

## NORTHEAST OUTLOOK FOR 2010 FISHING OPENER

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Ice out was two to three weeks earlier than normal over much of Northern Minnesota, and even set records on some lakes. Snowpack was gone by the first of April with little new runoff. Temperatures have been and are forecast to be warmer than normal with below average precipitation.

Fish spawning activity was ahead of normal. Unlike some spring fishing seasons, rivers and streams in northern Minnesota should be very fishable for the opener.

Please check regulations for the lake you plan to fish. It is not possible to list all regulations in this summary.

Whether it's a trophy walleye or pike, or bluegill or crappie for that matter, remember to practice CPR (Catch/Photo/Release) with these trophies. Recycling is the very best way to ensure there'll be trophies again for your next trip. Please handle all fish carefully and immediately release any fish not destined for the frying pan.

Last but not least, please help prevent the spread of invasive species by keeping your boats, motors and trailers clean of water and vegetation. Clean and disinfect boats and fishing equipment and empty all water from boats and bait buckets after leaving a lake.

### NE REGION

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**Rainy Lake:** Walleye fishing on Rainy should continue where it left off last year with high catch rates, plenty of large fish, and large numbers of smaller fish. Anglers should see good numbers of quality-sized Black crappies. Northern pike fishing should remain good in 2010 as a strong year-class reaches age-five (exceeding 25 inches), along with good numbers and a few trophy-sized fish.

**Lake Kabetogama:** Home of the Governor's 2010 Fishing Opener, this lake will see abundant walleye from the strong 2006 year class. Two previous strong year-classes (1996 and 2001) will provide opportunities for anglers to catch larger fish protected by the slot limit. Northern pike have produced consistent, average year classes since the late 1990s. One moderately strong year-class in 2005 should be 25 to 28 inches this season. A good year-class of sauger in 2003 should provide nice "bonus fish" for walleye anglers in 2010.

**Grand Marais:** Walleye fishing in the Grand Marais area should be better than many years because lakes will be warmer, especially in the shallow lakes that warm most quickly. Smallmouth bass and northern pike populations are in good shape. Lake trout have also done well especially in Greenwood, Gunflint, Loon, and Clearwater lakes. The area's smaller lake trout and stream trout lakes provide alternatives to the traditional walleye opener, but many accesses are carry-in only.

**Finland:** Anglers on Silver Lake should see some walleye action along with several other species. This lake has a good back-in access, but the lake could be hard on lower units with many boulders just under the surface of the water. Alton Lake in the BWCAW also offers good walleye fishing with an average size of 13.4 inches, and some fish up to 30 inches. MicMac Lake in Tettegouche State Park (walk-in access only) has an excellent northern pike population. Rental canoes are available. Crosscut is a stocked brook trout lake with good numbers of average-sized fish. The carry-in access is steep.

**Gull Lake:** Early morning and evening angling should be good on Gull Lake, especially if there's a light to moderate chop and overcast conditions. There is an abundance of two-year-old walleyes (10 inches) and 14 to 15-inch walleyes as well. The lake has many Northern pike in the 24 to 28-inch range and good opportunities for fish over 32 inches.

**Brainerd:** North Long, Pelican, and Whitefish Lakes have abundant walleye populations with several size classes, along with good numbers of Northern pike in the small to average size and a good chance for Northern in the 30 to 36-inch range. Panfish fishing should be good on Goodrich, Rogers, Sylvan, and Gilbert lakes north of Brainerd. All of these lakes have a five-fish bag limit for sunfish and crappie with large sunfish in the 8 to 9-inch range common.

**Mine pit lakes:** As in the past, 10 mine pit lakes will be stocked, some with rainbow trout, and some with brook trout. Angling should be excellent in these mine pit lakes from opening day through early August. The area's natural, designated stream trout lakes should provide excellent angling. One in particular, Allen Lake, has been rehabilitated and restocked with rainbow trout and brook trout.

**St. Louis River Estuary:** Walleye fishing should be good due to the strong walleye year-classes including 2005, which will exceed the 15-inch minimum length for harvest this year. The 18 to 20-inch walleye from 2001 and 2002 year-classes should still be plentiful. As usual, high quality fishing opportunities are also available for muskellunge, northern pike, smallmouth bass, black crappie and channel catfish. Incidental angler catches of lake sturgeon have been reported in recent years, but there is no open season for sturgeon in this system. **Island Reservoir:** Fish less than 13 inches will dominate the catch. There is a healthy muskellunge population with many fish 40 to 45-inches long. Angling for smallmouth bass continues to improve. **Boulder Reservoir:** Sampling shows several strong year classes of walleye and angling catch rates and size structure should be good in coming years, as is angling success for northern pike and black crappie.

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**Lake Superior:** In mid-May, Lake Superior fishing is just getting started. Lake trout can be found near shore in 30 to 100 feet of water, usually near the bottom. Chinook and Coho salmon are normally within one-quarter to one-half mile from shore in the upper 30 feet of water, looking for temperature breaks. Most salmon this time of year are in the Duluth area from Knife River to Park Point. Few walleye will be found in Lake Superior during the opening

weekend, as most are still the St. Louis River. In most years, there will still be steelhead and Kamloops in or near the mouths of North Shore streams. Most will have completed their spawning run and may be ready to bite.

**Aitkin:** Mille Lacs Lake has had a couple of good year classes of walleye that grew really well last summer and should provide for better action on the big lake this season. Farm Island and Round Lake should also have good angling action. A notable water for big walleye is Cedar Lake, but with over 24 miles of shoreline and over 1,700 acres of habitat, walleye can be challenging to find. The dark water of Big Sandy Lake warms quickly making it the one of the best bets for numbers of walleye early in the season. The Aitkin area also has many quality northern pike waters, which can generate early season action if the walleye are uncooperative.

**Grand Rapids:** Traditional opener lakes for walleye are Bowstring, Splithand, Swan, Round (N of Winnie) and the Winnie/Cutfoot system. In addition to walleye there are ample opportunities for hooking northern pike. The current population in Lake Winnibigoshish is very good. The size distribution of walleyes in the 2008 assessment ranged from 7 to 25 inches. While there are many fish in the protected slot (17-26 inches), there should be plenty of fish available for harvest outside of the protected slot. Northern pike abundance is high with some larger fish available. Yellow perch have recently increased in abundance with good year-classes from 2003 to 2005. Bluegill and black crappie are present in good numbers in the Cut Foot and Little Cut Foot Lakes.

**Tower:** Try Shagawa Lake where the latest survey had a walleye catch well above the long-term median. Many walleye were from strong year classes in 2006 which will exceed 14 inches in 2010, and 2004 which will be about 15-17 inches this season. Nice size Northern pike should also be available to anglers this spring and summer.