

Leech Lake

ASSOCIATION



The Voice of Leech Lake

IN THIS ISSUE

Our Mission: To be good stewards of Leech Lake and its environs, recognizing the vulnerability of the lake, and the need for citizens -- both individually and collectively -- to assume responsibility for its care.

Letter from the President,

The start of a new year is a good time to thank you once again for your membership in the Leech Lake Association and for your volunteer efforts and financial support of Association goals. We may be powerless in dealing with a tottering economy, the downturn in our financial markets, and plunging temperatures, but we do have great influence over what happens on Leech Lake and surrounding neighborhoods. Through our efforts - acting in concert with other groups such as the Leech Lake Tribe, the Leech Lake Watershed Foundation, the Association of Cass County Lakes, Minnesota Waters, the DNR, the Walker Fishing Committee, and Cass County Environmental Services - there are many positives to report as we begin this new year.

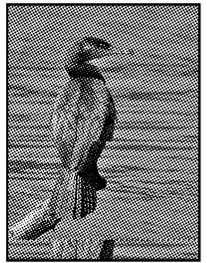
WATER QUALITY IS BEING MAINTAINED.

Samples collected by the DNR during July and analyzed for phosphorus concentration, chlorophyll, pH and other chemistries indicate no change in water

quality on Leech Lake since the DNR's water testing program first began in 1984. In addition, Leech Lake Association volunteers have embarked on a water monitoring program for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency which will involve collecting and testing water from Leech Lake's major bays over the next ten years.

THE WALLEYE FISHERY IS BEING RESTORED.

Cormorant control, the stocking of walleye fry, and good natural reproduction have restored good fishing to Leech Lake, with all signs pointing to continued good fishing in the future. There are now three strong walleye year classes in the lake, and fishermen are catching fish of all sizes. Walleye stocking will continue at least through 2010, and cormorant control will quite likely be ongoing.



(continued on page 2)

UPCOMING EVENTS

LLA Board Meetings are the second Monday of each month 9:30 AM at the courthouse. Members & Guests welcome!



(President's Letter continued from Page 1)

ZONING REGULATIONS HAVE BEEN TIGHTENED

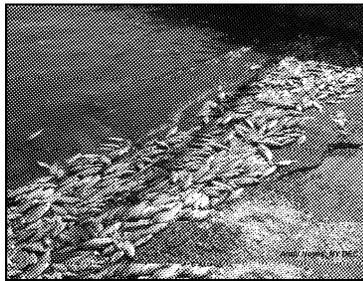
The Cass County Land Use Ordinance dealing with Conservation Developments (formerly called Planned Unit Developments) has been revised to reduce congestion on the lake itself in terms of fewer permanent docks, a 400- foot frontage requirement, and off-lake open spaces protected through permanent conservation easements. The improvements are the result of several years of effort by Cass County lake associations working closely with the Cass County Zoning Commission.

SENSITIVE SHORELINE AREAS BEING IDENTIFIED

Cass County and the DNR are identifying sensitive shoreline areas on Leech Lake and have produced a map of the entire lake which shows property ownership both on and adjacent to the water - whether public, private, or Tribal. This work will aid in determining which areas of the lake need the added protections of intra-lake zoning, improving conservation efforts. Conservation easements remain an excellent way to preserve lakeshore property.

MANY CHALLENGES REMAIN

Pressures to develop increasingly scarce and sensitive shorelines will persist and increase. Invasive Eurasian watermilfoil has spread during 2009 to several additional harbors around the lake, Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS), which can devastate fish stocks, is making its way north, as are exotic carp which are now as far north as Lake Pepin. These huge carp pose a serious threat to both boaters and water skiers.



To counter these evolving threats, the DNR has hired an Invasive Species Specialist who will be stationed at Lake Itasca, and the Leech Lake Tribe has added such a specialist to its own staff. The Leech Lake Association, with your support, will continue to assist in monitoring and reporting on these new and emerging environmental threats. Continued vigilance has to be the watchword as we head into 2009.

Here's wishing all of you a happy and prosperous New Year!



Robert Gisvold, President



US Army Corps of Engineers

RESERVOIR WATER LEVELS

As of January 14, 2009 the water level on Leech Lake is 1294.22 feet with a very slow fall. The current discharge from the dam is 355 cfs. Currently, there is 16.0 inches of snow with 1.07 inches of snow water equivalent in the basin. It is not uncommon for there to be over 2.00 inches of snow water equivalent in the Leech Lake basin near the end of February. Snow water equivalent (SWE) is the amount of water content that is contained in the snow pack.

CLIMATE

The snow depth map prepared on December 31 shows that the northern one-half of Minnesota has 12 or more inches of snow on the ground. Sections of west central, central, and northeastern Minnesota report more than 18 inches of snow cover. When compared with historical snow depths for the date, the Leech Lake area is near normal but current snow depths in some west central and central Minnesota counties rank above the 95th percentile. The following website contains an abundance of information relating to the climate: <http://climate.umn.edu>.

WINTER DRAWDOWN

The current drawdown plan is to continue the very slow fall and reach a level between 1194.10 and 1194.20 feet by mid February. In mid to late February, snow surveys of the basin will be taken and the results evaluated to determine if any changes to the current plan are necessary.

Monitoring of the water content is a continued process throughout the winter months. Balancing the level in which the lake should be drawn down in order to allow enough storage for runoff and downstream flood control and also not drawing down the reservoir too much in order for the lake to fill up to the summer band is not a simple task. Late March and early April snow and also April rains can make this task even more difficult and harder to achieve.

MORE INFORMATION

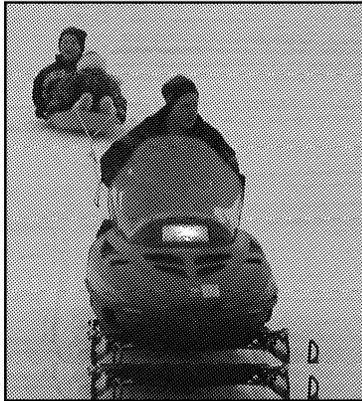
You can visit the Corps of Engineers Water Control Website at www.mvp-wc.usace.army.mil for more information on the regulation of Leech Lake Reservoir. Questions on the regulation of the Headwaters reservoir can be directed to Jodi Kormanik-Sonterre at 651-290-5646 or Tim Rennecke at 218-654-3145 at Leech Lake Dam.



LAKE SAFETY

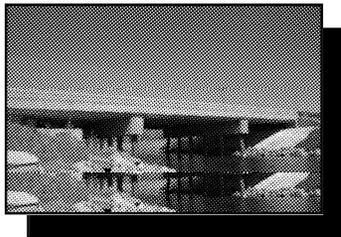
Dennis Leff, Chairperson

We are now well into an "old time" Minnesota winter with both cold and plenty of snow. The snowmobiling this winter has been the best in years and hopefully this will continue. A reminder: if you are snowmobiling on the lake, stay aware of the ice ridges, the slush, and - in some areas - thin ice. Plan to spend most of your snowmobiling time on the trails. We have some of the best in the country.



As we begin the new year, this would be a good time to review Lake and Water Safety efforts during 2008.

- The Roosevelt Canal was dredged a few years ago and remains in good shape. Re-dredging should not be necessary for many years.

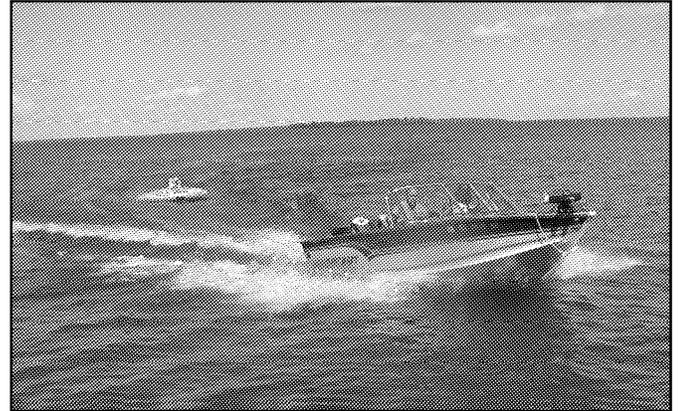


- A portion of the canal bridge fencing did need to be repaired because persons unknown cut a hole in the fencing to allow jumping off the bridge when boats were passing through the canal. Fortunately, this was not as big a problem as it had been in previous years.

- A new problem did surface on the canal bridge this year when vandals painted graffiti on the bridge and highway throughout the summer. If you had a chance to cross the bridge before the first snowstorm you would have noticed that the graffiti had been painted over. The painting was done by inmates under the supervision of the Sheriffs Office, with the Leech Lake Association providing the paint. This will be ongoing as needed.



- In regard to summer boating and the importance of lake buoys at key locations on the lake, the Leech Lake Association applied for and received a grant from the Lake Country Power Round Up program to purchase lighted buoys that had been broken or were missing. These buoys are placed on the lake by the Sheriffs Department. We will continue to work closely with the Sheriffs Department on Lake and Water Safety.



- Also during 2008, Leech Lake Association volunteers began collecting water samples from many different locations on the lake for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.. This is a multi-year testing program which will establish benchmarks for detecting changes in Leech Lake water quality over time.

Finally, as a reminder, if you see vandalism on any part of the lake, please report it by calling 911.



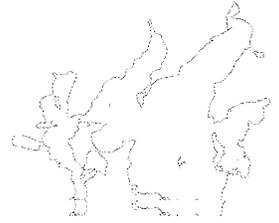
If you see safety problems where the Leech Lake Association could



provide assistance, please call any of the Board Members listed in this newsletter.



Leech Lake Update 1/15/2009
Walker Area Fisheries Office
 07316 State Hwy. 371 NW
 Walker, MN 56484
 218-547-1683



Greetings!

This update is part of a series of reports the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is sending to Leech Lake area resorts, businesses 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 activities on the lake. Earlier updates are available by visiting:

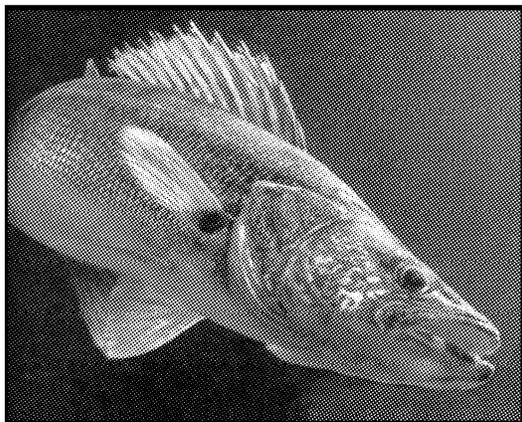
www.dnr.state.mn.us/areas/fisheries/walker/index.html.

Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions or comments, would like copies of previous updates not posted on the website, or if you would like to be added to the mailing list.

2008 CREEL SURVEY

- Approximately 585,371 angler-hours of fishing effort were expended on Leech Lake during 10 May-30 September 2008.
- An estimated 67,502 walleye (81,410 pounds) were harvested at a rate of 0.115 fish/hour across all anglers. Targeting anglers harvested walleye at a rate of 0.459 fish/hour.
- A total of 136,096 yellow perch (59,149 pounds) were harvested at a rate of 0.233 fish/hour across all anglers. Anglers targeting perch harvested them at a rate of 2.730 fish/hour.
- Season totals of catch and harvest rates of walleye, yellow perch, and northern pike during recent summer creel surveys completed on Leech, Mille Lacs, Lake of the Woods, and Winnibigoshish, are presented below for general comparison.
- The full report for the 2008 creel survey should be completed and posted on the Walker Area website by the end of February 2009.

		Walleye/hour		Yellow perch/hour		Northern pike/hour	
		Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest	Catch	Harvest
All Anglers	Leech, 2008	0.278	0.115	0.766	0.233	0.087	0.029
	Mille Lacs, 2007	0.305	0.101	0.105	0.026	0.009	0.001
	LOTW, 2007	0.544	0.288	0.022	0.009	0.012	0.002
	Winnibigoshish, 2007	0.432	0.164	0.657	0.173	0.182	0.037
Targeting Anglers	Leech, 2008	1.064	0.459	6.881	2.730	0.881	0.339
	Mille Lacs, 2007	0.391	0.129	5.061	1.184	0.11	0.048
	LOTW, 2007	0.550	0.290	NA	NA	0.110	0.040
	Winnibigoshish, 2007	0.545	0.229	4.380	1.380	0.451	0.123



STATUS OF THE FISHERY

- Recent management actions and favorable environmental conditions have led to quick improvements in the Leech Lake walleye and yellow perch populations.
- All goals for the 2005-2010 action plan aimed at improving the Leech Lake walleye population have been met or exceeded for the second consecutive year.
- Establishment and fast growth of walleye year classes during 2005-2007 have been a primary contributor to the improvements in fishing quality on Leech Lake.

(continued on page 5)

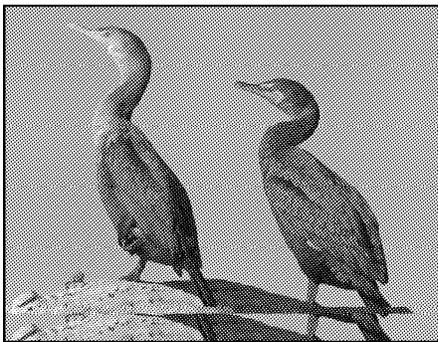
- The full report reviewing the current status of the Leech Lake fishery is available on the Walker Area Fisheries website:

www.dnr.state.mn.us/areas/fisheries/walker/index.html

STOCKING UPDATE

- During May 2008, 22.1 million Woman Lake/Boy River walleye fry were marked with oxytetracycline (OTC) and stocked into all major bays of Leech Lake.
- A total of 511 young-of-year walleye were collected using shoreline seining (July), bottom trawling (August), and shoreline electrofishing (September) and examined for the presence of an OTC mark.
- Of the fish examined, 55% were identified as stocked fish. The hatch rate of wild fry during 2008 was estimated to be 0.31%, the second highest observed since stocking began in 2005.
- To date, walleye hatch rates have been very similar to, if not better than, those estimated in Red Lake.
- As per actions of the 2008 legislative session, 22.5 million walleye fry will be stocked into Leech Lake in 2009.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT CONTROL



- To date, a total of 12,357 double-crested cormorants (eggs, juveniles, and adults) have been removed from Leech Lake under the supervision of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. This a correction to the 9,487 birds reported in the last update and this year's Large Lake Report.

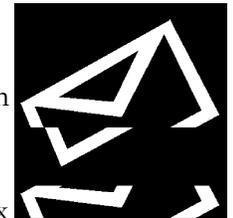
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has published a proposed rule and Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) to extend the expiration dates of current double-crested cormorant depredation orders. Comments on the proposed rule and DEA are due by January 22, 2009.

- You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal:
<http://www.regulations.gov/>.
Keyword search "double-crested cormorant", follow the instructions for submitting comments on revision of expiration dates for cormorant depredation orders.



- U.S. mail or hand-delivery:
Public Comments Processing,
Attn: RIN 1018-AW11; Division
of Policy and Directives
Management; U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax
Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203-1610.



- Emails and faxes will not be accepted. All comments will be posted on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means that any personal information provided will also be posted.

For further information contact:

Terry Doyle
Division of Migratory Bird Management
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Migratory Bird Management
4401 North Fairfax Drive
Mail Stop 4107
Arlington, VA 22203-1610
Telephone 703-358-1825

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

Doug Schultz
(doug.schultz@dnr.state.mn.us)
or Harlan Fierstine
(harlan.fierstine@dnr.state.mn.us)

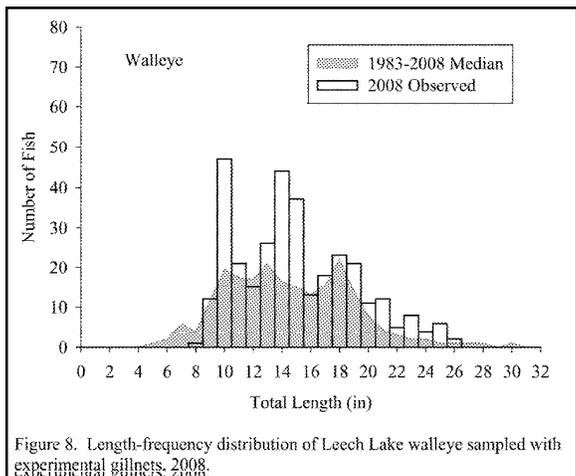
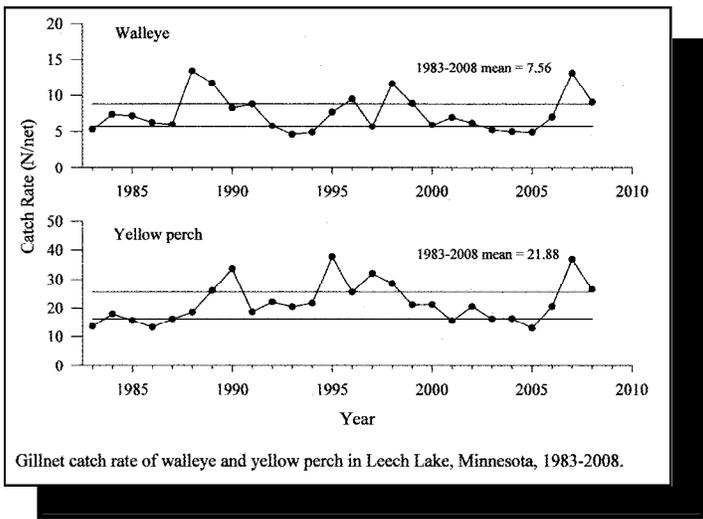


GILLNET SURVEY - 2008

The DNR's 2005-2010 Action Plan established a number of benchmarks for evaluating improvements to the Leech Lake walleye population. These included:

- 1) maintaining a standing stock biomass of mature females of 1.21-1.75 pounds/acre,
- 2) achieving a walleye gillnet catch rate of at least 7.4 fish/net, and
- 3) reaching a goal where at least 50% of all walleye captured in the experimental gillnets be shorter than 15 inches.

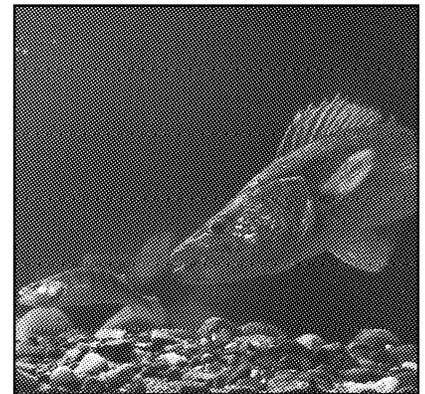
As was the case in 2007, all of these goals were met or exceeded in 2008. The nearby illustration shows walleye and perch catch rates per net taken in gillnets from 1983 through 2008. The second figure shows the size distribution of walleye taken in 2008 compared to the 1983-2008 median.



Note: Illustrations (figure 8 and catch rate) were taken from Large Lake Sampling Program Assessment Report for Leech Lake, 2008

THE YEAR OF THE WALLEYE

In the January 9, 2009 issue of Outdoor News, writer Chris Niskanen suggested that 2009 might rightfully be called "the year of the walleye." Why so? Because managing the state's walleye populations in a multitude of lake types is a complex issue and also big business. This has led the DNR to host a recent Outdoor Roundtable where outdoor writers, fishermen, legislators and DNR people could get together and have a candid discussion about the catching and stocking of walleye in the state of Minnesota. Walleye regulations are working, but at what cost in terms of confusion and complexity? Are slot limits overprotecting walleye on some lakes, causing them to cannibalize and suppress survival of young walleye? This may have happened on Lake Mille Lacs to the 2006 year class where 18% of walleye diets were small walleye. What are the cost/benefit tradeoffs of stocking fry versus frylings or fingerlings, and how many are necessary when some level of stocking is needed to maintain good fishing?



This year the DNR will begin revisiting its walleye stocking guidelines for the first time since 1992. The review might result in more fish being stocked but with less DNR involvement. A new walleye stamp, which goes on sale in 2009, might be used to purchase more walleye from private hatcheries. And the DNR would like to produce a new Walleye Management Plan by 2010. In late January or February the DNR will send mail surveys to 3000 anglers who fish walleye in Minnesota, asking them about their motivation, travel habits, and experiences catching our state fish. So 2009 might indeed be the "year of the walleye."

Larry Anderson, Chairman
Walker Fishing Committee



FUTURE FUNDING SOURCE FOR LEECH LAKE PROJECTS

With passage of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment in the recent election, approximately \$90 million will be available annually to protect Minnesota's lands and waters. A 12-member Outdoor Heritage Council has already been appointed and tasked with deciding how and where this money will be spent. No money will be available until this fall, but already the Council is soliciting project ideas from

the public. Typical projects might include land acquisition, easements, habitat restoration, and much more. Some of the money will likely be made available to lake associations as matching grants.

We encourage our membership to be on the lookout for projects in your own neighborhoods which might qualify for this new and long-awaited funding source. It is a unique opportunity to make a real difference. Pass your ideas on to any Leech Lake Association Board Member. Or contact the Outdoor Heritage Council at www.lohc.state.mn.us.

Costs for printing and distribution of the winter edition of the LLA Newsletter have been donated by the First National Bank of Walker, Hummingbird Press, Super One Foods, and Reeds Sporting Goods.

Leech Lake Association Officers

Bob Gisvold, President	547-1450	gisvold@kwgc-law.com
Dennis Leff, Vice President	547-2343	leffs@arvig.net
Paul Houska, Treasurer	547-3194	houska@uslink.net
Dave Laursen, Secretary	547-2832	dlaurs@arvig.net

Board Members

Chuck Allen, Membership	335- 7737	cjallen@paulbunyan.net
Roseanne Budahl, Website	547-1568	Rbudahl@aol.com
Jack Shaffer, Conservation	363-3817	bellshaf@webtv.net
Jerry McCauley, Healthy Lakes	836- 2076	iccracking@embarqmail.com
Jane Ekholm, Legislation	547 -4131	janevanhunnik@hotmail.com
John Annexstad, Science	547-1404	iceman58@eot.com
Ivan Paulsen, Natural Resources	836- 1510	paulsen@arvig.net

Leech Lake Band Representative

John Ringle	335-7421	jringle@paulbunyan.net
	1-800-442- 3942	

LLA Publications Committee

Dave Laursen, Editor	dlaurs@arvig.net
Cathy Denker, Composition/Design	cdenker@embarqmail.com

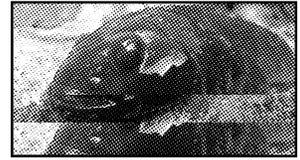
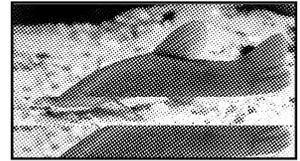
STUDY: MORE SPECIES INVASIONS IN GREAT LAKES

Traverse City, Mich. (AP)

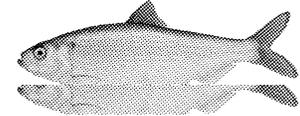
Dozens of foreign species could spread across the Great Lakes in coming years and cause significant damage to the environment and economy, despite policies designed to keep them out, a federal report says.



On January 8th, 2009 the National Center for Environmental Assessment issued the warning in a study released. It identified 30 nonnative species that pose a medium or high risk of reaching the lakes and 28 others that have a foothold and could disperse widely. Among them are fish such as the tench ("doctor fish"), the monkey goby and the blueback herring.



"These findings support the need for detection and monitoring efforts at those ports believed to be at the greatest risk," the report said. It described some of the region's busiest ports as strong potential targets for invaders (ports listed included Duluth and Superior).

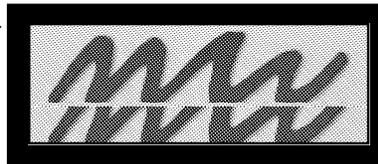


KEEPING LEECH LAKE HEALTHY...

A NEVER ENDING CHALLENGE

According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) 40% of Minnesota lakes are impaired, and all are threatened. The threats are many:

- Pollution by human-generated sources of phosphorous
- The invasion of lakes and rivers by two species of mussel - zebra and quagga mussel
- The clogging of lakes by plants not native to Minnesota, especially Eurasian watermilfoil.
- Shoreline degradation caused by over-development, and improper landscaping around lake homes and cabins.
- Improperly maintained or failing septic tanks
- Spread of purple loosestrife, which competes with native vegetation, clogs drainage ditches and destroys fish spawning areas



- Loss of water clarity caused by algae blooms fed by phosphorous and other human-made fertilizers

All of the above combine to stress lakes and the fish and other wildlife that depend on fresh water for existence. Last fall, Minnesota Waters sponsored a meeting in Walker to brief Minnesota legislatures, the DNR, Leech Lake Tribal leaders and others on these many threats. to our lakes and streams.

There is plenty of incentive to take the threats seriously -and not just because of Leech Lake livability issues. Clean lakes, streams and rivers are the state's primary recreational draw, and this is big business indeed. Tourism in Minnesota generates more than \$12 billion per year, creating 286,000 full-time jobs and \$9 billion in income.* Even before this recent economic downturn, the local business community knew very well the value of the tourist.

***Information cited in the Winter Issue of the Minnesota Waters News.**

LLA Board Meetings are the second Monday of each month 9:30 AM at the courthouse. Members & Guests welcome!



Leech Lake Association
 PO Box 1613
 Walker, MN 56484

**NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID
 WALKER, MN
 PERMIT NO. 5**

Forwarding Service Requested