

Hutchinson Fisheries Management Area

General Outlook for Hutchinson Area: Winterkill was not a significant factor on larger lakes this year though shallow lakes experienced some winterkill. Water levels are mostly normal in lakes, and streams are slowly returning to normal levels. Ice went off area lakes about the same time as last year. Current and forecasted air temperatures are warmer this spring than they were last spring and water temperatures are going to increase accordingly. This year's warmer spring could contribute to an earlier bite on the bigger/deeper lakes and consistent action on the smaller/shallower lakes. Early season crappie fishing could come and go rather quickly.

Minnesota River in southern Minnesota was last sampled in 2004. Flathead catfish from 20-40 pounds are commonly caught and "trophy" fish over 40 pounds are not unusual. We've sampled fish exceeding 50 pounds. Channel catfish from 5-15 pounds are common and fish exceeding 15 pounds are not unusual. The consistently excellent walleye fishery is largely unnoticed by anglers. In 2004, walleye ranged from 4-27 inches with the vast majority of fish in the 12-17 inch range. Who knows what else you might catch in the river. Fish from the Minnesota River are safe to eat in moderation. Refer to fish consumption guidelines if you have questions or concerns <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/fish/eating/specpoprivers.pdf>

Washington Lake (2,639 acres) in Meeker County was netted in 2008 and the walleye population looked good. The gill net catch rate was 17.8/net with fish averaging 13.2 inches and many were in the 14 to 16 inch range. The 2007 year-class was exceptionally strong, but only averaged 10 inches in late July of 2008. Northern pike numbers were on the low side (1.6/net), but fish up to 34 inches were sampled. Opportunities for bluegill and black crappie also exist.

Stella Lake (553 acres) in Meeker County was netted in 2008 and the walleye population looked good. The gill net catch rate was 19.9/net with fish averaging 10.8 inches due to the strong 2007 year-class. Fair numbers of 13 to 15 inch fish were also sampled. Fair numbers of northern pike were gill netted (3.8/net), with fish averaging 21.3 inches in length. The longest northern pike sampled was 33.7 inches. Bluegill and black crappie opportunities also exist.

Star Lake (557 acres) in Meeker County was netted in 2007 and the northern pike population looked excellent. The gill net catch rate was the highest ever recorded for Star at 11.3/net with fish averaging 23.7 inches in length and the largest at 37 inches. Good to excellent numbers of black crappie were netted from 5.4 – 12.4 inches in length, with fish averaging 7.1 inches. Moderate numbers of bluegill were also present with some fish exceeding 8 inches. Walleye opportunities also exist.

Belle Lake (826 acres) in Meeker County was netted in 2008 and the walleye population looked good. The gill net catch rate was 7.8/net with fish averaging 16.6 inches. Fair numbers of northern pike were gill netted with fish averaging 26.2 inches in length. Opportunities also exist for black crappie. Ice-out trap netting in 2009 showed that there were extremely high numbers of small yellow perch present. This large amount of forage could make the bite tough in 2009.

Other Lakes: Ripley Lake (558 acres), in Meeker County, had a good crappie and bluegill bite last winter, as did Cedar Lake (1,924 acres) in McLeod County. Hook (327 acres) and Swan (343) in McLeod County both offer opportunities for walleye and black crappie. Hanska Lake (1,773 acres) in Brown County should also offer some good early season action for walleye.

Ortonville

General Outlook for Ortonville Area: Big Stone, Traverse and Hendricks Lakes are on the MN/SD border and are well known for their excellent walleye fishing. The fishing season on these lakes begins three weeks earlier than on Minnesota's inland waters. These lakes are quite large and host a variety of access locations that provides places to launch boats or fish from shore. Shore fishing for walleye can be excellent especially during May and October. Other lakes in the Ortonville Area provide opportunity for anglers to catch a wide range of species.

Lac Qui Parle is located about 10 miles SW of Appleton and contains populations of walleye, northern pike, crappie, and channel catfish. The northern pike and crappie fishing has been excellent recently.

Artichoke Lake is located about seven miles north of Correll and contains excellent populations of walleye and crappie. Walleye average from 15 to 17 inches with some lunkers possible. Crappie average from 11 to 14 inches.

Big Stone Lake is located in the town of Ortonville. The major game fish species present are walleye, yellow perch, and white bass. However, in the past few years, bluegill fishing has begun to pick up.

Lake Traverse is north of Big Stone Lake near Browns Valley. Traverse boasts excellent populations of walleye, white bass, and channel catfish. Traverse Lake also has a decent population of bluegill. It should be noted that Big Stone Lake and Lake Traverse are border waters with South Dakota, and the season opens on April 24.

Spicer

General Outlook for Spicer Area: Ice out in the Spicer Area was very early this year. There was closer to normal snowmelt runoff, and lake water levels are normal for this time of year. If the weather continues to gradually warm, I expect fishing to be good on the shallow Area lakes on the Opener. Green Lake and other larger, deep lakes in the Area should be better about a week after Opener. Trails and Waterways will have docks installed and access planks checked and reset by the Opener.

Long Lake (near Willmar) – Kandiyohi County. (1575 Acres) There are two public boat launches on Long Lake. The south access is off Co Rd 25. 2009 netting results: Walleye 12.0/gillnet are moderately abundant, average size is 2 pounds. Northern pike 0.67/gillnet are low in abundance, with an average size of 4.5 pounds.

Eagle Lake –Kandiyohi County. (824 Acres) There is one public boat launch on the SE side of Eagle Lake off Co Rd 9. 2009 netting results: Walleye 15.5/gillnet are abundant, with an average size of 1.2 pounds. Northern pike (1.25/gillnet) are low in abundance, average size 4 pounds.

Diamond Lake – Kandiyohi County. (1565 Acres) There are two public boat launches on Diamond Lake. 2008 netting results: Walleye 8.75/gillnet are moderately abundant, average size 1.5 pounds. Northern pike 3.75/gillnet (4.7 lb average). Black crappie 14.75/gillnet (0.4 lb average).

Koronis Lake- Stearns County. (3014 Acres) There are five public boat launches. 2007 netting results: Walleye 10.25/gillnet are abundant, with an average size of 1.3 pounds. Northern pike 9.88/gillnet are plentiful, with an average weight of 3.26 pounds.

Rice Lake- Stearns County. (1639 acres) There are two DNR public accesses on the lake. 2007 netting results: WAE 8.29/gillnet, with a 2.5 pound average, NOP 13.14/gillnet (2.8 lb average), BLC 10.7/gillnet.

Wood Lake- Yellow Medicine County. (432 acres) There is a County access in the park on the north side of the lake off Co. Rd. 18. 2007 netting results: WAE 17.0/gillnet. Walleye should average about 1.9 pounds each. BLC are abundant (14.5/trap net), with some large fish available.

Other Area lakes should also provide good fishing. Norway, Andrew, Games, Foot, Willmar, East Solomon, Lillian, and Ringo lakes should provide walleye action in the Kandiyohi County Area. Cottonwood and Lady Slipper lakes should provide walleye fishing in the Yellow Medicine and Lyon counties portion of our area. Northern pike anglers can expect good catches on Nest, Norway, Games, and Florida lakes. A partial fish kill on the Middle Fork Crow River reservoir at New London will probably not significantly affect fishing this summer. Fishing is not recommended at School Grove Lake, Lyon County, due to a winterkill of fish this past winter.

Waterville

Madison Lake (1113 acres): A perennial walleye gem, Madison Lake in Blue Earth county is situated next to the town of the same name. Fry stocking has worked well; Madison is stocked three out of four years. 2009 test gill netting averaged 6 fish per net. Expect many boats on opening day. Public accesses are located in the city, in Bray County Park, and north of Bray County Park.

Albert Lea Lake (2650 acres): Albert Lea Lake is located in Freeborn County near the City of Albert Lea. This lake and adjacent basins were stocked with 5.2 million walleye fry following a 2004 winterkill; the first time walleye fry have been stocked in this complex. The post-winterkill walleyes were very abundant at up to 85/gill net during the 2006 assessment; most of the fish were 14 – 18 inches at that time. Yellow perch were also very abundant at 150 per gillnet. Many perch over 8 inches were sampled. Accesses are located at the City of Albert Lea, at Myre-Big Island State Park and on the south side of the lake. Albert Lea Lake is shallow with a maximum depth of 5 ½ feet; much of the angling activity has traditionally been from shore in the vicinity of the channel connecting Albert Lea with Fountain Lake, immediately upstream.

Lake Elysian (1902 acres): Lake Elysian is located in Waseca County near the cities of Elysian and Janesville. While walleye abundance has dropped to more moderate levels from post-winterkill highs, the pike population will be the new draw to Lake Elysian. 2008 nettings returned 8 pike per gill net, and roughly one third of all pike captured were over 30 inches. Elysian has been a northern pike broodstock lake for Waterville area fisheries stocking efforts because of the immense size of the large female pike. Public accesses are located at the north and south ends of the lake, near the cities of Elysian and Janesville.

Circle Lake (624 acres) and Fox Lake (311 acres): Circle and Fox Lakes are located in Rice County approximately 8 miles north of Faribault. Walleyes in Circle are abundant as a result of fry stocking following 2004 winterkill and Fox has many fish that have moved downstream. Circle walleyes were sampled at 22 per gillnet during a 2007 assessment. Most of the fish were 12 to 15 inches in length at the time. Pike were also caught in good numbers during the assessment at 6 per gillnet, with most fish 16 to 23 inches long. The public water access is located on the northwest shore of Circle lake and the south shore of Fox lake.

Loon and Crystal Lakes (755 and 393 acres): These connected lakes are located in Blue Earth County near the city of Lake Crystal. Walleyes were captured at 57 per gillnet in Crystal and 37 per gillnet in Loon during a 2006 assessment. Many of the walleyes were 13 – 16 inches long at the time but fish up to 30 inches were observed. Public water accesses are located on the south side of Lake Crystal and on the south side of Loon Lake. Partial winterkills have affected the lake during the winter of 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 but have not significantly diminished gamefish populations.

Bass Lake (203 acres): Bass Lake, located northeast of Winnebago in Faribault County, supports an abundant population of large walleyes. 2008 Lake survey test netting returned 8.5 walleye per gill net. Bass Lake gill netted walleye weighed a whopping 3.6 pounds on average. Fry stocking on Bass Lake has been successful. The public water access is located on the north side of the lake.

Scotch Lake (565 acres): Scotch Lake, located south of Cleveland in Le Sueur County, is a migratory waterfowl feeding and resting area during the fall. The lake was stocked with walleye fry following a 2004 winterkill and aeration equipment was upgraded. The fish grew and the word was out in 2009 and into 2010 as winter fishing was very good for walleye, jumbo perch, and northern pike. A 2009 fish population assessment returned 22 walleye and 14 northern pike per gill net lift, with a good range of sizes for both species. The public water access is located on the northwest end of the lake.

Cannon Lake (1591 acres): Cannon Lake remains popular on the fishing opener and for good reason. The 2009 lake resurvey found over 7 walleyes per gill net lift, with 77% of walleye caught larger than 15 inches. With any wind, the long, narrow, shallow, and Cannon River-connected lake builds a strong “walleye chop” and anglers can cover lots of ground while drifting with live bait. A public water access is located on the southeast end of the lake in Shager Park.

Other waters: Lake Washington (1487 acres; located northeast of Mankato in Le Sueur County) has been a good walleye destination following some successful fry stocking in recent years; pike, while rare, are of large size with some trophy pike present. The Cannon River chain of lakes (Gorman, Sabre, Tetonka, Upper and Lower Sakatah, Cannon and Wells) supports good numbers of walleyes. There are numerous shore

fishing opportunities, including a fishing pier at the Waterville Area Fisheries Headquarters on Lake Tetonka; the bridge between Upper and Lower Sakatah; a park area in the City of Morristown; and the bridge between Cannon and Wells Lakes. Also, approximately 4 miles of the Cannon River between Morristown and Warsaw flows through the Cannon River AMA and WMA. The Blue Earth River can be excellent if flow is moderate.

Windom

General Outlook for Windom Area: Winterkill was a more common occurrence in our area than past years. Water levels should be high given the wet fall of 2009 and extreme snow cover through the winter of 2010. Using northern pike as the index to our spring, it would appear that we are a few weeks ahead of normal. We continue to assess the severity of winterkill in the Windom area, but based on reports from lakeshore owners and anglers, it would appear it was a difficult winter for fish on selected lakes. With that said, the concept of complete winterkill continues to be a myth as we found good numbers of live fish in St. James Lake this spring.

Lake Sarah (1,176 acres) in Murray County continues to be one of the best walleye lakes in the Windom Area. Lake Sarah has not been stocked with walleye since 1993 because of the documented consistent walleye natural reproduction. Lake Sarah will be netted this summer but the last survey in 2006 indicated 60.5 walleye/gill net with nearly 60% of the fish > 12.0 inches. Sarah also had great numbers of yellow perch with catch rates of 36.5 perch/gill net with 74% of the fish at least 6.0 inches. In spite of the consistent yearly fishing pressure, Lake Sarah continues to be one of our best fisheries.

Okabena Lake (785 acres) in Nobles County has a solid walleye population. The gill net catch rate in 2008 was 23.3/net with 65% of the fish greater than 12.0 inches. The yellow perch population appeared to be numerous as well. Catch rates for perch averaged 43.3 fish/gill net with 86% of the fish 6.0 inches and greater. If channel catfish are what you are after, you will not be disappointed as we caught 30.67 fish/ gill net with 95% of the fish at least 12.0 inches.

Kansas Lake (398 acres) in Watonwan County was netted in 2009. Despite the low dissolved oxygen levels during the last two winters, the gill net catch rate for walleye was 19.33/net with fish averaging 13.1 inches. The sizes of these fish may be in the “acceptable keeper” range by now and will likely provide some good fishing. Kansas had one of the highest northern pike catches during the summer netting of 2009 with nearly 11 fish/gill net and averaged nearly 20 inches in total length. Great numbers and sizes of yellow perch were found as well. Our catch rate averaged 53.3 fish/gill net with 89% of the fish 9.0 inches and greater!

Shoakotan Lake (995 acres) in Lincoln County was netted in 2009. The gill net catch rate for walleye was 22.7 walleye/gill net with 65% of the fish at least 14.0 inches. We averaged 19.3 yellow perch/gill net with all of the fish being at least 6.0 inches. Black bullhead numbers are currently low which may translate to a good bite at opener.

Lakes with at least some winterkill suspected: St. James Lake (252 acres) in Watonwan County experienced some winterkill but ice-out netting captured good numbers of walleye, bluegill, and yellow perch. All of the species of fish that have ever

been stocked by DNR were found alive following during ice-out netting. The following lakes we have received reports of dead fish after ice out but we have yet to determine the severity of winterkill: Buffalo Lake (248 acres) in Murray County, Bloody Lake (248 acres) in Murray County, Shetek Lake (3,396 acres) in Murray County, East Stay Lake (220 acres) in Lincoln County, Fedji Lake (179 acres) in Watonwan County, Clear Lake (68 acres) in Lyon County, Eagle Lake (88 acres) in Cottonwood County.