

## **Commissioner's Order #1 ML 2018: Amend Smallmouth Bass Season, Walleye Season, and Walleye Limits to Make Adjustments to Manage Fisheries in the 1837 Ceded Territory (Mille Lacs)**

**Date:** December 1, 2018

**Statutory authority:** *Minnesota Statutes*, section 97C.005, subdivision 3

Supersedes: Expedited Emergency Game and Fish Rule 6264.0400, subd. 4, item B, referring to the angling season for smallmouth bass and largemouth bass, and item F, referring to the catch and release angling

season and possession restriction for walleye: Mille Lacs Fishing Regulations as published in the 23 April 2018 State Register (42 SR 1254)

### **BACKGROUND**

Each year a harvestable surplus is set for walleye in Mille Lacs Lake by a joint management process between the state and the eight Chippewa Bands. The harvestable surplus is the pounds of fish that can be taken safely from Mille Lacs Lake while ensuring sufficient walleye remaining in the lake for a healthy population. The harvestable surplus for 2019 will not be determined until January 2019. However, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is confident that the safe harvest will be similar to or higher than that set in 2018, therefore, limited harvest may be taken by state anglers this winter with little risk of exceeding the safe harvest for the 2018/2019 fishing season. The winter 2018/19 fishing season will commence December 1, 2018, and extend through

February 24, 2019, with the harvest restrictions outlined in the order below. This decision is based on the results of recent fisheries surveys that indicate the Mille Lacs walleye fishery can accommodate an ice fishery and stay within the projected state share of the 2019 harvestable surplus.

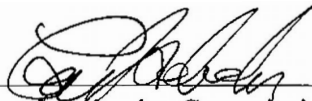
Because smallmouth bass were considered abundant enough to allow a fall harvest, smallmouth bass in Mille Lacs were temporarily exempted from the statewide fall harvest closure to increase the opportunity for anglers to harvest fish. However, in consultation with stakeholder groups, the DNR has determined the harvest season should again be closed, starting on December, to protect quality smallmouth bass during the winter walleye harvest season, and to be consistent with the statewide harvest closure for smallmouth bass.

For all other species, the Expedited Emergency Game and Fish Rule adopted on April 23, 2018, will remain in effect.

### ORDER

**NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED**, pursuant to authority vested in me by law, including *Minnesota Statutes*, section 97C.005, subdivision 3, that:

1. The angling season for taking smallmouth bass on Lake Mille Lacs is closed beginning at 12:01 a.m., December 1, 2018.
2. The angling season for walleye begins at 12:01 a.m. on December 1, 2018, and continues to 11:59 p.m. on February 24, 2019. While a person is on or angling in Lake Mille Lacs, the possession limit for walleye is one. The walleye in possession must be from 21 inches in length to 23 inches in length, inclusive, or over 28 inches in length. All walleye less than 21 inches in length or greater than 23 inches but not greater than 28 inches in length must be returned immediately to the water.
3. Fishing for all other species, including northern pike, perch, and panfish, and the existing regulations for all other species, continue unaffected by this order.

  
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Tom Landwehr, Commissioner

Date: 11/19/18