

Waterville Area Fisheries

2020 Fishing Outlook



Lakes managed by the DNR Waterville Area Fisheries Office range from deep, stable lakes to prairie potholes and provide a variety of fishing opportunity for anglers. Waterville Fisheries staff follow strategic lake management plans, conducting rotating lake surveys to monitor fish populations in Le Sueur, Blue Earth, Faribault, Waseca, Steele, Dodge, Freeborn, Mower, and Rice counties in southern Minnesota.

The data provided here show a breakdown of fish caught during sampling in 2017, 2018, and 2019 for selected species, by size. We hope you can use this information to decide what to fish for and where in 2020.

A note on sampling

The data we present here are from standard surveys conducted with trap nets, gill nets, and electrofishing. The numbers reflect a snapshot in time - usually 1 week in the summer. Nets are placed in the same locations within a lake each year and surveying over many years allow us to track trends. However, netting is subject to many variables such as water temperature, weather patterns, water clarity, or oxygen levels at the time of the survey. Also, netting does not target big fish, netting targets a representative sample of the fish population and every gear has built-in size bias. This means the largest, or smallest, members of a population may not be shown on the graphs presented. Therefore, one poor survey does not mean numbers have crashed or a lake has no big fish. Likewise, high net catch rates do not guarantee angling success. Use the results shown here as a starting point for your trip and best of luck!

Bluegill

Most lakes in the Waterville Area have Bluegills but the best Bluegill lakes are the lakes with the best habitat. Anglers looking for Bluegills should first look for habitat, namely vegetation. Lakes with good vegetation such as Beaver, Cedar, and Frances are consistent Bluegill producers. Big Bluegills are often found in lakes with lower Bluegill numbers. Waterville area lakes capable of producing large Bluegills include Horseshoe, Washington, and Volney. Large Bluegills are hard to find anywhere in the state and deserve special attention, and protection. Please practice selective harvest of large Bluegills – those large fish can be especially vulnerable in the spring and are not easily replaced.

Crappie

Anglers have plenty of choices for crappies in the Waterville Area. For constant action anglers should look to the German/Jefferson chain of lakes, Madison Lake, Lake Washington, and Fountain Lake.

Clear Lake, in Waseca, has historically been known for abundant, but small crappies. However, crappie size has improved greatly on Clear Lake making it worth a trip. Some lakes where large crappies were surveyed include Cedar, Duck, and Roberds.

Yellow Perch

Quality sized Yellow Perch can be difficult to come by in most areas. However, anglers willing to put in a little work can find good Yellow Perch in the Waterville area. Circle Lake, near Faribault along with Roberds, Crystal and Elysian are some of the best bets for Yellow Perch. Pickeral Lake, near Albert Lea is managed specifically for Yellow Perch and Northern Pike and boasts a large population of Yellow Perch, although many run on the small side.

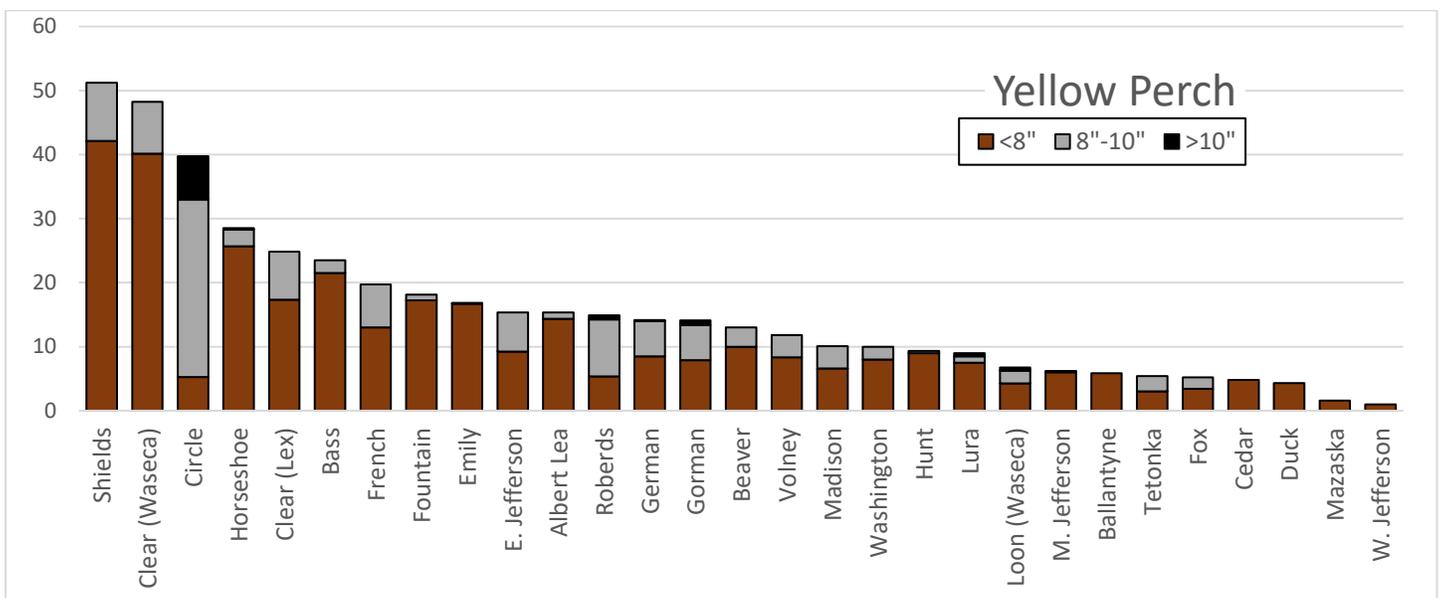
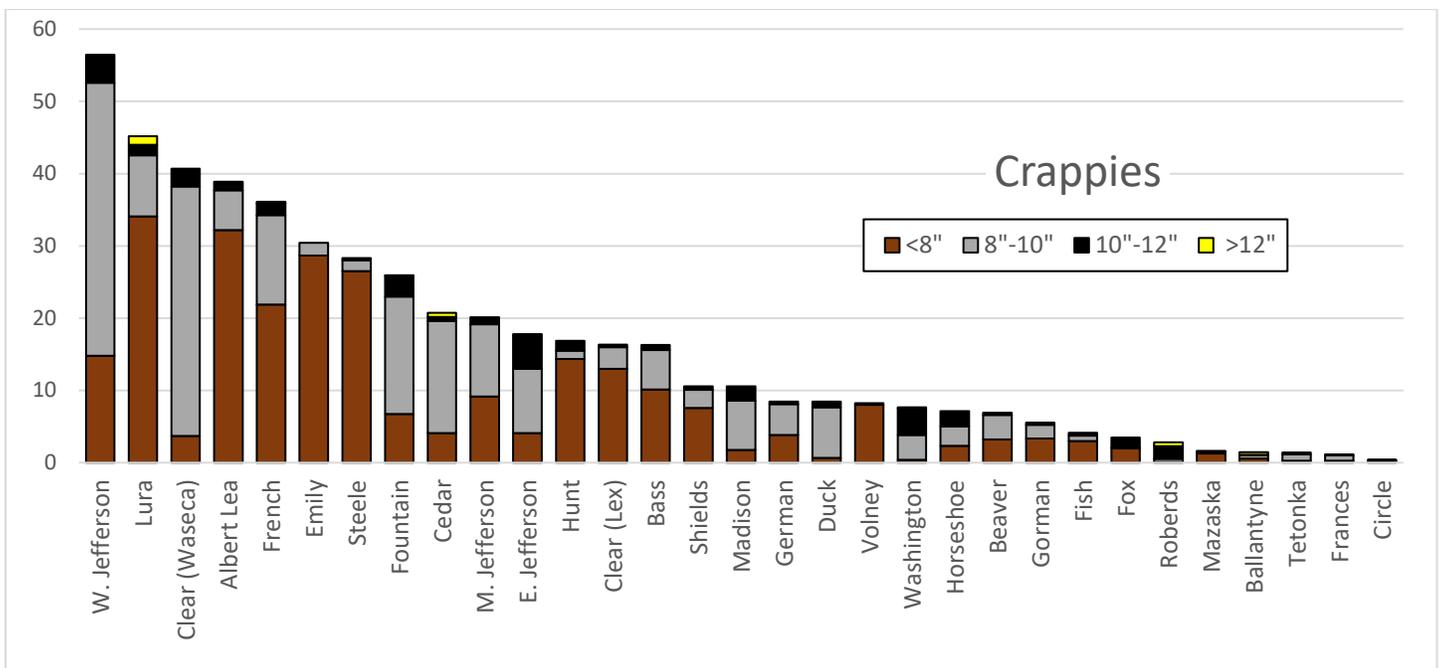
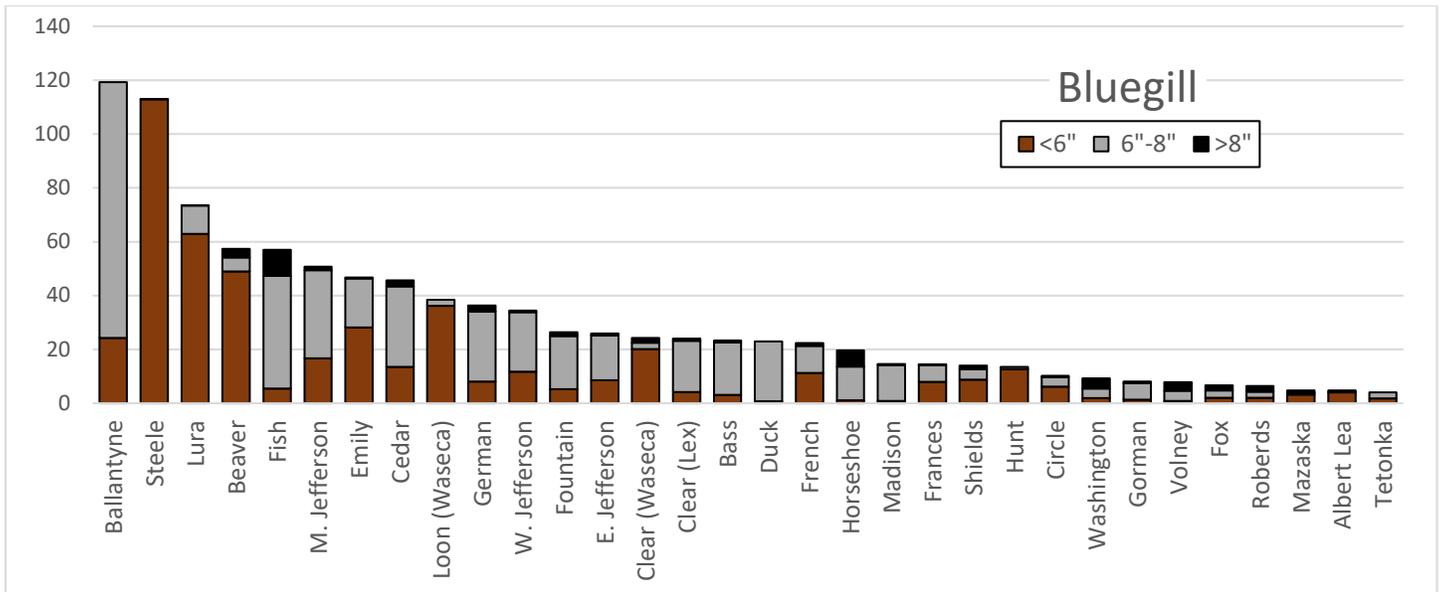
Walleye

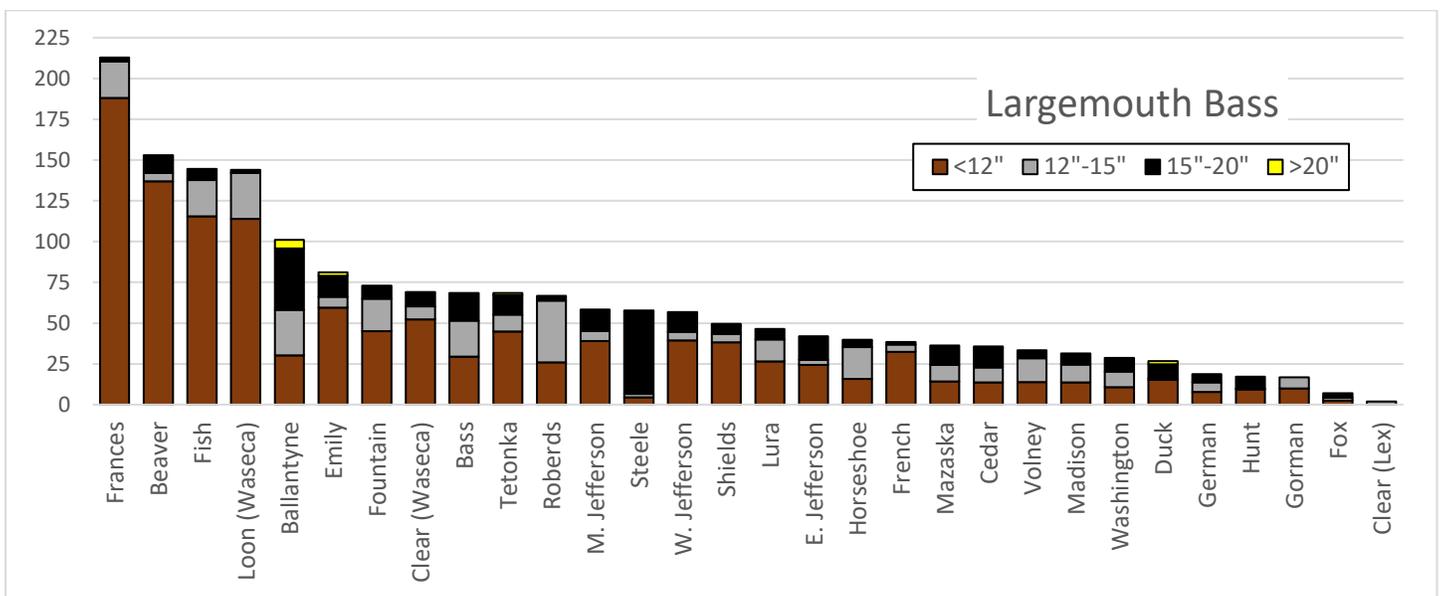
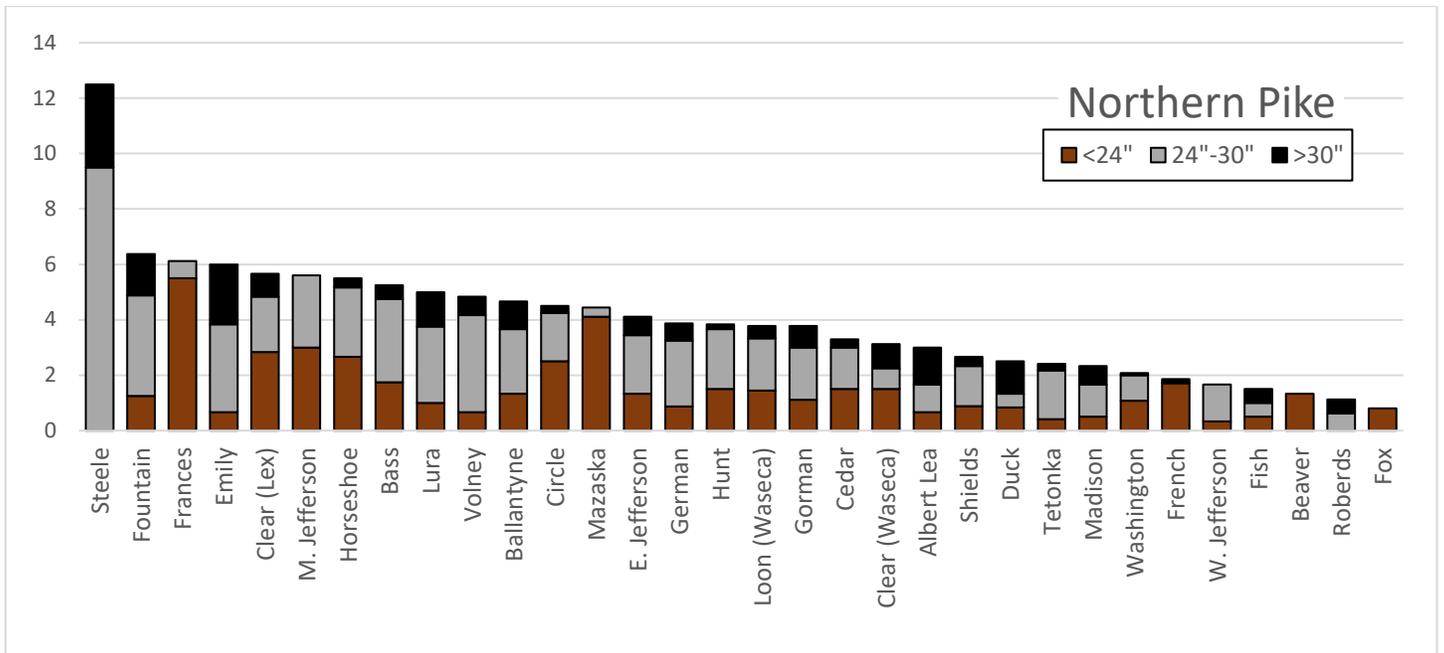
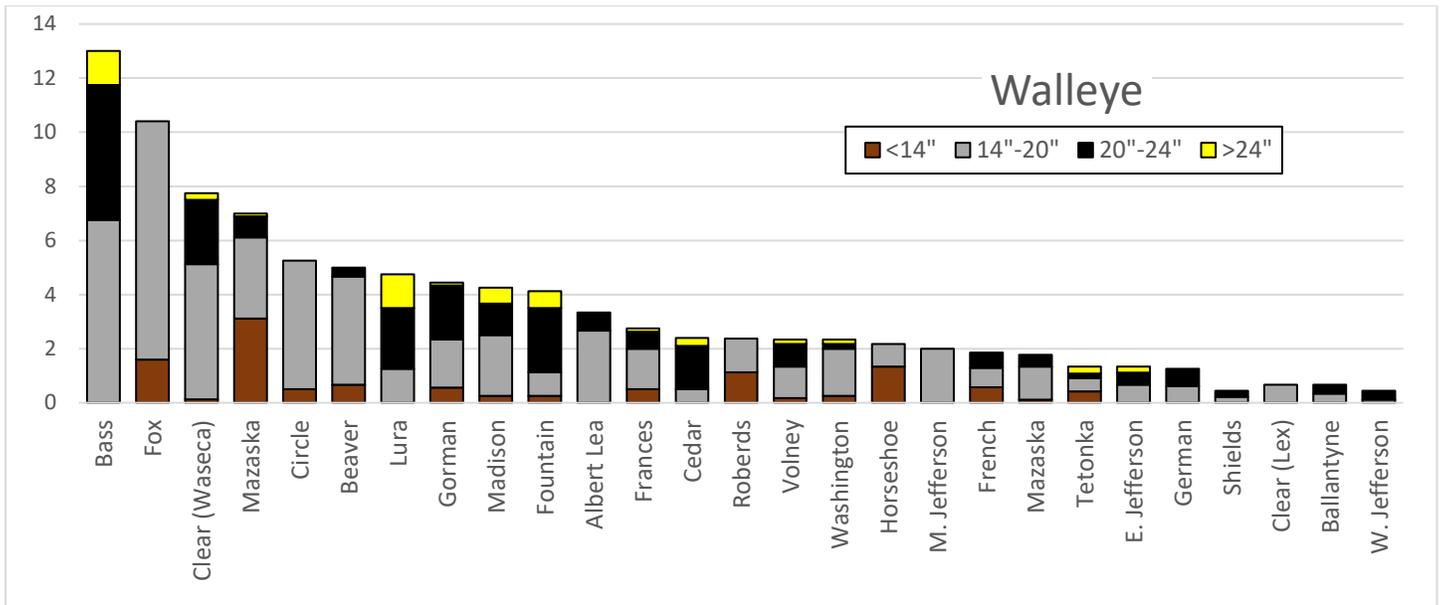
Top bets for Walleye in 2020 include reliable waters like Madison Lake, Lake Washington, and the Minnesota River. Or, try a lake or two that aren't necessarily known as Walleye destinations such as Clear Lake in Waseca or Cedar Lake. Many of our boom/bust fisheries including Elysian Lake, Loon Lake, and Mills Lake survived the brutal 2018/2019 winter and still offer quality Walleye fishing. Lura Lake, Bass Lake, and Lake Tetonka boast populations with Walleye over 24 inches. Fountain Lake, in Albert Lea, hosted the Governor's Fishing Opener in 2019 and has a good Walleye population with plenty of big fish.

Northern Pike

Northern Pike are a popular target of anglers in the Waterville area. Many Northern Pike swimming in area lakes are stocked fish hatched at the Waterville State Fish Hatchery. The Waterville area has few lakes with high Northern Pike density, however, low numbers of Northern Pike usually means bigger Northern Pike. Waterville Area lakes are part of the new Northern Pike regulation's Southern Zone. Anglers in the Southern Zone may keep 2 Northern Pike which must be at least 24 inches long. Finding a 24 inch Northern Pike shouldn't be much of a problem, especially at lakes like Steele or Volney. Duck Lake has the potential to kick out fish 30 inches and longer, as do Steele, German, and Clear (in Waseca) to name just a few. St. Olaf Lake near New Richland has a 30 inch minimum size limit that will remain in effect.

(more species on back page)





Largemouth Bass

The Waterville Area is full of quality Largemouth Bass lakes. For fast action anglers should check out lakes with high bass numbers such as Reeds, Francis, or Fish. Lakes with low to medium densities of bass such as Lura, Ballantyne, and Cedar often offer the best crack at fish topping the 20 inch mark.

Catfish

The Minnesota River is the best bet for Channel and Flathead Catfish in the Waterville area. The stretch from Courtland to Henderson holds a variety of catfish habitat, especially woody snags. The Le Sueur and Blue Earth rivers are also excellent choices for Channel Catfish. In addition, Cannon Lake, Fountain Lake and Emily Lake also have Channel Catfish.

Bullheads

Most lakes in the Waterville area have decent numbers of bullheads in them, but size is often considered too small. Washington Lake is home to good populations of Black and Yellow Bullheads. Large Yellow Bullheads can be found in Frances Lake and Cedar Lake. Clear Lake in Waseca along with Clear Lake near Lexington and Horseshoe Lake all have good populations of eating sized Black Bullheads.

Muskellunge

French Lake, by Faribault, is the only Muskie lake in the Waterville area. Recent sampling shows a population of about 200 adult Muskie in the lake, or only 1 fish for every 4 acres of water. There may not be a lot of Muskie in French Lake (and that's by design) but fish over 40 inches are common and fish over 50 inches are a real possibility. French Lake is also home to a small population of big Northern Pike and a very healthy Crappie population.

Trout

A few options exist for those seeking trout in the Waterville area. The ponds at Paul's Creek near St. Peter are stocked every spring with 5,000 ten to twelve inch Rainbow Trout. If you prefer to fish moving water check out Rice Creek, by Dundas, for Brook Trout. Rice Creek is loaded with small to medium sized Brook Trout and some large fish. A new trout opportunity will be available in 2020. Wolf Creek, in Austin's Todd Park, will be stocked with 600 Rainbow Trout in April of 2020.

Other Species

The Waterville area offers a host of "other" fish for those seeking something off the beaten track. Lakes like German and Mazaska offer Longnose Gar. Mazaska also sports a healthy population of big, hard fighting White Bass. The Minnesota, Le Sueur, and Blue Earth rivers (as well as other, smaller rivers) are a bonanza for anglers looking for less sought-after species like various redhorse, White Suckers, Shovelnose Sturgeon (catch and release only!), and gar. Tetonka Lake, along with the Cannon River, Straight River, and the Minnesota River offer an opportunity to catch a Smallmouth Bass or two. Options are nearly endless for anglers or those looking to arrow a carp. Also, Waterville Fisheries manages many kids fishing ponds across our nine counties. Kids fishing ponds are stocked with fish such as Bluegills, Largemouth Bass, and crappies. These are fantastic places to take kids or introduce someone to fishing!

For more information visit LakeFinder on the MN DNR website (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/index.html>).

Lake survey year

2017 - French, Roberds, Shields, Tetonka, Lura, Beaver, Circle, Fox, Hunt, Sunfish, Emily.

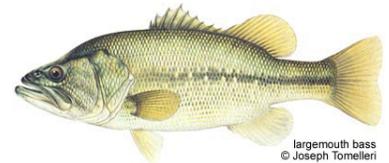
2018 - Clear (Le Sueur County), Albert Lea, Bass, German, Horseshoe, Middle Jefferson, West Jefferson, East Jefferson, Clear (Waseca County), Fountain, Loon (Waseca County).

2019 - Cedar, Frances, Mazaska, Madison, Duck, Washington, Fish, Volney, Ballantyne, Steele, Gorman.

2020 lake survey schedule

The following lakes will be surveyed with gill nets, trap nets, and electrofishing during the summer of 2020:

French Lake	Upper Sakatah Lake
Shields Lake	Lower Sakatah Lake
Roberds Lake	Cannon Lake
Tetonka Lake	Sabre Lake
Lura Lake	Wells Lake
Rays Lake	



WATERVILLE AREA FISHERIES

(507) 497-1820

50317 Fish Hatchery Road Waterville, MN 56096

mn DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES