



2008 Wisconsin Fishing Report



Fishing is one of DNR Secretary Matthew Frank's most fond childhood memories. Get tips on how to make fishing fun and memorable for kids on p. 16.

Fabulous fisheries projects

Epic habitat makeover

OSCEOLA – A habitat makeover in Osceola Creek completed in 2007 turned a previously distressed trout stream into an exceptional brook trout fishery.

Heavy rains in 2002 blew out the Upper Osceola Dam and extensively damaged the stream. The Village of Osceola and the Department of Natural Resources began working collaboratively to restore more than 1,500 feet of stream in downtown Osceola in Polk County.

They removed a small rock structure, stabilized eroding streambanks and installed LUNKER structures to create overhead cover for trout. They also added rock plunge pools and enhanced spawning areas.

Three new walking trails now allow anglers to stroll down to bunker areas to sit

and fish from shore. New parking lots and a handicapped access fishing area are additions to this trout haven.

Several dozen Osceola High School students also helped with the stream restoration by planting more than 1,000 trees and shrubs in the area.

The completed habitat work has achieved stellar results: 500 trout per mile were found in the restored stretch in 2007, compared to 50 fish per mile before the work was done.

“Our goal is to be at 1,000 brook trout per mile,” says Heath Benike, DNR fisheries biologist. “We weren’t expecting that for a couple of years, but we may just reach it in 2008.”

– Alisa Lopez, fisheries communication specialist, Madison

Diving for answers

WOLF RIVER – Donning dry suits and scuba tanks, DNR biologists dove the frigid waters of the Wolf River in late November and early December to capture flathead catfish by hand.

This unique technique to collect flathead catfish, shunning the typical electroshocking boats and fyke nets for an up-close and personal approach, has provided valuable information and insight into this elusive fish.

Flathead catfish become very inactive and immobile once water temperatures dip under 40° F. Many of the juvenile fish are so lethargic from the cold water that they can actually be handled and moved into mesh nets underwater.

Once the fish are captured, they are brought to the surface and measured, weighed and tagged before a diver takes the fish back down into the wintering site and releases them.

This technique has proven to be extremely efficient, with 40 to more than 100 flatheads captured in a single dive, typically an hour long. Biologists have learned that flatheads tend to group in large numbers during winter, can number in the hundreds with many fish stacked on top of one another, and in some cases, may use the same wintering site year after year.

Biologists are also hopeful that this technique can help them monitor trends in catfish abundance at more prominent wintering sites, and help them gather important information on angler harvest rates and fish age and growth from recaptured tags.

– Alan Niebur, fisheries biologist, Shawano

Continued on page 6



DNR fisheries biologist Al Niebur holds a 40-plus pound flathead catfish he captured while conducting scuba diving surveys on the Wolf River in November. This unique and efficient technique has provided valuable information and insight into this elusive fish.

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Fishing by the numbers

- 1.4 million licensed anglers
- 21 million annual fishing days
- #2 ranked fishing destination nationwide
- 88 million fish caught
- 33 million fish harvested
- 11 million fingerlings and yearlings stocked a year
- \$2.75 billion economic benefits
- 30,164 jobs
- 165 fish species
- 15,081 lakes
- 42,000 miles of year-round streams
- 10,266 miles of trout stream

For more information...

Find links to fishing licenses, season dates, regulations, where to fish and more at www.fishingwisconsin.org

If you have more fishing questions, call toll-free 1-888-WDNRIFo (1-888-936-7463) or visit dnr.wi.gov/contact for a live chat

Great fishing! ¡Buena pesca! Zoo Nuv Ntses Heej!
Bilingual services now available

Dear Wisconsin Angler

Numbers tell the story. 1.4 million anglers, 21 million days on the water, 88 million fish caught, and \$2.75 billion in economic benefits.

Wisconsin is a great place to fish. It's evident in those mind-boggling statistics from recent angler surveys. More importantly, it's evident in the big fish stories, the photographs and the memories anglers share with us every year. It's why we work to make your fishing better.

Our spring and fall fisheries surveys suggest that 2008 will reel in more of the same: Lots of fish and good times with family and friends in Wisconsin's beautiful scenery.

This year will also be one of change for anglers and, potentially, some challenges. A new fish disease that killed large numbers of fish in the lower Great Lakes in 2005 and 2006 reached Wisconsin in 2007. The disease, viral hemorrhagic septicemia, or VHS for short, isn't a health risk for humans, but it can infect and kill a wide variety of our native game fish, panfish and bait fish.

So far we haven't seen any large fish die-offs from VHS here, but Wisconsin has taken significant, comprehensive steps to keep this disease from spreading beyond

the Lake Michigan and Lake Winnebago systems, where VHS was detected in May 2007. We're confident these actions, along with continued help from anglers and boaters in following new statewide rules restricting the movement of live fish and water, will keep fishing great in Wisconsin in 2008 and for generations to come.

Anglers' cooperation in following these rules on the Great Lakes and Lake Winnebago in 2007 was a big reason VHS was contained to those waters. I want to thank those anglers for their efforts.

I ask all anglers in 2008 and beyond to show the same caring for our fisheries and future generations. By working together, we can keep Wisconsin fish and lakes healthy and reel in many, many more great memories and big fish.

Sincerely,



Mike Staggs, Director
Bureau of Fisheries Management

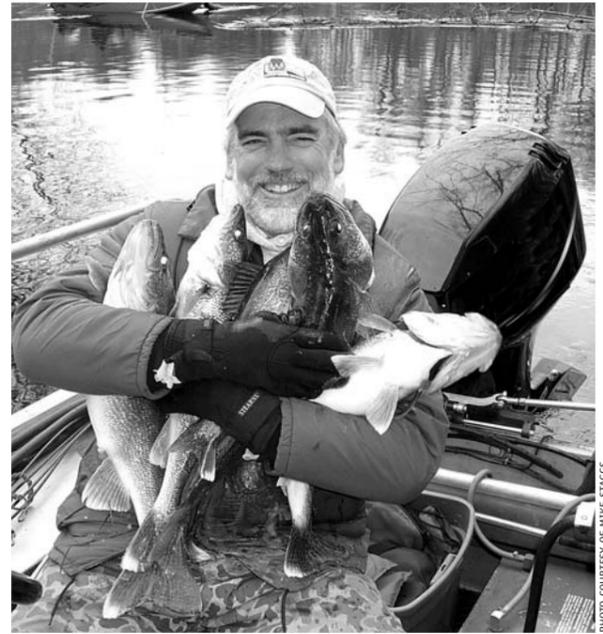


PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE STAGGS

More anglers target walleye than any species, and Fisheries Director Mike Staggs found plenty of this dinner favorite during 2007 fish surveys.

VHS and YOU Keep Wisconsin's waters healthy

A new fish virus was discovered in Lake Michigan and Lake Winnebago in May 2007. The virus may also be present in Lake Superior and the Mississippi River. The viral hemorrhagic septicemia virus, or VHS, is not a threat to people who handle fish or want to eat their catch. However, it can spread easily to healthy fish that eat infected fish or absorb water carrying the virus.



Anglers' favorites like musky, walleye, bluegill and trout are most susceptible to VHS. To keep them healthy and prevent this deadly fish disease from spreading, anglers should not move water or live fish away from a waterbody and they should buy their bait from licensed Wisconsin bait dealers. For information on specific regulations and the VHS virus in Wisconsin, visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/vhs.



Infected fish — whether they were infected with VHS before leaving the bait shop or picked it up while sitting in a bait bucket refreshed with water from that lake — are the most likely pathway for VHS to get introduced to new waters.



Fish appear more vulnerable in the spring, when water temperatures are cold and their immune systems are stressed from the rigors of spawning.



Signs of VHS virus in fish include hemorrhaging or bloody spots on the skin and fins and inside in the muscle and tissues, pale or swollen internal organs, and swollen eyes.



There are reports from other states that the main VHS impact is on young fish. Die-offs of these smaller fish are not easy to detect and may take years to become noticeable in fish populations and impact fishing opportunities.

Anglers should report large numbers of dead or dying fish to the DNR Tipline at 1-800-TIP-WDNR (847-9367).

Please do your part to protect Wisconsin's great fishing!



You can help prevent the spread of VHS by purchasing your bait from a licensed Wisconsin bait dealer.



Removing aquatic plants, animals and mud from your boat, trailer and equipment is a good practice when leaving any water.



Disposing of your bait fish or properly preserving them for future use can help keep VHS from entering into new waterbodies.

✂ Clip and Save

Wisconsin Boaters and Anglers Keep Wisconsin's Waters Healthy

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia virus or VHS is a serious fish disease that has recently been discovered in Wisconsin. Please do your part to help control the spread of this disease and other invasive species.



For more information on the VHS virus and other invasive species, visit dnr.wi.gov



DRAIN all water from boat, motor, bilge, live wells and fishing equipment including bait buckets and coolers before leaving the lake or shoreline.



DON'T MOVE LIVE FISH or fish eggs, including bait fish, from any waterbody. Dispose of your bait fish in covered waste barrels or take them home and dispose of them or preserve them for future use.



INSPECT and **REMOVE** all aquatic plants, animals and mud from your boat, trailer and equipment before leaving the landing.

Please report large numbers of dead or dying fish to the DNR Tipline at 1-800-TIP-WDNR(847-9367).



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!



Clip and Save ✂



Anglers mail survey:

88 million fish caught, 33 million kept in 2006-07

MADISON – Anglers caught 88.2 million fish in the 2006-07 license year and released nearly two thirds of them, 55.1 million, according to results of a statewide mail survey of anglers.

“The ultimate measure of the success of our program is how many fish people are catching,” says Mike Staggs, Wisconsin’s fisheries director. “The numbers emphasize how good fishing is in Wisconsin — a lot of people catch a lot of fish.”

The surveys were sent out every two weeks to 2,500 anglers randomly selected from the automated database of current license holders, according to Brian Weigel, the DNR fisheries researcher who analyzed the results. Anglers were asked if they fished during the two-week period, what fish they primarily fished for, and other general information like whether they belong to a sportsman’s club or other conservation group.

Anglers were also asked to fill in a grid with the date, county and lake or stream they fished, and for each species, the number of fish they caught and kept.

The survey also delivered these findings:

- The top 10 waters accounted for only 26 percent of angler trips, meaning nearly three-quarters were made to other waters, hinting at the diversity of fishing in a state with 15,081 lakes and 42,000 perennially flowing miles of river.

- Bass and musky were the fish released most often, with only 5.4 percent and 5.59 percent of those species harvested, respectively.

- Ice anglers spent 15.2 million hours fishing, caught 14 million fish and kept nearly half of them, or 6.5 million.

Gerry Dohm displays the largemouth bass he hooked while fishing in Clear Lake, Langlade County. Large and smallmouth bass are the third most targeted species by anglers, according to a 2006-07 survey.



Wisconsin’s top 10 fished waters

Wisconsin statewide mail survey 2006-07

1. Lake Michigan
2. Lake Winnebago
3. Mississippi River
4. Wisconsin River
5. Green Bay
6. Wolf River
7. Fox River
8. Rock River
9. Chippewa Flowage
10. Lake Waubesa

Wisconsin statewide mail survey 2006-07

Top targeted fish, by fish group	# of fish caught	# of fish harvested
All panfish	57,728,758	25,732,346
Walleye	7,068,112	2,155,626
All bass	10,073,286	550,335
All trout	1,615,190	497,783
Musky	223,101	12,493
Northern pike	3,158,927	621,700
Catfish	777,094	535,658
Other	7,580,707	2,983,290
TOTAL FISH	88,225,175	33,089,231



A YEAR OF FABULOUS FISHING



JANUARY

Anglers can enjoy a fantastic brown trout fishery in the open waters of Lake Michigan’s tributaries and harbors. When the weather gets cold, concentrations of warm water, either in the river mouth or one of several warm water discharges, attract bait fish such as gizzard shad and round gobies — and the hungry browns that feed on them all winter long.

FEBRUARY

February brings North America’s largest winter spear fishery, with an average annual harvest of 1,400 lake sturgeon from the Lake Winnebago system and an annual economic impact of more than \$3 million dollars to the region. The population, estimated at 12,000 adult females and 25,000 adult males, is the world’s largest and reflects DNR’s successful century-old sturgeon management program and citizens’ commitment to sustaining this prehistoric species.

MARCH

As Lake Michigan tributaries open up, fishing for steelhead and brown trout picks up. The catch-and-release trout season opens the first Saturday in March and anglers can enjoy great weather and action this time of year. Walleye and sauger catches often pick up in those river systems open year-round to game fish. Find them listed online at: dnr.wi.gov/fish/yearmd.htm.



DARREN MILLER

APRIL

The end of the ice season in northern Wisconsin is very near. The majority of fishing action is usually on river systems, especially Great Lakes tributaries where steelhead runs are near peak, and those rivers that remain open for walleye fishing. Rains often trigger fresh runs of steelhead on Lake Michigan tributaries in April. Walleye angling is often excellent on various rivers with open seasons, including the Menominee, Wisconsin, Mississippi, Fox, Wolf, Rock and Crawfish rivers.

MAY

The regular inland season for game fish opens statewide on May 3. Walleye fishing across the state is usually good as walleyes begin to feed heavily after spawning. The start of the regular trout fishing season is a great time to get out on your favorite stream or explore new ones. These early months are a terrific time to fish. Most of the stocked trout lakes and spring ponds should provide some excellent fishing for opening weekend anglers.

Crappie, bluegill and perch become more active in shallow, warm bays of lakes. Northern pike are more active after their spring spawning. Bass fishing in the northern zone is catch and release only until June 15. The northern musky zone does not open until May 26. White bass runs on several rivers provide great fishing opportunity early in the season and can happen any time from late April to early June, depending on water conditions.

JUNE

Bass and panfish opportunities are plentiful across the state, as they move into shallow water to build nests and spawn. Largemouth and smallmouth bass are usually well into their spawning period in northern Wisconsin in June, with the northern catch-and-release season ending June 15. Northern pike action picks up with the warming water temperatures. The harvest season for bass in the northern zone opens the third Saturday in June.

JULY

Bass and panfish opportunities are plentiful across the state in lakes. This is also a good time for smallmouth bass fishing in streams and rivers, trolling in the Great Lakes for trout and salmon, and perch fishing on Green Bay and the Winnebago System. Walleye fishing tends to slow down in the warmer months of July and August after higher catch rates in May and June. Walleye catch rates pick up again in September and October.

AUGUST

Fishing can be very good for bass and panfish in August. Bass fishing is often best at early morning and evening. This is usually a slow time for walleye. Chinooks, browns, and rainbows are available to pier fishers along Lake Michigan cities. Musky fishing is popular in northern lakes. Lake Winnebago may be the best bet for walleye fishing in August. Lake Michigan fisheries for trout and salmon have been tremendous in July and August for the last couple years.

SEPTEMBER

September brings the hook-and-line season for lake sturgeon. All anglers who plan to harvest a sturgeon must buy a harvest tag before they fish. Lake sturgeon are found in the Wisconsin River, Lake Superior, Mississippi River and Lake Michigan drainages. September is also a good time for walleye fishing. Bass fishing is still good before slowing down with the cooling of lakes and streams. Inland trout fishing season ends September 30, so make a last visit or two to your favorite streams.



JIM FISCHER

OCTOBER

October brings cooler weather but great opportunities for walleye and musky fishing across the state. September to October is often when walleye put on much of their growth for the current year. Fall movements of walleye up rivers can provide good fishing opportunities.

NOVEMBER

Musky fishing is often challenging but rewarding in November, whether on inland lakes or the Fox River. Recent years have seen very large musky caught at the tail end of the musky fishing season, which closes the last day of November.

DECEMBER

Ice fishing starts to pick up in mid-December in northern Wisconsin. Early ice can bring good fishing for walleye and panfish, but anglers need to be very careful about ice conditions.



JEFF JANZEIN

For current fishing regulations visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/regulations

Raising the next generation of fish

The total number of fish stocked in 2006-07 was lower than previous years due to the extra precautions DNR took with its hatchery program after a new fish disease, viral hemorrhagic septicemia, was discovered in Wisconsin in May.

Our goal was to protect the fish already in lakes and streams by ensuring that no fish with VHS would be stocked from state hatcheries. Hatchery-raised fish, their parent fish, and the water supplies were all tested for the virus before the fish were allowed to be stocked out.

The good news is all test results were negative for VHS. But the delays resulting from testing, and prohibitions against collecting wild forage minnows for feeding to fish in our hatchery ponds, resulted in fewer fish being raised this year. Changes to operation procedures should allow a return to more normal production in future years.

Fish stocked from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007

COMMON NAME	FRY	SMALL FINGERLING	LARGE FINGERLING	YEARLING	ADULT	ALL AGES TOTAL
Brook trout		21,246	134,998	119,725	823	276,792
Brown trout	69,955	54,751	764,499	910,703	5,569	1,805,477
Chinook salmon		1,052,875				1,052,875
Coho salmon			173,918	324,970		498,888
Lake sturgeon		3,706	17,801	1,111		22,618
Lake trout			33,074	112,589		145,663
Musky			65,989	74		66,063
Northern pike	2,134,594	350	36,533			2,171,477
Rainbow trout		29,684	49,221	792,760	1,707	873,372
Splake			87,096	89,942		177,038
Walleye	10,961,799	28,697	128,473			11,118,969
Total fish stocked	13,166,348	1,191,309	1,491,602	2,351,874	8,099	18,209,232

Science in the spotlight

Seeing the "big picture" for Wisconsin stream fisheries

Wisconsin is blessed with more than 88,000 miles of streams and rivers, ranging from tiny spring creeks to the mighty Mississippi River. But in any one year it's hard to survey the fish in more than 500 of these miles, leaving more than 99 percent of the state without up-to-date information for fisheries management.

A new and powerful computerized forecasting tool, recently developed by DNR fish researchers in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey should help. This tool, called the stream model, determines where different fish should be found based on a variety of stream and watershed characteristics and also makes it possible to project what types and numbers of fish will occur in every single mile of Wisconsin's streams.

For example, the model estimates that 11,100 stream miles are currently suitable for brook trout. The model identifies new streams that could support trout fisheries if managed appropriately, but also indicates streams where efforts to establish trout, through stocking or habitat improvement, are probably not worthwhile. This allows fisheries managers and conservation groups to focus their efforts on those streams with the best potential to support good brook trout fisheries.

A particularly exciting application of the model will be to project future trends. The model is a kind of "crystal ball" that can help managers see 10 to 25 years into the future and predict how changes in land use (e.g., urban sprawl) or climate change (e.g., warmer summers) will influence Wisconsin stream fisheries.

— John Lyons, fisheries scientist, Madison



The stream model allows fisheries biologists to see which streams have the potential to support successful fisheries such as brook trout and also streams where efforts may not be worthwhile.

More state fish records set in 2007

Anglers continued their record-setting ways in 2007 with Ettrick, population 1,879, grabbing more than its fair share:

Nicole Brunner of Ettrick established an initial record using a bow and arrow to catch a three-pound, 5.9-ounce, and 19.5-inch gizzard shad in the Mississippi River, Trempealeau County, on April 22.

Jason Cichy of Necedah hauled in a 10-pound, 7.2-ounce, 25.25-inch quillback carp-sucker from the Wisconsin River in Juneau County on March 17, bettering the existing record by just over 10 ounces.

Andrew Volkmann of Wellesley, Mass., reeled in a two-pound, 2.9-ounce, 19.5-inch Kokanee salmon in Menominee County's Upper Bass Lake on Aug. 14, beating the previous record by nine ounces.

Nickolas Smitala of Ringle also hooked a two-pound, 8.2-ounce, 19.5-inch-long Kokanee salmon in Upper Bass Lake, Menominee County on Sept. 1, which bettered the existing record established two weeks earlier by more than five ounces.

Brandon Gann of Sparta used a bow and arrow to capture a 62-pound, 9.6-ounce, 49-inch bigmouth buffalo on April 23 from the

Wisconsin River in Juneau County that beat the previous record by nearly 10 ounces.

Hunter Folkedahl of Ettrick caught a 10-pound, 15.7-ounce, 31.5-inch bowfin with a bow and arrow from the Mississippi River in Buffalo County on Aug. 24 to beat the previous record by over 3.5 pounds.

To see details on other state record fish, go to www.fishingwisconsin.org, and look under "Wisconsin fish" for "record fish."

If you think you or someone else has caught a fish that may be a state record, here's what you need to do:

- Don't clean or, if at all possible, freeze the fish.
- Keep the fish cool, preferably on ice.
- Get the fish weighed as soon as possible on a certified scale (usually found in grocery and hardware stores, etc.) and witnessed by an observer.

Contact the nearest DNR Service Center to get the fish species positively identified and to find out whether the fish is actually a state record. If possible, take a photo of yourself with the fish.

First fish into Wild Rose Hatchery



The revamped Wild Rose State Hatchery welcomed its first fish into new coldwater fish rearing facilities in early 2008, marking a historic moment for the century-old fish hatchery and workhorse of Wisconsin's stocking program. Tom Van Effen, fisheries propagation technician, uses a dip net to transfer coho fingerlings from the Westfield Hatchery into their \$15.9 million home. This first phase of construction involved building all new coldwater facilities and a new visitor's center. Work is expected to begin this summer on the second phase of the renovation, building new coolwater facilities to raise walleye, lake sturgeon, spotted musky and northern pike. Find a video, factsheets and other information about the Wild Rose Hatchery project at dnr.wi.gov/fish/wildrose.

She's 24 and she's caught 35

I peered over the side of the boat and there the monster sat, staring at my sucker from two feet away. "Take it," I mouthed. On command, it flared its gills in attempt to scare the sucker and then inched toward the bait. When the sucker struggled to swim away, the musky pursued and I saw the bobber suddenly change direction — a good indication it had hold of the sucker. My uncle and I slowly moved over to the bobber to make sure the musky was moving away. "Set the hook!" he shrieked. Minutes later he helped me boat a 45-incher.

I've been fishing since I was two years old and musky fishing since I was 11. My uncle, John Aschenbrenner, introduced me to fishing and I've learned most of what I know from him.

He owns and operates a resort on Wabikon Lake in northern Wisconsin so it's quite convenient for me to make travel and fishing plans. For about 13 years now, I've kept a log detailing each of the 35 muskies I've caught across Wisconsin.

I love musky fishing. I think it's the thrill of using the tools you have to outsmart a fish that's tough to catch. It's also the anticipation, coupled with the feeling of not knowing if you will catch one on a given day.

When I first started musky fishing, I had no idea what bait to use but used whatever my uncle put on the end of my line.

I still consult him to this day, but I've also picked up a few patterns and definitely have a few favorite lures. These tips can help anglers new to the sport find early success, as I did, and get hooked on musky fishing.

- Choose lures such as bucktails, spinnerbaits, or crankbaits that won't tire you out while casting them all day. Bucktails and spinnerbaits are effective early in the season.

- Space your casts out. The clearer the water, the more space you want. This also yields a faster retrieve of your lure. For dark and murky water, really work the water and don't worry about casting in similar spots more than once.

- Pay close attention to structure that's submerged or on the surface. Slow down as you approach these areas and cast from different angles.

- Keep your lure in the water! So many anglers fail to do this because either they're

busy talking with their fishing partner, changing lures IN prime spots instead of BEFORE reaching them, taking a short "break" from casting, or taking out a backlash. People who minimize these activities catch more fish.

- Change baits and fishing times as fall approaches. Crankbaits and jerkbaits work better in the late summer/early fall. Fish tend to move a little slower those times of year. Top water baits work best at night and there's no better thrill than catching one when you can barely see your lure!

- Try fishing with suckers. As water temperatures cool in the late fall, fishing with suckers can be very successful. Suckers stay in the "strike zone" longer than arti-

cial lures and increase your chances of catching one of Wisconsin's state fish.

- Use a quick set rig instead of a single hook rig. Studies, including one in Wisconsin, have shown delayed mortality of 80 percent or greater when musky are allowed to swallow single hook bait before the angler sets the hook.

— Rachel Piacenza, aquatic resources education assistant, Madison



Rachel rocked the boat when she used a quick-set sucker rig to reel in this 44.5-pound musky on Sand Lake, Burnett County.

Musky Top 10

TROPHY POTENTIAL

- Green Bay – Marinette, Oconto, Brown and Door counties
- Lake Monona – Dane County
- Chippewa Flowage – Sawyer County
- Okauchee Lake – Waukesha County
- Petenwell and Castle Rock lakes – Adams County

MUSKY ACTION

- Little Green Lake – Green Lake County
- Lake Wingra – Dane County
- Eagle River Chain of Lakes – Vilas County
- Pewaukee Lake – Waukesha County
- Biron Flowage – Wood County

Panfish pointers

Few anglers would dispute that panfish provide the bulk of fishing opportunities and effort in Wisconsin. After all, panfish provide great action and are fairly easy to catch, evidenced by the 58 million panfish that anglers caught in the 2006 license year.

Best of all, panfish taste great!

Here are some of my time-tested fishing tips for increasing your catch, developed over five decades of pulling in panfish and 25 years as a fisheries biologist in Plymouth.

The number one rule is KEEP THINGS SIMPLE. Use:

- Ultralight tackle
- Light test line (two to four pounds)
- Small hooks for sunfish and perch (#10 and smaller), larger hooks for crappies
- Small bait (grubs, small leeches, small minnows, red worms, small plastics)
- The lightest weight required to get the bait down and the smallest bobbers to keep the bait positioned

The next key is to find active fish. Panfish are more actively feeding at sunrise and sunset. However, they are sometimes cooperative

during the entire day, especially if the water is cloudy.

Quality-size panfish use very specific areas of a lake. Concentrate your efforts on outside weed edges, openings in weed beds, fish cribs and tree falls. Larger bluegills and crappies will often suspend over water 15- to 20-foot deep in summer, where water temperatures are cool and where their food (plankton) is abundant. Remember that they may be found in only five percent of the lake area, so you will have to move around a bit to find active fish. Slip bobber rigs are great for keeping the bait at the correct depth. Perch are often right on the bottom of the lake, feeding on snails and other organisms on rocks or in the mud.

The best technique to locate active panfish is to drift slowly across likely areas often, keeping track of where the best action is found. Use a small variety of techniques (plastics versus live bait) at different depths to find the fish. Use lake maps to mark where fish cribs are located or where fish were found to be active. Change locations often until the fish are found. Slight movement of the bait will often stimulate a strike.



Panfish are the number one targeted catch, according to a statewide 2006-07 survey, for good reason — there are plenty of places to fish and plenty of panfish to catch.

Below are some waters where fisheries biologists have documented good quality panfish populations. Most of these waters are large and may withstand more fishing pressure. However, that small lake in your county may be a good bet as well.

Regardless of where you fish for panfish, enjoy the experience and the good eating that results. Remember also to limit your take of panfish. Quality-size panfish are a limited resource. Leave some for tomorrow.

— John Nelson, fisheries biologist, Plymouth

SAFE-EATING GUIDELINES –

for most of Wisconsin's inland waters

Women of childbearing years, nursing mothers and all children under 15 should limit their consumption to:

1 MEAL PER WEEK Bluegills, crappies, yellow perch, sunfish, bullheads and inland trout

AND

1 MEAL PER MONTH Walleye, pike, bass, catfish and all other species

DO NOT EAT Musky

Women beyond their childbearing years and men may eat:

UNRESTRICTED Bluegills, crappies, yellow perch, sunfish, bullheads and inland trout

1 MEAL PER WEEK Walleye, pike, bass, catfish and all other species

AND

1 MEAL PER MONTH Musky

Visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/consumption/ for more information on fish consumption advisories.

NORTHERN REGION:

- Chippewa Flowage, Sawyer County
Bluegills and crappies
- Chetek Chain of Lakes, Barron County
Bluegills, crappies and perch
- Turtle Flambeau Flowage, Iron County
Crappies
- Lac Vieux Desert, Vilas County
Bluegills and crappies
- Upper and Lower Clam lakes, Burnett County – Bluegills

NORTHEAST REGION:

- Green Bay
Perch
- Shawano Lake, Shawano County
Bluegills
- Lake Winnebago pool lakes
Yellow perch
- Cauldron Falls Flowage, Marinette County – Bluegills
- Green Lake, Green Lake County
Bluegills

WEST CENTRAL REGION:

- Mississippi River pools
Bluegills and crappies
- Mason Lake, Adams County
Bluegills (small), crappies and perch

WEST CENTRAL REGION: (continued)

- Lake Menomin, Dunn County
Bluegills
- Tainter Lake, Dunn County
Perch
- Stevens Point Flowage, Portage County
Crappies

SOUTHERN REGION:

- Lake Monona, Dane County
Bluegills
- Fox Lake, Dodge County
Bluegills, crappies and perch
- Beaver Dam Lake, Dodge County
Crappies and perch
- Lake Koshkonong, Jefferson County
White bass
- Rock Lake, Jefferson County
Bluegills

SOUTHEAST REGION:

- Lake Delavan, Walworth County
Bluegills
- Pewaukee Lake, Waukesha County
Crappies and bluegills
- Lake Michigan
Perch
- Big Cedar Lake, Washington County
Bluegills and perch

Year-round shore fishing on Lake Michigan

You don't need a boat to enjoy great fishing on the big pond and its tributaries. Grab a fishing rod and follow this seasonal calendar to some of the state's best and most diverse fishing.

SPRING – March and April are prime times to catch steelhead in the tributary streams. Migratory steelhead are at the peak of their spawning run during this time. DNR stocks multiple strains of steelhead as well as a more domestic rainbow trout. Each variety spawns at a different time, providing extended fishing opportunities. The terms “rainbow” and “steelhead” are used interchangeably by Lake Michigan anglers. Steelhead are rainbow trout that run upstream to spawn. A wide variety of baits and flies will work, but spawn or anything that looks like spawn is best.

Shore anglers will start to catch coho salmon in May. These bright silver fish average about three pounds, fight like crazy and make excellent eating. Small silver spoons are a top choice for coho.

SUMMER – After suffering reproductive failure for most of the 1990s, the yellow perch population seems to be making a comeback. Biologists are “cautiously optimistic” that this popular fish is on the road to recovery. Perch can be caught on a wide variety of baits including jigging spoons, crayfish, minnows, small jigs and hellgrammites.

June is when chinook salmon fishing starts to improve. As the water begins to warm up, shore anglers are at the mercy of the wind. Westerly winds push the warm water out and force the cooler water preferred by salmon closer to shore. This “upwelling” effect is what shore anglers will be looking for all summer long. The best fishing is usually early or late in the day. Large silver spoons or alewives are the most commonly used baits. Glow in the dark lures can be especially productive in low light conditions.

Sturdy tackle is required to land Chinook, which can weigh 10 to 20-plus pounds. In recent years, the Chinook harvest has been better than it's ever been since the DNR started stocking this fish in the late 1960s.

Additionally, coho salmon and brown and rainbow trout can be taken throughout the summer when conditions are right.

FALL – Chinook will start to stage around harbors and river mouths in September in anticipation of their fall spawning runs. Even though their feeding starts to decline, they are very catchable. They will aggressively strike bright colored lures or a chunk of fish eggs fished under a bobber. Once in the rivers they provide great sport for anglers, especially on a fly rod. The Chinook run will peak in early October as they reach the end of their life cycle. October is a great time for “fish watching” in the rivers as jumping salmon put on quite a show.



Shore fishing was the winning ticket for Marc Wisniewski, who hooked this 12-pound, 31-inch brown trout near Jones Island in Milwaukee.

Coho salmon will migrate upstream a couple of weeks after the chinook. Coho don't run as large and can be more difficult to catch in the streams than Chinook. By November, most salmon will have spawned and died.

Beginning in mid-September, brown trout can be found in big numbers in the river mouths and harbor areas, where they will remain until the following spring. Browns will remain active and accessible to anglers throughout this season. Although they move upstream to spawn in the fall, they don't migrate as far as salmon or steelhead.

WINTER – With the salmon gone, anglers start to get serious about chasing steelhead. Winter runs of steelhead usually start in November. River run steelhead, fresh up from the lake, will provide great fishing until ice up. Just as in spring, spawn is the top producing bait. If the weather stays mild, any kind of rain or snow melt event will trigger another batch of fish to move upstream. There are almost always some open water fishing opportunities available in the lower stretches of the rivers or harbor areas where browns are the main target.

The cold weather doesn't seem to bother the fish at all.

– Matt Coffaro, fisheries biologist, Milwaukee



You don't need a boat to fish the great Lake Michigan — shore fishing opportunities abound for anglers of all ages. Just ask this little guy.

Great Lakes fishing in Wisconsin

235,000 anglers

3,705,000 fishing days

Lake Michigan #1 most frequently visited water in Wisconsin

1,399,160 fish harvested (2006)

\$251.9 million in retail sales

\$418.8 million ripple effect

5,011 jobs

\$28 million in state and local tax revenues

Call the Lake Michigan hotline at (414) 382-7920 for up-to-date fishing reports and conditions.

Fabulous fisheries projects *continued*

Keeping tabs on Wisconsin River lake sturgeon

POYNETTE – New emergency size limit regulations and a shorter hook-and-line season for lake sturgeon on the Wisconsin River worked as intended to avoid the overharvest of these prehistoric fish.

The emergency changes set a 60-inch minimum size limit instead of 50 inches, and a four-week season instead of six weeks. The changes also reduced the 2007 harvest below the Prairie du Sac Dam to nine fish from the previous harvest level of nearly 80, and on Lake Wisconsin from 25 fish to four.

Increased harvest below the Prairie du Sac Dam started to occur in the mid-1990s and extreme overharvest (30 percent) was documented in 2005. While harvesting 35

percent of the adult population is considered a safe level for short-lived and fast-growing game fish species such as walleye and largemouth bass, harvesting that many lake sturgeon would crash a population of these much slower-growing, late maturing fish.

Female lake sturgeon don't start to reproduce until they are over 50 inches and 20 years old, and then they spawn only once every three to five years. A harvest rate of five percent is considered safe for a sustainable lake sturgeon fishery.

Mandatory harvest registration started in 1983, providing important information for managing the fishery, and regulations have become more restrictive as increased harvest has occurred.

– Michael Rennie, sturgeon biologist, Poynette

Additional information for better overall management of the fishery will be provided by a movement study that began in fall 2007. In October, 16 adult sturgeon below the Prairie du Sac Dam were surgically implanted with radio transmitters. Tracking these fish will provide information on spawning locations, residence time in the heavily harvested area below the dam, and overall use by the sturgeon of the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers.



ALISA LOPEZ



From left to right: Jerry Loop (Musky Clubs Alliance volunteer), Bob Haase (Musky Clubs Alliance volunteer and director) and Joe Nohner (University of Michigan graduate student) use spotlights to scan the shoreline of the lake for spawning muskies as part of a two-year study to identify and predict where muskies spawn.

Protecting Wisconsin's state fish

WOODRUFF – By protecting habitat for musky spawning, fisheries biologists hope to augment successful musky management strategies that have already helped make the legendary “fish of 10,000 casts” more like the fish of 3,000 casts in Wisconsin.

The Musky Clubs Alliance of Wisconsin, University of Michigan researchers and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources fish biologists launched a two-year habitat study in 2007 on 20 lakes in northern Wisconsin to help identify and predict where the famed fighters spawn.

“We want to be able to protect the existing musky spawning habitat that is out there because naturally reproducing populations are those that are the most valuable,” says Paul

Cunningham, a DNR fisheries policy ecologist. “You don't have to stock those lakes, they sustain themselves.”

When darkness falls, research teams using handheld spotlights search the entire shoreline of each lake for spawning muskies. Each time a musky is seen, the location will be marked and its position will be recorded using digital mapping software. Researchers later return to the site to verify that spawning occurred by searching for eggs on the bottom.

The data is then built into a model that can predict critical spawning habitats on other lakes, providing valuable knowledge for addressing issues such as shoreline development, aquatic plant management, land acquisition and zoning ordinances.

– Alisa Lopez, fisheries communication specialist, Madison

Food pantry receives 9.5 tons of salmon and trout

STURGEON BAY – DNR fish crews delivered nearly 10 tons of trout and salmon to a Green Bay food pantry to help feed the hungry, significantly increasing donations from previous years.

The increased donation was possible because the continuing drop in environmental contaminant levels in the fish means that larger fish can be safely eaten, so that DNR was able to increase the number of fish available to Paul's Pantry.

The 19,000 pounds of trout and salmon (mostly Chinook and coho) DNR delivered in fall 2007 came from two DNR facilities where fish crews collect eggs from the fish after the salmon make their one and only spawning run. Strawberry Creek Weir provided 14,600 pounds and 4,400 pounds came from Besadny Anadromous Fisheries facility. Additionally, a total of 2,800 pounds of trout and salmon were given to the Green Bay Wildlife Sanctuary and REGI, a raptor rehabilitation facility near Antigo.

– Paul Peeters, fisheries supervisor, Sturgeon Bay

Muskies on the move

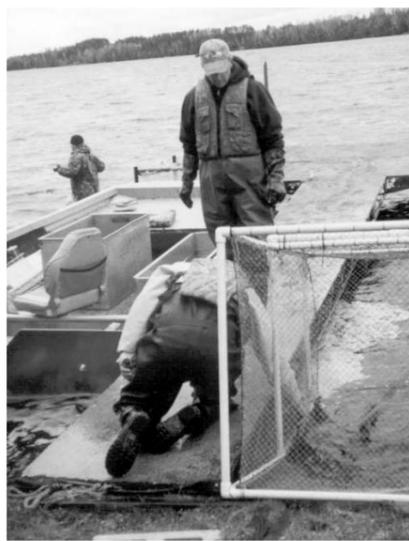
BUTTERNUT – The odds of catching trophy muskies on Butternut Lake may be better thanks to a transfer of 116 adult muskies from the lake to start a new musky fishery in Lake Neshonoc on the La Crosse River.

The transfer reduces an overabundance of adult muskies and decreases the competition among them so that the remaining fish can grow to larger sizes.

Four years ago, the number of adult musky in the lake was at 1,000 and climbing, well above the desired goal of 0.2 to 0.3 fish per acre. The transfer strategy is considered a step in the right direction. Fewer fish per acre should reduce competition for prey, improve musky condition and growth rate, and ultimately improve the population's size structure.

Beginning in 2009 and once every five years afterward, fisheries biologists will conduct fyke netting and electrofishing surveys to determine how successful their transfer strategy has been in moving Butternut Lake toward the desired number of fish.

– Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls



DNR fisheries staff prepares to move muskies to their new home in Lake Neshonoc.

Anglers have easier lakefront access

MILWAUKEE – Anglers now have more free parking and better access to prime Lake Michigan lakeshore.

An agreement among Pieces of Eight Restaurant, the Milwaukee Port Authority and the Department of Natural Resources gives the public eight spaces where they can park for 90 minutes free. The restaurant also agreed to allow anglers to park for free every day from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., seven days a week.

– Sharon Gayan, basin supervisor, Milwaukee

Shore anglers gain piers/stations

Anglers now have two more shore fishing structures from which to catch their favorite fish. The new facilities, completed in 2007, bring to 110 the grand total of shore fishing structures built across Wisconsin over the past 20 years using Sport Fish Restoration Funds. The new and accessible shore fishing facilities were built in cooperation with local units of government and other partners.

Dane County – A fishing pier on Salmo Pond in the Black Earth Creek Fishery Area.

Washburn County – A fishing pier on Shell Lake in Shell Lake's Memorial Park.

In addition, eight more projects are expected to be completed in spring 2008.

Dane County – Fishing pier on Lake Kegonsa in Lake Kegonsa State Park.

Florence County – Fishing pier on Fisher Lake in the Village of Florence.

Grant County – Fishing pier on the Mississippi River in Wyalusing State Park.

Kenosha County – Two shore fishing stations on the Bong Urban Pond in the Richard Bong Recreational Area.

Lafayette County – Shore fishing station on the East Branch of the Pecatonica River in the Village of Argyle.

Ozaukee County – Fishing pier on Puckett's Pond in Harrington Beach State Park; fishing pier on Quarry Lake in Harrington Beach State Park.

Walworth County – Fishing pier and two shore fishing stations on Whitewater Lake in the Kettle Moraine State Forest Southern Unit.

Find information about more than 100 developed shore fishing sites online at dnr.wi.gov/org/land/facilities/boataccess.

– Cheryl Goodman, fisheries budget analyst, Madison

Lake sturgeon raised streamside a success

MILWAUKEE – A second attempt at raising lake sturgeon in a streamside facility was a grand slam in 2007.

The Department of Natural Resources with the support of the Riveredge Nature Center in Newburg first tried raising sturgeon streamside in 2006, but only 27 sturgeon were stocked due to lost larvae and excess silt in incubating trays.

A change to incubating jars instead of trays gave way to the successful stocking of 158 fingerling lake sturgeon into the Milwaukee River in an effort to restore its lake sturgeon population.

The streamside rearing facility allows the DNR to raise lake sturgeon on a native water source throughout their entire early life. This will maximize their ability to "imprint" to this water source and greatly improve the odds that, at maturity, the sturgeon will return to the Milwaukee River to spawn, which is the ultimate goal.

– Brad Eggold, fisheries supervisor, Milwaukee



Fingerling sturgeon are released into the Milwaukee River.



Boaters can look forward to easier access onto Butternut Lake in Ashland County after a prefabricated concrete slab was added to the boat ramp at the Hoffmann Rocks public access site. The Northern Region Fish Operations Crew designed and installed the ramp extension in May 2007 to prevent the wheels of long boat trailers from dropping off the ramp edge. The Butternut-Schnurs Lake Association provided \$1,000 to buy and deliver the slab.

Lake trout making a comeback on Lake Superior

BAYFIELD – Wild lake trout populations continue to stage a strong recovery on Lake Superior, thanks to successful efforts to control sea lampreys and protective fishing regulations.

Nets set at 46 locations between Saxon Harbor and Superior in spring 2007 revealed the continued resurgence of lake trout since the surveys started over 40 years ago.

"The lake trout population is not completely recovered, but we've made great strides," says Mike Seider, fisheries biologist stationed in Bayfield.

Predation from sea lamprey—nonnative, eel-like fish that attack trout with their sucking mouths—and over-fishing nearly obliterated Lake Superior's trout population during the 1950s. Since lake trout are a native "keystone" species and top-of-the-food-chain predator, their absence can and did knock the whole lake's ecosystem off-kilter, Seider says.

Since then, the DNR, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Bad River and Red Cliff Bands of Lake Superior Chippewa have worked to develop and carry out cooperative fisheries management. Sea lamprey control, fish refuges, restricted use areas and conservative sport and commercial fishing regulations have all played important roles in the recovery of the lake trout population.

As a result, the total number of lake trout allowed to be harvested from Lake Superior has grown over time, including under an agreement signed April 19, 2007, by the DNR and the Bad River and Red Cliff Bands. Future DNR surveys will continue to monitor the status of lake trout to ensure current harvest still allows for further population increase.

– Lisa Gaumnitz, public affairs manager, Madison

Island restoration boasts better fishing

BUFFALO CITY – Anglers can look forward to larger fish and more of them along the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi River as the revamped habitat thrives thanks to the Spring

Lake Islands habitat rehabilitation and enhancement project completed in 2006.

Construction of this \$3.4 million project near Buffalo City began in November 2004 and was completed in July 2006 with a cooperative effort among the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Wisconsin and Minnesota Departments of Natural Resources.

The 500-acre backwater area now boasts four new islands, which created 20 acres of land, 16 acres of mudflats and more than 13 acres of new fish overwintering habitat.

The new islands, built with hydraulically dredged material from the vicinity, have begun to help restore habitat and diversity in the lake. Their construction allows Spring Lake to be maintained as a protected, shallow backwater for fish and wildlife, and slows degradation of the area.

Yearly fyke netting surveys already show more and bigger fish. Since 2005, bluegill numbers have risen from 18 to 40 fish per net lift and from 3.8 to six inches long and yellow perch from two to 15 fish per net lift and from 7.3 to nine inches long.

– Alisa Lopez, fisheries communication specialist, Madison

Fort McCoy fishing permits planned for ALIS in 2008

This year, the Wisconsin DNR Bureau of Customer Service and Licensing will offer Fort McCoy's fishing permits on the Automated License Issuance System (ALIS).

"This could be in effect by the inland fishing season opener on May 3," says John Noble, Fort McCoy's fisheries biologist. "Anglers can purchase a Fort McCoy permit at any store selling hunting and fishing licenses."

Until the transition is completed, fishing permits will still be available at Fort McCoy. Questions can be directed to (608) 388-3337. Anglers should be aware that Fort McCoy has specific regulations (available at www.mccoy.army.mil under Recreation Opportunities) in addition to State of Wisconsin regulations.

– Mary Dresser, natural resources coordinator, Fort McCoy



Fisheries biologists Michael Seider and Randy Besonen proudly display 30-plus pound lake trout from Lake Superior. The native lake trout population continues to grow thanks to sea lamprey control and protective fishing regulations.

2008 Regional Forecasts

Find fish and habitat survey reports for many lakes and rivers featured in this forecast at www.fishingwisconsin.org. For current fishing regulations, visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/regulations. For more detailed forecasts visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/reports/fishingreport/

Northern Wisconsin



It took Matt Austin 25 minutes to reel in this 23-pound, 2-ounce northern pike measuring 46 inches from Lake Nebagamon. The net wasn't large enough to land the fish, so Matt's cousin reached over the boat, grabbed the fish by the gills and hauled the monster in.

Lake Superior

Chequamegon Bay – Lake Superior provides a wide variety of fishing experiences and Chequamegon Bay is no exception. Conservative fishing regulations, natural reproduction and limited stocking maintain a distinctive fishery with opportunities for big fish. Spring surveys in 2007 showed an increase in pike between 26 and 30 inches with several fish netted larger than 38 inches. Although walleye numbers are relatively low, the average fish caught in past surveys was 22 inches. A trophy smallmouth bass fishery is building in the bay with fish exceeding 19 inches commonly caught. Naturalized populations of coho salmon and stocked Chinook salmon, splake and brown trout provide diversity to the fishery. The DNR continues to stock splake and brown trout in deeper water along the shoreline to increase their survival. Fishing opportunities in Chequamegon Bay exist all year but key times for many species are spring and fall. Unlike much of Lake Superior, the bay is accessible with smaller boats as long as anglers check the weather forecast before heading out.

St. Louis River – Another great fishing opportunity can be found in the St. Louis River, along the Wisconsin-Minnesota border. As the water quality in the once heavily polluted river has improved, healthy populations of walleye, northern pike, smallmouth bass and panfish have returned. Annual surveys reveal sporadic natural reproduction of walleye but conservative regulations have preserved a healthy population. The 2007 spring survey indicated that 44 percent of the spawning fish exceeded 20 inches. The musky population continues to improve, with recent surveys revealing juvenile catch rates similar to that found in many healthy northern Wisconsin lakes. Furthermore, spawning surveys in 2007 showed the average size of musky was 38.7 inches with several fish topping 45 inches.

Although some years are better than others, the Apostle Islands are the destination for lake trout fishing. The average lake trout caught throughout the year is about 22 inches, with several fish exceeding 32 inches each year. Lake trout have made an incredible resurgence due to restrictions on fishing and sea lamprey control. Populations today consist almost exclusively of wild fish.

For more specific information about the Lake Superior fishery visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/lakesup/.

– Mike Seider, fisheries biologist, Bayfield

Douglas County

Amnicon Lake – A musky population estimate completed in spring 2007 found musky ranging from 17.1 to 42 inches and averaging 32.4 inches in length. Anglers will continue to enjoy a high catch rate on musky. The adult musky population was abundant with 1.8 fish per acre. Northern pike, which historically had not been found in the system, were found again in 2007. The adult walleye population was 2.9 adults per acre, considered average for naturally reproducing walleye populations in Wisconsin. The average

length of walleye captured was 14.2 inches, with sizes ranging from 9.8 to 27.5 inches and 15 percent of walleye were 15 inches or longer. Samples were taken from walleye during the 2007 survey to better understand walleye genetics throughout their native range.

– Scott Toshner, fisheries biologist, Brule

Bayfield County

Lake Owen – A comprehensive fishery survey that started in spring 2007 suggests this is a good lake for anglers who prize big walleye over frequent strikes. Ninety-four percent of surveyed walleye were 15 inches or longer, with an average length of 20.1 inches with a maximum of 28.2 inches. Adult walleye abundance was low at 1.1 walleye per acre.

Middle and Lower Eau Claire lakes – Middle and Lower Eau Claire lakes began surveys in 2007, revealing a unique opportunity to find big walleyes and fast and furious walleye action a short drive away. Middle Eau Claire continues to have an abundant walleye population with 6.6 adult walleye per acre. Average length of walleye surveyed increased to 15.1 inches from 14.2 inches in 2004, and the size ranged from 7.2 to 27.7 inches. Lower Eau Claire Lake had lower walleye abundance, 2.5 walleye per acre, but a slightly bigger size structure. They averaged 16.8 inches and ranged from 7.2 inches to 27.7 inches.

– Scott Toshner, fisheries biologist, Brule

Ashland and Iron counties

Gile Flowage – The Gile Flowage smallmouth population should provide anglers with improved catch rates, with recent surveys showing an increase in abundance. Past surveys sampled smallies at a rate of 43 fish per hour while recent survey data showed catch rates have increased to more than 60 fish per hour.

Walleye numbers and size structure look very good for this coming season. This fishery has improved under the “one over 14-inch” regulation. Recent surveys have shown improvements in the walleye size structure with more than 50 percent of the adult population larger than 15 inches compared to the mid-1990s where only 33 percent of the population exceeded 15 inches.

Panfish, especially bluegill, have been providing anglers with some exceptional fishing the past two years with eight- to 10-inch fish commonly caught. I suspect the good bluegill fishing will continue into 2008. Crappie action should be on the upswing with several good year-classes coming up in a flowage that still owns the state record for black crappie.

Turtle-Flambeau Flowage – The Turtle-Flambeau Flowage has consistently provided top-notch fishing and the 2008 season should be no exception.

Spring walleye action should be similar or slightly better than in the past and anglers should find fish in the traditional spots with flowage water levels at or near normal. Recent netting data shows a slight increase in the proportion of fish larger than 15 inches when compared to past data. The number of 18-plus inch fish remains stable at about six percent of the adult population.

Smallmouth bass will continue to provide good action throughout the season with more and larger fish reported caught (and mostly released), during the past couple of years. Panfish fishing is expected to continue to provide good opportunities when walleye fishing slows in mid-summer. The majority of fish that anglers encounter will be at “keeper” or “quality” size.

– Jeff Roth, fisheries biologist, Mercer

Vilas County

Little St. Germain Lake – Nets set in the lake in spring 2007 as part of a joint project between DNR and lake residents to evaluate the status of the musky population captured 71 muskies. The largest fish was 47.3 inches and weighed 30 pounds. Only four percent of the fish we captured were of legal size, but we expect to see this number increase in future surveys. This ongoing project will include additional netting and tagging of fish this spring.

Little Rock Lake – This 45-acre lake seven miles north of Woodruff became famous in the 1980s as part of a project to study acid rain and its effects on small lakes. Now that this research has been completed, the lake is again open to angling as of Jan. 1, 2008. There are no special fishing regulations associated with the opening of this fishery but anglers must follow the standard statewide regulations and seasons. The lake has an abundant largemouth bass population, with bass up to 16 inches captured in recent surveys but most between 12 and 14 inches. Panfish numbers are low with yellow perch, black crappie, and rock-bass the only species present. The DNR will conduct a creel survey of Little Rock Lake throughout the 2008 season. Anglers are asked to please cooperate with the creel clerk stationed on the lake.

Tamarack Creek – Thanks to the cooperative effort of the Town of Conover, Vilas County, Trout Unlimited and the DNR, anglers will have the opportunity to pursue brook trout along the entire course of Tamarack Creek in the near future. In 2005 an extensive fish and habitat survey of the creek identified a road culvert and the

In reel terms

Year-class – Fish hatched in a particular year.

Young-of-the-year (YOY) – Generally, fish that hatch in the spring and summer and survive through fall, when DNR typically does “young-of-the-year” surveys to assess their survival.

Recruitment – Fish surviving to reach catchable age and enter the adult population.

Size structure – Generally, the proportion of fish occurring at different sizes. When biologists say they are taking a management action to try to improve size structure, they’re often talking about trying to increase the number of bigger fish and ensure enough younger fish survive to replace the adult fish that are caught or die naturally.

remains of an old logging dam that were limiting brook trout habitat. The dam sill was removed and the culvert replaced in 2007, which has improved trout habitat throughout this stream system.

– Steve Gilbert, fisheries biologist, Woodruff

Taylor and Price counties

Solberg Lake – Black crappies were almost as important as bluegills and walleyes to local stakeholders who helped us define the “desired future condition” of this fishery. Our mid-fall fyke net samples targeting black crappies revealed an abundance of fish, but not the size anglers prefer. Only 12.4 percent of black crappies greater than five inches exceeded 10 inches or more, instead of the 20 to 40 percent desired. Fall fyke netting also indicated that crappies in the nearby Phillips Chain of Lakes were less abundant than in Solberg Lake, but the size structure of the two populations was similar.

Rib Lake – Last summer, volunteers from the Rib Lake Fish and Game Association and the Spirit Lakes Improvement Association raised a total of 2,006 large walleye fingerlings in three Taylor County ponds under cooperative fish rearing agreements with the DNR. The Rib Lake Association stocked 1,503 fingerlings into Rib Lake in mid-October to supplement natural walleye reproduction. The Spirit Lakes Association, first-year cooperators, stocked 503 fingerlings into North Spirit Lake in early November to create and maintain a “bonus” walleye fishery where largemouth bass is the predominant sportfish. The cooperators look forward to increasing the yield from their ponds next year.

– Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls

Barron and Polk counties

Rice Lake – DNR crews collected 78 musky during a 2007 spring musky survey and found, impressively, that 36 exceeded 40 inches and 11 exceeded 45 inches. The two largest fish measured just over 49 inches and weighed almost 40 pounds.

Yellow River – Staff began a two-year study to document trout abundance and recruitment trends in the Yellow River Fisheries Area. In addition, several hundred adult trout were tagged with external floy tags to document angler harvest and fish movement throughout the study reach. Anglers are encouraged to report any tagged fish caught or released within the Yellow River Watershed.



Wapogasset Lake – Largemouth bass are the most dominant game fish followed by northern pike, walleye and musky. The adult largemouth bass population was estimated at 10,338 fish or 8.7 fish per acre, a normal density for Polk County lakes. The adult walleye population has remained stable and was estimated at 1,575 fish or 1.3 fish per acre. Northern pike were common and quality size fish up to 40 inches are present, but most are in the 24- to 30-inch range. Only a small number of musky were collected but several were at or near the 40-inch minimum length limit. Panfish are abundant and the size structure is good with most bluegill seven to eight inches and black crappie nine to 10 inches. Carp are common and good bowfishing opportunities are present.

Magnor Lake – Largemouth bass are the most common game fish in Magnor Lake, followed by northern pike and walleye. The adult largemouth bass population was estimated at 1,232 fish or 5.3 fish per acre. The walleye population was estimated at only 169 adult fish or 0.7 fish per acre. Natural reproduction of walleye has not occurred for some time in Magnor Lake and walleye stocking success has been poor. Panfish size and abundance appears to be in the normal range for Polk County lakes with most bluegill seven to eight inches and crappie nine to 10 inches.

King Lake – The DNR, in partnership with the Town of Black Brook and the King Lake Association, installed a lake aeration system during fall 2007 to prevent future fish winter-kills. King Lake has had a long history of such problems, with the last fish kill reported in 2001. The lake currently has fishable largemouth bass, northern pike and panfish.

Osceola Creek – About 1,000 feet of stream habitat restoration work was completed on Osceola Creek in western Polk County (see page 1). Brook trout densities have already increased 10 times over the past year in the project area. In addition, a donation from the Willard Sieh Memorial Fund allowed creation and installation of fishing stations and walking paths to provide additional fishing opportunities for disabled anglers.

– Heath Benike, fisheries biologist, Barron

Burnett and Washburn counties

Long Lake – Known for quality-size walleye due to fast growth, nearly one-third of the spawning population exceeds 20 inches. There's always a chance to pick up a wall hanger here but action on table-size fish should be the best. A combination of stocking and natural reproduction in 2005 created the largest year-class in fall surveys since 1980. These fish will reach the 15-inch size limit during the 2008 season. When the walleye aren't biting, the bluegill action is pretty consistent. Bluegills average seven inches, with 13 per acre harvested in each of the last two creel surveys. An unusually large number of black crappies were observed during the 2007 fall walleye fingerling survey. We should see excellent crappie numbers in 2008, but size-wise, 2009 may be the peak for this cycle.

Minong Flowage – This is a numbers lake with a 2005 adult population estimate of seven walleye per acre, up from 5.5 in 1989. Adult walleye average 16.1 inches but only five percent of the population is greater than 20 inches. Largemouth bass and northern pike populations are secondary fisheries but with decent size structure for northwestern Wisconsin. Largemouth reach a maximum size of 19 inches and about five percent of the northern pike were between 30 and 39 inches. Bluegills and black crappies are not as abundant as on many Northwoods lakes but run to trophy size when you find them.

Wood Lake – Bluegills are the year-round favorite with anglers, and for good reason. Spring electrofishing in 2007 found that of the three-plus inch bluegill stock, 30 percent are greater than six inches with about half of those greater than seven inches. Anglers report that eight- to nine-inch bluegills are

fairly common but only one percent were larger than eight inches in the survey. We might have seen larger fish had the survey been done closer to spawning time. Largemouth bass are the most abundant game fish with a spring shocker catch rate of 48 per mile. Size structure is dominated by mid-sized bass. Only four percent were greater than 16 inches and none exceeded 18 inches. The lack of big bass is due to poor growth rather than excessive angler harvest. Wood Lake and about 30 other northwestern Wisconsin lakes that no longer meet minimum growth criteria are being reviewed for a size limit exemption beginning this year.

– Larry Damman, fisheries biologist, Spooner

Forest and Florence counties

Howell Lake – Netting and electrofishing surveys completed in 2007 revealed a near average adult walleye population, several strong year-classes of northern pike and low densities of panfish and bass. The adult walleye population estimate for the 177-acre lake was 408 fish or 2.3 per acre. Over half the walleye captured were over the legal 15-inch size limit, with several fish in the 30-inch range. The northern pike population estimate was 16 fish per acre, or just over 2,800 fish. The vast majority of the northern pike captured were 14 to 22 inches. Anglers will enjoy a near wilderness experience when fishing Howell Lake. The entire shoreline is completely wooded except for one cabin. The only boat access is a carry-in type on Forest Service property about one-half mile downstream from the lake on the Pine River. Anglers are reminded to limit their activities to on-the-water only to avoid trespassing on the privately owned shoreline.



Fisheries crews installed LUNKER structures and rock plunge pools as part of the habitat makeover on Osceola Creek.

Elvoy Creek – One of the final phases of the Elvoy Creek Meadows and Dam Sill Restoration Plan between the Forest Service, a private individual and the DNR was completed in 2007. The goal was to restore the brook and brown trout habitat of this segment of stream. In the process, 36 pools, one island, 10 runs, and 31 riffles were either created or enhanced. About 400 boulders and 55 16-foot whole cover logs were distributed within the restored stream channel for trout cover. The Forest Service will complete the plan in 2009 by dredging the plunge pool.

Keyes Lake – Comprehensive netting and electrofishing surveys completed in 2007 revealed a below-average adult walleye population, a good bass population dominated by largemouth, some brown trout and a very low density of northern pike. The adult walleye population estimate for the 202-acre lake was 358 fish or 1.8 per acre. Most of the walleye captured exceeded the legal 15-inch size limit, with a good number of fish in the 20-inch range. Of the 265 largemouth bass measured, most were under the 14-inch minimum size limit but

fish up to 19 inches were captured. The smallmouth bass population is about half that of the largemouth bass, but the quality was better. Of the 120 smallmouth bass measured, there were respectable numbers over the minimum 14-inch size limit with some trophy fish in the 20-inch range. The panfish population is dominated by bluegills with some rock bass and very low densities of the other species. Walleye and brown trout fingerlings have therefore been stocked in Keyes Lake in recent years to reduce smelt and in turn increase the walleye population. The future looks good for anglers interested in pursuing walleye, brown trout and bass.

– Dave Brum, fisheries technician, Woodruff

Langlade and Lincoln counties

McGee Lake – McGee Lake, which was renovated in 2006 to eliminate an unwanted largemouth bass population, was restocked with brook trout following chemical treatment of the lake. In April, six adults (14 to 17 inches) that had been removed from the lake before renovation were restocked. In July, 470 juveniles and adults (two to 10.4 inches) were transferred into the lake from McGee Creek downstream. The lake was surveyed in fall 2007 and we are very happy to report that no bass were captured or seen. The trout that were stocked are growing fast and the project is progressing as planned. We will transfer some more brook trout into the lake in 2008 and will continue to monitor the trout population as it rebuilds. The lake will reopen to fishing once it is safe to do so without harming the repopulation process, possibly in 2009 but maybe not until 2010.

East Branch of the Eau Claire River – Last year, brook trout numbers on our long-term survey station were up 13 percent over the long-term average from 1986-2007. Our population estimates showed that per mile, there were more than 3,500 brook trout four inches and larger. That's down about 450 fish per mile from the 2006 estimate, but size structure remains very good.

Tug Lake – The walleye population in Tug Lake is doing well and was estimated at 5.3 adults per acre. Natural reproduction is responsible for this resurgent population because the lake has not been stocked since 2001. The bulk of fish are 12 to 18 inches. We saw very good walleye reproduction in our fall electrofishing survey. We captured 138 young-of-the-year (51 per mile) ranging in size from 4.5 to 7.4 inches. Tug also has low density, high quality populations of bluegills, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and musky. Northern pike are more common.

Bass and Long lakes – The adult walleye population in these lakes has fallen to 0.6 fish per acre from an estimate of 1.1 per acre in 2000. There is no natural reproduction of walleye in these lakes and they depend completely on stocking. Although numbers are low, if you are lucky enough to catch one, the size quality is good with most fish in the 17- to 24-inch range. These lakes have good largemouth bass populations. We estimated the population of eight-inch and larger bass at almost 15 per acre with good numbers up to 16 inches. Northern pike are present in low numbers but with nice size quality. Panfish (bluegills, crappies, perch, rock bass and bullheads) are mostly small and stunted.

Otter Lake – Otter Lake, despite being only 34 acres and receiving heavy fishing pressure due to a public campground on its shores, has a nice largemouth bass, bluegill, northern pike and crappie fishery. The bass population (eight inches and greater) is estimated at 3.4 per acre with good size quality up to about 16 inches. The northern pike population is high in numbers, but they are small. It could use some thinning out as most fish are 12 to 18 inches. The bluegills and crappies are a little on the small side but there are some nicer ones out there.

Seven Island and Somo lakes – In 2007, musky recapture netting surveys completed on these lakes found very good musky populations. Seven Island is estimated to have 78 fish, or 0.59 musky per acre greater than 30 inches, and Somo 144 fish or 0.30 per acre this size and larger. The population in Seven Island Lake is completely supported through natural reproduction and fish in our nets ranged from 21 to 42 inches. Somo Lake appears to depend on stocking. It is currently stocked every other year with 472 fingerlings (one per acre). Somo muskies in our surveys ranged from 11 to 47 inches.

Lake Alexander and Merrill Flowage – In 2007, musky marking netting surveys were completed on Lake Alexander and the Merrill Flowage. Both appear to have musky populations that are low density but are larger fish. We only captured 14 musky in Lake Alexander and six in the Merrill Flowage. They ranged in size from 33 to 49 inches in Lake Alexander and from 32 to 43 inches in the Merrill Flowage.

Prairie River – Last summer, trout numbers in our Prairie River long-term survey station declined by seven percent from 2006, but are still one percent above the long-term average. This is somewhat surprising, considering the very dry and warm summer we had last year. Size structure of trout in the Prairie River remains good, with five percent of the four-inch and larger brook trout exceeding 10 inches and five percent of the four-inch and larger brown trout exceeding 14 inches.

– Dave Seibel, fisheries biologist, Antigo

Oneida County

Three Lakes Chain – We teamed up with the dam owner and Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company (WVIC), to survey six lakes near the center of the chain (Big Stone to

Northern Wisconsin *continued*

Little Fork). We found a strong walleye population, centered on 12 inches and with good numbers to about 18 inches. The chain has a reputation as an action packed musky fishery. We saw this during our fall 2006 surveys; lots of muskies but only a handful of fish over 40 inches. However, during the spring spawning season the story was a little different: About one-third of the muskies were over 40 inches, including a 50-plus inch fish handled and released by the WVIC crew.

The abundant Three Lakes walleye are keeping bass numbers in check. Low numbers of smallmouth bass were captured, but 81 percent of them were 14 inches and larger. Panfish also showed low to moderate density. Panfish size structure was good for northern Wisconsin, with good numbers of bluegills out to eight and crappies to 11 inches. We also saw a few nice perch, but most were only six to eight inches.

Moen Chain – We estimated an average density walleye population of 3.6 adults per acre, with good numbers of fish measuring into the upper teens. Northern pike and musky were moderate in abundance but with good size potential. Most pike were 16 to 25 inches, while all sizes of musky were well represented out to 45 inches. The largest pike we handled was a 39.7-inch female and the largest musky was 49.2 inches. Moderate numbers of good-sized black crappies, perch and bluegills were also present.

Musky population estimates found low to moderate numbers of 30-plus inch fish on Buckskin (one every five acres) and North Nokomis (one every 2.3 acres). On Pelican Lake, a 50-inch minimum length limit for musky took effect in 2007. Musky anglers report that some large fish are already present, but it will take a few years to really benefit from the increased protection. It took 17 years to grow a 52-inch, 34.8-pound musky taken



Joshua's fourth-grade field trip and fishing day at the Tommy G. Thompson State Fish Hatchery in Spooner was really one to remember. He caught one of the hatchery's retired broodstock fish, a big beautiful rainbow.

Sawyer County

Namekagon River – The pilot project for the addition of 50 big woody cover structures in the Larsen Road reach is now slated for summer 2008.

The Namekagon is alive and well and continues to be an excellent wild, trophy, brown trout fishery. Over the last 26 years the Larsen reach has supported 400 to 2,000 trout per mile. Trout larger than 15 inches have accounted for 10 to 30 percent of the population with densities ranging from 30 to almost 200 per mile. The 2007 survey showed around 1,000 total trout per mile with 30 percent of that total fish larger than 15 inches. That is about half the total population seen in 2006, but twice the proportion of big fish. Both years showed populations higher than the long-term average.

Try these Namekagon trout opportunities:
Cable reach from Pacwawong Flowage upstream to Lake Namekagon – Nine inch minimum, three bag, any gear. This fishery is now about half brook trout.

Lenroot Reach downstream of Pacwawong Flowage to Phipps Flowage – One bag and 15-inch minimum, artificial only. Probably the best section for brown trout, both numbers and size.

Phipps Reach – Between Phipps dam and Lake Hayward. This section is entirely catch-and-release and artificial only. It has fewer trout than above but may have even more big fish.

Below Hayward – Stocked, good winter fishery and the only inland stream fishery in Wisconsin which is open year-round. It has a nine-inch minimum and three bag limit during the regular open-water trout season, and catch-and-release and artificials only October through

early May. Wild, migrant brook trout and a few native rainbows are a bonus here, too.

This stream has been fishing exceptionally well in the new early season, during March and April. Good early hatches include large stoneflies and the Hendrickson mayfly. Rapalas, wooly buggers and leech patterns are also a good bet. These big trout eat big meat!
– Frank Pratt, fisheries biologist, Hayward

Rusk County

Dairyland Flowage – High quality angling is on the horizon after the 2007 completion of a large-scale, fish habitat improvement project thanks to the Rusk County Land and Water Conservation Department, Rusk County Wildlife Restoration Association and Dairyland Power Cooperative.

The partners “came together to seize a rare opportunity and built around 150 fish habitat structures while the impoundment of the Flambeau Hydroelectric Station was drawn down 30 feet for scheduled dam maintenance,” says Paula Carow, Rusk County conservationist. “The last drawdown was in 1984.”

“The placement of rock and woody materials now serves to enhance the diversity and complexity of aquatic habitat where structural features were scarce,” says John Thiel, environmental biologist for Dairyland Power. “Additional substrates now provide fish cover and attachment sites for adhesive fish eggs, insects and invertebrates important in the food chain.”

Fish will undoubtedly occupy the new habitat, and the structures may serve to increase angler success. The large number of structures should help prevent concentrated fish and anglers and many anglers enjoy fishing over structures and graphing lakebed features on depth recorders.

– Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls

from Pelican by an angler this year.

Fall surveys found good numbers of bass, northern pike and panfish on Indian, Maple, Shishebogama and Gunlock lakes.

Trout populations in northern Wisconsin are down after six years of drought conditions. Look to stocked waters and larger streams to provide the best fishing opportunities. Look for brown trout in Dorothy Lake. Rainbows are planned for Perch, Hawk and Little Bass lakes and brook trout will go into Mercer Springs and Brown, Guddegast, Scott, Starks and Thunder creeks.

– John Kubisiak, senior fisheries biologist, Rhinelander

Northeastern Wisconsin



November 2006. Fisheries surveys in spring and summer 2007 found almost no live fish left in the lake. The cause of the fish kill could not be determined. A rehabilitation plan has been completed that will include stocking of native species to rebuild the fishery. The local sports groups as well as the lake association are working together with the DNR to secure funds for the project. During 2007 we continued our cooperative effort with the Peshtigo River Sportsman's Society and stocked one million walleye fry into High Falls Reservoir.

Stream surveys were carried out on the South Branch Pemebonwon, the North Branch Beaver Creek, Holmes Creek, Homestead Creek, Iron Springs Creek, Lower Middle Inlet, North Fork Thunder River, Wausaukee River, The Outlet, Rat River and the Pike River. The overall health of the streams surveyed was good, with natural reproduction of brook trout detected in trout waters and smallmouth bass in warm water systems.

– Justine Hasz, fisheries biologist, Peshtigo

Oconto County

Archibald Lake – Preliminary results from a comprehensive fishery survey in spring 2007 show a healthy fishery supporting a range of game fish and panfish species, including largemouth bass, walleye, musky, northern pike, bluegills, black crappies, rock bass, pumpkinseed and yellow perch. Initial results show a decline in the walleye population and an increase in the musky population. The largemouth bass population is very healthy with a good size structure. The panfish fishery also is very healthy with dominant species being bluegill, yellow perch and rock bass.

North Branch Oconto River – Stream surveys were carried out on the North Branch Oconto River, West Thunder Creek and Christie Brook. The overall health of the streams was good, with natural reproduction of brook trout detected in trout waters and smallmouth bass in warmwater systems.

South Branch Oconto River – In June 2007 a tornado ripped through several counties in northeast Wisconsin, causing a path of de-



Members of the Oconto Chapter of Trout Unlimited and DNR fisheries crews install a weir on the South Branch of the Oconto River.

struction more than 30 miles long. The U.S. Forest Service has begun cleanup in several locations but access may be restricted to some streams through 2008 until all hazardous trees are removed.

The South Branch Oconto River trout stocking project continued in 2007. Through the cooperative agreement between the DNR and the Oconto River Watershed Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Suring Sportsman's Club, wild brook and brown trout were raised for stocking into area waters. In the fall of 2007, over 800 large fingerling brook trout were raised and stocked into Fischer Creek in Manitowoc County to help rehabilitate a fishery that was adversely affected by a manure spill. A total of 12,000 brown trout were stocked in the fall of 2007 and were dispersed among the Oconto River, South Branch Oconto River and North Branch Oconto River.
– Justine Hasz, fisheries biologist, Peshtigo.

Northern Green Bay

Outlying waters of Green Bay – Annual late summer trawl surveys show several strong year-classes since 2003 and yellow perch fishing on Green Bay should continue to be

rewarding for several years. The trawling surveys showed that 2007 produced a strong year-class with the relative abundance of young-of-the-year yellow perch ranking as the second highest in 20 years. Data collected during the 2007 summer creel survey shows that 42 percent were age four (2003 year-class) and 39 percent were age two (2005 year-class). Most of the perch caught were between seven and 10 inches, with an occasional fish 12 inches to 14 inches. These large fish were mainly age seven or nine. The open water sport harvest of yellow perch more than doubled from 2005 to 2006. This was partly due to regulation changes which allowed a daily bag limit of 15 fish in 2006 instead of 10 in 2005. In addition to being able to keep more fish, anglers were more successful in 2006 and caught nearly twice as many yellow perch per hour spent fishing as the previous year. Harvest estimates for 2007 will be available in early 2008.

Seeforellen strain brown trout brood stock collections in the Menominee River continued for the 16th year in 2007. Seeforellens captured by boom shocking on the Menominee River averaged 31 fish per day in 2007. This was the same catch per day as 2006. Most of the Seeforellens were two-





Fisheries biologist Tammie Paoli holds tight to a Great Lakes spotted musky from the lower Menominee River.

and three-year olds stocked in 2005 and 2006, with an average size of 26 inches and the largest 37.8 inches. Domestic brown trout averaged 23 inches with the largest 31.5 inches. Large numbers of whitefish were also observed during the late fall sampling. Walleye fishing in the Menominee and Peshtigo rivers and surrounding area of Green Bay has been good for the past few years and should persist based on the numbers seen this fall.

The DNR continues annual stocking of brown and rainbow trout, Chinook and coho salmon, and splake in Upper Green Bay. These fish will provide future opportunities for stream angling and trolling. Efforts to restore the spotted musky population in Upper Green Bay continued with stocking yearling fish in 2007.

– Tammie Paoli, fisheries biologist, Peshtigo

Waupaca and Shawano counties

Shawano Lake – Routine annual boom shocking surveys conducted on Shawano Lake indicate largemouth bass populations are in good shape. During 2007 fall assessments, 36 bass per hour were captured during electrofishing with 22 percent larger than 14 inches. Panfish anglers can expect continued good angling for bluegills. Bluegill catch rates averaged 324 bluegills per hour of electrofishing with fish up to 7.9 inches. Northern pike numbers appear to be down; however, size structure has improved with 21-inch and larger fish making up a significant percentage of the catch. Walleyes are still at very low densities with most of the population comprised of larger (20-plus inches) adults from year classes produced in the 1990s. Muskies have continued to provide a great fishery with several 45- to 50-inch muskies captured and observed during our fall assessments. This past year the DNR stocked 1,667 musky fingerlings.

Upper Red Lake – Surveys conducted during spring of 2007 indicate a healthy population of game fish and panfish. Upper Red supports the highest quality northern pike fishery in the area. During our survey we captured 232 adults ranging from 11.1 inches to 35.6 inches, with more than 36 percent exceeding 26 inches and more than nine percent exceeding 30 inches. Panfish catch was

comprised mainly of abundant bluegills (over 300 per net night) and average size structure (33 percent of catch greater than six inches). Largemouth bass were found in good numbers and size with several bass up to 20 inches and more than 50 percent of the catch greater than 14 inches. Muskies are also found in Upper Red Lake with some fish sampled up to 42 inches. Anglers venturing over to Upper Red Lake should concentrate their effort during spring, late fall and winter months due to the extensive growth of aquatic plants which can limit the ability to fish it effectively during the summer.

Wolf River – Anglers will continue to find diverse angling opportunities as electrofishing surveys showed good populations of various game fish and panfish throughout the river. Game fish catch was comprised of mainly smallmouth bass with lesser numbers of walleye, largemouth bass, flathead catfish and northern pike. Smallmouth bass catch rates were the highest in the reach between Shawano and Shiocton with as many as 10 bass caught per hour of electrofishing. Smallmouth bass size averaged 9.4 inches with 21 percent over the legal size. This reach of river makes a nice float in a small boat or canoe for anglers who want to get away from the crowds. Hoop net surveys conducted near Gills Landing and above the Mill Cut captured good numbers of channel catfish. Channel catfish size averaged 21.3 inches and ranged from 12.8 to 34.8 inches. The largest channel catfish weighed in at 17.2 pounds. The highest number of flathead catfish were sampled at the Gills Landing/Red Banks area. A total of 182 flatheads were captured, ranging from 4.6 to 44.9 pounds.

Radley Creek – Habitat work completed by the Wild Rose operations crew on Radley Creek will help maintain this quality fishery. Crew members did maintenance work on several hundred feet of overhead bank cover in the Radley Creek Fishery Area. In addition, Trout Unlimited contributed several work days to build brush and Christmas tree bundles to capture sediment and reinforce stream banks. Trout population surveys conducted in Radley Creek have shown trout abundance at 1,568 per mile with more than 20 percent of the trout exceeding the legal minimum size of nine inches. The creek has multiple areas for anglers to access the stream. Several marked parking areas are located along state Highway 22.

Shawano County trout streams – Brook trout populations in these streams have been under some stress due to low flow conditions over the past couple years. However, trout population surveys show acceptable levels of abundance to provide decent fishing. Anglers interested in brook trout fishing should concentrate their efforts on headwaters of Mill Creek and North Branch Embarrass River, where the 2007 surveys found abundant brookies of all ages and sizes.

– Al Niebur, fisheries biologist, Shawano

Door, Manitowoc, and Kewaunee counties

Lake Michigan and Green Bay, including tributary streams – The Chinook (king salmon), continues to reign as Wisconsin's premier sport fish in Lake Michigan. During summer 2007 there was little doubt that big lake anglers were continuing to experience the best stretch of Chinook salmon fishing in decades. Because of low water levels, many of the smaller boat launch access points will be unusable again this coming summer. Anglers planning to fish the lakeshore are advised to check with local municipalities before going to a particular launch. One new boat launch on Little Sturgeon Bay recently became available, improving boater access to this popular fishing area. The boat launch at the Old Stone Quarry at the mouth of Sturgeon Bay has been expanded and now includes a harbor of safe refuge, a six-lane ramp and plenty of parking.

Smallmouth bass populations along the Door County shoreline remain strong and should provide exciting fishing in 2008. The strong 1995 year-class of smallmouth will continue to provide abundant fish in excess of 18 inches. Trophy-sized fish above 20 inches from the 1995 and older year-classes are not uncommon. Walleye populations in and around Sturgeon Bay and Little Sturgeon Bay received important supplemental stocking in 2003 and 2004 as nearly 425,000 walleye fingerlings were divided between the two bays. This walleye stocking effort should help establish two good year-classes of walleye, which should be available to anglers for several years to come.

– Paul Peeters, fisheries supervisor, Sturgeon Bay

Lake Michigan tributary streams – Following the spring melt, anglers can hook steelhead, brown trout or northern pike in many tributaries. In years with normal flow, anglers should try fishing farther upstream in large rivers or in smaller tributaries to avoid the crowds. Suggested locations include the upper Manitowoc River, Branch River, Stony Creek or Whitefish Bay Creek. In low water years, the best bets will be the lower sections of larger rivers. Anglers looking for a different fishing experience may want to try dip-netting suckers or smelt as they migrate upstream in Lake Michigan or Green Bay tributary streams. Summer should once again see anglers catching a variety of fish in tributary streams. Smallmouth bass fishing can be very productive during summer months in the lower Manitowoc and Kewaunee rivers. Following the reopening of the yellow perch season in June, anglers can catch some nice sized perch in the Manitowoc Harbor and

River. If you are looking to hook some catfish or bullhead, try harbor fishing in Manitowoc, Two Rivers or Kewaunee. Anglers looking to catch Skamania steelhead should be ready to fish the Manitowoc, East and West Twin, Kewaunee and Ahnapee rivers following a cool, late summer rainfall.

With the onset of fall spawning migrations in mid-September, tributary fishing can be fantastic! For a little more solitude, try fishing smaller streams such as Hibbards Creek, Stony Creek, Silver Creek or Fischer Creek. If the water is low this fall, the larger rivers will be the best bet for good fishing action. During September and October, Chinook salmon and Skamania steelhead can be found in streams in large numbers. Wild Rose brown trout can be caught during October. Late October and November brings coho salmon and Seeforellen brown trout into streams. Finally, as the year comes to a close, early running Chambers Creek steelhead can be found in lower sections of the larger streams.

– Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot

Winnebago System

Wolf and Upper Fox rivers, Winnebago, Butte des Morts, Winneconne, Poygan lakes – Walleye fishing will continue to be good to fantastic based on stats from the record 11,000 walleye that state crews and volunteers tagged during 2007 spring runs on the Upper Fox and Wolf rivers. More than half of the fish were 17 inches or larger and about 15 percent exceeded 20 inches. Males ranged from 12 to 24.4 inches and averaged 16.75 inches and 1.6 pounds. Females ranged from 15.5 to 29.4 inches with 64.5 percent between 19 and 22 inches and 13 percent exceeding 24 inches. Please remember to release any fish you catch with dark “polka dots” on the dorsal fin. These are sauger and walleye/sauger hybrids and they may not be kept while we work cooperatively with Walleyes for Tomorrow and Otter Street Fishing Club to restore their population.

Bass populations continue to be healthy and their numbers are increasing, especially smallmouth. They have become much more abundant in the last five years, especially on the big lake along reefs and rocky shorelines. Based on bass tournament data, smaller fish (14 to 16 inches) still make up the majority of anglers' catch. Largemouths 14 to 16 inches made up 66 percent of fish brought to the scales. Smallmouths were only slightly larger, with a mean length of 15.9 inches and weight of 2.02 lbs. Large fish are scarce.

Good perch and bluegill fishing has been reported on the system as the resurgence of rooted aquatic plants in bays, channels and shallows over the last five years has produced a cornucopia of panfish. Twice as many adult black crappies were captured in trawl surveys from 2001-07 as the previous period, 34 times as many yellow perch and bluegill were 67 times as plentiful. There have also been increases in the trawl catches of young-of-year (YOY) for these species, especially perch. These increases have translated into some good angling, and this summer should prove no different.

– Kendall Kamke, senior fisheries biologist, Oshkosh

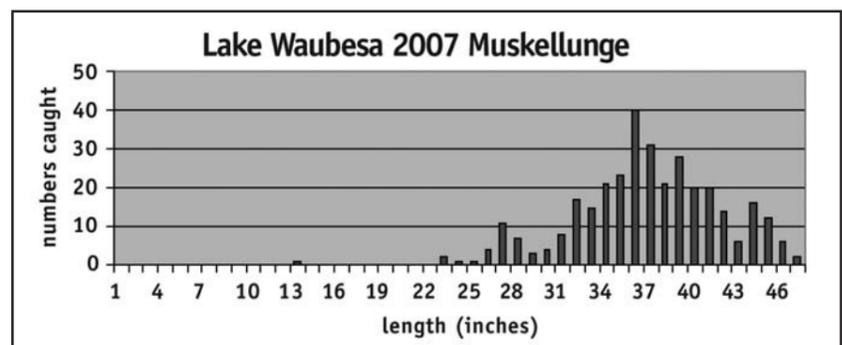
South Central Wisconsin



Dane County

Madison chain of lakes – Musky anglers, take note. Survey work conducted in 2007 on the Yahara Chain (Mendota-Monona-Wingra-Waubesa-Kegonsa) focused on finalizing a population estimate for musky on Lake Waubesa. Adult fish concentrate in spring and are vulnerable to netting efforts. Crews captured 312 muskies, with 43 percent (145 fish) exceeding 38 inches, and 17 percent (56 fish), larger than 42 inches. From the 2006 marking sample, 63 fish were recovered, yielding a population estimate of 1,163 fish or .56 per acre. The largest fish was 47.1 inches and tipped the scales at 34.5 pounds.

Additionally, Waubesa walleye numbers look robust with ample numbers of fish



greater than 15 inches. More than a quarter of the fish sampled measured over 20 inches, and eight percent exceeded the “memorable”

definition of more than 25 inches.

We noted better-than-average catch rates and size distribution for walleye in Lake

South Central Wisconsin *continued*

Mendota. The average size fish was 15 inches, with fish in the low 20-inch sizes common. Similarly impressive were robust panfish samples on both Lakes Monona and Waubesa. Monona bluegills ranged all the way to 9.2 inches and 63 percent of fish captured were larger than six inches. Waubesa showed excellent bluegill numbers, appropriate for young anglers who require more "catching" than harvest. Bass anglers can choose visits to either Lake Monona for largemouth or Lake Mendota for smallmouth. Both lakes have excellent numbers of catchable fish greater than 12 inches, and harbor memorable fish measuring 18 inches and larger.

Black Earth Creek – Dane County trout anglers will be happy to find easier access along the banks of Black Earth Creek, where DNR brushing crews have re-established the open meadow conditions characteristic of spring creeks. DNR stream surveys were conducted at 14 sites on seven systems including Deer Creek, Gordon Creek, Black Earth Creek, Elvers Creek, Kittleson Valley Creek, Primrose Branch and West Branch of the Sugar River. The most striking trend was the strong number of six- to 10-inch fish in all systems. This is indicative of good carry-over of both natural and stocked fingerlings from the previous year. Recent stream habitat restorations and land use improvements within their respective watersheds may be responsible for improvements in these streams.

TABLE 1
Catches of brown trout per mile,
Dane County, 2007

STREAM NAME	NO. TROUT PER MILE	PERCENT > 9 INCHES
Gordon Creek	425	14
Black Earth Creek	1,341	31
Elvers Creek	443	32
Kittleson Valley Creek	322	28
Primrose Branch	450	21
West Branch Sugar River	99	71

In each system, fish greater than 14 inches are available, however Dane County streams "grass over" by June, making mid-summer fishing more challenging.

– Kurt Welke, fisheries biologist, Fitchburg

Dodge and Jefferson counties

Beaver Dam Lake – As usual, the severity of the winter of 2008 will determine the fate of upcoming fishing on Beaver Dam Lake. Volunteers from the Beaver Dam Lake Improvement Association operate an aeration system on the lake and are prepared to install it.

Fox Lake – Walleye catch rates for 2007 fall electrofishing were 54 per hour, compared to 116 per hour in 2006. The number of young-of-the-year (YOY) walleyes under 10 inches was 15 per hour compared to 22 per hour in 2006. In 2007, DNR did not stock walleyes into Fox Lake due to VHS restrictions placed on the state hatchery system. Therefore, the young-of-the-year walleyes sampled in fall electrofishing surveys may be the result of natural reproduction in the lake. Catch rates of largemouth bass in 2007 (43 per hour) were consistent with those in 2006 (49 per hour). Favorable conditions for aquatic plants continue to support a productive fishery on Fox Lake. Anglers should continue to experience good crappie fishing. 2007 fall electrofishing sampling reported black crappies up to 10.5 inches. Bluegill catch rates remained good in 2007 (449 per hour), consistent with 2006 catches (477 per hour).

Rock Lake – Fall electrofishing surveys produced largemouth bass up to 20.5 inches and smallmouth bass up to 18 inches. Overall catch rates for walleyes remain consistently low at 3.7 per hour, compared to 2.4 per hour in 2006, with fish ranging from 7.1 to 23.8

inches. Only three young-of-the-year walleye were sampled in 2007 fall electrofishing. Bluegills up to nine inches and yellow perch up to 8.9 inches were also sampled. Rock bass was the second most abundant panfish species at 39 fish per hour.

Rock River – This is the third year of an ongoing fish tagging study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Jefferson Dam fish passage. The passage was installed in November 2005 to allow game and nongame fish species upstream and downstream navigation of the Rock River. To date, more than 2,000 fish have been tagged as part of the study, and good numbers of tag returns have been received. So far the study has documented substantial seasonal movement of fish from Lake Koshkonong to the Jefferson Dam and up the Crawfish River. Tag returns have documented that one channel catfish, tagged in Lake Koshkonong, was recovered below the lower Watertown Dam, indicating movement through the fish passage.

– Laura Stremick-Thompson, fisheries biologist, Horicon

Columbia County

Lake Wisconsin/Wisconsin River – The number of walleye and sauger exceeding 20 inches continues to increase five years after regulations eliminated harvest of those fish between 20 and 28 inches. Fall 2007 shocking found 33 walleye exceeding 20 inches versus the 1993-2001 average of 12. Sauger larger than 20 inches were nonexistent before the rules, but eight were collected in 2007. Reports of 28-plus inch walleye are starting to appear. Lower reproduction of both walleye and sauger was again noted in 2007. A largemouth bass population estimate was calculated from marking and recapture of tagged fish at five bass tournaments in 2007. Legal size largemouth (14-plus inches) numbered about 4,000. A similar study in 2004 with smallmouth found about 3,000, 14-plus-inch fish. Lake Wisconsin supports quality panfishing for bluegills and crappies, along with good year-classes of white bass, according to recent surveys. Both channel and flathead catfish were recorded. Some are very large. One guarantee is that no fishing trip to Lake Wisconsin will be short on catching drum (sheepshead), whether they are sought or not. Give them a taste test. You'll be surprised.

Lake Columbia – The annual late fall electroshocking survey continues to confirm a major change in this fishery, likely due to warmer lake temperatures. The once dominant largemouth bass fishery has declined to near zero levels. No recruitment has been noted since 2004. The stocked hybrid stripers continue to survive, but no fish larger than 25 inches has been found during the last four years. Channel catfish numbers of fish less than 12 inches continue to decline. This could be due to predation by flathead catfishery. Flatheads favor small bullhead/catfish type bait. A record number of 20- to 40-inch flatheads were collected. Shad and small bluegills continue to be abundant. The lake is open year-round and allows for carry-in boats and outboard motors at the public access on the lake's south end. A fish refuge is present near the power plant on both sides of the center dike.

Park Lake – Despite lower levels of shad noted in fall 2006 and spring 2007 surveys, water quality and aquatic vegetation did not show improvement during 2007. Shad were abundant by fall 2007. Since the dramatic loss of habitat around the year 2000, the bass and panfishing have dramatically declined, with shad, and to a lesser degree carp, dominating the fishery. On the bright side, the stocked channel catfish of years ago are now 22 inches to 28 inches and are reproducing, and nine- to 12-inch fish are abundant. Also, dense stocking of walleye from 2003 to 2006 has created a decent walleye fishery of three fish per acre at or exceeding the minimum legal size of 15 inches. Yellow bass are abundant and large enough to attract anglers.

Swan Lake – Despite abundant shad, the lake's deep water negates their value as forage. The most recent survey of 2005 notes a good walleye fishery maintained by stock-



Linda Swenson shows that fall musky fishing can pay off. She reeled in this 39-inch fighter from Lake Wingra in Dane County in November, only to hook a 34-incher less than two hours later.

CHUCK SWENSON

ing, an excellent largemouth bass population, along with some smallmouth. Stocked musky also provide action fish 45 inches and greater. Crappies, bluegills, yellow bass, perch and channel cats round out the fishery.

Tarrant Lake – This 25-acre impoundment within the Village of Cambria was refilled during spring 2007. Stocking of pre-spawn, adult bluegills and fall fingerling bass will continue for the next three years. An August survey found good bluegill reproduction. This used to be a phenomenal little fishery, especially used by local kids.

Silver Lake – This 70-acre lake has always been plagued by stunted bluegills, but they provide good action for kids. It has low density largemouth bass, though some are dandies. There are also naturally-reproducing northern pike, limited large walleyes from volunteer stocking and on any given summer evening there will be three to four boats casting for musky. Poor forage base results in slower musky growth but fish 40 inches or greater are still present.

Long Lake – There is a little bit of everything in this 69-acre lake just west of Portage, but it's good for bass, northern pike, crappies and bluegills. There is poor boat access on the lake's east side.

Spring Lake – A fall 2004 shocking survey found the lake to be "alive with fish." Look for nice bluegills, some crappies, largemouth bass, walleye, northern pike and a few muskies.

A boat ramp provides access on the south side of this 24-acre lake, just below Park Lake in Pardeeville. No outboard motors are allowed. Fish from downstream Swan Lake; you can enter via the Fox River connection.

Crystal Lake – Getting to this groundwater-fed, 27-acre lake, southeast of Pardeeville will require a half-mile walk, but it's worth the effort. You'll find deep, clear water with good vegetation and plenty of bass, bluegills, crappies and perch.

Fish Lake – The most recent survey, 2003, found a good opportunity to catch and release bass under the 18-inch size limit. Dense milfoil beds allow bluegills to escape predation, thus they are abundant but don't grow to quality size, although a fair number of seven-inch fish exist. Carp are abundant and nutrient levels from agricultural runoff over the years have decreased water quality. Mud Lake, connected by a road culvert, contains good populations of quality size yellow bullheads and seven- to nine-inch crappie. Water levels have dropped due to dry conditions the past few years, making the boat ramp more accessible.

– Tim Larson, fisheries supervisor, Poynette

Sauk County

Devil's Lake – The brown trout fishery continues to grow in popularity. About 15 percent of the catch is comprised of two-year-old trout (14 to 17 inches) which have survived one summer. Stocked at nine inches in April, they grow to 12 inches by fall. Anglers enjoy ice fishing for the trout, using fathead minnows. The lake touts a trophy northern pike fishery with its 32-inch size limit. A 2006 ice-out netting survey found low density but a stable number of pike. The survey noted good numbers of large females, 32 to 41 inches and good recruitment of the 2004 year-class. Largemouth, smallmouth bass and jumbo bluegills are also present. Only electric motors are allowed.

White Mound Lake – Sampling in 2007 still found plenty of small gills, though anglers were reporting larger bluegills and crappies caught in deeper water. The bass numbers (eight-plus inches) are up 27 percent compared to a 1999 survey. Numbers of eight-plus-inch fish are 12 per acre, better than average for local lakes. A robust five per acre are 14- to 17-inch fish.

Lake Virginia – This lake is becoming a quality bass and bluegill fishery four years after the lake was drained, refilled in spring 2004 and subsequently restocked with adult bass and bluegills.

Mirror Lake – The most recent survey in 2006 reports this 137-acre state park impoundment continues to support an excellent largemouth bass population. Native northern pike are also present and stocked walleye support good numbers of 10- to 18-inch fish. Bluegills, black crappies and yellow perch provide plenty of action as well. There is a township boat landing on the lake's northwest side and a very nice access in the park.

Lake Delton – This 267-acre impoundment is a playground for Wisconsin Dells water activity. However, when activity tapers off in the fall and early spring and during early morning and evening, it offers excellent fishing. A good largemouth bass population, stocked walleye and spillover northern pike from Mirror Lake offer outstanding action. The lake has shad forage, which allows for good growth. Bluegills, crappies and yellow bass provide panfishing. The main boat landing is in the lake's southeast corner.

Leland Pond – Record rainfall during August 2007 "flooded out" this 14-acre impoundment on the North Branch of Honey Creek, located in the Village of Leland. A September survey found a variety of rough fish species below the dam had not migrated into the pond. Bass numbers were down 50 percent compared to a



South Central Wisconsin *continued*

1995 survey. The pond was stocked in fall 2007 with 1,200 bass fingerlings. Carp numbers have increased, but the pond is still dominated by dense vegetation, which would not be present if carp were overabundant. The bluegill population appears heavily harvested as larger size fish were not noted.

Dutch Hollow – This very deep, 210-acre clear water impoundment can make daylight fishing difficult. A 2006 bass survey found the number of eight-plus-inch fish down from the last survey in 1993, with only 164 fish per hour instead of 256, but still very good for local lakes. Dutch Hollow is noted for large-sized bluegills and crappies. The 2006 survey found a good number of 16- to 24-inch walleyes, supported by small fingerling stocking.

Sauk and Columbia County trout streams – Stocking wild strain trout has provided two to three times better survival in the trout streams. About 80 percent of the streams are stocked. The better streams in Columbia County are Rowan, Rocky Run, Jennings and Lodi, while in Sauk County try Dell, Rowley and Manley for native brookies. Habitat work conducted in 2004 and 2005 on two stretches of Honey Creek (Class II brown trout) in western Sauk County is showing positive response and receiving high angler use. About three months after habitat work was completed on 800 feet of a feeder stream to Lodi Spring Creek in southwestern Columbia County, native population of brown trout exploded in that segment. We found 10 times the young-of-the-year and yearlings, five times as many nine- to 11-inch fish, and twice as many 12-plus-inch fish. This is an example of “if you build it they will come.”

– Tim Larson, fisheries supervisor, Poynette

Lafayette County

Yellowstone Lake – Anglers looking for walleyes or channel catfish will find Yellowstone Lake to their liking. Expect good to excellent fishing in 2008 for walleyes, channel catfish, largemouth bass and smallmouth bass. Musky and northern pike populations are low-density big-fish fisheries. Crappie fishing will be slower than previous years. The crappie population crashed in 2007 as a result of a columnaris bacteria outbreak. Early ice fishing reports from 2007 indicate there are still a few crappies to catch as well as many bluegills.

Smallmouth bass streams – Historically, southwest Wisconsin was nationally recognized for its smallmouth bass fishing in small streams. Although the national attention has faded, the quality of fishing has not. These small streams still offer a rare opportunity to catch trophy-sized smallmouth bass. Unlike trout, smallmouth bass are present in lower numbers. Good smallmouth streams will have only 50 to 100 mature fish per mile as trout streams may harbor 750 to 1,000 mature fish per mile. Some of the more productive streams include the Galena River, Yellowstone River, Blockhouse Creek, Rattlesnake Creek, and the Platte/Little Platte rivers. Because of the generous contributions from the Badger Fly Fishers and Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance, 1,800 feet of smallmouth bass habitat work will be completed on Blockhouse Creek in 2008.

Pecatonica River and East Branch Pecatonica River – Channel catfish continue to be the mainstay of this fishery and one of the better channel catfish fisheries in south central Wisconsin. Channel catfish in the 19- to 23-

inch range are abundant, with some fish up to 30 inches, and flatheads up to 42 inches. The best time to catch these fish will be mid-April through the end of August, before many of the catfish will migrate south to Illinois. These waters up to Highway 151 (Pecatonica River) and Highway 39 (East Branch of the Pecatonica River) offer anglers excellent opportunities to pursue walleye during March and April. Walleyes 16- to 18-inches are common, with some fish larger than 20 inches.

Gordon Creek – Trout habitat work was completed on 1,300 feet of Gordon Creek with plans underway for work on another 4,600 feet in the next two years. With about four miles of public fishing easement, Gordon Creek supports one of the better brown trout fisheries south of State Route 18. There are an estimated 300 adult trout per acre from surveys conducted in 2005. Surveys conducted in 2007 supported this information and the trout fishery has remained stable. With brown trout topping 20 inches, the creek offers anglers the opportunity to catch trophy-size fish.

Borah Creek, Little Grant River, Grant River – Located within 10 minutes of Lancaster, all of these streams harbor good brown trout fisheries. Combined, there are seven miles of public bank fishing easements available to anglers. All of these streams harbor brown trout populations near 300 adult trout per acre. Adult brown trout range from seven to 21 inches. For those of us accustomed to the “good ol’ days” of many large trout within these systems, we will have to change the way we view these fisheries. Gone are the days of stocking numerous large holdover trout and brood fish measuring 12 to 24 inches. It is advantageous for trout living in these systems to have a smaller body size; so many anglers will not see the 21- to 26-inch brown and rainbow trout of the past. Trophy fish in these systems will now be in the 16- to 18-inch range. There are still a few 20-plus inch fish present, but anglers looking for these larger fish will have to look farther downstream on the Grant River.

– Bradd Sims, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

Grant, Iowa and Richland counties

Heavy rains and flooding in southwestern Wisconsin in August 2007 eliminated the drought conditions that had persisted for several years. All streams have returned to normal or slightly above normal conditions and there are still good populations and good size structures. The flooding subjected trout to a period of serious physical abuse and water quality problems, and that’s a concern for survival of some of them, but there are still a whole lot of spawners, since the flooding created a lot of good clean gravel for spawning. The water volume is up and the water quality is currently very good. Only time will tell, but our wild trout populations have shown to be very hardy and resilient to most environmental changes. Adult wild brown trout average 10 to 13 inches with big trout measuring 14 to 16 inches and trophies measuring 17 or 18 inches. Wild trout in excess of 18 inches are very scarce in the small streams of this part of the state.

Lower Wisconsin River – The overall fisheries of the Lower Wisconsin River (LWR) are in very good shape. The walleye population has seen a significant increase in the number of 15- to 18-inch fish resulting from increased protection afforded by the newly established 18-inch size limit. Fair increases in the number of 19-inch and larger fish have also been noted in the surveys. In particular, anglers report that the number of medium and, to some extent, larger walleyes caught downstream has improved significantly. There was a summer kill of walleye at the Prairie du Sac Dam in July. About 150 walleyes of all sizes were killed, a significant number, but in the overall scope of the river, it shouldn’t have too great an impact. In October 2007 we stocked 500 extended growth young-of-the-year (YOY) walleye near the dam to help mitigate the loss.

The channel catfish are currently in good shape and continue to be the most important fishery on the lower part of the LWR. The smallmouth bass population has a good number of fish with a number of medium and larger fish. Almost all bass anglers on the LWR practice catch and release exclusively and the population is improving to reflect this practice. The crappie population remains in pretty good shape for number and size distribution. The population of large bluegills has passed out of the system, replaced by very good numbers of medium-size fish. These are little-utilized fisheries and would provide good fishing for people wanting to specifically target these species.

Blackhawk Lake – The largemouth bass population has responded positively to the special “no size limit” regulation in effect for the past few years. The overpopulation of medium bass has been reduced and the current population still consists of good numbers, but the fish are much heavier for their body length and there are more large fish.

Cox Hollow Lake – The special “no size limit” regulation for bass has eliminated the severely stunted population of bass but the bluegill fishery remains dominated by a moderate number of medium and larger fish with only a limited number of smaller fish. The liberal bass regulation will remain in effect until the number of smaller panfish dramatically improves.

Twin Valley Lake – Intensive management efforts in recent years have greatly improved the overall quality of the fishery. The lake currently has dense populations of small to medium bluegills and small crappies, and there is no limit on the number that may be harvested in any one day. The largemouth bass population is protected by a catch-and-release regulation and has an excellent number of large fish and an excellent size structure. The number of muskies stocked in the lake has been reduced and significant amounts of musky forage have been planted in the lake. This has resulted in normal catch rates along with fish in much better condition. While not a producer of trophy musky, the number of 36- to 40-inch fish is outstanding for a small lake. The lake has a 40-inch musky size limit.

– Gene Van Dyck, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville



Lake Waubesa in Dane County’s Yahara chain of lakes ranks 10th in the state as a fishing destination, no surprise given its robust walleye population. Surveys in 2007 found that more than a quarter of the fish sampled exceeded 20 inches and eight percent topped 25 inches.

Southeastern Wisconsin



Southern Lake Michigan

Open lake fishing – Chinook salmon fishing on Lake Michigan has been phenomenal in recent years and another harvest record was set in 2007, when anglers caught more than an estimated 430,000 Chinook. In the summer of 2007, many fish in the 15- to 20-pound range were reported. A slight reduction in Chinook stocking implemented lakewide in 2006 should further improve their growth and survival in coming years.

In spring 2007, coho were abundant, and southern Wisconsin anglers enjoyed good fishing. However, a reduction in coho stocking by Michigan DNR in spring 2007 may have

implications for Wisconsin anglers in 2008 and beyond. Coho stocked in Michigan provide a significant portion of the fishery in southern Wisconsin because coho follow an annual clockwise migration pattern around Lake Michigan’s southern basin. As the season progresses and water temperature increases, most coho follow the Illinois and Wisconsin shore north. Through an unprecedented fundraising effort, Wisconsin and Illinois sport anglers provided more than \$47,000 to Michigan DNR to raise additional yearling coho for stocking in 2008.

Nearshore fishing – Shore anglers enjoyed some good fishing in July and August working harbors and river mouths for Skamania steelhead. These fish were staging in antici-



Scott Bunde and his daughter teamed up to land this 20-pound Chinook while fishing Lake Michigan.

Southeastern Wisconsin *continued*

pation of their early fall spawning run. The Chambers Creek and Ganaraska strains should also provide some action for anglers in late winter and early spring.

In recent years, two additional rainbow trout strains have been stocked on an experimental basis to boost opportunities to fish from shore or small boats: the Arlee strain stocked since 2001 and the Kamloops strain since 2003. Both strains have quickly been reaching catchable size, as reported by the Lake Michigan creel survey.

Brown trout fishing was good in spring and fall 2007. Browns provide a consistent near-shore fishery during the cold months, especially at warmwater discharges and near river mouths. We see dependable returns on domestic brown trout, while the fast-growing, hard-fighting Seeforellen strain continues to add excitement to the brown trout fishery.

Numbers of yellow perch in Lake Michigan are slowly showing signs of improvement, but overall the population is still low. The 2002 and 2003 year-classes now contribute most significantly to the sport harvest, but the 1998 year-class is still represented in the sport catch as well. In addition, the 2005 year-class is also appearing in significant numbers in annual DNR surveys, indicating a healthier perch population developing in the lake.

Many of our harbors have seen habitat improvements over the last decade. This has translated into increasing naturally reproducing populations of smallmouth bass and northern pike, two species native to Lake Michigan. Fishing for these species has increased as more anglers choose to target them.

Walleyes stocked in the Milwaukee River have shown good survival and high growth rates. Walleye anglers can be found throughout the lower Milwaukee River, the Menomonee River and canals, as well as in the harbor.

Tributary fishing – Dry conditions throughout early fall 2007 led to low flows in area tributaries and a relatively mediocre salmon run. In fall 2008, we anticipate good returns of Chinooks and coho, provided the river water levels remain conducive for upstream fish migration.

Spring and fall steelhead runs have not been strong in recent years. Anglers can generally look for Skamania as water temperatures start to cool in mid-September. Chambers Creek usually follows in late fall and Skamania can be found through March and early April. Ganaraska enter the streams as early as late November and December and again from late March through April.

For up-to-date fishing information, call the Southern Lake Michigan Fishing Hotline at (414) 382-7920. To read information about our Lake Michigan program visit dnr.wi.gov/fish then look under "Fisheries Program" to find "Lake Michigan."

– Pradeep Hirethota and Cheryl Peterson, Southern Lake Michigan fisheries, Milwaukee

Walworth and Racine counties

Browns Lake – Browns Lake is a good bet for plenty of action on largemouth bass and northern pike. Our electrofishing surveys revealed good numbers of largemouth bass. Catch rates for the last four years ranged between 85 and 110 per hour and averaged 92 fish per hour. Most fish are 14 inches and in good condition, with five percent 16 inches or longer. Northern pike are abundant and should provide excellent ice fishing action. Our catch rates were between 18 and 23 per hour and averaged 21 per hour. We sampled northerns up to 32 inches but most are between 18 and 21 inches.

Delavan Lake – This lake supports excellent populations of walleyes, northern pike and largemouth bass. Our fyke net and electrofishing surveys sampled walleyes up to 26 inches. We estimate there are 11,800 adult walleyes, or 5.7 per acre, which is excellent for stocked lakes. These walleyes are in excellent condition and many are larger than the 18-inch minimum size limit. We estimate 4,970 adult northern pike, or 2.4 per acre, which is very good and representative of healthy naturally reproducing populations. Angler catches of fish exceeding 32 inches are fairly common.

We sampled largemouth bass up to 25 inches. They are in excellent condition and most bass are between 12 and 18 inches with nine percent 18 inches or larger. Smallmouth bass aren't quite as abundant but size structure is excellent. Smallmouth average 16 inches and we have sampled fish up to 19 inches. If you are lucky enough to hook a musky, it will be worth your time. We have sampled muskies up to 48 inches. The lake has plenty of bluegills, with the average size

six inches but also fish eight inches and larger. If you like big crappies, Delavan Lake has them. Average length is eight inches and there are crappies 12 inches and larger out there.

Geneva Lake – Geneva Lake provides excellent angling opportunities for warmwater, coolwater and coldwater game fish. This lake supports naturally reproducing populations of largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, bluegills, black crappies, yellow perch, rock bass and northern pike. Walleyes, lake trout, and brown trout are stocked. Largemouth and smallmouth bass anglers go here for big bass and lots of them. Our fisheries surveys revealed that 85 percent of the largemouth bass we caught were legal size (14 inches or larger) and 10 percent were 18 inches or larger, with some up to 20 inches. We have sampled walleyes up to 30 inches and 13 pounds, and yellow perch and rock bass up to 10 inches. Big crappies are here and anglers have harvested fish up to 16 inches. Lake trout are stocked annually and provide anglers using downriggers good action in the summer. Most lake trout are between 24 and 28 inches.

– Doug Welch, senior fisheries biologist, Sturtevant

Waukesha County

Pine Lake – Results from the 2005-2006 Pine Lake Comprehensive Survey indicates a quality size structure for walleye as well as an abundance of bass and bluegills. Estimated walleye harvest is one out of every five fish caught. Walleye growth rates are slightly higher than the statewide average, yielding an average length of 17.5 inches with the largest fish measuring 33 inches. The electrofishing catch rate for largemouth bass was 32 per mile, providing fast action for bass anglers. Average length of the largemouth bass sample was 11 inches with the largest measuring 22 inches. Average length of smallmouth bass was 13 inches with the largest measuring 21 inches.

Other Waukesha County lakes – Whether casting for a trophy musky or looking for a meal of keeper bluegills, anglers can find opportunities throughout the county.

Walleye – Lac La Belle's 20-inch size limit and one daily bag limit maintains high numbers and an average size structure. For larger walleyes, opportunities include Oconomowoc, Pewaukee, Nagawicka and Little Muskego.

Bass – For largemouth bass, Okauchee, Pewaukee, Keesus, Denoon and Big Muskego all provide decent size and numbers. Oconomowoc, Pine and Nagawicka are excellent choices to target smallmouth bass.

Musky – Each year Pewaukee and Okauchee receive up to 3,000 musky fingerlings and both lakes continue to produce a few 50-inch fish each year. Other fishable musky populations are found in Oconomowoc, Fowler and Lac La Belle.

Northern Pike – Big Muskego continues to support excellent pike action for the region. Other pike destinations include Golden, Ashippun and Phantom lakes.

Panfish – Lower Genessee, Nagawicka and Big Muskego lakes are producing quality size panfish.

– Benjamin Heussner, fisheries biologist, Waukesha

Sheboygan, Washington and eastern Fond du Lac counties

Fish surveys on the Sheboygan River from Johnsonville downstream to Kohler in 2007 indicated that anglers should be able to find an abundance of smallmouth bass to catch. Few of the bass exceeded the 14-inch size limit but they should provide a good deal of action. Access to the river can be found at the many bridge crossings.

Friess Lake – A fish survey of Friess Lake near Richfield in spring 2007 yielded good results for anglers. The lake has a fairly good population of bluegills and black crappies. A few nice-sized northern pike were also caught by trap nets during the survey.

Pike Lake – Pike Lake continues to produce some excellent largemouth bass fishing. The walleye population remains strong in the lake but walleyes can be tough to catch due to the abundance of small panfish in the lake.

Long Lake – Long Lake remains the best largemouth bass lake in the region, producing both good numbers and higher than average size. Best fishing for bass is early morning and evening when boating activity is low. Bluegill fishing in Long Lake should also be very good during 2008.

– John Nelson, fisheries biologist, Plymouth

Kenosha County

Silver Lake – Anglers will find quality fishing for largemouth bass here. These fish reproduce naturally and no stocking is necessary. We do however, stock walleyes, musky, and northern pike into Silver Lake: 23,000 walleyes are stocked every other year; 900 muskies are stocked every year; and 1,700 northern pike are stocked periodically. Fyke net and electrofishing surveys yielded muskies up to 48 inches, walleye up to 22 inches and northern pike up to 38 inches. Bluegills are moderately abundant and provide good action in late spring, early summer. Black crappies do well in this lake with 12-inch fish being reported.

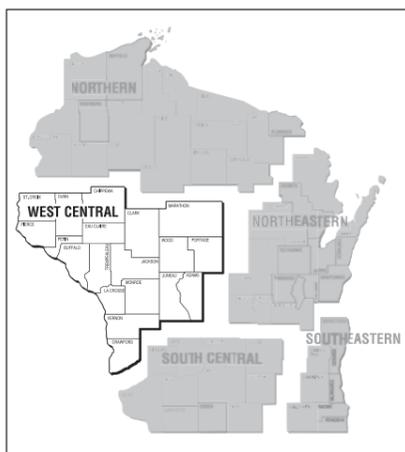
– Doug Welch, senior fisheries biologist, Sturtevant



PHOTO COURTESY OF THOMAS ZAGAR

The DNR project to rehabilitate habitat and water quality on Big Muskego Lake in Waukesha County in the 1990s is producing great fishing, hunting and clean water. Thomas Zagar caught this 21-inch largemouth bass in 2007.

West Central Wisconsin



Mississippi River Backwaters – (Pools 4, 5, 5a and 6) Based upon recent shocking and netting surveys, fishing should continue to be good for many species during 2008. Surveys found good numbers of bluegills and black crappies. Black crappies averaged 9.3 inches,

while 30 percent were between 10 and 12 inches. Black crappies ranged to near 14 inches. Of the bluegills surveyed in 2007, 59 percent were six inches to eight inches, with about one in five bluegill from seven to eight inches. The 2007 surveys showed average numbers of northern pike. Similar to previous surveys, the average pike was near 26 inches, while the largest was 39 inches. During 2008, largemouth bass should provide plenty of catching opportunities. The 2007 surveys showed good numbers of largemouth both above and below the 14-inch size limit. Good numbers of largemouth 15 inches to 17 inches are available, while surveys have shown fish up to 20 inches.

– Brian Brecka, fisheries biologist, Alma

Adams and Juneau counties

Neenah Creek – DNR fisheries crews electrofished a stretch of stream from the confluence of Peppermill Creek 1,250 feet upstream on Neenah Creek. The survey captured 137 brown trout ranging from four inches to 15.4

inches, with an average length of eight inches. The survey determined a healthy population of naturally reproducing brown trout. The 1983 habitat improvement project is still functioning after 24 years and is creating excellent trout fishing opportunities into 2008 and beyond.

Big Roche-a-Cri Creek – DNR fisheries crews electrofished 4,000 feet of stream west of County Highway G and found a healthy population of naturally reproducing brook trout and a small population of brown trout. We captured 351 brook trout ranging from four inches to 14.9 inches with an average length of 7.39 inches. Fourteen brown trout were captured and ranged from 6.5 to 14.4 inches with an average length of 8.59 inches. The old habitat project from 1980 is still functioning well after 27 years and excellent trout fishing can be expected in 2008 and into the future.

Castle Rock Flowage – Walleye continues to be the main target species for most anglers and survey results suggest anglers will find more and bigger walleyes in 2008. A spring 2007 netting survey of the Castle Rock Flowage car-

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Lead fishing tackle kills aquatic wildlife dependent on Wisconsin's lakes, rivers and streams. Just one lead sinker is enough to kill a loon.

You can prevent lead poisoning in wildlife:

- Replace lead jigs and sinkers with those made of tin, bismuth, steel, tungsten or ceramic.
- Ask the business where you purchase fishing tackle to carry non-lead products.
- Dispose of old lead sinkers and jigs properly at your local hazardous waste collection site.
- Outfit your children's tackle boxes with non-lead tackle.

Visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/pages/gettheleadout.html for more information.



ried out by DNR fisheries crews captured 345 walleyes, ranging from seven to 30.4 inches. The number captured, (8.1 per net) is among the most captured in any previous netting survey. The proportion of walleye exceeding 20 inches also increased to 5.8 percent and included four walleyes between 29 and 30 inches. That compares to the 0.8 percent and no fish larger than 28 inches found in 2003, indicating that the slot size limit is doing exactly what it was designed to do by increasing the number of walleyes larger than 20 inches. The minimum length limit on walleye and sauger is 15 inches but fish from 20 through 28 inches may not be kept and only one fish over 28 inches is allowed. Sixty-two percent of the walleye population in the flowage fall under 15 inches and these fish are protected by the slot size limit, while 31 percent fall within the harvest slot between 15 and 20 inches. The average length of the male walleyes was 13.5 inches while the average length of the females was 19.2 inches.

Two significant findings were the large number of black crappies and the excellent average size of the bluegills. The survey captured 1,612 black crappies, ranging from 4.7 inches to 12.6 inches. The average length of the crappies was 6.6 inches. The survey also captured 159 bluegills ranging in size from five inches to 10.2 inches. The average length of the bluegills was 7.3 inches.

The survey captured 186 northern pike, (4.42 per net) ranging from 12.7 to 40.4 inches. Of the pike population, 92.4 percent are under the 32-inch size limit while 7.5 percent are over the size limit. Male northern pike averaged 21.7 inches and females averaged 27.1 inches. The good news is that the number captured, (4.42 per net) is significantly higher than the 2.7 per net captured in the 2003 survey.

– *Scot Ironside, fisheries biologist, Friendship*

Marathon and Portage counties

Wisconsin River – The Wisconsin River continues as a great destination for anglers to experience a wide range of fisheries. Gamefish surveys completed at five locations in 2007 found that smallmouth bass comprised 65 percent of the combined catch, followed by walleye representing 15 percent, channel catfish with 9.3 percent, musky and largemouth bass each at four percent, northern pike at 1.3 percent and white bass at 0.67 percent.

The greatest catch rate of smallmouth (46 fish per hour) was recorded below the Stevens Point Dam. Smallmouth ranged from three to 18.1 inches and averaged 10.7 inches, very similar to 2006. At four of the five sites, 60 to 80 percent of the fish were 11 inches or greater.

Walleye were captured at all five locations with the greatest catch rate found below Dubay Dam at 8.1 fish per hour. Walleye ranged from 6.7 to 19.2 inches and averaged 11.2 inches.

The annual channel catfish hoop net study focused on new sites in 2007, below Mosinee Dam and below Rothschild Dam. The greatest catch was recorded below Rothschild (22.4 fish net per night), where 22 percent of the catfish exceeded 16 inches and 11 percent exceeded 24 inches. The catch below Mosinee was 4.75 net per night and 68 percent of the catfish below Mosinee were greater than 16 inches.

Collins Lake – Survey results indicate northern pike remains the dominant predator but anglers will find significantly more big fish than a generation ago. Catch rates of 3.4 fish per net per night in 2006 are similar to the 2.2 fish per net per night in a 1970 survey, but the 26-inch minimum size limit has changed the size structure so that fully 64 percent of the fish caught in 2006 exceeded 21 inches, up from 17 percent in 1970. Eight percent of the fish are greater than 28 inches. Fall electrofishing indicated that largemouth bass are also a stable component in the predator population, with a catch rate of 9.3 fish per mile of shoreline. Bluegill and black crappie are the main panfish species. Bluegill sizes have improved since the last survey, with 42 percent exceeding six-plus inches and three percent near eight inches. The black crappie population has also become stronger. In 2006, 83 percent were eight inches or greater and 25 percent were 10 inches or greater. Collins Lake appears to have one of the better panfish fisheries of the local small lakes.

Big Bass Lake – During our fyke netting sampling on Big Bass Lake in 2006, we captured 19 walleyes all 20 inches or larger, including one 23.5 inches. The spring fyke net survey was dominated by panfish species that included bluegill, pumpkinseed and yellow perch. Eighty percent of the fish are at or above the quality size of six inches for bluegill and pumpkinseed and eight inches for yellow perch. However, there are few fish at the preferred size of eight inches for bluegill and pumpkinseed, and 10 inches for yellow perch. A new bass size regulation will take effect in spring 2008 — to try to increase panfish size. Survey crews captured 21 largemouth bass eight inches or larger; 57 percent exceeded 12 inches, 29 percent exceeded 15 inches, and 14 percent topped 18 inches. The biggest largemouth bass captured was 19 inches.

Tomorrow River – Surveys indicate that brown trout and brook trout populations in the river above Amherst Dam are healthy and will continue to provide a vibrant fishery for anglers. At two stations, nearly 30 percent of the catch was of harvest size. Below Amherst, although the numbers were slightly lower this year, trout are still available to the angler willing to put in the extra effort. Once again, we expect this part of the river to continually improve with continued wild brown trout stocking.

Emmons Creek – The new habitat work near Stratton Lake Road will continue to improve available cover for trout. As in past surveys, about 30 percent of the fish were at or above the minimum length of seven inches.

Plover River – The Plover River will provide great brook trout and brown trout fishing. At least five percent of the browns were at or above the 12-inch minimum size and 15 percent of the brook trout were of harvestable size, which is eight inches.

– *Tom Meronek, fisheries biologist, Wausau*

St. Croix, Pierce, Dunn and Pepin counties

Recent lake investigations in the area show largemouth and smallmouth bass populations are in great shape with excellent size structure. Legal bass average about two to 10 per acre on area lakes and flowages; sublegal bass are abundant. Bass anglers will find great action on just about any lake they choose to fish. This spring, try casting a small jig and medium sized leech toward a shoreline structure or along a weedline and be prepared to catch an assortment of bass and panfish.

Panfishing is very popular throughout the area. In Dunn County, Lake Menomoin produces some of the nicest bluegills around and

Tainter Lake is projected to produce nice catches of perch. In Pierce County, try Nugget Lake and Spring Valley Reservoir for good bluegill and crappie action. Squaw Lake has been the most consistent producer in St. Croix County, however, according to 2007 surveys Baldwin Pine Lake should be a good bet. Local efforts by DNR and sport clubs continue to improve panfish habitat throughout the area with the installation of fish cribs in Cedar and Glen lakes, St. Croix County and Tainter and Menomoin lakes in Dunn County.

The 2008 inland trout fishing season is projected to be another outstanding one. Historically, Pierce and southwest St. Croix counties have proven to be hot spots for both the early and regular trout seasons and this year will be no different. Some of the best brook and brown trout streams in this area with high trout densities include the Rush River, Kinnickinick River, Plum Creek, Cady Creek, Elk Creek just upstream from Elk Creek Lake and the headwater sections of the South Fork of the Hay River. Annual monitoring of trout populations throughout the four-county area show natural reproduction of brook and brown trout to be slightly lower than average in 2007, however, 2006 reproduction was the best we have seen in the past 10 years. This means in spring of 2008, legal brook trout (eight inches) and browns (eight to 12 inches) should be very abundant. Anglers can expect some brown trout to reach lengths greater than 20 inches and brook trout greater than 14 inches in these streams. Barring any late winter floods, trout populations are projected to be in great shape for the 2008 season.

– *Marty Engel, senior fisheries biologist, Baldwin*

Buffalo, Clark, Jackson, and Trempealeau counties

Trout streams – Recent surveys of area trout streams indicate stable adult and young-of-the-year catch rates despite drought-like conditions over the past couple years. Combine these results with the DNR's stocking program and there should be plenty of trout waiting for anglers in 2008. DNR and cooperative hatcheries will stock 35,000 brook, 37,000 brown and 16,000 rainbow trout to area waters next spring, before the regular season opener.

Also waiting for anglers are improved fishing conditions. DNR survey crews and trout anglers noted deteriorating habitat due to the drought. Much needed rain and storms in late summer and fall of 2007, although devastating in other areas of the state, began restoring flow rates and water depth, and scouring sediment out of holes, spawning habitat and other cover in many of our area streams. Other streams

were improved through DNR habitat restoration projects, including Pine Creek, Traverse Valley Creek, Borst Valley Creek and Bruce Valley Creek, all in Trempealeau County. These projects were funded by the state's trout stamp program and contributions from area conservation organizations. Restoration activities include creating overhead cover, pools, and spawning habitat as well as stabilizing streambanks to minimize erosion. Work continues on Pine Creek in 2008 and new projects will start on French Creek and Tank Creek, both in Jackson County.

Lakes and rivers – Surveys conducted in 2006 and 2007 indicate overall improvements in catch rate and size structure of panfish populations in area lakes. Lakes surveyed include Henry (Blair Pond), Martha (Osseo Pond), Crystal (Strum Pond), Arbutus, and Potter Flowage. Over the past couple years, Arbutus has produced some of the best crappie and bluegill fishing anglers have experienced in a long time. Abundant natural reproduction of both species should sustain recruitment and angling success into the next few years. Musky anglers take note: spring 2007 netting surveys for Potter Flowage produced the highest catch rate of fish 40 inches or larger in the last 40 years. Potters is stocked with large fingerling muskies (average 12 inches) on alternate years.

Continuous monitoring of the lower Black River since 2001 indicates a recent trend in game fish populations anglers will appreciate: catch rates for most species improved over the past couple years.

– *Daniel Hatleli, fisheries biologist, Black River Falls*

Chippewa County

Lake Wissota – Spring netting surveys conducted in 2006 and 2007 provided a population estimate of one adult musky for every 10 acres. The number of larger, older fish was low due to low stocking levels from the mid-to late 1990s. Fifteen percent of the catch was 40 inches and larger, with the largest a 54-inch female. In fall 2005, the local Muskies Inc. chapter stocked 500 Leech Lake strain muskies and added another 833 Leech Lake fingerlings in fall 2007. The 2007 musky survey also provided further information on walleye, northern pike and smallmouth bass populations. Thirty-two percent of the walleye catch was 18 inches and larger, which indicates that the 14- to 18-inch protected slot size is doing well at producing larger fish in the lake. For legal-size smallmouth bass, 23 percent of the catch was 17 inches and larger. Northern pike are more widespread throughout the lake compared to the 1989 survey. Little Lake Wissota and the Yellow River area of the lake now hold good numbers of northern pike with 19 percent of the 2007 catch 26 inches and larger.

Round Lake – Netting surveys of Round Lake in 2006 and 2007 documented a low density but high quality walleye population. The adult population estimate was similar both years at 0.8 fish per acre. For walleyes over the 15-inch minimum size limit, 96 percent were 20 inches and larger in the 2007 survey. The largest was a 29-inch female. Females averaged 25.6 inches and males 22 inches. The lake is stocked with walleyes in odd-numbered years.

– *Joe Kurz, fisheries biologist, Chippewa Falls*

La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon and Crawford counties

Anglers should experience excellent fishing in coulee region streams now and in the future. Record rainfall in August 2007 scoured many stream channels down to underlying bedrock, expanding spawning substrate and places for aquatic invertebrates to attach. Post-flood stream surveys showed little flood damage to DNR habitat improvement sites and good trout numbers. With the increased spawning habitat, we expect excellent natural reproduction and many hatchling trout this spring.

– *Jordan Weeks, fisheries biologist, La Crosse*



Fisheries biologist Jordan Weeks displays a 27-inch brown trout from the Kickapoo River Watershed, Crawford County. In the area, trout stream improvements were completed on Sugar Creek, Crawford County, Dutch and Mormon Coulee Creek, La Crosse County and Springville Branch Creek, Vernon County.

How to make fishing fun for kids

Some tips to help ensure their first trip isn't their last

FOOD – Pack a cooler with sandwiches, some cookies and water.

FUN – The younger the child, the shorter the attention span. If the fish aren't biting, don't keep them chained to their fishing poles or held hostage in a boat. On shore, let them set the poles down and run around. If you're fishing from a boat and it's hot, reel in, double-check the kids' life preservers and throw them overboard for a swim.

PATIENCE – Keep the outing short and accept that they may not keep quiet and they probably will get a few tangles.

SAFE AREA – Check for swift or deep water, dams and uneven footing along banks.

SIMPLE GEAR – Cane poles and closed-face reels are good choices. Barbless hooks make it easier to release fish and resolve injuries.

BAIT – Worms are good to use. Encourage, but don't force them, to bait their own hooks if they hate touching worms. Let them practice with plastic worms. Eventually, they'll get used to the idea of doing it themselves.

TACKLE – A small box can hold a few small hooks, a couple of bobbers and a few sinkers. That's all they need to get started.

ROLE MODEL – Use good bait and fish handling behavior that will help protect our resources from disease. Remember to drain all water from your boat and equipment, don't move live fish between waters, and report sick fish to the DNR.

– Theresa Stabo, aquatic resources education director, Madison

For more information on taking kids fishing, visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/kidsparents/ or contact Theresa Stabo at (608) 266-2272 or theresa.stabo@wisconsin.gov.



SCOTT BUNDE

A kid's catch: pumpkinseed

This is the number one fish for kids to catch all over Wisconsin! They are smaller than eight inches long and like the shallow water where they can be caught from the shore or pier by kids of all ages. Wear your life jacket and hold onto your pole. They can put up a good fight! They taste good when pan-fried — that's why they are also called "panfish."

To catch these petite beauties, grab any pole and wade in the shallows with some garden worms, insects, leeches or pieces of fish. Try fly fishing for them. In early and late winter, try insect larvae and grubs.

– EEK!/Environmental Education for Kids



BRIAN WEIGEL



JAY BREWSTER

Family Outings

June 7 and 8, 2008 – Free Fishing Weekend
Reel in a child or new angler and cast out to Wisconsin's waters for Free Fishing Weekend. All the waters of the state are open, including state waters of the Great Lakes and rivers bordering Wisconsin. For more information visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/kidsparents/freefishingweekend.html

Year round – Visit a hatchery or egg-taking facility
Keep our state fish hatcheries in mind when planning your next day trip. These facilities are open to visitors and provide unique opportunities to see lots of fish at all stages in their life cycles. Hours and days of business vary seasonally and certain times of the year will provide more fish action than others, so visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/hatchery/hatmap.htm to find information on a facility near you.



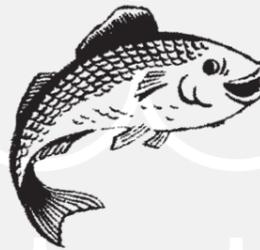
EEK! A website just for kids! dnr.wi.gov/EEK

So much fishy fun you can find on EEK!

- Learn about Wisconsin's fish species
- Meet a fish biologist
- Find out where to watch fish
- Prepare to go fly fishing
- See some whacky water critters
- Read big fish stories
- Watch a video on ice fishing

Catch 'n' Color

Fish are swimming in circles just waiting to be colored. Visit www.fishingwisconsin.org to download pages of coloring fun.



First time fishing?

Whether you're taking a child or novice fishing, or it's the first time yourself, you can find all the information you need to get started at www.fishingwisconsin.org.



LEANNE ROSENBERG



CHERYL PETERSON

"takemefishing"

TAKEMEFISHING.ORG



An Invitation from the Secretary

Kids need a connection with the outdoors today to become tomorrow's stewards of Wisconsin's great natural resources. Help create tomorrow's conservationists — take a kid fishing.

You'll find great tips on this page for introducing kids to this fun and relaxing recreation. See you out on the water!

Sincerely,

Mathew J. Frank
DNR Secretary



ALISA LOPEZ

2008 Wisconsin Fishing Report

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