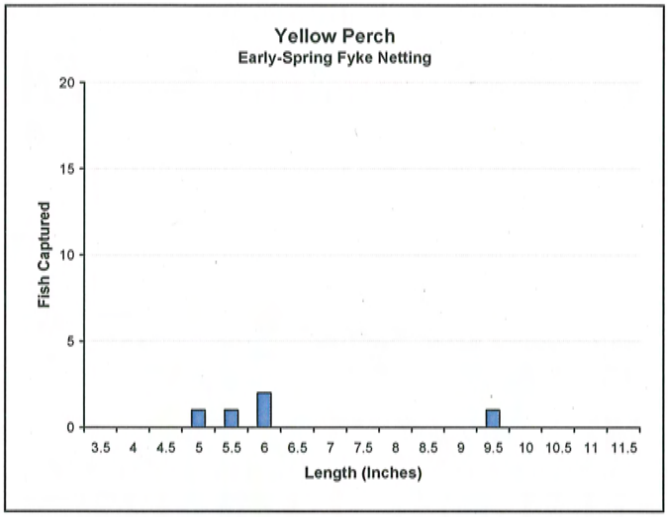
Northern Pike

Captured 9.3 per net-night ≥ 14”	
Quality Size ≥ 21”	67%
Preferred Size ≥ 28”	3.4%



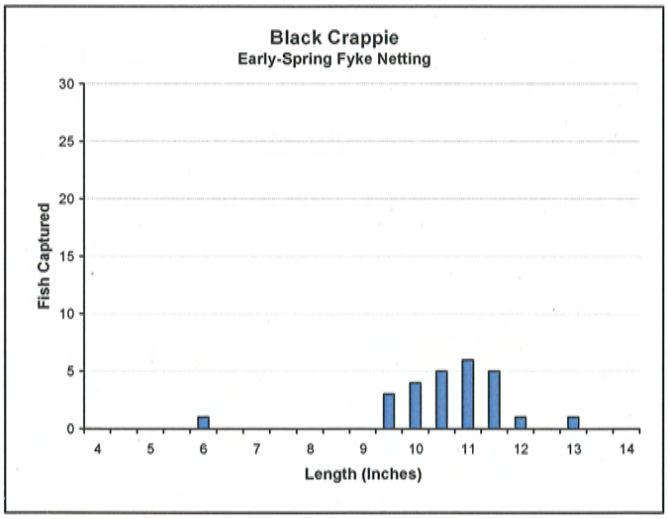
Yellow Perch

Captured 0.5 per net-night ≥ 5”	
Quality Size ≥ 8”	20%
Preferred Size ≥ 10”	0%



Black Crappie

Captured 1.6 per net-night ≥ 5”	
Quality Size ≥ 8”	96%
Preferred Size ≥ 10”	85%



Summary of Results

In early spring of 2010 the water level in Lac Courte Oreilles was still a foot or two below normal due to prolonged drought. However, due to the lake's shape and geology; an abundance of high-quality walleye spawning habitat (clean gravel and cobble) was still available. With water temperature in the high 40s, our survey was well-timed for purposes of obtaining a representative sample of target species adults in likely near-shore spawning areas.

We captured a moderate number of walleye ≥ 10 inches (10 per net-night) – a slight increase from our 2008 survey (6.9 per net-night). The proportion of quality-size fish ≥ 15 inches was 97%, which was similar to the 2008 survey (93%) and higher than our 2006 Management Plan* target range of 50-70%. An impressive 27% of walleyes were of preferred size ≥ 20 inches in 2010 (9.1% in 2008) which is also higher than our target range of 5-10%. This increase in the proportion of large fish reflects relatively low recruitment of young fish in recent years (2005-2008) and the satisfactory growth of adult year classes (hatched in 2001-2004) that comprise most of the current population. Fortunately, our fall 2009 electrofishing survey documented a highly successful 2009 walleye year class (135 per mile of shoreline) – a combination of stocked and naturally produced fish – that should soon recruit to the adult population.

Muskellunge capture rate in 2010 (1.6 per net-night) was higher than average for northern Wisconsin (0.95 per net-night) and slightly greater than in 2008 (1.3 per net-night). The proportion of quality-size muskellunge ≥ 30 inches was 60% in 2010, which mirrored the 2008 survey (62% at quality size ≥ 30 inches). No fish > 40 inches were caught in 2010, as was the case in 2008. As anglers have demonstrated, there are a few trophy muskellunge in Lac Courte Oreilles; however, they occur in such low abundance they may easily avoid detection in surveys of this scope. We believe this survey reasonably represents current population size structure. The abundance of 28- to 32-inch muskellunge is probably a result of recent stockings of larger-than-average muskellunge fingerlings by the Hayward Lakes Chapter of Muskies, Incorporated.

Capture rate of northern pike ≥ 14 inches was very high (9.3 per net-night) and is four times greater than in 2008 (2.2 per net-night), despite recent mechanical removal efforts by cooperating state and tribal fishery managers. Pike size structure had not changed since 2008 (67% at quality size ≥ 21 inches and 3.4% at preferred size ≥ 28 inches).

We captured few yellow perch ≥ 5 inches (0.5 per net-night). Capture rate had decreased in comparison to the 2008 survey (10 per net-night); and the absence of 6.5- to 9.4-inch perch in our 2010 sample likely reflects high predation by both walleyes and over-abundant northern pike. We captured black crappie ≥ 5 inches at a low rate as well (1.6 per net-night). Although, our catch was comprised almost entirely of larger fish (85% at preferred size ≥ 10 inches), we are still below our 2006 Management Plan objectives of 5-10 per net-night with 40-60% of memorable size ≥ 12 inches (only 8% in both 2010 and 2008 surveys).

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November 3, 2010

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November 4, 2010

*Available online at: http://dnr.wi.gov/water/basin/upchip/documents/LacCourteOreilles.pdf