



Leech Lake Update, December 2010
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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.

2011-2015 Leech Lake Management Plan

- The Leech Lake Advisory Committee (LLAC) met 11 times from August 2009 through March 2010 and provided recommendations to the DNR on key Leech Lake management issues, including special walleye regulations, walleye fry stocking, habitat, and double-crested cormorant management. These were incorporated into a draft version of an updated management plan for Leech Lake.
- Public input on the draft version was solicited during July, 2010. Public comment was collated and a response document was prepared. The draft version of the management plan was amended as appropriate and finalized.
- Final copies of the Public Comment & Response and the 2011-2015 Leech Lake Management Plan documents are both available on the Walker Area Fisheries website (www.dnr.state.mn.us/recreation/fishing/largelakes/leech/index.html).

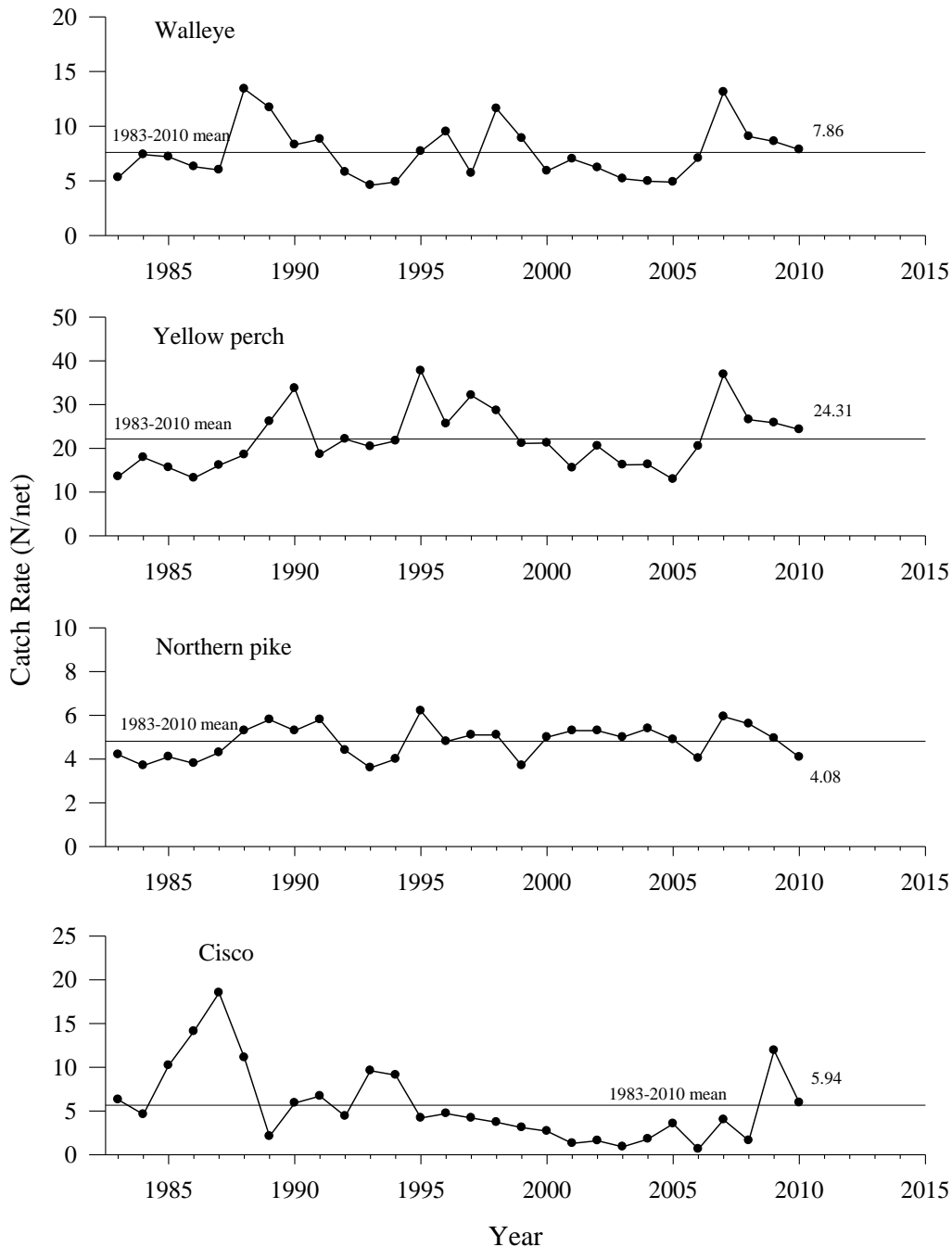
Walleye regulation review

- Concurrent with the updating of the Leech Lake Management Plan, the existing walleye regulation (18-26" protected slot limit, 4 fish in possession, one of which can be longer than 26.0") was formally reviewed.
- Public input was solicited via post cards handed to interviewed anglers during September of the 2010 summer creel survey, a Public Input Meeting held on October 13, 2010 at the Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Public School, in Walker, MN, and through telephone, walk-in, and written correspondence to the Walker Area Fisheries office.
- All public input types showed majority support for maintaining the current regulation for an additional five years. However, some interest was also expressed for more liberal regulations (eg. 20-26" protected slot limit).
- DNR's recommendation: Continue with the 18-26" protected slot limit, 4 fish in possession, one of which can be longer than 26.0". If measures of mature female walleye density exceed 2.0 pounds/acre during two consecutive years DNR will consider adjusting the regulation to a 20-26" protected slot limit, possession of 4 fish, one of which can be longer than 26.0" based on current information.



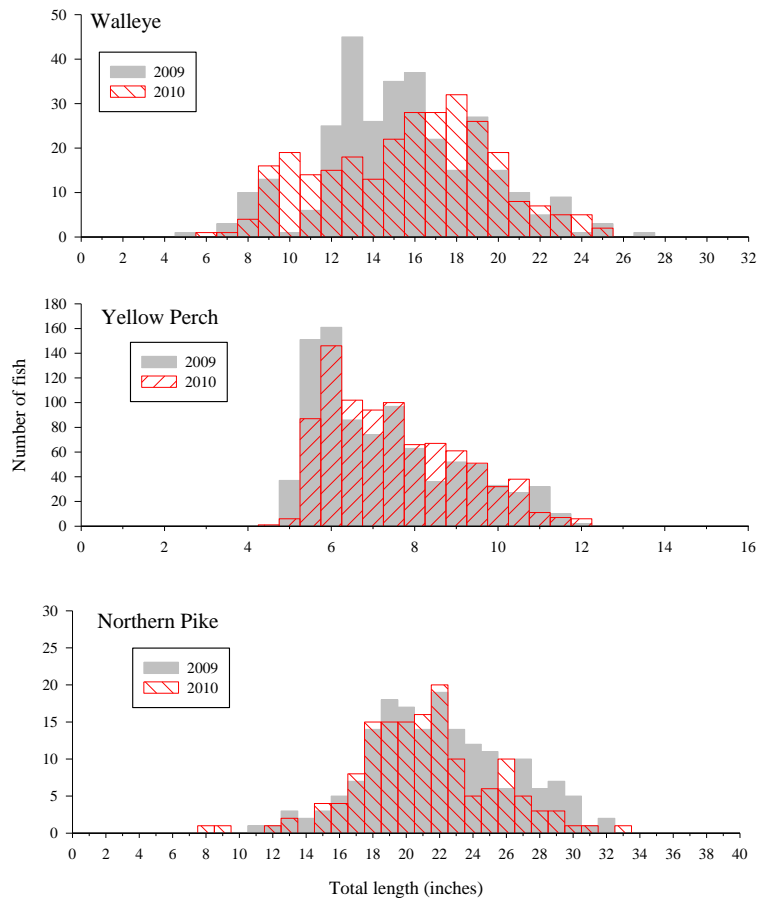
2010 Large Lake Survey results

- Seine (11.35 age-0 walleye/acre) and trawl (80 age-0 walleye/hour) catch rates were below the historical averages. Seine and trawl catch rates of young-of-year yellow perch were also below the long-term average.
- In most cases, gill net catch rates (below) of walleye, yellow perch, and northern pike were similar to last year and remain near long-term averages (horizontal lines). Good recruitment of young cisco in the last couple of years led to the increase in cisco catch rates.





- The size distributions of walleye, northern pike, and yellow perch sampled in gill nets were also similar to 2009 in many respects (see inset).
- Of walleye sampled in gill nets, 36% were shorter than 15 inches.
- With strong year classes produced during 2005-2007, average to below-average recruitment during 2008-2010 despite higher fry densities is not a surprise. While cool summers and slow growth appear to be an influence in some cases, interactions between previous year classes (ie. suppression) and increased competition within a year class (ie. more mouths competing for same food supply) should not be discounted as possible contributors.
- Currently the Leech Lake walleye population is in good condition and anglers have been enjoying excellent fishing.



Thanks for the help!

As in 2009, during the 2010 field season a substantial number of volunteers contributed about 200 hours of their time assisting with muskie sampling, walleye fry stocking, and Large Lake sampling on Leech Lake alone. Other persons assisted staff with sampling and work on other Walker area lakes throughout the year. On behalf of Walker Fisheries office staff and the DNR, THANK YOU!





Minding your lakeshore

Last summer I was one of two guest speakers at the annual Leech Lake Association summer picnic. My closing remarks at that event echoed a continued need for us to be good stewards of our resources. You may have heard reference to the “cumulative effects” people can have on a landscape and/or watershed – seemingly inconsequential “little things” across numerous sources can add up to be quite significant and, in some cases, detrimental. So, too, can the cumulative benefits from doing “the little things” in a lake-friendly approach. Below are some ideas and resources in that direction.

- Decide which areas along shore you use on a frequent basis. Are there some areas you mow that may not need to be mowed because they are not used?
- Leave about a 10-foot (or wider) strip of vegetation along the water’s edge undisturbed. Usually the seed bed of native plants lasts for decades so wait and see what comes back naturally – you may be surprised. Ask an expert or do some research to determine which plants are desirable and which are weeds.
- If you want to create a wider buffer zone to the lake, design a layout that still allows you access and areas along the shore to meet your recreational needs.
- Resources that can assist you with shoreland restoration and/or improvement include:
 - Purchase the “Restore Your Shore” instructional CD ROM for \$29.95 plus tax & shipping from Minnesota’s Bookstore.
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/restoreyourshore/index.html>
 - Request “A Guide for Buying and Managing Shoreland” informational booklet from the DNR Information Center
(<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/shorelandmgmt/guide/index.html>).
 - Other information and tips related to shoreland management can be found at :
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/shorelandmgmt/index.html>



Above: Before (left) and after (right) photos of a shoreland restoration project completed near Park Rapids, MN.

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

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