

News Reel

Waterville Area Fisheries Newsletter

Fall 2018

Autumn a busy time for all

A 2013 study found 29 percent of American's favorite season was fall. What makes fall so special for people? We often associate fall with big events such as going back to school. Fall is also the season of Thanksgiving, a time to reflect on the past year. In the Upper Midwest, fall is a very important time for agriculture, as the reward for an entire year's worth of planning, effort, investment, risk, and about every emotion under the sun, comes to fruition.

For the Waterville Area Fisheries Office, we also appreciate fall as one of our favorite seasons. The fall is a very busy time, but brings a climatic ending to lots of hard work! For staff like Andrew, who runs the hatchery, you can sense the calmness in him once the last pond is drained. Andrew, and the other staff, care for fish from March until nearly Thanksgiving every year. That takes a lot of responsibility, effort, and thought and care around the clock 7 days a week. Andrew doesn't get away from that until Fall harvest is completed. I bet he looks forward to fall for that reason!

Other staff have been busy running nets in our natural walleye rearing ponds. These ponds were stocked with walleye fry in May and we have been monitoring

them since. Pond harvest is always a rewarding time that we anticipate. The crew have also been working on Aquatic Management Areas around Waterville. Brandon has led a project to install a primitive access on Savidge Lake AMA. Another project was completed to improve the St. Peter AMA/trout ponds. There are always other issues at AMAs such as trash and fencing that Peter deals with.

Sky and Tyler are aging fish and preparing lake survey reports based on this summer's netting data. All staff contributed to Fall electrofishing to assess success of our walleye fry stocking and/or natural reproduction. There was exceptional reproduction of walleye in the Cannon River system this year, that's exciting!

We are also planning already for next year, with the goal of creating and sustaining great fishing resources!

Fall is the time of year we are thankful for what we have accomplished while being mindful of what we need to do and the changes we need to make to improve our management of the areas fisheries.

By the way, the fishing is usually good in the fall too, something else to add to the list of reasons to love the fall! -Craig S.

ABOVE: Brook trout join in the Fall color festivities. This male brook trout, from Rice Creek, shows off his best orange, pink, purple and other hues.

Winter is coming

With winter coming, it is time to start thinking about putting the boat away. Here are a few things you should do to take care of your rig so it doesn't cost you in the spring.

- **Change the Lower unit oil:** This is by far the most important thing you can do. Be sure to completely drain and refill with new gear case oil.
- **Trailer bearings:** Check to be sure there is no water mixed with the grease. Rusted bearings are the leading cause of bearing failure.
- **Change your engine oil:** 4 strokes – do a complete oil and filter change, 2 strokes – top off your oil reservoir.
- **Water pump:** If the tell tail (water stream) has gotten weak it could be a time for a new water pump.
- **Batteries:** Be sure you have MARINE batteries and make sure the cells are nearly full of liquid. Charge your battery and disconnect. Store the battery inside or leave in your boat.
- **Gas:** Always put a stabilizer in your tank and let your motor run to be certain it has made it into the fuel system.
- **Trailer lights:** It is a good time to fix any problems with your trailer lights. You don't want to be ready for a trip in the spring and realize your lights do not work properly.

If you take the time this fall to take care of some minor maintenance, you will be able to get out much earlier in the spring. It may also save you a few pennies.

- Contributed by Tyler Fellows, specialist

Sunrise on Mayhew Creek



Giant bladders divert Mayhew Creek around the electric barrier construction site.

Summer and Fall AMA Work

Trout Improvements

Anglers who took advantage of trout stockings at St. Peter AMA (Paul's Creek) this spring probably noticed two developments. First, the road was rough and full of potholes. We repaired the road and the parking lot – expect it to be in good shape next spring in time for trout season. A gate and parking lot have been installed near Ottawa Road. The gate will be locked during winter months which is when most of the damage is done to the road. Don't worry, we will open the gate for trout season! We also had to repair the levee holding back water in the big pond. It has been fixed and is working perfectly.



lake and easier access in the winter.

The road to Blue Earth River AMA, near Winnebago, was repaired in 2017. Users of the AMA were driving around potholes and through farm fields to access the site and were causing significant damage to private property and the access road. Rock was hauled in to firm up the road and potholes were removed. Also, the parking lot was expanded, rocked, and concrete barriers were installed to keep vehicles out of the AMA.

Other AMA maintenance activities will be taking place throughout the year. These include prescribed burns, boundary surveys, mowing of parking areas, and removal of invasive plants.

Clean-up

We are constantly removing trash including litter, TVs, microwaves, mattresses, railroad

ties, and many, many tires from AMA land. This is a time-consuming and expensive effort that takes away resources we should be directing towards fish management. If you see trash piled at an AMA please contact us and we will remove it when we can. Or, if you belong to, or know of a club or association looking to "adopt an access" to help keep these areas clean please let us know.

What is an AMA?

An AMA is property owned by Fisheries and designated as an Aquatic Management Area. Many people will be surprised to learn that Fisheries owns land.

There are a few good reasons for this. The first is to protect valuable shore land habitat like emergent vegetation or trees that have fallen into a lake or stream. The second is to provide anglers access to areas like rivers or trout streams.

In the Waterville Area we have a unique type of AMA – northern pike spawning areas. Northern pike are stocked in these AMAs as fry and released into an adjoining lake in mid-summer.

To find out more and find an AMA near you, visit the DNR website <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/amas/index.html>

Better Access

Another AMA near St. Peter, Savidge Lake AMA, got an upgrade this summer. Trees were cut and a carry-in access was installed. Cattails removal will be done in the spring of 2019 and will allow canoe and kayak access to the



Waterville Area AMAs

Waterville Area Fisheries owns and maintains almost 1,700 acres of land on 30 AMAs in our 9 county area. These AMAs range in size from 1.6 acres to over 375 acres. AMAs protect lakeshore, streams, and wetlands. Some are even islands!

Most AMAs provide hunting and fishing access, but some do not. The DNR has created a new webpage for finding AMAs and determining what uses are allowed. To see more go to <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/amas/index.html>

You can search for an AMA by county or by use type such as hunting or fishing. Hunting regulations on AMAs are the same as on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs).

Waterville area has 30 AMAs with nearly 1,700 acres of land

Types of AMAs

- **General Use:** Angling, hunting, trapping, non-motorized travel, and wildlife observation are allowed.
- **Restricted Use:** Angling, non-motorized travel, and wildlife observation are allowed. NO HUNTING.
- **Easement:** Only angling is allowed. Easement AMAs are generally found along trout streams.



Consult the Minnesota Hunting & Trapping Regulations book for details on hunting seasons and public land regulations.



Above: Lake Francis AMA.

Left: Yellow signs denote AMA boundaries and provide information on activities allowed at the property.

Outside Partners Help With Hatchery Experiment

Fish food

Diet plays a large role in fish growth and survival. Diets vary depending on species being raised and budgets. Muskellunge at Waterville Hatchery are fed a dry, pellet food while housed inside. We have used the same food for many years.



A fingerling muskellunge looks for shelter among the rocks immediately after being stocked in French Lake.

This spring the Waterville Hatchery did a food study intended to increase growth and survival of muskellunge.

I want to preface the results with some encouragement to our anglers and constituents to involve themselves with the Minnesota DNR through collaboration/cooperation. This study was only possible with help from Muskies Inc. and the Hugh C. Becker grant.

New food

Two types of food were compared in the

trial with the new food purchased from a company in Japan that is gaining followers in the fish production world. Sixty percent of the muskellunge were raised on the old food and the remaining forty percent on the new food. Each day mortality from each tank was counted and recorded.

Promising results

Early indications showed considerably less mortality in the tanks with the new food.

This was exciting, but another component that proved to be very beneficial was the cleanliness of the new food and its ease of use.

The new food did not stick to feeders, the water was clearer, fish were easier to observe, and there was less waste in the bottom of tanks.

Partners

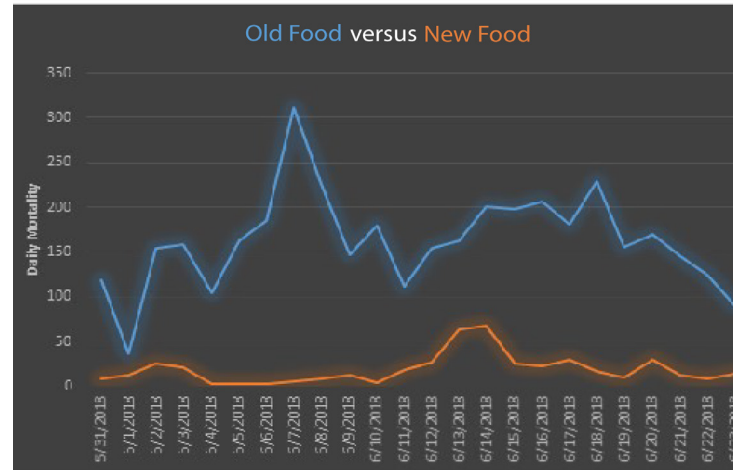
We collaborated with the East Metro fish hatchery in St. Paul and also shared information with a private producer, both

of whom had similar, positive, results with the new food.

Thank you!

We plan to replicate this diet study in 2019 with intentions of completely changing to the new food in 2020, if we have positive results. Again, a big "Thank you" to Muskies Inc. and the Hugh C. Becker Grant for purchasing the new food.

- contributed by Andrew Scholten, hatchery manager

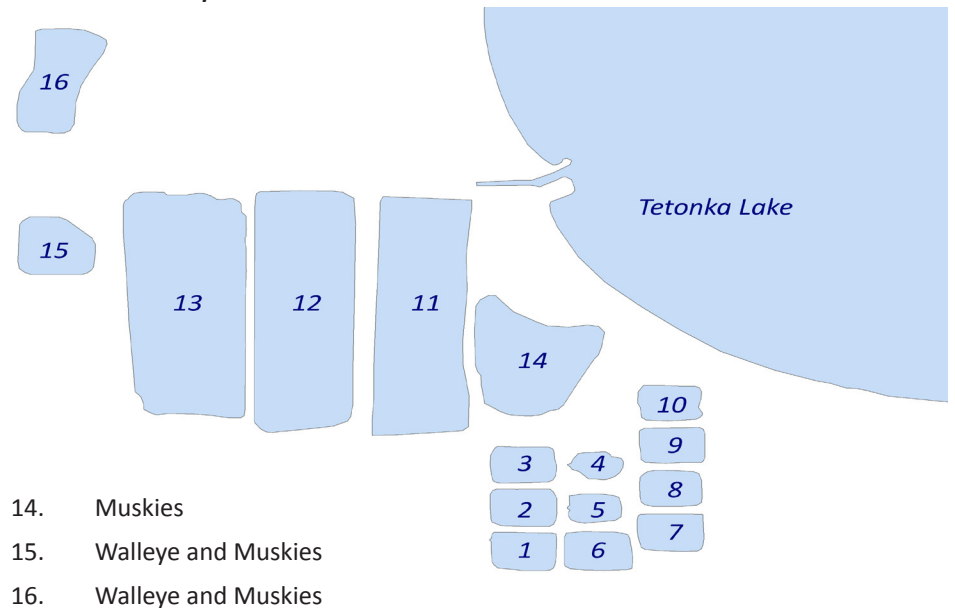


This graph shows the daily mortality of muskellunge at the Waterville Hatchery. The blue line indicates the number of fish given the old food that died. The orange line indicates the number of fish given the new food that died.

What's in Your Pond?

1. Muskies
2. Muskies
3. Channel Catfish
4. Muskies
5. Muskies
6. Muskies
7. Muskies
8. Muskies
9. Muskies
10. Muskies
11. Water for Hatchery
12. Walleye
13. Walleye

Map of the ponds at Waterville State Fish Hatchery and what fish species are usually raised in which ponds.



WATERVILLE AREA FEATURES:

Elysian Lake

IN WASCA COUNTY

It's been quite a couple years for Elysian Lake, bordered by the city of Elysian on the north and Janesville on the south. The winter of 2016/2017 was the first in nearly 40 years that the aerators didn't run, spring saw a strong crappie bite, summer brought a massive carp die-off and a walleye boom is in full effect.

Boom or Bust

In shallow lakes a fish boom is often the result of a lot of fish dyeing. The first fish to die in a winter kill situation are our favorite gamefish like walleyes and bluegills. The last fish to die are undesirable fish such as bullheads and carp – rough fish. Only a strong, complete winter kill is enough to control rough fish populations. Unfortunately, aeration systems can turn a complete kill into a partial kill where only gamefish die. When gamefish die, but rough fish don't, rough fish can take advantage of a lake with no competition or predation and often those rough fish populations explode.

However, by removing aeration from the equation, managers hope to avoid partial winterkills and encourage total kills which effectively reset the entire lake back to zero. At this point, managers can stock desirable game fish at high concentrations, which leads to a boom. Eventually the bust comes; gamefish numbers drop, rough fish increase, and hopefully another

winterkill hits the reset button. This is the new management strategy for Lake Elysian. And, thanks to a winterkill in 2013-2014 and subsequent stockings, things are currently booming.

Carp Kill

In other news, if you were anywhere near Lake Elysian in 2017 you know about the carp die-off. Thousands of dead fish washed ashore in early July. Early indication was a bacteria-induced kill, however further testing revealed the Koi Herpes Virus (KHV) was to blame. The KHV is most likely spread by illegal releases of goldfish into lakes and ponds. Goldfish are carriers of the virus, but are not affected by it. While the carp die-off was massive, it was not a complete kill. Please do not release pet fish into public waters!

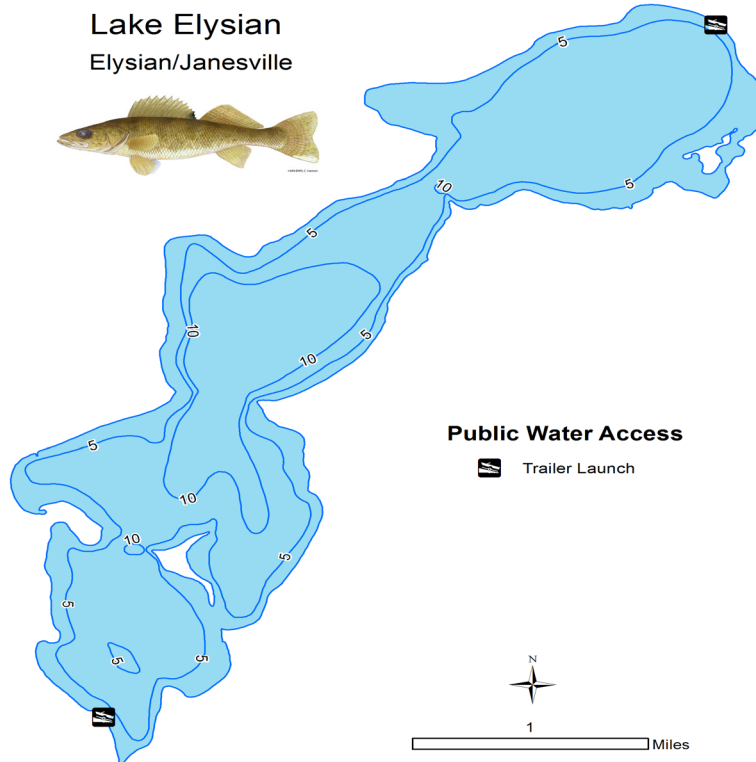
Carp Barrier

Lastly, a new electric fish barrier is being installed downstream of the outlet. This barrier is intended to keep invasive bighead and silver carp out of the lake.

It is definitely a time of change for Lake Elysian. Hopefully, the future brings improved habitat, regular winterkills, strong boom fishing conditions, and low carp numbers. In the meantime,

anglers are encouraged to take advantage of booming crappie and walleye populations while they can.

-Contributed by Brandon Eder, assistant supervisor.



Natural walleye reproduction

Area staff spent some long, cold, dark hours on area lakes this fall in search of walleyes hatched earlier this spring. We use night electrofishing in the fall to look for fingerling walleyes that were either stocked or produced via natural reproduction. Fingerling walleye were plentiful, mostly on the Cannon River chain of lakes including Gorman, Tetonka, and Cannon lakes. Good natural reproduction was also found on Washington Lake. Natural reproduction can produce far more walleye than stocking and can sustain good fishing for years.

To receive your complimentary copy of **NEWS REEL** or to submit topic ideas, contact Brandon Eder, newsletter editor, at brandon.eder@state.mn.us or call 507-362-4223 ext. 225.

Electrofishing results

- Cannon Lake – 378 fish/hour
- Washington Lake – 120 fish/hour
- Gorman Lake – 82 fish/hour
- Tetonka Lake – 80 fish/hour
- Madison Lake – 12 fish/hour

WATERVILLE AREA FISHERIES

50317 Fish Hatchery Road Waterville, MN 56096

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NATURAL RESOURCES