

## FISH MANAGEMENT

Dan Meixner, chair

Data from the DNR lake surveys completed in the summer of 2015 have been compiled and released. It shows mixed conditions as to the status of our 3 lakes.

**Bluegill/Sunfish** in general are down significantly in number and size. In fact, Middle and Lower numbers are at record lows sampled in the net. Middle for instance, had a high catch per net of 97.6 fish and now has 9.6 fish per net. Upper numbers are similar to Middle and Lower. While the size of the fish remained the same in Upper, Middle and Lower fish were smaller in general and the average size shrunk as well.

**Crappie** numbers are similar to past numbers. Size structure is about the same to slightly larger as well.

**Bass** numbers are about the same as the last survey with the exception of Middle. In Middle, numbers per catch are down from 114 in 2003 to 75 in 2009 to 58 in 2015. The size is down in Middle and Lower, while larger in Upper.

**Walleye** numbers are roughly the same as the 2009 survey. The age class of the walleyes sampled in Upper and Lower match the 3 year interval of Middle Cullen stocking. This indicates at least some of the fish stocked in Middle are moving into Upper and Lower. The size structure in Middle is up from 18" to 19.5" average lengths. Upper and Lower size structure is down about 4" on average from 22"-18" in Upper and 23"-19" in Lower.

**Northern Pike** numbers are up in Middle and Lower, but down in Upper. The numbers in Upper are still at or above the numbers sampled in Middle and Lower. The size structure however, shows the smallest fish in Upper and the largest fish in Lower.

- Upper shows size averages below 24" for most fish sampled. Last survey, 19% were over 24" and in the latest survey there were only 13% over 24". The DNR recommends releasing all fish 22" and over, and only keeping fish under 22".
- Middle shows size structure dropping from 26.6" to 24.2" average length. In this survey, only 41% were over 24" in length while in 2009 64% were over 24". The DNR recommends releasing all fish 24" and over, and only keeping fish under 24".
- Lower has larger fish sampled this survey. The average size is up from 24.3" to 25.9". 55% of the fish are over 24" now while in 2009 only 35% were over 24". The DNR recommends releasing all fish 22" and over, and only keeping fish under 22".

Because many of the lakes in MN now have smaller Northern Pike average lengths, the DNR has proposed changing the limits and sizes that may be taken. The goal is to increase the average size and number of larger fish in our lakes. To do this, in 2018 the DNR is proposing a possession limit of 10 fish with no more than two over 30". The protected slot would be from 22"-26" where all fish caught would have to be immediately released.

Please see our website for more detailed information on the above summaries. Links to the expanded articles and DNR information are on the [Lakes](#) page and the [Fisheries Committee](#) page under the [Board Member](#) page.