

# Lake of the Woods – Rainy River Walleye and Sauger Regulations

## *When did the present regulations for Lake of the Woods – Rainy River walleye and sauger take effect?*

The last **major** change in regulations took effect on December 1, 2004. During the months prior to that date, a variety of regulations were considered by fisheries managers and other stakeholders, including; a shorter angling season, a reduction in bag limits, and various size restrictions. The new regulation package was the product of extensive stakeholder involvement, and was the most widely-accepted alternative that would accomplish the necessary reduction in harvest.

## *What were the major changes that took effect at that time?*

### **Summer:**

Prior to change: Limit of **8** walleye/sauger in combination, with only **6** being walleye. Only one walleye over 19.5 inches was allowed per day.

After change: Limit of **6** walleye/sauger in combination, with only **4** being walleye. All walleye from 19.5 to 28 inches must be immediately released. Only one walleye is allowed over 28 inches.

### **Winter:**

Prior to change: Limit of **14** walleye/sauger in combination, with only **6** being walleye. Only one walleye over 19.5 inches was allowed per day.

After change: Limit of **8** walleye/sauger in combination, with only **4** being walleye. All walleye from 19.5 to 28 inches must be immediately released. Only one walleye is allowed over 28 inches.

## *What was the goal of those regulation changes?*

The goal of the changes was to reduce walleye and sauger harvest to levels that will protect the high quality fisheries that Lake of the Woods offers.

## *Specifically, why was the regulation changed?*

- The walleye and sauger harvest was not sustainable at levels documented prior to the change in regulations.
- The Lake of the Woods system is managed for a long-term average harvest that does not exceed 450,000 pounds of walleye, and 250,000 pounds of sauger. The walleye harvest target was derived from physical factors of the lake, including mean depth, dissolved solids, growing degree-days and water clarity.
- The 1999 to 2003 average walleye harvest of 637,976 pounds was well above the target of 450,000 pounds.
- The sauger target is based on an average harvest over a range of sauger abundances. Average sauger harvest (1999-2003) was 282,994 pounds, which was above the 250,000 pound target level.
- Continued harvest at levels above established targets will result in the loss of the high quality size structure of the walleye population, and increasing “boom and bust” cycles in the fishery.

## *What has happened to harvest since the new regulations took effect?*

During the three-year period after the new regulations took effect, walleye harvest was reduced, but the average annual harvest was still above the 450,000 pound target threshold.

