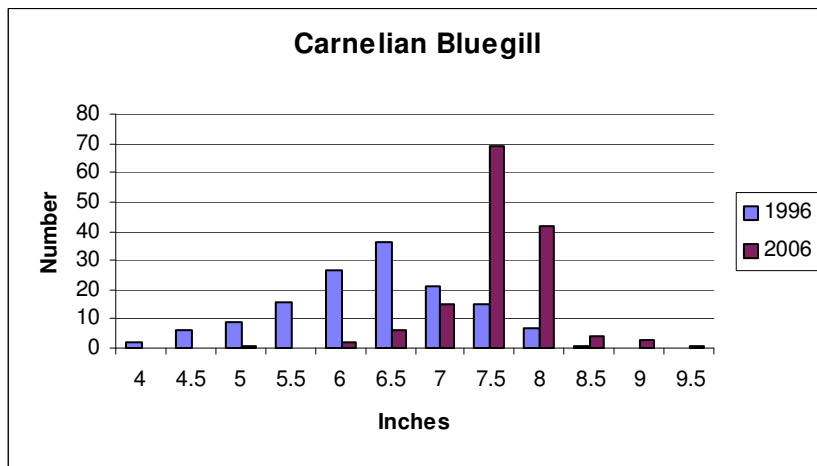


Fishing Regulations

A major challenge for fisheries managers is how to improve the quality of panfish angling. Many, if not most, small lakes have sunfish populations that could be characterized as abundant, slow-growing, and of small average size. A research study begun in 1994 led to the improvement of the sunfish population at Lake Carnelian by using fishing regulations which reduced the daily bag limit to 10.

Lake Carnelian is in lake class 31 and this lake class has a history of producing large sunfish. The lake is located four miles north of Kimball, Minnesota in southeastern Stearns County. Five years after the regulation was implemented there was evidence that the bag reduction worked as growth and size of sunfish had improved. The regulation was then extended to 2007.

By 2006 an evaluation showed that 35% of sunfish taken in spring trap netting were greater than eight inches. Anglers were thrilled and lake residents agreed that the regulation was a success. In other lakes only 1-2% of the sunfish population would be eight inches or longer. One angler said recently “an eight inch fish doesn’t even raise an eyebrow” meaning that even larger fish are now commonly caught.



The chart shows a shift to larger sizes of bluegill during the 10 years from 1996 to 2006.

Based on the wishes of those who attended the public meeting in 2007 the daily bag was lowered to five per day and the experimental regulation was extended for 10 years. The reason for this was to protect the good fishing for larger sunfish that now exists.

Currently, studies are underway at Pleasant, Mink, Somers and Crawford Lakes to determine the success of similar regulations. If results are favorable the regulations could be applied to other area lakes.