

Commissioner's Order #1 ML 2021: Amend Walleye and Cisco Seasons and Limits to Make Adjustments to Manage Fisheries in the 1837 Ceded Territory (Lake Mille Lacs)

Effective Date: December 6, 2021

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

Supersedes: Expedited Emergency Game and Fish Rule 6264.0400, subd. 4, item F, referring to the angling seasons and possession restrictions for multiple fish species: Mille Lacs Fishing Regulations as published in the 10 May 2021 State Register (45 SR 1203)

BACKGROUND

Each year a harvestable surplus is set for walleye in Lake Mille Lacs by a joint management process between the state and the eight Ojibwe Bands signatory to the Treaty of 1837. The harvestable surplus is the pounds of fish that can be taken safely from Lake Mille Lacs while ensuring sufficient walleye remain in the lake for a healthy population. The harvestable surplus is then divided between the state of Minnesota and the eight Ojibwe Bands. The harvestable surplus for 2022 will not be determined until January 2022. However, based on 2021 fall fisheries surveys, we anticipate that the 2022 harvestable surplus will allow for limited walleye harvest by state-licensed anglers during the winter 2021/2022 fishing season while not exceeding the state's share of the harvest. The winter 2021/2022 fishing season will commence December 6, 2021, and extend through February 27, 2022, with the harvest restrictions outlined in the order below.

Lake Mille Lacs cisco are a popular target of many anglers but also an important forage item for walleye and muskellunge. Cisco populations have declined over the past 30 years in

Lake Mille Lacs. The possession limit was reduced to ten cisco several years ago, but annual harvest has still exceeded 20,000 pounds in recent years. Although climate change plays a primary role in the decline of cisco, reducing harvest via the possession limit serves as a climate adaptation strategy intended to slow the population decline.

For all other species, the Expedited Emergency Game and Fish Rule adopted on May 10, 2021, 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 winter angling season for walleye begins at 12:01 a.m. on December 6, 2021 and continues to 11:59 p.m. on February 27, 2022. While a person is on or angling in Lake Mille Lakes or its associated tributaries to the posted boundaries, the bag limit for walleye is one, provided:

- a. a walleye in possession must be from 21 inches in length to 23 inches in length, inclusive, or over 28 inches in length; and
- b. all walleye less than 21 inches in length or greater than 23 inches but less than 28 inches in length must be returned immediately to the water.

2. The angling season for cisco begins at 12:01 a.m. on December 6, 2021 and continues to 11:59 p.m. on February 27, 2022. While a person is on or angling in Lake Mille Lakes or its associated tributaries to the posted boundaries, the bag limit for cisco is five.

3. Fishing for all other species and the existing regulations for all other species, continue unaffected by this order.

Saul Stein