



State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Jim Doyle, Governor
Matthew J. Frank, Secretary

101 S. Webster St.
Box 7921
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921
Telephone 608-266-2621
FAX 608-267-3579
TTY Access via relay - 711

September 5, 2008,

Subject: Wild Bait Harvest and Testing Requirements

Dear Wisconsin Bait Dealers:

This letter is directed at Wisconsin bait dealers who harvest wild minnows from Wisconsin waters and is intended to explain updated fish health testing requirements for wild harvested minnows.

Background Information

Currently, no minnow harvest of any kind is allowed from VHS known and suspected waters. This includes Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, the Mississippi River, Lake Winnebago and the Fox River downstream to Green Bay, and all waters connecting to these up to the first barrier impassable to fish. A complete list of closed waters can be found at the DNR website listed below.

On all other waters, personal collection and use of minnows is allowed, but no live minnows may be moved away from the water except by Wisconsin bait dealers who have obtained a wild bait harvest permit from the Department of Natural Resources. A separate permit is required for each waterbody or stream segment and they are valid for a specific 30 day time period. The permit is free, but must be obtained BEFORE any minnows are harvested. More information on the wild bait harvest permit can be found at the website listed below.

Wild bait harvest permits may only be issued to persons holding a Wisconsin bait dealers license, or persons under age 16 who sell minnows for bait but are exempted from needing a bait dealer license under certain conditions. Generally everyone who sells bait or possesses more than 600 minnows at any one time must obtain a Wisconsin bait dealer license or meet the exemption above. If you are not sure whether you need a bait dealer license, please check with your local DNR office.

ALL minnows harvested from Wisconsin waters by Wisconsin bait dealers under a wild bait harvest permit must receive a Fish Health Certificate (FHC) from a qualified fish health inspector before they can be distributed or used. The only exceptions to this are instances where the minnows are sold or moved to a registered fish farm where the minnows will be tested before they leave the farm.

Health Testing

Fish Health Certificates are issued for a group or "lot" of minnows that is ready to be distributed or used. You may combine separate harvests from different waters and time periods as long as you do not add any new or uninspected minnows to the "lot" after the inspection process is started. Once the FHC is obtained for a "lot" of fish, they may be used, sold, or otherwise distributed, however a separate copy of the FHC should accompany any fish taken from that group. A separate FHC is required for each species in the "lot."

The Fish Health Certificate inspection must be repeated for every species in the "lot." This requires the necropsy (dissecting the fish to look for diseases) of 20 minnows of each species and a visual inspection of all other fish.

If a "lot" contains US Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) listed VHS susceptible species the FHC for the listed species must include a test for VHS performed by a qualified

laboratory. Tests for VHS are done on groups of 60 fish. Lists of APHIS susceptible species can also be found on the DNR website.

In accordance with DATCP rules, the FHC will be good for 30 days if no uninspected minnows are added to the "lot." If new uninspected minnows are added to the "lot", a new FHC will be required.

The Fish Health Certificate must be issued by a DATCP qualified fish health inspector. A list of qualified fish health inspectors can be found at both the DNR and DATCP websites listed below. Inspections can be done at the minnow holding location or the entire "lot" may be brought to the inspector to perform the FHC. Contact the inspector in your area to discuss options and inspection details. Copies of the completed FHC (and VHS test results if required) must be submitted by the fish health inspector to DATCP and the bait harvester must submit a copy to DNR within 7 days of the inspection. Copies sent to the DNR are to be sent to the same address as listed on the wild bait harvest permit.

You may note that these procedures are revised primarily to allow the testing of pooled fish collections. DNR and DATCP have been working with federal and state fish health authorities across the country to refine fish health testing procedures. We feel these revised procedures will continue to provide reasonable protection against the spread of fish diseases through bait harvest through an inspection of all harvested fish by a qualified fish health inspector, but also streamline the inspection process for many wild bait harvesters.

If you have any questions concerning DNR wild bait harvest permits please direct them to Ted Treska, WDNR (608-267-7659 or ted.treska@wisconsin.gov). Questions concerning DATCP rules should be directed to Dr. Myron Kibus, DATCP (608-224-4876 or myron.kebus@wisconsin.gov).

For more information, please see the appropriate agency websites listed below.

DNR

http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/vhs/vhs_wildbait.html

DATCP (see the Aquaculture heading)

<http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/core/animals/animals.jsp>

Thanks for your cooperation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael P. Stagg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mike Stagg

Director, Bureau of Fisheries Management
Wisconsin DNR