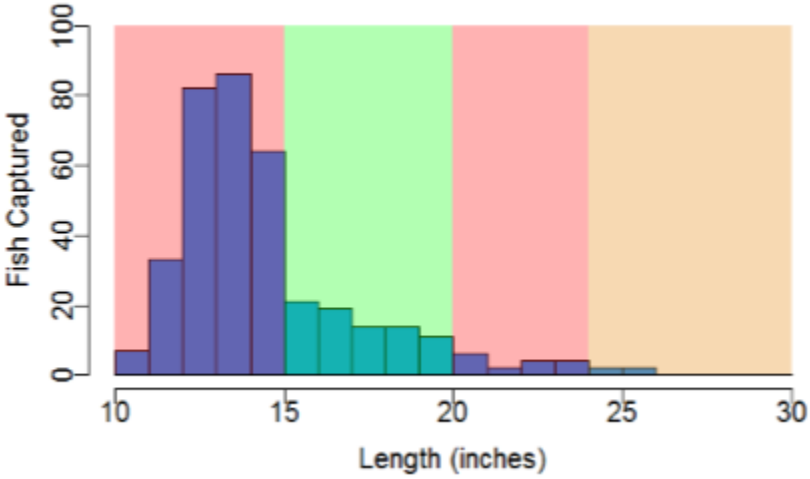
Spring Fisheries Survey Summary
Lake Chippewa, Sawyer County, 2018

The Hayward DNR Fisheries Management Team conducted a fyke netting survey on Lake Chippewa (also known as The Chippewa Flowage) from May 3-6 to assess the adult walleye, northern pike, and yellow perch populations. A second netting effort from May 12-15 (when water temperatures were between 50-60F) targeted muskellunge and black crappie populations. An electrofishing survey conducted on May 16th and 17th documented the status of bluegill, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, and non-game species, but also provided information on juvenile walleye. Twelve miles of shoreline were shocked. Survey efforts in 2018 focused on the east side of the lake (east of County Highway CC). 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.

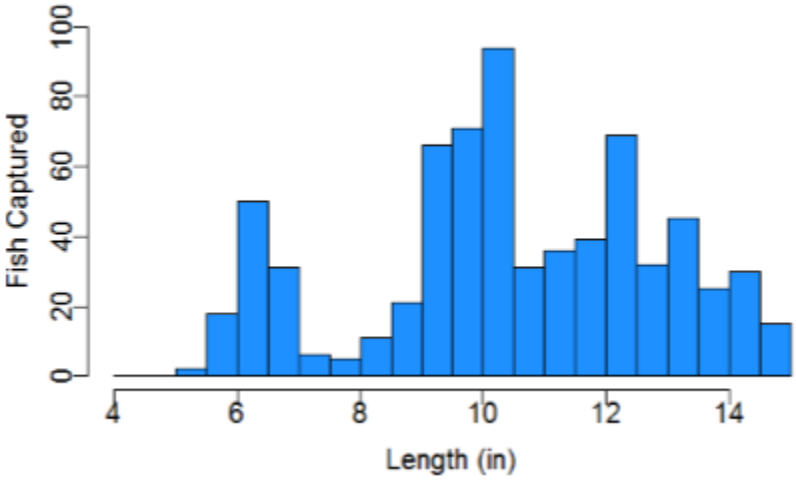
Walleye (Adult)

Captured 21 per net-night ≥ 10 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 15"	27%
Preferred Size ≥ 20"	5%



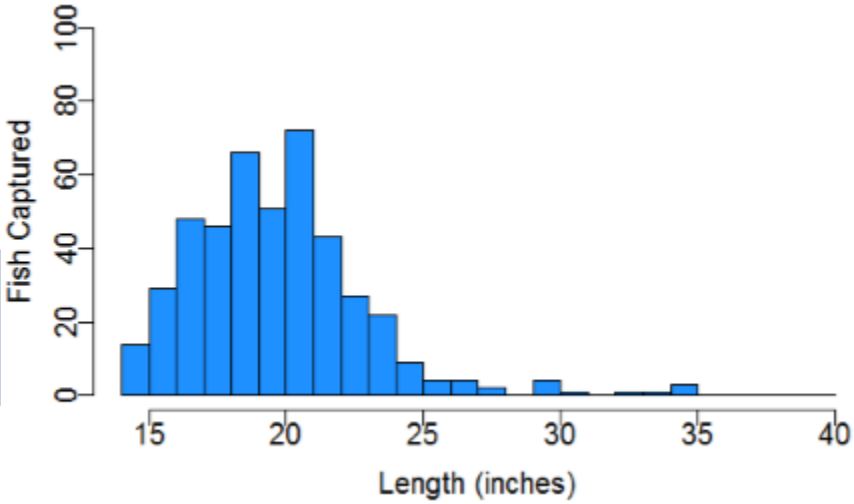
Walleye (Juvenile)

Captured 58 per mile ≤ 15 inches



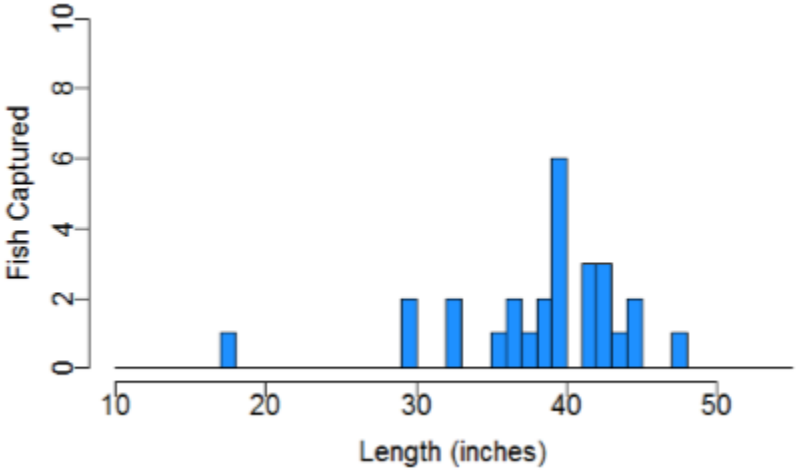
Northern Pike

Captured 25 per net-night ≥ 14 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 21"	27%
Preferred Size ≥ 28"	2%



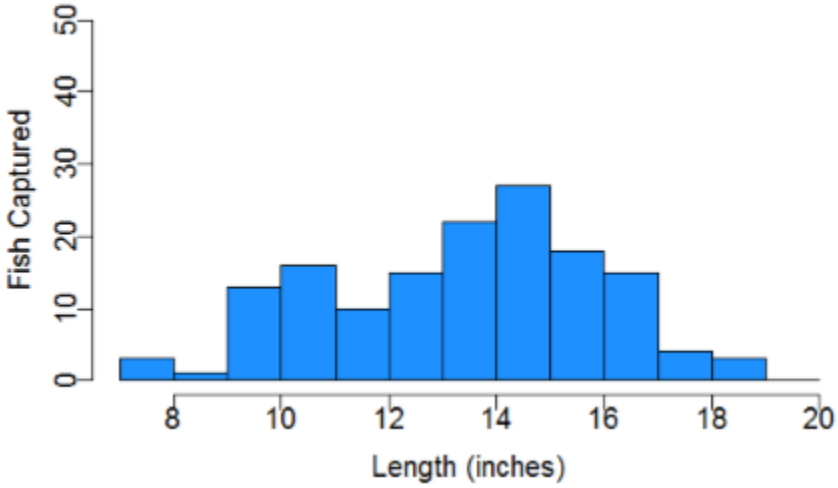
Muskellunge

Captured 0.9 per net-night ≥ 20 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 30"	92%
Memorable Size ≥ 42"	27%



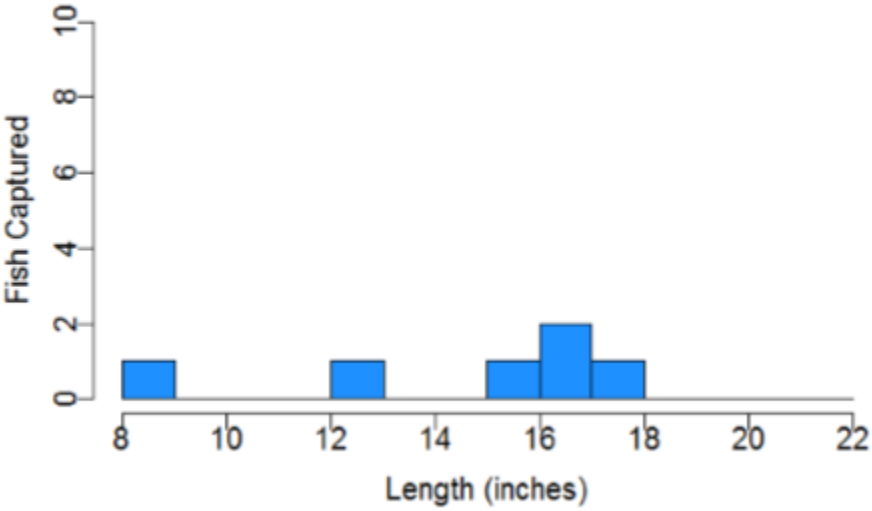
Smallmouth bass

Captured 12 per mile ≥ 7 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 11"	78%
Preferred Size ≥ 14"	46%
Memorable Size ≥ 17"	5%



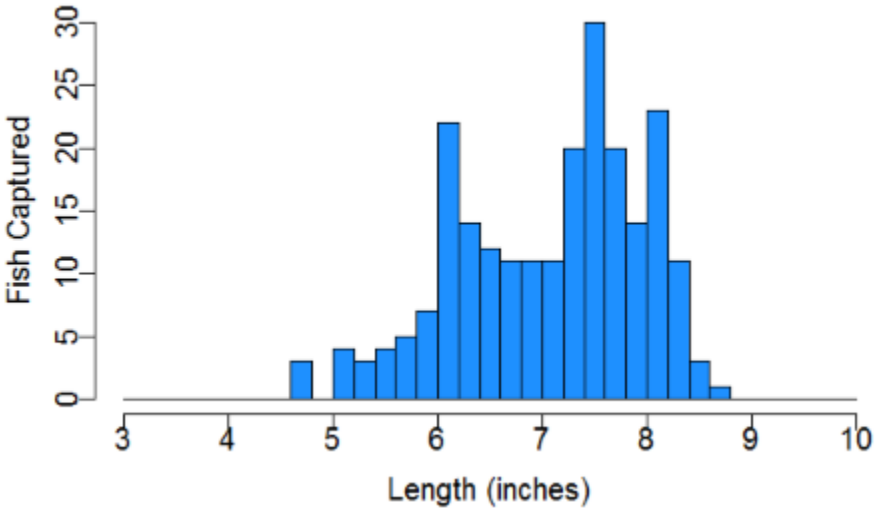
Largemouth bass

Captured 0.5 per mile ≥ 8 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 12"	86%
Preferred Size ≥ 15"	67%



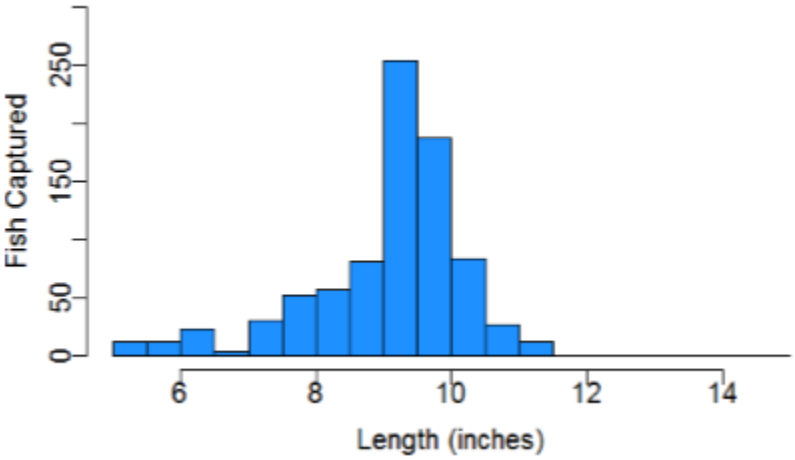
Bluegill

Captured 76 per mile ≥ 3 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 6"	89%
Preferred Size ≥ 8"	17%



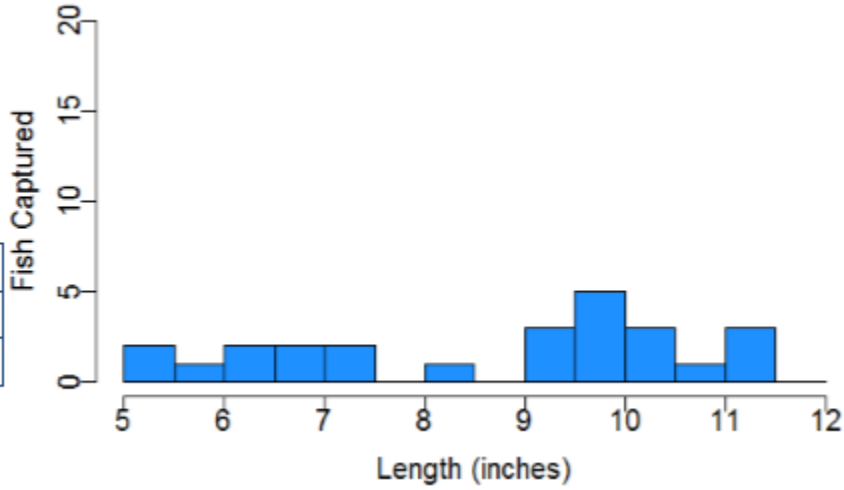
Black Crappie

Captured 28 per net-night ≥ 5 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 8"	84%
Preferred Size ≥ 10"	15%



Yellow Perch

Captured 1 per net-night ≥ 5 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 8"	64%
Preferred Size ≥ 10"	28%



Summary of Results

Most metrics indicate that the Chippewa Flowage walleye population is increasing in abundance because of some natural recruitment, extensive stocking, and protection of smaller fish with a minimum length limit. Capture rate for adult walleye in 2018 (21 per net night) was higher than 4 years ago (10 per net night). Despite high catch rate of fish below the minimum length limit, 20% of walleye appearing in the survey were in the harvest range between 15-20 inches. Juvenile walleye abundance during electrofishing surveys was also encouraging, with high catch rates of fish from multiple year classes.

Northern pike abundance is high and size is poor with only 27% of pike surveyed being over 21 inches. Abundance of pike will need to be reduced to achieve better size. Anglers are encouraged to keep northern pike, especially small ones.

Surveying muskellunge in the Chippewa Flowage was challenging in 2018. Some muskellunge were spawning at the same time as the walleye shortly after ice out, while others were still spawning two weeks later. With no distinct peak in the spawn, it was difficult to capture large numbers of muskellunge despite the second netting effort. The results shown here are not believed to be representative of either the size or abundance of muskellunge in the Chippewa Flowage. Many of the muskellunge captured in this survey were tagged fish that were stocked in 2013 or 2016, providing indications that those stocking efforts have been successful in recruiting new muskellunge into the population.

Smallmouth bass are considerably more abundant than largemouth bass on the east side of the Chippewa Flowage, due in large part to the rockier and more riverine habitat. Smallmouth abundance was slightly lower than in 2014 (12 per mile compared to 17 per mile) but size has improved since that time with 46% now being over 14 inches (31% in 2014). Largemouth bass have become very scarce on the east side of the Chippewa Flowage and their distribution is limited to weedier bays. Largemouth bass size has increased considerably over the last four years, with 67% currently being over 15 inches (16% in 2014). The lake is being managed for a low density largemouth bass population with a high proportion of large fish.

Quality of panfish populations in the Chippewa Flowage have either been improving or have held steady depending on the species. Bluegill size is considerably higher than 4 years ago, with 17% currently being over 8 inches (compared to 2% in 2014). Improvements in bluegill size are

attributed to lower bluegill abundance, which was achieved by increasing predator populations and managing water levels. Black crappie abundance has been stable over the last 10 years and size has remained largely the same, with most fish in the 9-11 inch range. Yellow perch abundance has been difficult to index on the Chippewa Flowage, but size appears to be fair.

DNR Fisheries Biologist Max Wolter with volunteer (and nephew) Carson Slattery hold a Chippewa Flowage muskellunge before she is released back into the lake.

Report by Max Wolter – Fisheries Biologist, Sawyer County
Survey conducted by Max Wolter, Scott Braden, and Evan Sniadajewski
Special thanks to volunteers Mike Artese, Rebecca Slattery, Jason Slattery, Carson Slattery, and Amanda Wilson.
Reviewed and Approved by Jeff Kampa – Area Fisheries Supervisor