

To Rep. Mohamud Noor, chair of Workforce and Business Development Finance Policy.

I recieved a one hundred thousand five years ago because of the collapse of the walleye population in Mille Lacs lake. The collapse was caused by years of poor management by the DNR. From 1999 to 2016 they did not allow harvest of walleyes between 20 and 28 inches and a couple of years they protected walleyes from 16 and 17 inches to 28 inches. I was a member of the original advisory committe which was comprised of Mille Lacs business owners. For years I told the DNR as well as did other business owners that there management of protecting all the large walleyes would eventually lead to a collapse of the fishery because they were creating a predator dominate fishery that would not only eat up the bait fish population they would also eat up the young walleye population and would eventually collapse because the lack of food. Unfortunaley the DNR totally disregarded what we were telling them and in fact made the predator problem worse by stocking three thousand muskies every other year. Well unfortunately we were right the fishery did collapse. Former DNR commissioner Tom Landwher stopped by my place of business when he was still commissioner and told me the only reason Mille Lacs collapsed was because of poor management by the DNR it was not because of zebra mussels and the other excuses the Aitkin DNR office was spewing out to try and take the blame off of them for the fishery collapse. The spring advisory meeting after the Mille Lacs fishery walleye collapse, I said to the DNR, you people caused this collapse, biologist Rick Bruesewitz, Tom Jones , Fishery chief Don Perria and other DNR employees bowed there heads and never said a word. This ended up being the end of the advisory committee comprised of business owners the DNR knew we had been right and that there management had caused the collapse and did not want to deal with people who actually know what is happening at Mille Lacs.

When the loan became available in 2017 I was skeptical because of the walleye collapse the last thing a Mille Lacs business need was more debt. The Mille Lacs county commissioner told me the state had done the same type of loan program for Red Lake businesses and after the five years they were forgiven. So I took the loan and with it I updated my charter boats and some ice fishing equipment. Both Red Lake and Leech lake had five year restoration projects that were very successfull they were able to keep fish again and there businesses are booming. Mille Lacs on the other hand has not experienced such a recovery. The one thing Covid -19 has shown is that shutdowns are extremely damaging to affected businesses. The Mille Lacs area businesses have experienced Covid like regulations since 2015 when the fishery was closed on August third. We have not been able to keep a walleye in summer months since 2015 we have had mid season shutdowns of walleye fishing from several weeks to months. We have also have had periods from weeks to a month where we could not use live bait. Restrictions where we cannot keep a walleye in the summer time is like telling Mc Donalds you can be open but you can only sell diet coke in the summer. The damage done to Mille Lacs business because of continuing mid season shut downs, bait restrictions and the inability to keep any walleyes in the summer have made it impossible to pay off these loans.

Terry Thurmer owner Terry's Boat Harbor Marina L.L.C.



2018

3.1 C. Mille Lacs Lake is closed to the taking of fish between the hours of 10 p.m.  
 3.2 and 6 a.m. daily during the period commencing (night closure) beginning at 10 p.m. on the  
 3.3 Monday following the Saturday two weeks prior to the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend  
 3.4 May 14, 2018, and ending at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, four weeks after the date of  
 3.5 commencement. During the closure, no person shall be on the waters of Mille Lacs Lake  
 3.6 while having in possession any equipment whereby fish may be taken. Spearing is prohibited  
 3.7 from December 1 through April 30. A person may not have a spear in possession while on  
 3.8 or fishing in Mille Lacs Lake during this period. December 1, 2018, except as provided in  
 3.9 subitems (1) and (2).

3.10 (1) Beginning June 2 at 10:00 p.m. and subject to the bait restrictions under  
 3.11 item H, subitem (3), fishing for muskellunge and northern pike is allowed between 10:00  
 3.12 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Angling for, harvesting, and possessing species other than muskellunge  
 3.13 and northern pike during these hours are prohibited.

3.14 (2) Beginning June 2 at 10:00 p.m., bow fishing for rough fish is allowed  
 3.15 between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. No person shall have in possession any angling equipment  
 3.16 while bow fishing under this subitem. Angling for, harvesting, and possessing species other  
 3.17 than rough fish while bow fishing during these hours are prohibited.

3.18 [For text of item D, see M.R.]

3.19 E. The angling season for Northern cisco (tullibee) is year round. While a person  
 3.20 is on or fishing in Mille Lacs Lake or its associated tributaries to the posted boundaries, the  
 3.21 possession and daily limit for Northern cisco (tullibee) is ten fish.

3.22 F. The angling season for walleye begins at 12:01 a.m. May 12, 2018, and  
 3.23 continues to 11:59 p.m. February 24, 2019. Angling for walleye is limited to catch and  
 3.24 release only. Any walleye caught must be immediately returned to the water.

**Table 1: Lake Mille Lacs, Angling Regulations, Safe Harvest, State Allocation, and State Total Kill**  
**Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources**

Fishing Year	Starting Regulation	Regulation Adjustments	Safe Harvest	State Allocation	Total
1996	15" minimum				741,471
1997	15" minimum		320,000	280,000	336,449
1998	14-20" harvest slot with 1 over 26"		260,000	220,000	371,211
1999	14-18" harvest slot with 1 over 28"		550,000	495,000	581,597
2000	16-20" harvest slot with 1 over 28"		370,000	300,000	215,639
2001	14-16" harvest slot with 1 over 28", bag limit 4	Regulations changed in 2001 to 16-18" HS June 5, 16-18" HS w/ 1>30" July, 14-18" HS, w/ 1>28" December 1.	395,000	310,000	289,838
2002	17-28" protected slot with bag limit 4		400,000	300,000	382,060
2003	20-28" protected slot with bag limit 4		550,000	450,000	66,492
2004	20-28" protected slot with bag limit 4	Regulations changed to 22-28"PS on July 16, and reverted back again to 20-28" PS on Dec 1, limit remained 4.	480,000	380,000	79,412
2005	20-28" protected slot with bag limit 4	Regulations changed to 22-28"PS on July 16, and reverted back again to 20-28" PS on Dec 1, limit remained 4.	505,000	405,000	195,271
2006	20-28" protected slot with bag limit 4	Regulations changed to 22-28"PS on July 16, and reverted back again to 20-28" PS on Dec 1, limit remained 4.	600,000	500,000	479,367
2007	18-28" protected slot with bag limit 4	Regulations changed July 9, 2007 to 14-16" HS 1>28, then to 20-28 PS, w/ 1>28" December 1.	549,000	449,000	462,869
2008	18-28" protected slot with bag limit 4		430,000	307,500	75,747
2009	18-28" protected slot with bag limit 4		541,000	414,500	141,333
2010	18-28" protected slot with bag limit 4	Regulations changed July 15, 2010 to 20-28" PS 1>28, then reverted to 18-28 PS, w/ 1>28" December 1.	544,000	411,500	270,638
2011	17-28" protected slot with bag limit 4	Regulations changed July 15, 2010 to 20-28" PS 1>28, then reverted to 18-28 PS, w/ 1>28" December 1.	540,000	397,500	230,230
2012	17-28" protected slot with bag limit 4		500,000	357,500	309,906
2013	18-20" harvest slot with bag limit 2	Regulations changed on opener to 18-20" harvest slot, bag limit of 2	250,000	178,750	145,862
2014	19-21" harvest slot with bag limit 1		60,000	42,900	23,650
2015	18-20" harvest slot with bag limit 1	Fishery closed on August 3	40,000	28,600	31,671
2016	18-20" harvest slot with bag limit 1	Catch & release only for open water; fishery closed on September 6	40,000	28,600	36,237
2017		Catch & release only for open water; fishery closed July 8-August 11, Sept 5-Nov 30	64,000	44,800	53,924

3.1 ~~or fishing in Mille Lacs Lake during this period~~ December 1, 2019, except as provided in  
3.2 subitems (1) and (2).

3.3 (1) Beginning June 1 at 10:00 p.m. and subject to the bait restrictions under  
3.4 item H, subitem (3), fishing for muskellunge and northern pike is allowed between 10:00  
3.5 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Angling for, harvesting, and possessing species other than muskellunge  
3.6 and northern pike during these hours are prohibited.

3.7 (2) Beginning June 1 at 10:00 p.m., bow fishing for rough fish is allowed  
3.8 between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. No person may have in possession any angling equipment  
3.9 while bow fishing under this subitem. Angling for, harvesting, and possessing species other  
3.10 than rough fish while bow fishing during these hours are prohibited.

3.11 [For text of items D and E, see Minnesota Rules]

3.12 F. A person on or fishing in Mille Lacs Lake or its associated tributaries to the  
3.13 posted boundaries may take walleye according to subitems (1) and (2).

3.14 (1) Beginning at 12:01 a.m. on May 11, 2019, the possession limit for walleye  
3.15 is one. All walleye in possession must be from 21 inches in length to 23 inches in length,  
3.16 inclusive, except that a person's possession limit may include one walleye over 28 inches  
3.17 in length. All walleye less than 21 inches in length or greater than 23 inches but less than  
3.18 28 inches in length must be immediately returned to the water. This subitem is effective  
3.19 until 11:59 p.m. on May 31, 2019.

3.20 (2) Beginning at 12:01 a.m. on June 1, 2019, angling for walleye is limited  
3.21 to catch and release only. Any walleye caught must be immediately returned to the water.  
3.22 This subitem is effective until 11:59 p.m. on November 30, 2019.

3.23 F. G. Fish that are taken by angling and not immediately released into the water  
3.24 after capture are considered to be in possession and part of the bag limit. Once a fish has  
3.25 been reduced to possession, culling or live-well sorting (the act of exchanging one fish for

[https://www.messagemedia.co/millelacs/outdoors/fishing/dnr-s-2020-open-water-regs-for-mille-lacs/article\\_e075f650-6e35-11ea-aceb-c741dadeb969.html](https://www.messagemedia.co/millelacs/outdoors/fishing/dnr-s-2020-open-water-regs-for-mille-lacs/article_e075f650-6e35-11ea-aceb-c741dadeb969.html)

FEATURED

## DNR's 2020 open water regs for Mille Lacs

by Erik Jacobson [news@millelacsmessage.com](mailto:news@millelacsmessage.com)

Mar 25, 2020



File photo

### Walleye fishing closed in July

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources announced the new regulations for the 2020 open water season on St. Patrick's Day. This year's walleye season will again be catch-and-release with a closure the entire month of July, including no live bait use during that month. But muskie and northern pike anglers can use sucker minnows that are longer than 8 inches.

According to the DNR, there was a 30-year-high ice fishing harvest this past season which, according to their estimates, ate up 30,000 pounds of the 87,500 pounds that state anglers were allocated. And this, partially, is the reason for the restrictive walleye rules for the open water season on Mille Lacs.



**DNR RESPONSE TO COVID-19:** As a result of COVID-19, we've modified access to some DNR offices, facilities, and services. Please see our [COVID-19 page \(/covid-19.html\)](/covid-19.html) for more information.

## Mille Lacs Lake fishing regulations

If regulations change, they will be posted at public accesses and on this web page. Printed and electronic copies of these regulations are available from the DNR Information Center by emailing [info.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:info.dnr@state.mn.us) ([mailto:info.dnr@state.mn.us?subject=Mille Lacs Lake Fishing Regulations](mailto:info.dnr@state.mn.us?subject=Mille%20Lacs%20Lake%20Fishing%20Regulations)) or by calling 1-888-646-6367

### — Current regulations

---

**This lake has special fishing regulations that differ from statewide or border water regulations for those species identified below and take precedence. Unless specified below, all general regulations, season dates, limits, possession, transportation and border water regulations apply.**

including all tributaries from the mouth upstream to posted boundaries

- **Burbot (Eelpout):** All burbot must be immediately released.
- **Northern Pike:** Beginning May 15, 2021 through March 31, 2022, all northern pike greater than 30 inches must be immediately released. Limit of three. Same regulations for spearing, which concludes Sunday, Feb. 27, 2022.
- **Smallmouth and Largemouth Bass:** Beginning May 15, 2021 through May 28, 2021, all bass must be immediately released. Beginning May 29, 2021, all bass greater than 17 inches must be immediately released. Limit of three in combination. Smallmouth harvest ends Sunday, Sept. 12. Largemouth harvest ends Sunday, Feb. 27, 2022.
- **Tullibee (Cisco):** Until December 1, possession limit is 10. Beginning December 1, 2021 - February 27, 2022, possession limit is five.
- **Walleye:** For the 2021 open water season,
  - May 15 - May 31: possession limit is one walleye between 21-23 inches or one fish longer than 28 inches. All other walleye must be immediately released.
  - June 1 - June 30: all walleye must be immediately released.
  - July 1 - July 15: walleye fishing is closed and walleye may not be targeted.
  - July 16 - September 15: all walleye must be immediately released.
  - September 16 - November 30, possession limit is one walleye between 21-23 inches or one fish longer than 28 inches. All other walleye must be

immediately released.

For the 2021-2022 ice fishing season, December 1, 2021 - February 27, 2022:

- possession limit is one walleye between 21-23 inches or one fish longer than 28 inches. All other walleye must be immediately released.
- **Bait Restriction:** Beginning July 1, 2021 through July 15, 2021, anglers targeting northern pike or muskellunge can use sucker minnows longer than 8 inches. Anglers targeting all other fish species may not use live, dead, preserved or parts of minnows, night crawlers, worms, leeches or crayfish.
- **Night Closure:**
  - May 17 - June 4: No fishing for any species from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.
  - June 5 - September 15: No fishing from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. except for below exemptions
  - September 16 - November 30: No fishing from Midnight (12 a.m.) to 6 a.m. except for below exemptions:
    - Beginning June 5, muskellunge and northern pike may be targeted with artificial lures longer than 8 inches or sucker minnows longer than 8 inches. While fishing during the night closure, you may not possess or target any species other than muskellunge or northern pike.
    - Bowfishing is allowed but you may not possess angling equipment while bowfishing, and only non-game fish may be in possession.
- **No culling or live-well sorting:** Fish taken into possession are considered part of an angler's bag limit and cannot be exchanged with another fish. However, when the season for bass is open, smallmouth bass and largemouth bass may be culled following statewide culling rules.

**Tagged Fish:** Please record tag number, species, fish length, date & place caught, angler type (e.g. boat, launch, shore, ice, etc.), and whether released (leave tag attached) or kept (send tag). Postcards are available at public accesses & businesses on Mille Lacs Lake. Fish can be reported by:

- Contacting or mailing Minnesota DNR-Fisheries, 1200 Minnesota Ave. S, Aitkin, MN, 56431
- Sending an e-mail to [fish.tags@state.mn.us](mailto:fish.tags@state.mn.us)
- [Online \(/fisheries/tagged\\_fish\\_reporting/index.html\)](#)

---

Questions?

Call 651-296-6157 or 888-MINNDNR (646-6367)