



**Leech Lake Update 7/15/2009**  
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Greetings!

This update is part of a series of reports the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is sending to Leech Lake area resorts, businesses and others interested in DNR activities on Leech Lake. The goal of these messages is to keep you up to date with our findings and current activities on the lake. Earlier updates are available by visiting <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/areas/fisheries/walker/index.html>. Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions or comments, would like copies of previous updates not posted on the website, or if you would like to be added to the mailing list.

### 2009 Fishing Season

- Walleye fishing on Leech Lake continues to be tremendous. Preliminary creel statistics through mid-June indicate angler success has been similar to last year. Targeting anglers have been catching fish at a rate of approximately 1.2 walleye/hour, a very high statistic for any walleye fishery, and fish exceeding 30 inches in length have been reported. Reports from guides indicate that the preferred approaches at this time are crawler/spinner rigs or crankbaits.
- The current walleye regulation is an 18-26" protected slot limit (18.0-26.0 must be immediately released) with 4 fish in possession, only one of which can be longer than 26.0 inches. The regulation was originally due for review this winter. However, to accommodate the broader statewide evaluation of slot limits across all of Minnesota's large walleye lakes as well as to obtain an additional year of information, the Leech Lake walleye slot limit will be formally reviewed prior to the 2011 fishing season. At this time there are no pre-conceived conclusions as to whether the regulation will change or remain the same.

- Other notables thus far include quality-sized panfish and largemouth bass being caught and harvested when anglers choose to do so, and the muskie action is beginning to heat up.

- The Walker community hosted three walleye tournaments during May – the local Leech Lake tournament, the FLW Walleye League, and the FLW Walleye Tour. All three events were very successful.



Photo courtesy of FLW Outdoors

- The number of fish registered during all three tournaments was 2,235; reported mortalities at the three weigh-ins totaled 241 fish. There was no attempt to estimate post-release mortality.
- For comparison, estimated walleye harvest during the Opening weekend alone was approximately 8,700 walleye. As of June 15, 2009, the estimated total number of walleye caught by Leech Lake anglers (tournaments included) was nearly 151,000 fish and total harvest was approximately 46,000 walleye.

## 2009 Sampling

- Seining for young-of-year walleye and yellow perch started July 6. Five locations are seined weekly during July to index growth rates of young fish.
- Trawling, the best index of potential walleye year class strength, is scheduled for the weeks of August 17 and August 24. Weather-permitting, trawling will be conducted during the first two days of each week.
- The annual gillnet assessment is anticipated to begin Monday, September 7 (Labor Day, set nets only) and conclude Friday, September 18 (lift nets only).
- Electrofishing will be conducted during the last two weeks of September, weather- and schedule-permitting.
- We welcome volunteers to assist with trawling (rather physical lifting), gillnetting (need assistance picking fish from nets), and electrofishing (observation only). Persons interested should contact Doug Schultz, Large Lake Specialist. Your participation would be appreciated!



## 2009-2010 Muskie Assessment Update

- Reports from anglers indicate vegetation beds are more prolific than they have been in recent years, particularly in Sucker and Portage bays. Water temperature as of 7/13/2009 was 73 °F.
- If participating in the muskie study, **REMEMBER TO TAKE SCALE SAMPLES** from fish you catch! We cannot do a population estimate without them!



## Double-crested cormorant control (from Steve Mortensen, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe)

- Under the supervision of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, culling efforts ended on June 30 as the target level of 500 nesting pairs had been reached. A total of 3,084 birds were removed from Leech Lake this spring.
- A telemetry study that will track cormorant movements and usage of Leech Lake is also underway. Details can be obtained from Steve Mortensen, LLBO Division of Resources Management, 115 6<sup>th</sup> St. NW, Cass Lake, MN 56633; 218-335-7423. Reports from previous control work as well as cormorant research are available on their website ([www.lldrm.org](http://www.lldrm.org)).

## Fish diseases

- Anglers have reported catching fish with signs of lymphosarcoma (northern pike and muskellunge) and dermal sarcoma (walleye), a red sore and/or warty growth on the body. These diseases are caused by a viral infection and are fairly common in Leech and other lakes.
- Consumption of affected parts is not advised. As always, be sure to cook fish thoroughly before consuming.
- Information about these and other diseases can be found on the DNR website ([www.dnr.state.mn.us/fish\\_diseases/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fish_diseases/index.html)).



A northern pike suspected to be infected with lymphosarcoma from a Walker area lake (photo by MN DNR, 07/06/2009).

## Invasive Species Watch

- Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) was discovered in Leech Lake in 2004 and has been expanding every year since. Extensive searches have not discovered rooted EWM outside of artificial harbors to date, however, this invasive species continues to be discovered in new locations. Follow-up inspections found EWM in 22 harbors throughout Leech Lake in 2008. Inspection and treatments are underway.
- Boaters can help prevent further spread of invasive species by taking a few simple extra precautions:
  - inspect and remove all visible aquatic plants, animals and mud from boats, trailers and equipment such as anchors before leaving a water access;
  - inspect and remove all visible aquatic plants, animals or mud from docks, boat lifts and swim rafts before transporting to another water;
  - drain all water from boats - including live wells, bilges and bait buckets - before leaving a water access;
  - spray or rinse boats with high pressure and/or hot water, or let them dry thoroughly for five days before transporting to another water.
- Precautions for anglers and boaters can be found at: [www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/preventspread.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/preventspread.html)
- Further details on aquatic invasive species and the DNR Invasive Species Program can be found at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/invasives/index.html>



## Have you...

...taken a kid fishing lately?

Do you remember your youthful fascination with the outdoors? Whether it was etched in black and white or just a moment ago, can you recall a moth's dance to the lazy drum of water slapping a beached canoe, how only a minute of its erratic sinuosity captivated your attention for what seemed to be timeless hours below a glowing midnight sky? Perhaps the kick of a leopard frog in your hand as you trudged through a soggy shoreline, muddy pant legs at your knees and missing a shoe? Or maybe the pinch of a garter snake captured during a shore lunch as it shot from the grasp of your surprised sibling after you assured them of its harmlessness? Have you taken a kid fishing lately?

Can you recall the rising excitement before a fishing trip, the scramble to tidy gear and organize tackle as you agonized over which new lure to tie on first, only to change it after the first cast? Do you remember the kiss of cool damp air on your nose as you searched aimlessly through dewed grass for fresh bait under the flickering yellow beam of your flashlight, the misery that accompanied each miss, and the sleepless night of anticipation? Have you taken a kid fishing lately?

Can you hear the echoed teachings of your elders still ringing in your ear? How to tie a hook, set a bobber, bait up, and make a cast? Can you still find that one magic honey-hole in front of the dead elm splintered by woodpeckers? Do you recall racing for the first catch of the day, the painful disappointment of finishing second only too soon forgotten by a tug on your line, and the exhilaration that accompanied each successful landing? Even the small ones were trophies back then. Have you taken a kid fishing lately?

Too often we find ourselves hustling and bustling in our day-to-day lives, quickly forgetting what drew us to our occupations as biologists and guides, our cabins as property owners, and our passions as outdoor enthusiasts. Less frequently do we reflect on how our zeal for all things wild became such – because someone took the time to take us outdoors - and even more rarely do we acknowledge the simple truth that we are all stewards of our resources. The waters and woods we cherish are a



gift from our predecessors. Thus, it is our innate responsibility to ensure that this heritage we enjoy does not fade by recognizing how our daily activities influence our resources and by instilling in our youth a similar fervor for the wild side. It is as simple as taking the extra precautions to stop the spread of aquatic hitchhikers, taking a kid fishing, and teaching them to do both.

If you have questions, comments, or requests please contact:

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or

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