

WALLEYE!

More for Wisconsin's waters



UPDATE JUNE 2014

An initiative aims to boost fishing statewide for walleye — Wisconsin anglers' favorite target and a cornerstone of the state's tourism industry.

The Wisconsin Walleye Initiative represents a historic effort by the governor's office, Department of Natural Resources and partners statewide to maintain the strength of the state's wild walleye waters while developing a more productive sport fishery in lakes capable of sustaining this prized fish.

Through collaboration with state, private and tribal fish hatcheries, DNR plans to increase the number of large or "extended growth" walleye fingerlings released from 450,000 during 2013 to between 750,000 and 800,000 in 2015. Extended growth walleye fingerlings are young fish 6 inches or larger. Prior to the initiative, 40,000 large fingerlings were stocked annually. Plans call for stocking about 140 lakes during 2014 and an additional 140 lakes in 2015, up from the average 35 lakes stocked with the larger fingerlings in past years.

Under the initiative, DNR also will continue stocking 1 million smaller walleye in approximately 40 lakes each year where conditions allow for survival of the smaller fish. As part of the state's \$12 million funding commitment over three years, the plan includes \$8.2 million for major infrastructure improvements to increase efficiency and modernize the fish-rearing process as well as \$1.3 million for annual operating costs and additional funds for competitive grants to partner organizations.

DNR applauds the Wisconsin businesses, sport anglers, environmental groups, elected officials and concerned citizens who have come together to develop the Wisconsin Walleye Initiative – a groundbreaking effort that balances recreational and economic interests with the need to preserve our state's exceptional natural resources. Thousands of individuals already have contributed insights and expertise and additional public involvement is welcome.

The Wisconsin Walleye Initiative promises to bolster the great legacy of walleye fishing in Wisconsin while providing new opportunities for future generations of anglers.

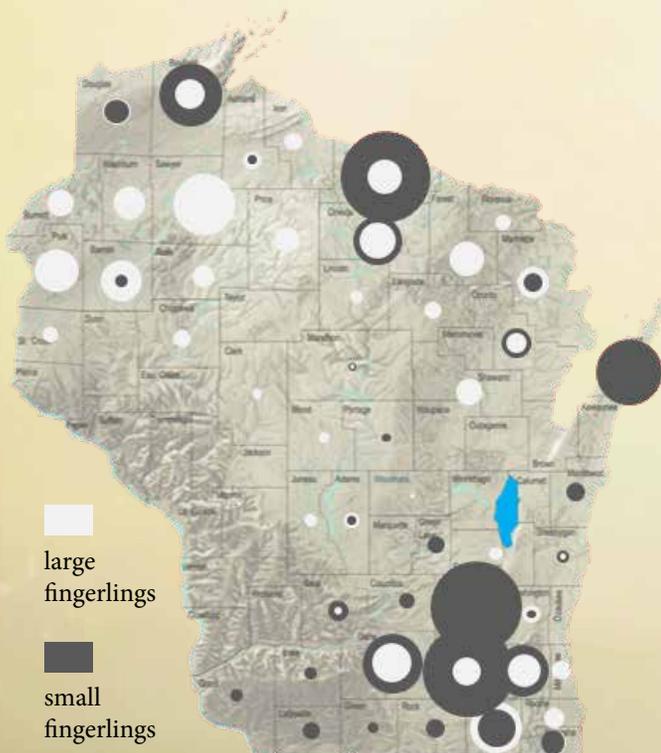
Initiative Timeline

- MAY '13** Review and update 2013 stocking quotas
- JULY '13** Purchase bait fish
- SEPT '13** Stock fish
- OCT '13** Stakeholder meetings (business and grant program development)
- NOV '13** Develop stocking priorities for 2014
Grant materials released
- DEC '13** Stocking guidance finalized
- JAN '14** Grant applications due
- MAR '14** Grant contracts awarded
- JULY '14** Hatchery infrastructure designs due
- OCT '14** Purchase and stock fish
- MAR '15** Award bids for contract purchase of fingerlings
- OCT '15** Purchase and stock fish

Wisconsin Walleye Initiative Milestones

Stocking Strategy

Based on a stocking strategy developed with public input, the team completed a master list of lakes for stocking in 2014 and 2015. Stocking priorities were based on criteria including anticipated fingerling survival, history of natural reproduction, public access, tribal interest (for ceded territory lakes) and potential tourism impact. Minor adjustments may be made.



Distribution by county of proposed stocking of large and small walleye fingerlings in 2014 and 2015.

Stocking Survival

Preliminary evaluation of fish survival in Wisconsin Walleye Initiative lakes is now underway. The bulk of one-year survival evaluations will occur in fall electrofishing surveys following the year of stocking.

Hatchery Infrastructure Improvements

Design contracts for key infrastructure improvements planned under the initiative are in

process for the Gov. Tommy G. Thompson and Art Oehmcke state fish hatcheries. A contract for a new well at the Wild Rose hatchery also is progressing.

Wild Walleye Waters

Wisconsin has an abundance of excellent natural walleye waters with healthy and genetically unique walleye populations. These waters do not need to be stocked and for the first time, as a part of the Wisconsin Walleye Initiative, DNR fisheries biologists are developing a statewide list of these waters (visually represented on the map below) for anglers and tourism inter-



Identification of a subset of Wisconsin's higher density, naturally reproducing walleye waters. The number of waters will likely change over time.

ests. The initial list can be found at dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/outreach/walleyeinitiative.html. This list will be added to over time as specific fishery management objectives are developed for individual waters.

Public Input

There has been an extensive, ongoing public input and comment process.

The walleye stocking strategy for 2014-2015 started as a draft document in 2013 and resulted in an approved plan in January 2014. Key aspects of the public comment and review process involved:

- o Vetting with public stakeholders including business focus groups in Hayward and Rhinelander;
- o An online survey in October 2013 that generated 1,200 responses;
- o Additional public meetings in Hayward, Rhinelander and Oconomowoc - October 2013;
- o Discussions with tribes about priority lakes for stocking;
- o Discussions with fish biologists statewide regarding plans to stock with fry, small fingerlings and extended growth fingerlings; and

- o A focused input process with private aquaculture operators that resulted in additional recommendations and a formal report, "Wisconsin Walleye Initiative, Regulatory Review and Recommendations Study," published Nov. 15, 2013.

Future walleye stocking management actions will be included in an updated Wisconsin Walleye management plan, developed with additional public and tribal input. It is expected to be produced by the fall of 2015.

Grants and Production Contracts

- Grant commitments: Agreements with nine grant recipients including six private fish farms and three tribal fish farms have been established and a total of \$2 million has been committed for proposed infrastructure improvements among the partners. These infrastructure construction projects are in progress.

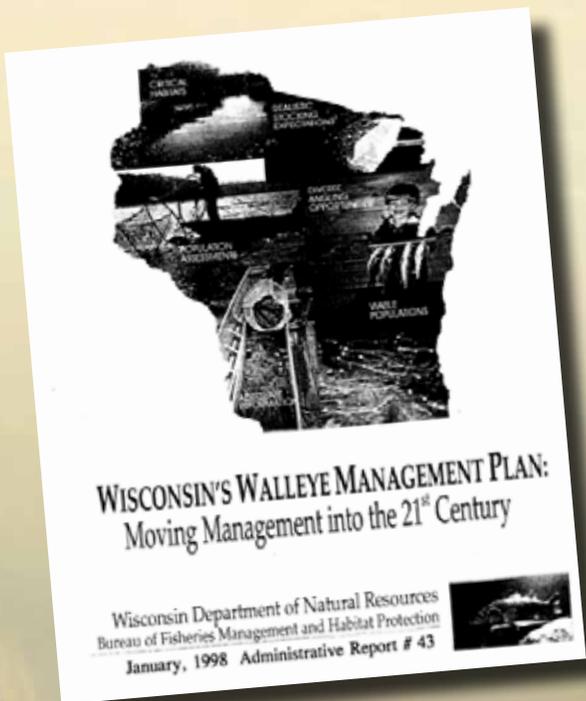
Eggs were distributed to the grantees at the beginning of May. Proposed increases in fish production capacity are on target for fall 2014.

- Production contracts: DNR has committed to purchasing fish from the nine grant recipients at the following cost over the next four years.

Year	No. of fish	Cost
2014	211,000	\$373,100
2015	369,000	\$654,750
2016	362,000	\$676,600
2017	100,000	\$209,300

Continued Research

- Private hatchery capacity study: DNR continues to study private sector capacity for augmenting state fish hatchery activities.
- Select state hatchery research: A study of the Kettle Moraine Springs State Fish Hatchery is in progress.



The Wisconsin Walleye Management Plan is expected to be revised with public and tribal input by the fall of 2015.

Outreach

Outreach plays an important role as the Wisconsin Walleye Initiative aims to increase public



The Wisconsin Walleye Initiative Web page includes the latest information on all aspects of the initiative.

understanding of scientifically based management practices while building regional tourism interest in Wisconsin walleye fishing. Outreach efforts included:

- Web pages: The Wisconsin Walleye Initiative Web page (dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/outreach/walleye_initiative.html) continues to



A special supplement in the Daily Herald found its way to 110,000 households in the affluent suburban Chicago market.

be updated as needed. Work has begun on the development of a comprehensive and informative “Wisconsin’s Walleye” Web page. This will be an online resource—“a one-stop shop” for walleye with information about stocking plans, walleye biology, how to fish for walleye and general news and features.

- Fishing promotion and ongoing advertising: Video and animated content was created for online and TV promotions to highlight Wisconsin walleye fishing. Together, the buys offered the potential to reach 85 percent of all TV homes in Wisconsin and Minnesota, with an additional 13,000 homes in the Rockford area.

- Online advertising: Wisconsin walleye fishing is being promoted through advertising opportunities under contract with JS Online and Gannett including targeted behavioral advertising through Facebook and Yahoo.

- Tourism conference: DNR sponsored a booth at the Governor’s Conference on Tourism to introduce the initiative.

- Special supplement: DNR placed a full-page ad in a Travel Wisconsin supplement distributed in the Daily Herald to 110,000 households in the affluent suburban Chicago market.

- Building interactive opportunities: DNR continues to work with mobile app developers to include walleye waters in the newly launched *Official Wisconsin Fish and Wildlife Guide App*.

Resources

- [Walleye Initiative Web Page](#)
- [Proposed List of Stocked Walleye Fingerlings, 2014 and 2015](#)
- [Initial List of Key Statewide Naturally Reproducing Walleye Waters](#)

For more information visit

dnr.wi.gov
and search “walleye.”

