LAKE: BRULE RIVER FLOWAGE/PAINT POND  COUNTY: FLORENCE  YEAR: 2015

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources conducted a comprehensive survey of the Brule River Flowage/Paint Pond, Florence County. Fyke nets were set in early spring from 4/7-28 and again in late spring 5/26-29, along with three electrofishing surveys from 4/16-18 and three electrofishing surveys from 5/26-29, to assess game and panfish populations. The Brule River Flowage/Paint Pond is considered a WI-MI boundary water (from the Brule River downstream) and a state of Michigan water (north of the Brule River). This flowage is located a few miles north of Florence and is fed by the Brule and Paint Rivers. The entire flowage is approximately 550 acres and achieves a maximum depth of 64 feet.

Walleye
Northern Pike
Muskellunge

Electrofishing surveys were conducted from 4/16-18 and 5/19-28 to assess game and panfish populations. The Brule River Flowage/Paint Pond is considered a WI-MI boundary water (from the Brule River downstream) and a state of Michigan water (north of the Brule River). This flowage is located a few miles north of Florence and is fed by the Brule and Paint Rivers. The entire flowage is approximately 550 acres and achieves a maximum depth of 64 feet.

Walleye were captured during the walleye/northern pike and bass surveys along with a directed survey for muskellunge from 4/19-4/28. All adult muskellunge were marked with a fin clip as part of a two year assessment of the population. We captured 69 different muskellunge during our fyke netting and electro-fishing surveys, ranging from 8.9 to 49.2 inches in length. Muskellunge will be sampled again in 2016 to estimate the population size.

Muskellunge have been tagged with internal tags in this flowage back to 2010. This data will allow us to better understand growth rates and longevity of muskellunge in this system. Here are a few examples that show the differences in growth rates between individual fish. A 23.3” fish of unknown sex in 2010 was captured in 2015 and measured 40.8 inches, while a 48.1” female captured in 2011 only grew 0.5 inches in 4 years, having been caught at a length of 48.6” this spring.
Panfish were not captured in high numbers during any survey of this flowage, suggesting that all species of panfish are of low abundance. However, bluegill appear to be the most abundant panfish species, captured at a rate of 5.5 fish per net-night during our late spring assessment. This is a very low catch rate for bluegill in this region.

A total of 109 bluegill were measured during our late spring survey to assess the size structure of the population. The size structure of bluegill is good, with approximately 80% and 8% of fish measured being > 6 and 8 inches, respectively.

Yellow perch were the most abundant panfish captured during the early spring fyke net survey. However, at a catch rate of 0.6 fish/net-night, this population is also low in abundance.

A total of 141 yellow perch were measured to assess size structure of the population. Size structure of yellow perch was fair-to-good, with 27% of the fish being ≥ 8 inches in length.

Other Panfish

Pumpkinseed and rock bass were also captured in low numbers during our spring surveys, suggesting relatively low abundance levels similar to black crappie and yellow perch. However, rock bass may be at a higher abundance than what is suggested by the spring netting surveys since a sizeable population was observed during electrofishing surveys of the southern part of the flowage. The southern part of the flowage was sampled less intensively during our netting surveys because the topography was not compatible with setting fyke nets.