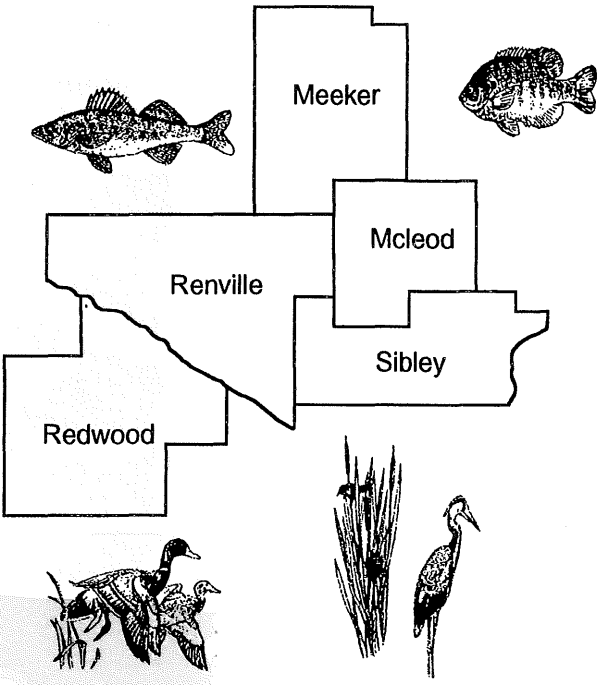
GUIDE TO LOCAL FISHERIES RESOURCES



This guide was produced in 1995 by the Hutchinson Area Fisheries Office of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

AQUATIC HABITAT

What can you do?

Our society values wild and scenic areas such as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and the Kettle River, yet we often forget the importance of undisturbed shoreline on the rest of our lakes and rivers. Native vegetation, rocks, trees, shrubs and logs are often replaced with fertilized lawns and swimming beaches. Fish need more than water to thrive. The cumulative impacts of shoreline development can have a devastating impact on the health of lake and stream resources.

What can you do as an individual to protect, preserve and enhance fish habitat in lakes and streams?

- ► Leave natural vegetation (trees, shrubs and grasses) grow in a 50 foot strip along the lake shores and stream banks.
- ► Protect and preserve aquatic vegetation such as bulrush, cattail and water lilies.
- ► Consider alternatives to developing your own beach. Sand blankets often cover valuable spawning substrates such as rock and gravel.
- ► Use low (no) phosphorus fertilizers near lakes and streams.
- ► Properly dispose of trash and debris when you are finished angling. This includes cigarette butts!
- ► Help control the spread of exotic species by removing all plant and animal material from your sports equipment before leaving the lake.
- ► Inspect, improve, and properly maintain on-site sewage treatment, sump pump, and feed lot systems.
- ► Treat or prevent shoreline erosion by using natural materials.
- ► Restore wetlands. Consult local agencies for technical advice.
- ► Use your local DNR agents as consultants before planning work involving waters of the state.

For more detailed information on what you can do, please contact us at the Hutchinson Area Fisheries Office.

WELCOME

....to the lakes and rivers within the Hutchinson Fisheries Management Area. The management area includes McLeod, Meeker, Redwood, Renville and Sibley counties. Over 550 waterbodies are found in these counties, of which 50 lakes are actively managed for fishing. The remaining waters consist of wetlands and shallow waterfowl lakes that typically do not support fish populations.

Surveys of fish populations and aquatic habitats are carried out on each managed lake or stream every one to five years. The information collected is used to monitor fish populations, evaluate management activities, and to develop new management plans. These reports contain information on fish populations such as abundance, sizes, age, and growth rates. Along with fish information, these reports include information on water chemistry, shoreline and watershed characteristics, aquatic vegetation, and much more.

Management plans detailing goals, objectives, and activities on each lake or stream managed for fishing are prepared by the DNR Section of Fisheries. If you are interested in information on a particular lake, or would like to review the current management plan, stop in at our office in Hutchinson. We are located one mile west of Hutchinson on Highway 7.

Our phone number is (612) 587-2717.

****

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Tables summarizing facilities available and best fishing opportunities are found on pages 4 to 7. These tables provide a quick reference to help you locate a lake or stream that has the facilities and fishing opportunities best suited to your needs. Facilities listed in this guide are open to the public and are provided by cities, counties, or the State of Minnesota. Some lakes have private campgrounds, RV parks, or resorts. Check with the local Chamber of Commerce if you are interested in a private facility.

The 'Best Fishing Potential' portion of the tables is not a list of what fish species are present in each lake or stream, but is a guide to which fish species anglers may want to pursue based on size and numbers. Yellow perch, for example, are found in virtually all of our lakes, but only a few lakes produce the numbers or size acceptable to most anglers. Because fish populations in area lakes can change dramatically from year to year, this guide will be updated on a regular basis.

Brief summaries of each lake and stream are found throughout the remainder of this guide. These summaries include descriptions of lake basins, water quality, aquatic vegetation, and fish populations. A variety of information is included throughout this guide to make your fishing trip a learning experience.

LAKE OR STREAM	ACRES	MAX. DEPTH (feet)	FACILITIES						
			ACCESS	FISHING PIER	PUBLIC PARK	PICNICKING	BEACH	BOAT DOCK	SHORE FISHING
MEEKER COUNTY									
ARVILLE	130	9	X					X	
BELLE	826	25	X	X	X*	X	X	X	X
BETTY	148	29	X						
CLEAR	497	17	X		X	X		X	X
DUNNS	142	20	X						
ERIE	182	34	X					X	
FRANCIS	991	19	X		X	X	X		
GREENLEAF	224	18	X					X	
JENNIE	1,056	15	X					X	X
LONG	163	28	X						
MANUELLA	286	51	X		X	X	X	X	
MINNIEBELLE	545	49	X		X	X		X	
LITTLE MUD	37	42	X						
RICHARDSON	111	47	X						
RIPLEY	558	18	X	X	X*	X	X	X	X
ROUND	323	8	X						
SPRING	218	30	X		X	X			X
STAR	557	15	X						
STELLA	553	75	X					X	
BIG SWAN	628	32	X						
LITTLE SWAN	45	31	X						
THOMPSON	220	8	X		X	X	X	X	
WASHINGTON	2,639	17	X					X	
WILLIE	182	17	X						
BIG WOLF	529	11	X						

* Camping available

LAKE OR STREAM	BEST FISHING POTENTIAL (as indicated by the most recent sampling and local fishing reports)											
	NORTHERN PIKE	LARGEMOUTH BASS	SMALLMOUTH BASS	PERCH	SUNFISH	CRAPPIE	CHANNEL CATFISH	FLATHEAD CATFISH	BULLHEAD	WALLEYE	SAUGER	TROUT
MEEKER COUNTY												
ARVILLE					X	X						
BELLE		X		X	X	X			X	X		
BETTY	X				X	X						
CLEAR	X				X	X			X	X		
DUNNS					X	X						
ERIE		X			X	X			X	X		
FRANCIS	X	X			X	X				X		
GREENLEAF	X	X		X	X	X			X			
JENNIE	X				X	X			X	X		
LONG		X			X	X				X		
MANUELLA	X	X	X		X	X				X		
MINNIEBELLE	X	X			X					X		
LITTLE MUD						X						X
RICHARDSON				X	X	X						
RIPLEY	X	X			X	X						
ROUND					X	X						
SPRING	X				X	X			X			
STAR	X				X	X				X		
STELLA	X	X	X		X	X				X		
BIG SWAN	X					X	X					
LITTLE SWAN	X	X			X	X				X		
THOMPSON	X	X		X	X							
WASHINGTON	X	X			X	X				X		
WILLIE	X	X			X	X				X		
BIG WOLF	X	X			X	X			X	X		

LAKE OR STREAM	ACRES	MAX. DEPTH	FACILITIES						
			ACCESS	FISHING PIER	PUBLIC PARK	PICNICKING	BEACH	BOAT DOCK	SHORE FISHING
MCLEOD COUNTY									
FRENCH	95	23	X		X	X			
HOOK	327	18	X						
MARION	415	12	X	X	X*	X	X		X
OTTER	546	11	X		X*	X			X
STAHLS	142	35	X	X				X	X
SWAN	343	10	X	X	X	X		X	X
WINSTED	376	12	X		X	X	X		
RENVILLE COUNTY									
ALLIE	451	12	X		X	X		X	
PRESTON	670	12	X					X	
SIBLEY COUNTY									
SILVER	679	8	X						
WRIGHT COUNTY									
COLLINWOOD	584	28	X	X	X	X			
SCOTT	80	23							
UNION	89	35	X						
RIVERS AND STREAMS									
BUFFALO CREEK	--	--	X**		X	X			X
S. FORK CROW R.	--	--	X**		X*	X			X
N. FORK CROW R.	--	--	X**		X*	X			X
MINNESOTA R.	--	--	X		X*	X			X
RAMSEY CREEK	--	--			X				X
REDWOOD R.	--	--	X**		X*	X			X

* Camping available
** Canoe/carry-in only

LAKE OR STREAM	BEST FISHING POTENTIAL (as indicated by the most recent sampling and local fishing reports)											
	NORTHERN PIKE	LARGEMOUTH BASS	SMALLMOUTH BASS	PERCH	SUNFISH	CRAPPIE	CHANNEL CATFISH	FLATHEAD CATFISH	BULLHEAD	WALLEYE	SAUGER	TROUT
MCLEOD COUNTY												
FRENCH	X				X							
HOOK	X					X			X	X		
MARION	X	X			X	X	X			X		
OTTER						X			X			
STAHLS	X	X			X	X			X	X		
SWAN					X	X	X		X	X		
WINSTED	X			X	X				X			
RENVILLE COUNTY												
ALLIE	X					X	X		X	X		
PRESTON	X					X			X	X		
SIBLEY COUNTY												
SILVER				X		X				X		
WRIGHT COUNTY												
COLLINWOOD	X	X		X	X	X			X	X		
SCOTT	X				X	X						
UNION	X	X			X	X						
RIVERS AND STREAMS												
BUFFALO CR.	X											
S.F. CROW R.	X					X	X			X		
N.F. CROW R.	X						X			X		
MINNESOTA R.	X		X				X	X		X	X	
RAMSEY CR.												X
REDWOOD R.			X							X	X	

MEEKER COUNTY LAKES

Arville

Frequent winterkill on this shallow, turbid lake makes sustained fisheries management a challenge. Panfish that survive partial winterkills seem to grow fast and can produce excellent fishing, especially for crappie and bluegill. Fish can quickly repopulate Arville following a winterkill, because of the connection to Washington Creek. Because of these natural movements, stocking efforts have been directed toward fry stocking of walleye. Local reports suggest these stockings have provided some angling success depending upon winterkill frequency.

Belle

Most local walleye anglers can, at some point in time, recall a trip to Belle with a smile. This lake is managed primarily for walleye and has yielded some exceptional catches in recent years. Fish barriers established years ago at inlet and outlet areas may have limited the northern pike's ability to reach spawning areas. Future management efforts will be directed at providing access to these areas to benefit not only northern pike but other fish as well. Aquatic vegetation in Belle is almost nonexistent because of the turbid water conditions. This lack of vegetation may be a problem in sustaining consistent panfish numbers. At times crappie, bluegill, largemouth bass and perch have all provided angling opportunities. Ample shore fishing areas and a fishing pier are available at the county park located on the southeast side of the lake.

****

Throw back the little ones?

For decades anglers have thrown back small fish so they will grow up to be "keepers". But as it often turns out, releasing small fish does little good. In many cases those are the fish you should consider keeping. A lake usually has more than enough small fish, and if it doesn't, it may be that spawning areas either don't exist or have been degraded.

****

Betty

Betty is one of many lakes located along the Clearwater River. This quiet lake offers a consistent fishery for crappie and northern pike. Most of the winter angling effort is directed at crappies. Sunfish, channel catfish and walleye have occasionally provided good fishing in Betty. There is no boat landing on this lake, but boat access is available via the Clearwater River.

Clear

Dense beds of aquatic vegetation can give boaters a bit of grief as they access this lake in early summer. These plants, however, provide excellent habitat for the various fish species in Clear Lake. Each year it seems that something different is biting on Clear. Recently, bluegill and crappie have been available in good numbers and sizes, providing anglers with an excellent opportunity for a successful day of fishing. Previously, walleye were producing the best fishing. At times northern pike numbers are very good and worth trying. Largemouth bass continue to show up in our sampling, and management efforts will be directed toward improving this bass fishery.

****

NATURES WATER FILTER

Wetlands filter runoff from surrounding land, removing nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus. Wetlands also recharge ground water supplies and provide seasonal fish habitat when connected to lake or stream resources. In recent history, frequency and duration of floods has increased in southern Minnesota. Wetlands can reduce the frequency and severity of floods by holding water on the land and slowing down the input of water to rivers and streams.

****

Dunn

Dunn Lake is a small, fertile lake that has infrequent winterkills. Most of the shoreline is wooded and aquatic aquatic vegetation is minimal. This lake, along with its neighbor to the west, Lake Richardson, are managed together as a single unit. Algal blooms are common in summer months. This lake is managed primarily for crappie and bluegill and secondarily for northern pike and largemouth bass. Best angling opportunities are for crappie because they are present in good numbers and sizes. Be patient if you are unable to locate crappie and experiment with different locations, depths, and baits. Populations of northern pike and largemouth bass are low. The poor quality and quantity of aquatic vegetation limits natural reproduction of these two species. Various stocking strategies for pike have failed to produce a sustainable fishery, and current management efforts are being focused on improving aquatic habitats and water quality in Dunn Lake.

Erie

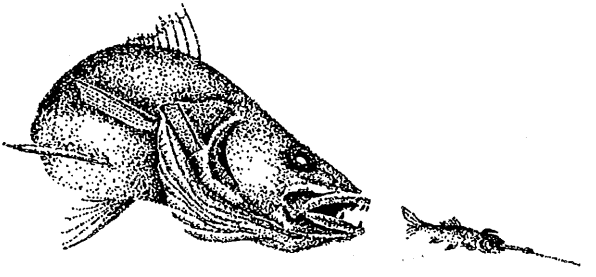
Erie is a lake with excellent water quality, fish diversity, and aesthetic appeal. A large portion of the lake has a wooded shoreline with slopes varying from moderate to steep. Aquatic plants are numerous and diverse. Erie also has deep open water areas, shallow bays, steep drop-off areas, shoreline areas with bulrush stands, an island, and two points. This combination spells angler opportunities. Primary management is for bluegill and largemouth bass and secondary management is for northern pike. Crappie numbers and sizes are approaching anglers' expectations and in upcoming years should provide some good crappie fishing. Average bluegill size is small for most anglers, but excellent opportunities for large walleye and largemouth bass exist. Erie is one of the best largemouth lakes in the area, and has good numbers of various age fish present. Anglers are encouraged to use selective harvest on the largemouth caught.

CATCH AND RELEASE
(Selective Harvest)

Catch and Release is an effective way for anglers to help maintain the quality of fishing in the lakes and streams they fish. It works by selectively returning medium to large size fish so there will be ample numbers of spawners to produce future generations. It also provides other anglers with the opportunity to catch a big fish.

The guidelines are simple:

- ► It is alright to occasionally take home a trophy size fish.
- ► If you have caught a few large fish already, consider releasing other medium to large fish, giving other anglers a chance to catch a good-sized, hard-fighting fish.
- ► It is best to keep smaller-sized fish for eating purposes.



Francis

Good water clarity, diverse vegetation, and sand to gravel shoals are found throughout this large lake basin. Sunfish and crappie are sought in both summer and winter, and success is good. Fall fishing for largemouth bass can also be excellent. If you like to fish northern pike this could be your lake. Our sampling has consistently shown good numbers of pike. Anglers seem aware of this, and local reports show good success not only in summer but also throughout the winter season. Don't be surprised to catch a few nice walleye while your chasing those pike! Walleye are stocked to provide an additional fishery in Francis. Although two public accesses are provided, neither has been developed. You may want to consider this before launching your boat.

Greenleaf

Winterkill frequency plays a big role in the management of this fishery. Management efforts involve the restocking of adult panfish after a severe winterkill. In recent years both crappie and sunfish have provided excellent fishing, especially in the winter period. Largemouth bass could be caught any time and northern pike numbers should continue to increase with normal water levels. Perch numbers are also on the rise and with a few years growth should provide another of angling opportunity.

****

CARRYING CAPACITY

Carrying capacity is a measure of what a lake can support. We often express this in pounds per acre. An average Hutchinson area lake can support up to 500 pounds or more of fish per acre. Consider Lake Jennie alone: 1,056 acres X 500 = 528,000 total pounds of fish. It would be ideal for the angler if these were all gamefish, but fish have to eat too. Forage and non-game fish make up a large portion of the total fish population. The real key to managing fish populations is creating a balance between predators and prey.

****

Jennie

This lake has a shallow, featureless basin that is often void of submersed vegetation by late summer. This can cause problems for various panfish species, such as bluegill, as their young can be susceptible to predation when this condition occurs. Sampling in Jennie has shown much variation in panfish abundance. At times bluegill and crappie fishing can be excellent. The fishery is usually supported by only one or two year classes, which often disappear for a few years. In early spring crappie are often caught from the shore-fishing area provided at the south public access. Walleye are a primary species managed and often provide good fishing in summer and winter. For big walleye, anglers cast near inlet areas in fall. Fish barriers at inlets have been removed to provide access for northern pike seeking spawning areas of marshes and seasonally flooded grasses. Bullheads are also readily caught from the shore-fishing area.

Long

Bluegill and largemouth bass are well suited to this lake with its abundant vegetation and sand and gravel shorelines. If you pursue largemouth bass in Long, you may want to consider turning a few back, because this population could easily be affected by overharvest. Typically, crappies become the target of winter anglers. Northern pike numbers are not usually high, but the average size of those caught is often close to five pounds. Walleye, stocked as fingerlings, also provide an additional fishery.

Manuella

Manuella sits at the top of the Manuella, Stella, Washington Lake chain. The fishery offers anglers a little of everything. Northern pike and walleye are usually well represented in our sampling. Sunfish are often sought in the open water period, and an occasional crappie is also caught. Bass fishing may be one of the best angling opportunities on Manuella. Both largemouth and smallmouth bass are present. Smallmouth bass abundance appeared very high based on our most recent assessment. Selective harvest is a wise choice if you give these bass a try.

MinnieBelle

Although the shoreline is well developed, an active lake association continues to improve the already good water quality in MinnieBelle. Submerged vegetation beds provide ideal habitat for a diverse fishery. This is a great place to bring the family, because this lake may be the area's most consistent producer of large bluegill. Northern pike are sought both in summer and winter with good success. MinnieBelle's clear water also makes this lake popular for those who enjoy spearing. A good walleye population is also present. Largemouth bass are pursued around the docks and submerged vegetation beds.

Little Mud

Little Mud offers a unique angling opportunity in the area. Each spring and fall rainbow trout are stocked to provide a put-and-take fishery. This lake has been designated as a stream trout lake, and involves special seasons and regulations. Be sure to consult your Minnesota Fishing Synopsis to familiarize yourself with these regulations before fishing Little Mud. Make sure you have a trout stamp before fishing in this lake.

****

FISH STOCKING ..... Good or Bad?

Many people feel that fish stocking is the only way to have better fishing in a lake or stream. This may or may not be a correct assumption. Stocking does work well for introducing fish species into a body of water following a winterkill or lake rehabilitation. It may also work to create a put-and-take fishery. However, most lakes have ample broodstock to supply future generations of gamefish. Stocking in this situation is not productive. For example, stocking additional predator fish (like northern pike) where there is a good population already, may actually cause the average size to drop because there is not enough food. So, in some cases, the way to increase numbers of gamefish may be to reduce or eliminate fish stocking.

****

Richardson

Lake Richardson is on the upper end of a watershed that includes Dunn Lake to the east. Richardson has no winterkill history and algal blooms are not as severe as in Dunn Lake. The shoreline is relatively undeveloped with moderate to steep slopes. The dominant submersed vegetation is curled pondweed. Beds of water lily are present along the south shore and in the southeast bay. Both Richardson and Dunn lakes are managed for the same primary and secondary species (See Dunn Lake). Best angling opportunities include crappie, bluegill, and yellow perch. These species are abundant and are present in sizes desired by anglers. A special opportunity exists to catch flathead catfish which remain from a research study conducted in the late 1970's and early 1980's. There are reports of flathead catfish weighing over thirty pounds being taken during evening hours with live bait.

Ripley

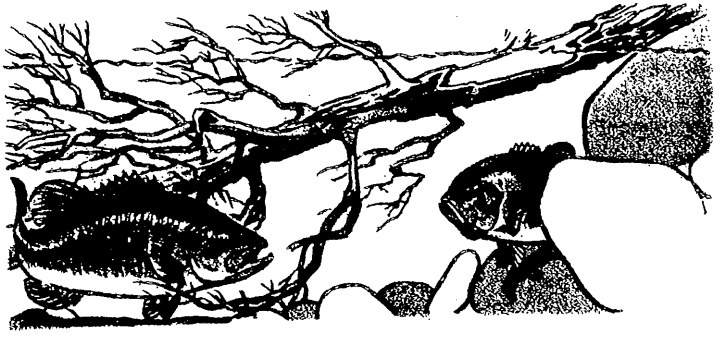
Ripley lies within the city limits of Litchfield. Its sand and gravel shorelines, and abundant vegetation, provide excellent habitat for panfish. Northern pike have access to a variety of wetland areas. They are usually well represented in our sampling, and are frequently caught by anglers in both summer and winter seasons. Sunfish and crappie are targeted throughout the year and usually provide some action, especially during late winter. This may be one of the area's top bass producers in terms of average size of fish caught. Large bulrush stands, submerged vegetation, and docks provide bass anglers with a variety of places to fish. A city park and beach are available to make this lake a great place for a family outing.

Round

This shallow basin is often covered with submersed vegetation. This condition often results in low oxygen concentrations when vegetation dies in winter. Following the last winterkill, Round was stocked with adult crappie, bluegill, and perch to provide a fishery. Recently, these introductions have provided some good catches of bluegill and crappie in spring and early summer. Once summer vegetation becomes well established, fishing becomes difficult.

Spring

Water quality problems continue to affect the fishery in Spring Lake. Although once used for sewage dilution, efforts are underway to improve water quality. Often, once the problems are addressed, lakes seem to heal themselves quickly. Recent sampling show northern pike are doing well in Spring Lake in both size and numbers. Bluegills were abundant and demonstrated good growth typical for this type of lake. Crappie, largemouth bass, and bullheads were also present. The longevity of this fishery will probably depend upon winterkill situations.



Star

The Star Lake Association helps keep a watchful eye on winter oxygen concentrations and operates a pump-and-baffle aeration system if winterkill appears probable. In recent years walleye and northern pike have provided good catches especially in the early summer and winter angling periods. The best fishing opportunity is, and probably will continue, to come from the bluegill and crappie. Soon after ice out, bluegill are readily caught along the shoreline. In winter, panfish have become the main target for anglers.

****

WOOD AND WATER

Fallen trees and old logs help stabilize shoreline areas and increase diversity of habitat for fish and insects. Almost all fish species utilize overhanging trees, fallen logs, brush piles and other forms of woody cover. This habitat provides fish with spawning and resting areas, food, shade and protection from predators. Yellow perch lay eggs in long ribbons on sticks and branches. Smallmouth bass build nests and protect their young next to sunken logs. Largemouth bass and channel catfish lurk under tangles of old trees and branches, just waiting to pounce on their favorite food, or your fishing lure! Proper shoreline management should include leaving wood in the water. Dedicate a portion of your shoreline for establishing some woody habitat and think twice before you pull out that dead tree ..... you may be taking someone's home!

****

Stella

Stella is part of the Manuella, Stella, Washington lake chain and continues to be a very popular fishing lake. It usually provides good fishing for a variety of species. Walleye are one of the more popular species sought. Our sampling has shown their numbers to be consistent, with many sizes present. Northern pike are following a downward trend as we've observed in many area lakes. With the return of normal water levels, and improved spawning conditions, northern pike numbers should improve. Panfish are not always sampled in large numbers in Stella. Local reports suggest people do well for bluegills in the spring and summer while crappies become prime targets for the ice angler. Largemouth and smallmouth bass provide additional opportunities to anglers. Smallmouth bass larger than three pounds frequently make the weekly fishing contests.

Big Swan

Big Swan could be considered a backwater lake. A large watershed feeds this system and during high flows the North Fork Crow River changes the outlet into an inlet. This combination of factors creates extreme water fluctuations within this basin. Channel catfish continue to offer excellent fishing opportunity in this lake. Walleye are often sought with good results and northern pike numbers seem to vary with spawning success. Crappie are the most frequently sought panfish, especially by winter anglers.

Little Swan

This small lake is best suited for panfish. Recent surveys and assessments have shown good numbers of sunfish and crappie. Summer angling effort is usually directed at the bluegill while ice anglers seek crappie. Largemouth bass and northern pike are also available. Because this lake is quite small, catch and release of the predator species is encouraged.

****

WINTERKILL - What's That?

Winterkill is a term used to describe the loss of fish in winter because oxygen was lacking in a waterbody. Submersed vegetation and algae create oxygen through the process of photosynthesis. During the winter, oxygen production is often reduced because ice and snow on the lake limit the amount of sunlight reaching vegetation. In small, shallow lakes the available oxygen can quickly be used up by bacteria that is feeding on dead and decaying vegetation. When the oxygen level gets too low, fish can suffocate. Winterkill is a natural process and not all results are detrimental. In lakes with high numbers of carp, periodic winterkill can thin out their numbers. In lakes that support gamefish, the fish population rebounds quite dramatically in years following a winterkill. These situations often produce some of the hottest fishing action. In a few selected lakes, aeration systems have been installed to reduce the possibility of winterkill. There are different styles of aerators, all however increase oxygen levels in lake water and create a refuge area for fish during winter months.

****

Thompson

A total lake reclamation was completed on this lake in 1987. Restocking efforts were completed in 1993 with northern pike, largemouth bass, bluegill and yellow perch introduced. It appears all four species have done well, and catches of nice-sized yellow perch and bluegill were common during the summer of 1994. Sampling efforts have shown most of these fish are reproducing naturally within the basin and hopefully will continue to do so. A pump-and-baffle aeration system has been installed in the county park to help prevent winterkill.

Washington

This lake is the last in the Manuella, Stella, Washington chain. Its large, open basin is definitely one of the most popular fishing lakes in the area, especially for walleye. Walleye fishing is generally good throughout the year and at times can be outstanding. Recently, both summer and winter periods have produced fish. Northern pike and largemouth bass are frequently caught while fishing walleye, and both species are present in good numbers. Bluegill and crappie have generated good fishing opportunities soon after ice-out and again during winter months.

****

Value of Aquatic Plants

The next time you are thinking of how to rid your shoreline of those "water weeds", consider these facts:

- ► All aquatic life is dependent upon water plants.
- ► Plants are the primary producers in the aquatic food chain.
- ► Fish are dependent on aquatic plants for food and shelter.
- ► Water purification is a result of a healthy plant community.
- ► Aquatic plants protect shorelines from erosion.
- ► Plants provide food and shelter for wildlife.

You may want to reconsider!

****

Willie

Although Willie has not experienced winterkill in recent years, low winter oxygen levels could influence success of management efforts. Management is primarily directed at northern pike and crappie while walleye are stocked to provide an additional fishing opportunity. Sunfish and crappie are often caught in the summer. Most winter angling effort is directed at panfish and catches vary from year to year.

Big Wolf

Big Wolf is now being managed as a walleye rearing pond. Fry are stocked in the spring and then harvested as fingerlings in the fall. The remaining fish often grow to provide an excellent fishery. Winterkill situations can occur in this lake but a fishery usually reestablishes quickly. Fish can move freely within this watershed and help restock the lake. Northern pike, largemouth bass, bluegill, and crappie have at one time or another provided fishing opportunities in Big Wolf. Winter northern pike spearing is popular on this lake if water clarity allows.

Big Swan

Big Swan could be considered a backwater lake. A large watershed feeds this system and during high flows the North Fork Crow River changes the outlet into an inlet. This combination of factors creates extreme water fluctuations within this basin. Channel catfish continue to offer excellent fishing opportunity in this lake. Walleye are often sought with good results and northern pike numbers seem to vary with spawning success. Crappie are the most frequently sought panfish, especially by winter anglers.

Little Swan

This small lake is best suited for panfish. Recent surveys and assessments have shown good numbers of sunfish and crappie. Summer angling effort is usually directed at the bluegill while ice anglers seek crappie. Largemouth bass and northern pike are also available. Because this lake is quite small, catch and release of the predator species is encouraged.

****

WINTERKILL - What's That?

Winterkill is a term used to describe the loss of fish in winter because oxygen was lacking in a waterbody. Submersed vegetation and algae create oxygen through the process of photosynthesis. During the winter, oxygen production is often reduced because ice and snow on the lake limit the amount of sunlight reaching vegetation. In small, shallow lakes the available oxygen can quickly be used up by bacteria that is feeding on dead and decaying vegetation. When the oxygen level gets too low, fish can suffocate. Winterkill is a natural process and not all results are detrimental. In lakes with high numbers of carp, periodic winterkill can thin out their numbers. In lakes that support gamefish, the fish population rebounds quite dramatically in years following a winterkill. These situations often produce some of the hottest fishing action. In a few selected lakes, aeration systems have been installed to reduce the possibility of winterkill. There are different styles of aerators, all however increase oxygen levels in lake water and create a refuge area for fish during winter months.

****

Thompson

A total lake reclamation was completed on this lake in 1987. Restocking efforts were completed in 1993 with northern pike, largemouth bass, bluegill and yellow perch introduced. It appears all four species have done well, and catches of nice-sized yellow perch and bluegill were common during the summer of 1994. Sampling efforts have shown most of these fish are reproducing naturally within the basin and hopefully will continue to do so. A pump-and-baffle aeration system has been installed in the county park to help prevent winterkill.

Washington

This lake is the last in the Manuella, Stella, Washington chain. Its large, open basin is definitely one of the most popular fishing lakes in the area, especially for walleye. Walleye fishing is generally good throughout the year and at times can be outstanding. Recently, both summer and winter periods have produced fish. Northern pike and largemouth bass are frequently caught while fishing walleye, and both species are present in good numbers. Bluegill and crappie have generated good fishing opportunities soon after ice-out and again during winter months.

****

Value of Aquatic Plants

The next time you are thinking of how to rid your shoreline of those "water weeds", consider these facts:

- ► All aquatic life is dependent upon water plants.
- ► Plants are the primary producers in the aquatic food chain.
- ► Fish are dependent on aquatic plants for food and shelter.
- ► Water purification is a result of a healthy plant community.
- ► Aquatic plants protect shorelines from erosion.
- ► Plants provide food and shelter for wildlife.

You may want to reconsider!

****

Willie

Although Willie has not experienced winterkill in recent years, low winter oxygen levels could influence success of management efforts. Management is primarily directed at northern pike and crappie while walleye are stocked to provide an additional fishing opportunity. Sunfish and crappie are often caught in the summer. Most winter angling effort is directed at panfish and catches vary from year to year.

Big Wolf

Big Wolf is now being managed as a walleye rearing pond. Fry are stocked in the spring and then harvested as fingerlings in the fall. The remaining fish often grow to provide an excellent fishery. Winterkill situations can occur in this lake but a fishery usually reestablishes quickly. Fish can move freely within this watershed and help restock the lake. Northern pike, largemouth bass, bluegill, and crappie have at one time or another provided fishing opportunities in Big Wolf. Winter northern pike spearing is popular on this lake if water clarity allows.

French

Abundant vegetation and partial winterkills make sustainable fisheries management a challenge. French Lake is connected to Stahls Lake via a large channel. Following a winterkill, fish soon move back into French, and in time can create a good fishery. Winter northern pike spearing, along with crappie and bluegill angling provide most of the opportunity in this lake. In early spring both crappie and sunfish move into the channel between Stahls and French, which can provide some good fishing to shore anglers.

****

CHAOTIC FISHERIES

As anglers, most of us would like to return to the same lake year after year for limits of fish. In most of our area lakes, this is simply not possible. Climatic conditions and marginal spawning habitats frequently result in inconsistent year classes of fish and a fishery we term "chaotic". Predicting when a good year class of fish will occur is very difficult. Big year classes result when weather patterns, water temperature and food supplies are optimal for successful hatching and survival of young fish. These natural variations cause fish populations to rise and fall, with the best fishing occurring when a large year class reaches a harvestable size.

Bluegill and crappie populations in Hutchinson area lakes are notorius for being chaotic. Stocking is simply not a solution for stabilizing these populations. Individual stockings often fail and it would take an enormous number of fish to offset natures lack of production. Management efforts to protect and improve habitats critical for spawning and rearing young fish are better than stocking.

****

Hook

Winterkill every five to eight years may limit sustainable fishing opportunities in this lake. The lake is managed primarily for walleye, but with some emphasis placed on northern pike and crappie. Fishing success for walleye seems to vary with the success or failure of individual year classes. Northern pike do very well on Hook when seasonally flooded wetlands or upland grasses are available as spawning habitat. Recently the walleye and crappie have provided the best winter fishery. At times bluegill are worth pursuing.

Marion

A total lake reclamation of Lake Marion was completed in 1979. Since then, Lake Marion has been the most popular fishing lake in the Hutchinson Area. The Marion Lake Association and Brownton Rod and Gun Club have helped in improving fish habitat and water quality by operating an aeration system and pursuing best management practices within the watershed. Marion's northern basin is often covered with submersed vegetation by early summer. Although this discourages boaters, these plants are extremely important in providing fish habitat and utilizing excess nutrients within the basin. Sunfish and crappie are caught year round. Largemouth bass, walleye, and northern pike are well represented in our sampling and provide great angling opportunities. Marion also offers a unique chance at channel catfish. Ample shore fishing areas are available at the county park and public access along Highway 15.

Otter

A dam across the South Fork Crow River creates this shallow reservoir. Silt loading and dense algae blooms cause extreme turbidity and contribute to frequent winterkill. Crappie seem to provide the most consistent fishing opportunity, especially after ice out and again in the fall. Recently walleye have increased in abundance due to migration from systems upstream, and our use of Otter as a walleye rearing pond. For those interested, bullheads are available for angling throughout the summer months.

****

ICING THOSE UNWANTED FISH

It appears some anglers believe tossing unwanted fish on the ice has some benefit to fisheries management, but it does not. First of all, it is illegal. Secondly, the chances of anglers depleting the lake of some unwanted species through angling is almost non-existant. You may also be removing valuable forage for predator species like largemouth bass, walleye and northern pike. Consider the image you are leaving with other anglers, and more importantly, the people that don't fish. Let's not leave that young angler next to you with the wrong impression! **Return your unwanted fish to the lake immediately.**

****

Stahls

This is what we might term a classic sunfish lake. Diverse vegetation with sand and gravel shoals provides excellent habitat for bluegill, but that doesn't always mean they'll bite! Stahls lake is managed for largemouth bass and bluegill. Northern pike are also present in good numbers. In recent years crappie have provided a good winter fishing opportunity, but bluegill become the main target as spring approaches. If bass peak your interest, you may want to consider releasing some of those twelve to fifteen inch fish. In a small lake like Stahls, bass could easily be susceptible to overharvest. For the shore anglers this lake offers two earthen piers that are accessible from the public access. Bring the kids!

Swan

This lake is characterized by an open, featureless basin with most of the aquatic vegetation disappearing by midsummer. The Silver Lake Sportsman's Club operates an aeration system that helps to prevent winterkill. Swan has consistently provided excellent angling opportunities for panfish, especially in the early spring and winter. Fishing success seems to vary between crappies, sunfish and perch depending upon individual year classes. Walleye and channel catfish are stocked to provide additional angling opportunities. Northern pike numbers are low due to limited spawning areas in seasonally flooded wetlands or upland grasses, but those caught are generally large fish. Consider releasing northern pike to give someone else the same enjoyment you've experienced. Shore fishing opportunities are almost unlimited on Swan Lake.

****

TRESPASS LAW: ASK FIRST!

Always ask permission before entering private land. Unless the DNR has purchased an access easement from the landowner, you cannot trespass on privately owned lake or stream shorelines without permission.

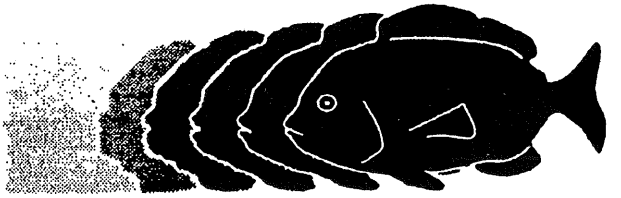
Trespassing is a misdemeanor. If you are convicted for violating trespass laws you will lose your fishing license. All conservation and peace officers enforce trespass laws. Trespassing on agricultural land, whether it is posted or not, is prohibited. Minnesota law defines agricultural land as that containing plowed or tilled fields, standing crops or crop residues, CRP land, or lands with a maintained fence for enclosing livestock.

****

Winsted

Watershed problems continue to affect this fishery. The city of Winsted and the Winsted Lake Association are presently working on water quality in the lake and the watershed. Year round aeration and better land management practices will hopefully improve this lake. Northern pike seem to provide the most consistent fishery. Good growth rates of northern pike provide large fish in a short time. Winter spearing can be excellent if water clarity allows. Though crappies and perch reach catchable size quickly, the unlimited forage base can make for difficult angling.

MINNAQUA



PROGRAM

Minnesota Waters - Fishing, Sharing, Caring

Teaching people about lake and stream ecology by teaching them to fish is the idea behind the **MinnAqua** program. Created by the Minnesota DNR in 1990, **MinnAqua** is a fishing education program designed to teach angling recreation as well as the ecology, conservation, and ethics of fishing.

MinnAqua works through cooperation and volunteerism. So, whether you're involved with a large community recreation program or a small group of volunteers who want to take some kids fishing, **MinnAqua** exists to meet your needs - from small fishing events lasting only a few hours to aquatic education clinics lasting several days.

MinnAqua's six programs, listed below, are designed to bring fishing and aquatic education to as many Minnesotans as possible.

- ► urban angling
- ► school classroom materials
- ► mobile displays
- ► teacher in-service training
- ► specialty fishing and resource seminars
- ► volunteer training for youth programs

For more information call **MinnAqua** at:

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
(612)296-3325

or

Minnesota Extension Services, 4H Youth Development
(612) 625-1285

RENVILLE COUNTY LAKES

Allie

The Buffalo Lake Rod and Gun Club and the Allie Lake Association are active participants helping to clean up this system. Turbidity from suspended solids and algae continues to limit the abundance of aquatic plants. This condition limits the possibility of management for many fish species. Presently, walleye, black crappie, northern pike, and black bullhead are our primary management species. Walleye are being stocked as fry and fishing results vary with year class success. The possibility of catching a large walleye is very good in Allie. Crappie are often angled in early spring and again in fall near the inlet area. Channel catfish were once stocked in Allie and now provide excellent shore fishing opportunities.

Preston

Preston is a relatively large, shallow basin with very little aquatic vegetation. Dense algae blooms occur during summer months and partial winterkill is sometimes a problem during winter months. These problems often produce a fishery dominated by black bullheads, as is the case in Preston. Walleye are the main species managed in Preston. Fry are stocked in an attempt to produce periodic year classes. Sampling has shown good numbers of walleye with various year classes represented. Walleye fishing is often spotty, but can be excellent at times. Black crappies are also present and in recent years have provided a spring fishery, especially near the inlet areas. Northern pike seem to persist in Preston, and anglers have reported mixed success while angling and spearing.

SIBLEY COUNTY

Silver

The Silver Lake Conservation Club is operating an aeration system in this shallow basin. Winterkill is a common occurrence and the club's efforts have provided some fishing opportunities in an area with few lakes. Management will be directed at establishing a self sustaining crappie fishery and a stocked walleye population. Winter angling has provided the most opportunity with catches of black crappie and perch. Longevity of this fishery will depend upon winterkill occurrence.

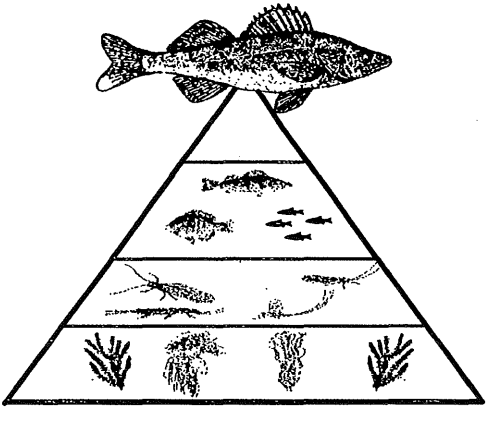
WRIGHT COUNTY LAKES

Collinwood

The large watershed above Collinwood offers northern pike access to many spawning areas when water levels are normal. Angling results will vary with their spawning success, but a chance at large northern pike is a definite possibility in this lake. Walleye are a frequent target for anglers visiting Collinwood, and sampling continues to show both good numbers and size. Crappie, sunfish, and perch abundance will probably fluctuate because habitat for these species is considered marginal. Recently bluegill have provided most of the panfishing opportunity. Largemouth bass can also contribute to angling possibilities in Collinwood.

Union

This is a classic "panfish" lake. A ring of aquatic vegetation with lily pads surrounds the shoreline. Bluegill are targeted by most open water anglers while crappie are sought in the winter season. Northern pike abundance will probably vary with accessibility to the Clearwater River. Largemouth bass are managed as the main predator in this lake. Consider selective harvest of the predators because their presence is very important in maintaining a healthy fish population.



FOOD PYRAMID

To produce and sustain a 10 pound walleye requires about 100 pounds of yellow perch each year. One hundred pounds of yellow perch consume one ton of minnows. These minnows need five tons of insects to survive and the insects need 50 tons of plants for their support.

Successful anglers know the habits and diet of the fish species they pursue. So the next time you are having trouble catching fish, think about where their food source is, and use baits or lures that imitate their prey.

As you can see in the diagram above, aquatic plants and some forms of algae (called primary producers) are the foundation needed to support fish populations in a lake. Beds of aquatic plants attract insects and forage fish, and are one of the first places to start looking for your favorite fish.

RIVERS AND STREAMS

Buffalo Creek

Much like the South Fork of the Crow River, Buffalo Creek is a reflection of its watershed. From a fisheries standpoint, management is challenging. Many species are present as various lakes are connected to this system. The river's ability to produce a sustainable fishery is questionable. Occasional reports suggest some angling success for northern pike, walleye, channel catfish, and bullhead. The city of Glencoe provides some shore fishing access within a city park.

North Fork Crow River

This river, which winds through northern Meeker County, has been designated as a Wild and Scenic Riverway. It also is included as part of a state designated canoe route. If you're looking for a quiet way to spend an afternoon, a float trip down the North Fork may be just the answer. As with many rivers, this fishery receives little use. Northern pike can be found throughout its course and probably receive the most angling attention. Northern Pike over five pounds are common. A recent survey documented that channel catfish are quite abundant and most are in the three to six pound range. Only a few anglers seem to be taking advantage of this angling opportunity. You could also hook up with walleye, bass, or any number of riverine species.

****

SURVEYS = INVENTORY

How can you manage a resource if you don't know what it consists of? Surveys are the foundation of Minnesota's lake and stream management program. They are like an inventory in a hardware store .... you have to know how much you have in stock in order to make a good management decision. Surveys are used to collect physical, chemical, and fish population information. This information allows us to develop specific management plans for each lake or stream. Surveys are also used to evaluate management techniques, such as stocking or harvest regulations, and to monitor long term changes or trends in the aquatic environment.

****

South Fork Crow River

Channelization, heavy silt loads, and extreme water level fluctuations all create a challenge to fisheries management. Without better land management practices throughout the watershed, a sustainable fishery in the South Fork may be unlikely. In recent years the best fishing has been below the dam located within the city of Hutchinson. Some excellent catches of walleye have been reported along with northern pike and a few channel catfish. Our sampling has also shown crappie, sunfish, perch, and a variety of other species present. Many shore fishing areas are available below the dam in Hutchinson.

Minnesota River

The Minnesota River is the most diverse and underutilized resource in the Hutchinson Fisheries Management Area. Although the Minnesota is neglected, you can still put a nightcrawler on a hook and catch a wide variety of fish. The most recent survey of the river turned up sixty-three different fish species. Channel catfish are very abundant and their relative the flathead catfish, are also found in good numbers. The largest fish ever sampled in the Hutchinson Area was sampled here in 1994 - a 50-pound flathead taken south of Sacred Heart. Twenty to forty pound flatheads are common. Northern pike, walleye, and smallmouth bass are also available to anglers. Walleye fishing can be excellent at times, but is kept a closely guarded local secret. The Minnesota also offers anglers a chance at sauger. Sauger are generally found only in river systems. Access is provided at various points along the river, specifically at four different Renville County Parks. Canoe float trips are an excellent way to enjoy the Minnesota River. It is a great place to take the kids and spend the day!

****

Wanted!

.... tag returns from flathead catfish in the Minnesota River. Flathead catfish have been tagged with a small, yellow tag near the dorsal fin. If you catch a tagged fish please record the 5-digit number along with the length of the fish and the location where it was caught. If you release the fish, please do not remove the tag. You can help us out by calling our office and giving us this information. We will send you a letter describing the goals of this study and some information about the fish you caught.

****

Ramsey Creek

This is a tributary to the lower Redwood River. The lower two miles are managed as a put-and-take trout stream. Yearling brown trout are stocked each spring. The stocked portion of this stream is predominantly contained within the Redwood Falls City Park. It provides a very scenic and unique outing for those seeking a quiet escape.

Redwood River

The Redwood River winds through southwest Minnesota and is one of the largest tributaries to the Minnesota River. Land use practices continue to affect the fisheries within these systems. Fish movement upstream ends at the dam in Redwood Falls. Above this point, many fish species are present but few seem abundant enough to provide consistent angling opportunity. Below the dam, almost all the species found in the Minnesota River are present. Our sampling indicated smallmouth bass are attracted to this rocky portion of the river. Catch and release of these fish may be extremely important in sustaining this population. Ample shore fishing is available here because a scenic city park surrounds much of the lower Redwood.

STOP the spread of Eurasian Water Milfoil

Eurasion water milfoil is an introduced aquatic plant which can interfere with boating, swimming, water-skiing, and fishing. It has already affected many lakes in Minnesota. Fragments of eurasian water milfoil can survive when transported on boating equipment and can initiate new colonies if introduced to non-infested lakes. Please remove all aquatic plants from your trailer, boat, motor/propeller, and anchors before launching and after leaving the water.

Eurasion Water Milfoil

9-21 leaflet pairs
whorls of 4

Northern Water Milfoil

7-11 leaflet pairs
whorls of 3-5

Northern water milfoil is often confused with its introduced (exotic) counterpart because they are similar in appearance. Northern water milfoil is not a nuisance plant, but is a valuable plant to fish populations and is present in most lakes with a healthy plant community.

What can your group do to protect, preserve and improve fish habitat?

1) Advocate those things we can do as individuals to protect, preserve, and preserve fish habitat.

Develop and advocate watershed-wide goals and objectives which include those we can accomplish as individuals (see inside of front cover).

2) Consult Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) regarding various water quality monitoring programs.

Under the Citizens Lake Monitoring program, individuals or groups are provided a secchi disk (for $10) and asked to monitor water clarity on a weekly basis throughout the open water season. An intermediate step, MPCA Lake Assessment, provides more specific data about water quality. Cleanwater Partnership grants are available from MPCA for diagnostic studies on lakes (Phase I) and implementation of strategies to improve water quality (Phase II). To participate in a Cleanwater Partnership, individuals or groups must share 50% of the costs (in-kind services are included).

3) Develop and nurture partnerships among the local farm community, lake associations, sports clubs, watershed districts, agri-businesses, and governmental agencies.

No man is an island. Partnerships built upon mutual trust and respect are essential for protection, preservation, and enhancement of aquatic resources.

To Report Game & Fish Violations Only 24 Hours a Day 1-800-652-9093

Don't let poachers steal your fish and wildlife: If you see someone violate a hunting or angling law or hear about a violation, call the toll-free TIP hotline at 1-800-652-9093.

TIP (Turn In Poachers), Inc. is a non-profit organization founded to stop poaching in Minnesota's outdoors. Cash rewards are given for tips leading to arrests. You may remain anonymous.