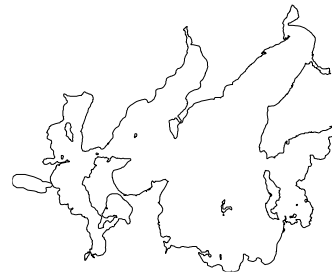




**Leech Lake Update 9/26/2023**  
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 Walker, MN 56484  
 218-552-2330

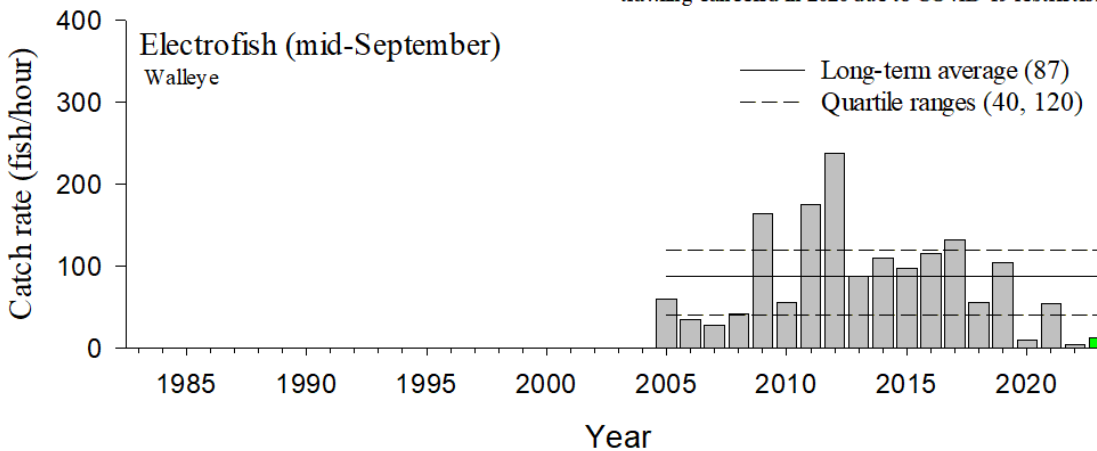
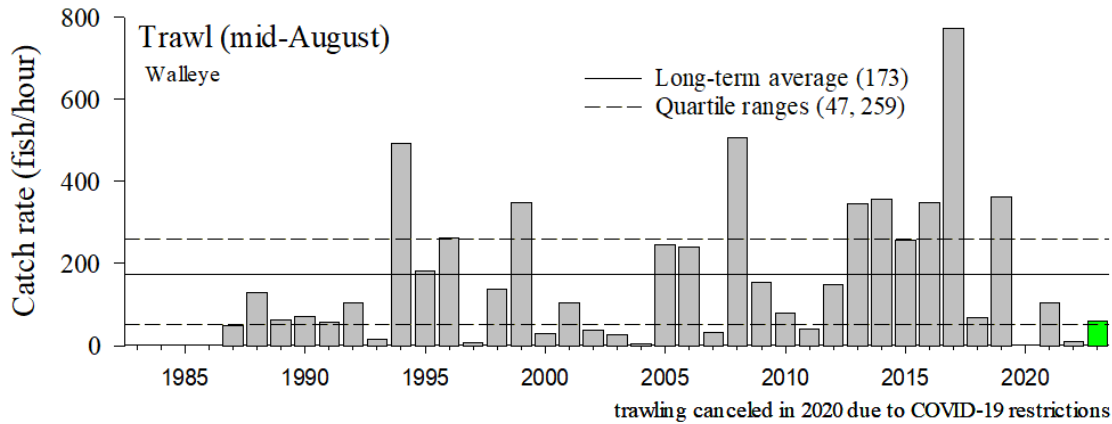


Greetings!

This Update is provided by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to the Leech Lake Input Group and others interested in DNR activities on Leech Lake. The goal of these messages is to keep you up to date with our findings and current sampling on the lake. Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions or comments.

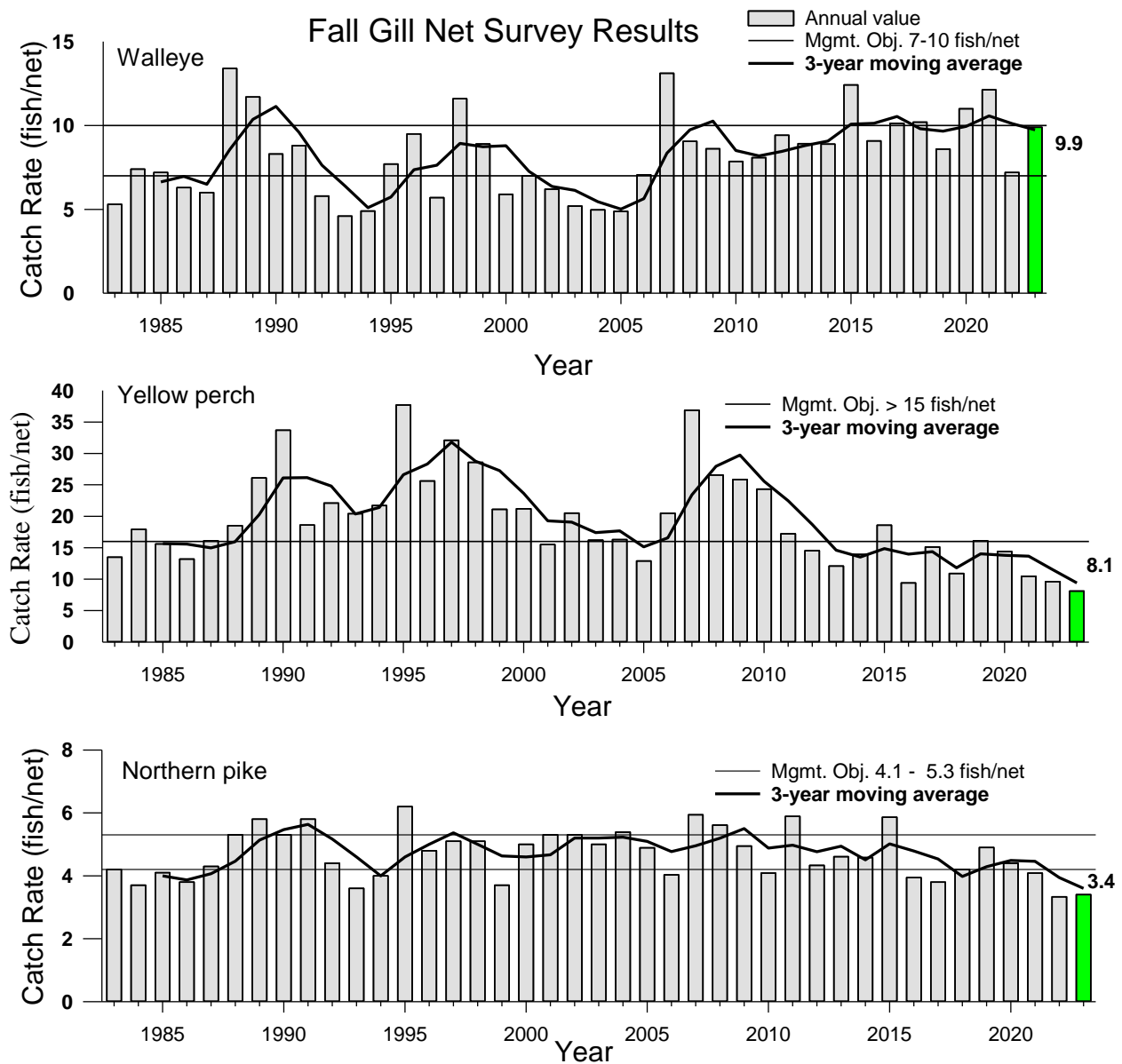
**2023 Young-of-Year (YOY) Sampling – YOY are the fish born this spring and specific sampling (seining, trawling and electrofishing) is used to estimate abundance relative to past years.**

- Shoreline seining was completed weekly during July. A total of 20 seine hauls yielded average catch rates of 2.4 YOY walleye/acre and 445 YOY yellow perch/acre.
- Trawling was completed weekly from August 14 through August 22. A total of 20 five-minute trawl hauls resulted in an average catch rate of 59.4 YOY walleye/hour and 16,690 YOY yellow perch/hour. The YOY perch catch rate was the fourth highest observed since trawling began in 1987.
- Shoreline electrofishing was conducted during the middle two weeks of September. So far favorable weather has allowed for successful sampling of eight of the eleven stations this year. The mean catch rate currently of age-0 walleye during 2023 is 12.0 fish/hour.
- Growth of age-0 fish was aided by an early warmup in June and relatively warm summer. YOY walleye growth (long-term average) was excellent this year, averaging 5.7 (avg. 5.3) inches long in trawl catches and 6.8 (avg. 6.2) inches in electrofishing samples and well-above average.

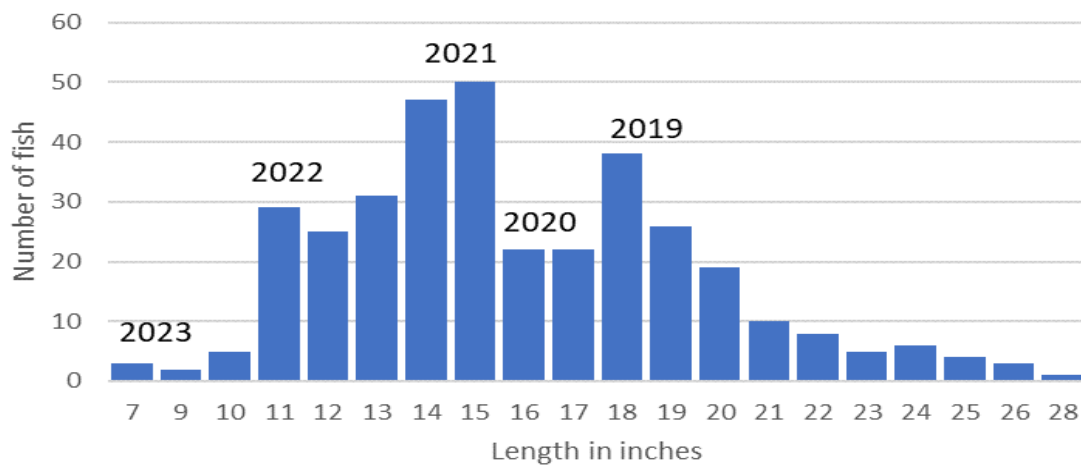


## 2023 Gill net Survey

- A Fall gill net survey is conducted every year in September which mainly targets adult walleye, yellow perch, northern pike and tullibee (cisco).
- This year the catch rate of walleye was above average, the northern pike catch rate was below average and the yellow perch rate was an historic low. It is unclear if low catch rates are due to changes in the lake food web caused by invasive species infestation at this time.
- Catch rates of tullibee (cisco) remain well below average.
- The 2021- and 2019-year class of walleye appears to be average to above-average in strength, which will certainly benefit the fishery if they persist. The 2023- and 2022- year classes are still too small to have been effectively captured in the fall gill nets but were present.



Walleye length groups from 2023 gillnet sample



### Cormorant Management

- Double-crested cormorant conflict management continues under the supervision of the Division of Resources Management (DRM), Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe.
- The goal is to maintain a stable population of these birds that are native to Leech Lake at a level that will not adversely impact the fishery.
- This year 2,011 birds were taken to reach 642 total nests, which was near the 500 nest target.
- Anglers and hunters are reminded that an area around Gull and Little Pelican islands remains closed to boat traffic to provide a resting place for migrating birds.
- Further information on Leech Lake cormorant management can be found on the DRM's web site at <https://www.llojibwe.org/drm/fpw/cormorants.html>



### Invasive Species

- Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) continues to be discovered in new boat harbors around Leech Lake and is expanding in the larger bays as well.
- Zebra mussels continue to expand throughout the lake.
- Starry stonewort, an invasive alga, was found in Steamboat Bay in 2021 and efforts by the Cass County Soil and Watershed District, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and Leech Lake Association to monitor and control the spread are ongoing.
- You can prevent the spread of exotic species. Remove all vegetation from your boat, motor, and trailer. Drain all water from live wells, bilges, and lower units after loading your boat and never empty bait buckets into the lake.
- Precautions for anglers and boaters can be found at: [www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/preventspread.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/preventspread.html)
- Further details on invasive aquatic species can be found at: [www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/aquaticanimals/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/aquaticanimals/index.html)

If you have questions, comments, or requests please contact:

Carl Pedersen, Large Lake Specialist ([carl.pedersen@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:carl.pedersen@dnr.state.mn.us))

or

Doug Schultz, Walker Area Fisheries Supervisor ([doug.w.schultz@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:doug.w.schultz@dnr.state.mn.us))

