

Review of Michigan DNR Inland Lakes Walleye Management Plan

The Upper Peninsula Sportsmen's Alliance has reviewed the new state wide Walleye Inland Lakes Management Plan. We found a number of concerning issues we would like to share, to inform the public.

The DNR plan states that *"reduced Budgets no longer allow for extensive stocking activities that were historically common."* Actually, stocking spring fingerlings is one of the most cost-effective methods the Fish Division has at their disposal. The spring walleye fingerlings that created most of the good walleye fisheries in Michigan only cost about \$ 0.06 to produce versus trout that cost about a dollar per per fish planted. Muskie and other species cost much more. The DNR received a license increase in 2014 since that time they drastically cut the amount of walleye fingerling stocked in inland waters. \$330,000.00 is being spent for all the walleye rearing efforts, according to the plan. That works out to around 3 % of the more than 10 million dollars that the state spends on fish rearing. The state has been reducing the stocking rates in lakes and the fishing has suffered. The plan sets forward a goal of trying to manage the walleye population to only 2 adult walleye per acre. That is significantly below neighboring State's walleye population goals and would result in the average walleye angler having to fish for over 30 hours to catch a legal walleye. US Fish and Wildlife Service surveys reveal walleyes are one of the top three sought after fish in Michigan, they deserve a larger share of the angler's dollars.

The management plan is supposed to include a through review of the Michigan's walleye lakes. The lakes have been classified based on natural reproduction, lake type, and suitability. Many of the waters are classified incorrectly some way overrated in terms of their ability to support a good walleye fishery from natural reproduction and some long-time good walleye waters underrated. The new management plan sets a very low bar for the DNR Fish Division with no apparent desire to improve walleye fisheries.

UPSA's general opinion on the plan is, that the plan needs to be completely rewritten to add measurable goals to gauge waters that will remain self-sustaining in the long run, and how to improve walleye waters with good adult walleye habitat although lacking in adequate spawning habitat. It is also disheartening that plan was developed internally with little or no outside collaboration with partners or the public. Other steps have been taken in recent years by the Fish Division which have alienated sports and fisheries enhancement groups. The DNR has discarded successful long-time agreements with local organizations that rear and fund stocking of walleye fingerlings. Instead of stocking these fish locally, the DNR is removing these fish from local ponds and stocking them elsewhere. Local clubs expect their efforts and monies will be used to help the local fisheries, anything else is a betrayal of their partnership.

Priorities and monies need to be allocated for inland walleye fisheries. A minor increase from the overall budget can have a big impact on the fisheries. Attitudes need to change. If the DNR is serious about improving walleye fishing, they need to consult with their conservation

partners and fishing public. UPSA takes no pleasure in being critical of the fisheries division. We want the fisheries division to be successful, but part of that success is improving the fisheries for the anglers of Michigan. The good news is that if the Fisheries Division modifies their draft plan, improvements to the walleye fisheries can become a reality. Please join us in encouraging the Fisheries division to upgrade their management plan and the inland fisheries throughout our great state of Michigan.

Comments to the “Inland Lakes Walleye Management Plan” can be made to:

Address (DNR-Walleye@michigan.gov) The deadline for comments is April 1, 2021.