



**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,

Much like a year ago, a dry January was followed by a snowy February, which may bode well for normal lake levels this coming spring and summer, assuming normal precipitation continues. But like our friends at Federal Dam always remind me, mother nature remains in charge. Let's hope too that drought conditions are relieved further south. We don't want barge traffic on the lower Mississippi looking to the northern reservoirs for water to float their boats. Even here in Minnesota, aquifers are being drained at unsustainable rates, reminding us – if we needed such reminding – that water is a most precious resource.

There is more bad news about aquatic invasive species, particularly zebra mussels. As most of you may know by now, juvenile zebra mussels (veligers) were discovered in Lake Winnie this fall during routine zooplankton sampling. Fortunately, zooplankton samples taken on Leech Lake during this same time frame proved negative, but the situation is certainly worrisome. We will step up our AIS prevention efforts through increased training and boat inspections, but it only takes one dirty boat or dock to infect the lake.

A major accomplishment during 2012 was revision of our Leech Lake Management Plan, which was mailed to some 2000 Leech Lake residents last fall. The Plan was thorough and well received, with over 100 households joining our organization for the first time, some of you at the sponsorship level. We now have over 400 households belonging to the Leech Lake Association, representing perhaps a 1000 residents. We thank you for your support and for sharing our goal of being good stewards of the lake and protecting the quality of life here for coming generations.

A later article in this Newsletter mentions that we are looking for a few good women and men to volunteer to serve on our Board of Directors. Most of us serving on the Board are retired, and have been for some time. We need some new blood, fresh ideas, and energetic individuals who can head up some of our various committees and take us into the future. It's an opportunity to make a difference, and have a good time while doing it. Drop me a note if you would like to participate.

*Robert Givold, President*

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**March 25**

*Leech Lake Association Meeting*

**April 8**

*Leech Lake Association Meeting*

**May 5**

*Youth Crappie Tournament, Marine Max*

**May 11**

*Fishing Season Opener*

**June 1-2**

*Leech Lake Walleye Tournament*

**June 21-22**

*Moondance Jamming Country*

**July 4**

*Independence Day Activities*

**July 18-20**

*Moondance Jam 22*

**July 25**

*Leech Lake Association Annual Meeting*

**August 10-12**

*Leech Lake Regatta*

**August 13**

*Walker Bay Day*

**August 15-17**

*Cajun Fest-Northern Lights*

**September 14**

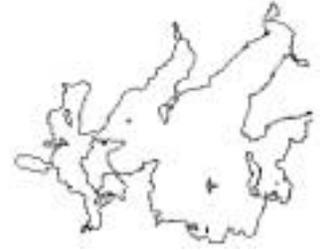
*Ethnic Fest 21*

**September 21**

*North Country Marathon 31*



**LEECH LAKE UPDATE**  
Walker Area Fisheries Office  
07316 State Highway 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 <http://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.

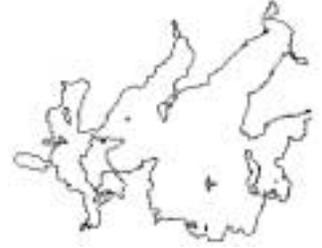
### **2012 survey work completed and to be completed on Leech Lake**

- The second of four programmed fry stockings was completed (7.5 million, OTC-marked). The 2012 OTC marking frequency was 14% (n=350) and the estimated hatch rate was 0.89%. The hatch rate was the highest observed, while the OTC marking frequency was the lowest observed. These compare to 2005-2011 ranges of 23-86% marked and hatch rates of 0.12-0.60%. Marking frequency tends to be higher during years of higher stocking densities because the initial marked wild fry ratio is higher. Survival and growth is similar between stocked and naturally-produced fish.
- Double-crested cormorant management continued under the supervision of the Division of Resource Management, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. Spring and fall cormorant counts were similar to those observed throughout 2011, peaking at 2,338 and 660, respectively. During 2012, 1,684 cormorants were removed to meet the management goal of 500 nesting pairs.
- From August 13-24, twenty trawls were conducted at the three standard locations. The number of young-of-year walleye sampled per hour (148) was slightly higher than the long-term average (137). The number of young-of-year yellow perch sampled per hour (704) was substantially lower than the long-term average (9,417).
- From September 3-14, the annual gill netting survey was completed at 36 locations around the lake. Walleye catch rates increased in 2012 (9.42 fish/net) and were above the management goal of 8.5 fish/net. The assessment indicated good numbers of fish produced during 2010 and 2011. These fish are currently between 9 and 14 inches, some of which will be large enough for harvest as early as this winter. Additionally, 35% of walleye sampled were within the protected slot and will continue to provide anglers an opportunity to catch a larger fish (Figure 1). Other game fish species targeted with test nets include yellow perch, and northern pike. Yellow perch abundance declined for the fifth consecutive year, while northern pike abundance continues to remain stable.
- Walleye spawner biomass (2.2 lbs/acre) exceeded the management objective range (1.5- 2.0 lbs/acre). Exceedence of the objective range again in 2013 would initiate consideration of relaxing the current 18-26" Protected Slot Limit to a 20-26" PSL (bag limit unchanged) for the 2014 angling season.

*(DNR Report continued on page 3)*



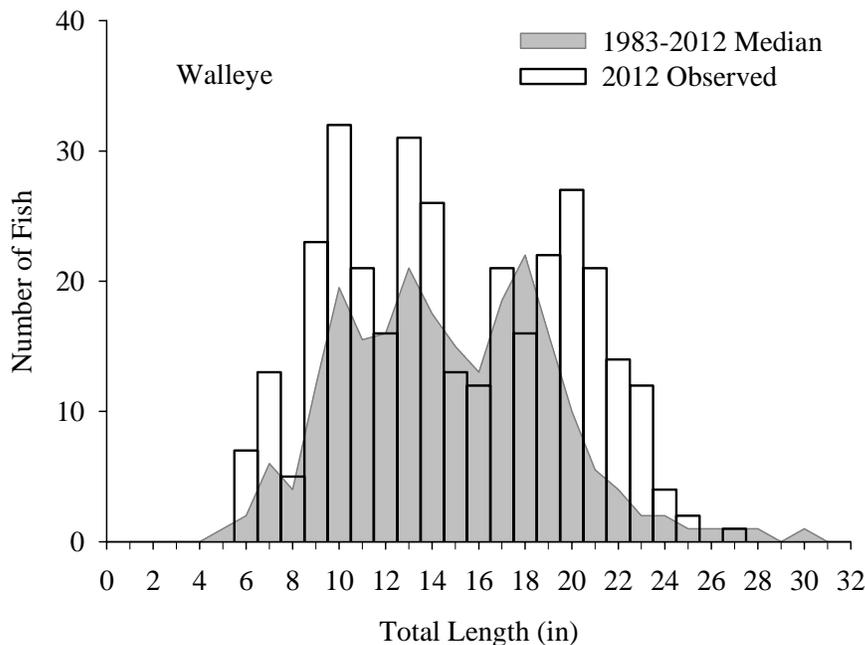
**LEECH LAKE UPDATE**  
Walker Area Fisheries Office  
07316 State Highway 371 NW  
Walker, MN 56484



*(DNR Report continued from page 2)*

- From September 9-13, eleven night time electrofishing stations were sampled for young-of-year walleye. The number of young-of-year walleye sampled per hour (237) was substantially higher than the long-term average (99) and the highest catch rate observed since this gear type began being used in 2005. The average length of these fish was 6.1 inches; larger size in the fall usually results in higher winter survival. The warmer summer likely contributed to above average young-of-year walleye growth rates.
- Monthly zooplankton sampling at five locations lakewide occurred from mid-May through mid-October (Photo 1). Diversity was high, with 20 taxa identified throughout the season. Total densities, biomass, and taxon were typical for lakes in this region. No Bythotrephes (spiny waterflea) or zebra mussels were found in any samples.
- Two minor fish kills were reported on Leech Lake this summer, one in early-July and the other in mid-August. Both kills were associated with water temperatures that exceeded 80 degrees for over a week. Oxygen profiles around the lake during the kills showed sufficient oxygen was present, meaning kills were solely a result of high temperatures. The only fish species observed dead was cisco. September test netting indicated adequate numbers continue to be present.

If you would like to volunteer next year to assist with any of the assessments just described, or if you have questions, comments, or requests please contact: Matt Ward ([matt.ward@state.mn.us](mailto:matt.ward@state.mn.us)) Large Lake Specialist at 218-547-1683, or Doug Schultz ([doug.w.schultz@state.mn.us](mailto:doug.w.schultz@state.mn.us)) Walker Area Fisheries Supervisor



**Figure 1.** Length-frequency distribution of Leech Lake walleye sampled with experimental gillnets, 2012.



**Photo 1.** Walker Area fisheries intern, Ethan Karppinen, sampling zooplankton on Leech Lake in August, 2012.



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

**St. Paul District  
Leech Lake Dam**



## LEECH RESERVOIR WATER LEVELS

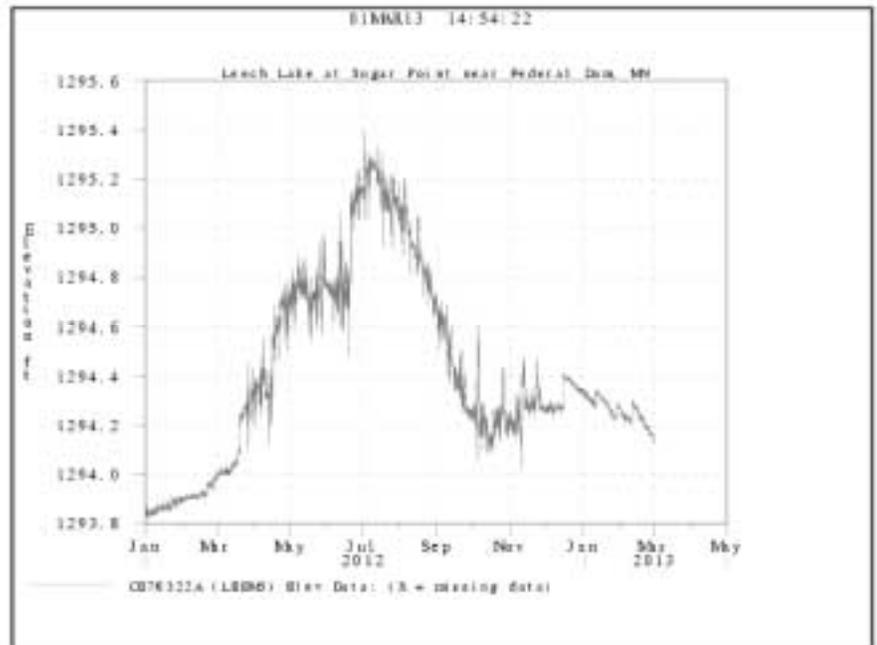
On March 1, 2013, the water level on Leech Lake was 1294.14 feet. Current discharge through the dam is approximately 680 cfs allowing the level to slowly drop to a target of 1293.80 feet by about the end of March.

This winter is very similar to 2011 when Leech Lake Dam was required to perform a winter draw down to make room for spring run-off. But 2012 gave us a wild ride in regards to water levels. We began January 2012 with below normal snow amounts, a dry spring leading to major rainfalls in June that caused flooding near Grand Rapids, McGregor, Aitkin, Duluth and other areas. By the end of July we were lacking in precipitation again causing Leech Lake to drop below the desirable summer range in fall.

Currently there is 17" of frost measured at Leech Lake Dam and about 18 inches of snow depth containing about 3 inches of moisture content across the Leech Lake Watershed. But that amount is not unusual and well within the capacity of the dam to perform an adequate drawdown during the winter to achieve desirable water levels next spring. We will continue to monitor moisture conditions and adapt our drawdown plan as appropriate. The 90-day precipitation outlook for January through March, provided by the National Weather Service (NWS) Climate Prediction Center (CPC), tilts toward normal or above normal conditions across north central Minnesota. If these outlooks hold true, combined with current moisture and frost conditions, we expect to manage the lake level in accordance with historically normal plans. However there is risk that Leech Lake will rise above the desirable summer range this spring especially if we receive above normal spring precipitation. In addition, flooding near Aitkin

during the spring melt may cause Leech and Winnie to become storage reservoirs for flood damage reduction. We will closely watch the National Weathers Service's Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service (AHPS) long-range (flood) probabilistic river stage data and increase our drawdown to provide as much storage potential on Leech as we can if flooding near Aitkin becomes a high probability.

**Please see the Leech Lake attached hydrograph for more information.**



*Referenced Hydrograph*

## CLIMATE

Greg Spoden, State Climatologist of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Division of Ecological and Water Resources reports:

- January precipitation totals were above historical averages across north central and northeast Minnesota. Monthly precipitation totals were below average in southwest and south central counties. Elsewhere, January precipitation was near the long-term average.
- For large portions of Minnesota, August 2012-through-January 2013 precipitation totals ranked below the 5th percentile historically. In southwest and south central Minnesota, June 2012-January 2013 precipitation totals were more than 10 inches below the historical average

*(CORPS Report continued on page 6)*

*(CORPS Report continued from page 4)*

- Snow depths vary widely across Minnesota. Many locations in west central Minnesota, north central Minnesota, and in the Lake Superior highlands report more than 12 inches of snow cover. Whereas, the landscape in far southwest and south central Minnesota is nearly snow-free. For most of the rest of Minnesota, snow depths range from four to eight inches.
- The U. S. Drought Monitor, released on February 7, continues to place large portions Minnesota in the Extreme Drought category. In total, 84% of Minnesota's landscape is considered to be in Extreme Drought or Severe Drought.
- The drought situation will likely remain unchanged until spring because the deeply frozen soil assures that very little winter precipitation will make it into the ground. As of late autumn, the soil moisture content in the plant rooting zone was near all-time low levels at many locations. Without abundant spring rains, a number of critical drought issues involving agriculture, forestry, horticulture, tourism, and public water supply will begin to emerge.

## LEECH LAKE DAM

Leech Lake Dam is located on the North East corner of Portage Bay and forms the Leech Lake River. The Leech flows into the Mississippi south of US HWY 2 downstream of the MN DNR Mud/Goose Wildlife Management Area. The Corps of Engineers provides recreation facilities such as boat ramps, campgrounds, picnic areas, trails and other services within the grounds at Leech Lake Dam. Check us out and click on "recreation" at [www.mvp.usace.army.mil](http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil)

## MORE INFORMATION

You can visit the Corps of Engineers Water Control, Web site at <http://www.mvp-wc.usace.army.mil> for more information on the regulation of Leech Lake Reservoir. Questions can be directed to Timm Rennecke at Leech Lake Dam, 218-654-3145. If you would like to comment regarding how lake levels are affecting you please email: [timmm.v.renncke@usace.army.mil](mailto:timmm.v.renncke@usace.army.mil)



## LEECH LAKE WATERSHED RESTORATION/PROTECTION UNDERWAY



The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the DNR, and local partners launched a four-year project in the spring of 2012 to assess the health of the waters in the Leech

Lake River watershed and develop a long-range plan for keeping these waters healthy. This watershed encompasses some 855,000 acres in Cass and Hubbard Counties, along with a small portion of Beltrami County. It includes the communities of LaPorte, Benedict, Walker, Federal Dam, Boy River, Whipholt, Longville and Hackensack. The watershed includes some 277 river miles, 750 lakes, and 165,000 acres of water which drain through Leech Lake to the Mississippi River.

The first phase of the assessment project involves both chemical and biological monitoring of streams in the watershed and collection and analysis of existing water quality data from local lake associations, including the Leech Lake Association, as well as the Leech Lake Band, and local and state agencies. The second phase will focus on additional analysis of streams and lakes that are showing decreases in water quality, developing water protection models and an implementation plan for restoring any impaired waters that are identified and for protecting the high quality of other waters in the watershed.

At the watershed project kick-off meeting held last year, project partners, members of the business community, local lake associations, township officials, and oth-

*(LL Watershed continued on page 6)*

*(LL Watershed continued from page 5)*

ers came together to explore “keeping our waters clean.” Top water quality issues identified at the meeting were: impacts of shoreland development (including lack of shoreland buffers and shoreland erosion), aquatic invasive species, failing septic system, stormwater runoff, and groundwater protection.



impacts of shoreland development (including lack of shoreland buffers and shoreland erosion), aquatic invasive species, failing septic system, stormwater runoff, and groundwater protection.



According to Paula West, Executive Director of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation, “...the waters of the Leech Lake watershed are in good shape now, but what will they be like 25 years from now? Our waters are essential to our health, our recreation, the economic sustainability of our communities, and our quality of life. Citizen involvement will be the key to the future of our waters. We, as community stewards, control the actions on the land that determine the quality of our waters.”

## HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF AIS

The Leech Lake Association (LLA) is launching a Volunteer Watercraft Inspection Program this coming summer to assist the DNR in their efforts to prevent and/or slow the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). Invasive species will alter the Leech Lake’s ecology in ways not totally known. Some AIS, such as zebra mussels (ZM) and spiny water fleas -- are more detrimental than others, negatively affecting vegetation, fisheries and shorelines, to name a few.



*zebra mussels*



*Spiny Water Fleas*

As many of you may know, Winnie is now infested with ZM and is only a few miles north of Leech Lake. Many boats travel between these lakes during the summer season. It only takes one negligent person to spread ZM from one lake to another. The new regulations established to prevent the spread of AIS can do only so much. It also takes close monitoring and particularly educating the public in how to prevent their spread. Because of the lake size and number of accesses on Leech Lake, the DNR can't possibly do the job alone. It will literally take a village, including property owners, resort owners, lake service providers, fishing tournament sponsors, and businesses.

Many may believe that the spread of AIS is inevitable and prevention efforts not worth the time and money involved. Others think more should be done by enforcing the law with heavier penalties and fines. The Leech Lake Association believes that the majority of its members agree that prevention efforts must be pursued, if only to delay infestation long enough for eradication methods to be developed. We also believe that we need to educate the public of the potential detrimental effects of AIS infestations without either adopting a fatalistic attitude or engaging in scare tactics. As a large group, LLA members can rally together to do what we can. Hopefully, in the not too distant future,

*(Help Prevent the Spread of AIS continued on page 7)*

*(Help Prevent the Spread of AIS continued from page 6)*

techniques and/or products will be developed to control or eradicate the worst offenders..

The LLA Volunteer Watercraft Inspection Program is being developed in coordination with the DNR. A brief outline of the program is as follows:

- 1) DNR will be offering Volunteer Training Programs starting soon and will be listing the dates and times on their website.
- 2) All Volunteers are encouraged to take this training and will receive a certificate.
- 3) The primary tasks of the volunteers will be to educate the public in the prevention and spread of AIS in a courteous and friendly way.
- 4) Initially, volunteers will be visiting resorts, bait shops, and businesses to distribute literature pertaining to AIS. In addition, volunteers (in groups of 2 or 3) will assist the DNR at public accesses. Volunteers have no authority to board and inspect watercraft without permission from the owner. Only the DNR and Sheriff will have that authority.

- 5) We urge all our LLA members, their friends and neighbors, to participate in this program. Volunteers can spend as little or as much time as their schedule permits.

For participation and questions about the program please call or email:

**Chuck Allen, LLA Board Member**

**Phone: 218-987-2307**

**Email: [cjallen@paulbunyan.net](mailto:cjallen@paulbunyan.net)**



## INVASIVES CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROBLEM ON MILLE LACS?

In a February 28 press release from the Minnesota DNR, Fisheries Chief Dirk Peterson discussed some management options to deal with the deteriorating walleye fishery on Lake Mille Lacs, includ-

ing a reduced seasonal walleye harvest, a tighter legal slot, a night fishing ban, hook and live bait restrictions, reduced bag limits, and other ideas still under consideration. The DNR is also considering allowing greater harvest of smallmouth bass and northern pike, which are both predators of walleye, and the prey that walleyes eat. One objective would be to protect walleyes in the 14-28 inch range which have been overharvested in recent years, while still protecting the lake's large 16-17-inch

year class, because currently there are no strong year classes coming up behind these fish.

Sound drastic? It is drastic, and drastic steps will be taken. Could this be a harbinger of what might happen in Leech Lake? The big unknown here is the contribution of Invasive Species to the problems occurring in Mille Lacs. Quoting DNR Fishery Chief, Dirk Peterson: "One of the emerging challenges of managing Mille Lacs is the complexity added by the evolving biological implications of Eurasian watermilfoil, spiny waterfleas, and zebra mussels. The impacts and interactions of these unwanted aquatic invasive species are not well understood but are making the lake increasingly unpredictable."



*(Invasives Contributing to Problems on Mille Lacs? continued on page 8)*

*Invasives Contributing to Problems on Mille Lacs?*  
(continued from page 7)

“For example, Eurasian watermilfoil has created more habitat for pike and bass. Zebra mussels are changing the nature of bottom substrates. Spiny water fleas may be competing with larval fish for small zooplankton.



***Zebra Mussels***



***Spiny Water Fleas***

Climate and weather conditions – namely, warmer weather patterns– also have resulted in low tullibee numbers and higher hooking mortality due to warmer water temperatures.”

All lakes, of course, are different. But there is one thing on which we can all agree: Mille Lacs Lake may just be our canary in the coal mine, and we need to be paying attention.

*Dave Laursen*

## BOARD MEMBERS SOUGHT



Due to illness and retirements, we are looking for two or more individuals who may have an interest in serving on the Leech Lake Association Board of Directors. The main qualifications are a passion for protecting Leech Lake lands and waters, and the time to attend our Board Meetings which are held the second Monday of most months at 9:30 AM in the Cass County Courthouse. These are interesting and informative meetings, which are regularly attended by representatives from Walker DNR Fisheries, the Corps of Engineers, and the Leech Lake Tribe. Our Board Members head up various committees directed at maintaining the quality of life on Leech Lake, including Invasive Species Prevention, Shoreland protections, Natural Resources, Lake Safety, Legislative issues, among others.

Our Board also works closely with Cass County Environmental Services, U.S Forestry, the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation, The Association of Cass County Lakes, and other like-minded groups.

If you have an interest in serving on our Board, please write a letter stating your interest and background to:

Robert Gisvold, President  
PO Box 1613  
Walker, MN 56484

Or send your letter by e-mail to Dave Laursen, Secretary/Treasurer, at [dlours@arvig.net](mailto:dlours@arvig.net).

## LEECH LAKE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETS



The 17-member Leech Lake Advisory Committee met during February to review Year 2 of the DNR's 2010-2015 Leech Lake Management Plan. This advisory committee was formed in August 2009 to provide recommendations to the DNR for Leech Lake fisheries management, with particular focus on the walleye population. Committee members include Leech Lake business and community members, guides/anglers, the Leech Lake Tribe, as well as state-wide angling experts. The group meets once each year to review progress against the goals established in the DNR's Five-Year Plan. This Plan embraces not just the sportfishery, but also includes cormorant control, habitat protection, crayfish abundance, and other factors

DNR analysis of the Leech Lake sportfishery is based on data gathered during seining, trawling, electro-fishing, and gill net operations conducted during the summer and fall, and analyzed over the winter. The news is good, with walleye populations – both in numbers and size structure --exceeding long term management objectives. The only fish population showing a downward trend was yellow perch, the cause of this decline to be the subject of further analysis. There are increasing numbers of large walleyes and other predator fish in the lake which prey on perch, along with cormorants, and increased winter fishing pressure. In this regard, if walleye spawning biomass continues to exceed management goals during the coming year, the present 18--26-inch protected slot will likely be changed to a 20--26-inch in 2014.

A summary of Year 2 of the DNR's Five-Year Management Plan is given below (some editorial liberties taken):

- Walleye gill net catch rate (9.4 fish/net) exceeded the management objective of 8.5 fish/net and was the sixth consecutive year catch rates were above the long-term average (7.7 fish/net)
- Walleye spawner biomass (2.2 lbs/acre) exceeded the management objective of 1.5 –2.0 lbs/acre. If this occurs again in 2013, consideration will be given to relaxing the 18—26-inch slot in 2014 (bag limit unchanged).
- Percentage of walleye sampled less than 15 inches (51%) was within the management objective range of 45 –65%, indicating a balanced population of adult and juvenile walleyes.
- Walleye recruitment objectives were met, with 6 of the previous 8 year classes having a measured strength of the long-term average (50<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher.)
- Walleye harvest rate for targeting anglers in 2011 (0.18 fish/hour) was below the management plan objective of 0.25 fish/hour, but within the range of previous observations (1991-2011). The next creel survey is scheduled for 2016.
- Yellow perch gill net catch rate (14.5 fish/net) was below the management plan objective (16.2 fish/net) and decreased for the fifth consecutive year. Size structure was similar to past years.
- Management objectives were met for northern pike.
- The second of four programmed fry stockings was completed in the spring of 2012 (7.5 million). Stocked fry were marked with OTC to allow DNR researchers to determine whether captured walleye fingerlings were stocked or wild. This summer, 14% of the captured fingerlings were stocked, and the natural hatch rate was estimated at 0.89%. Survival and growth is similar between stocked and naturally produced fish.



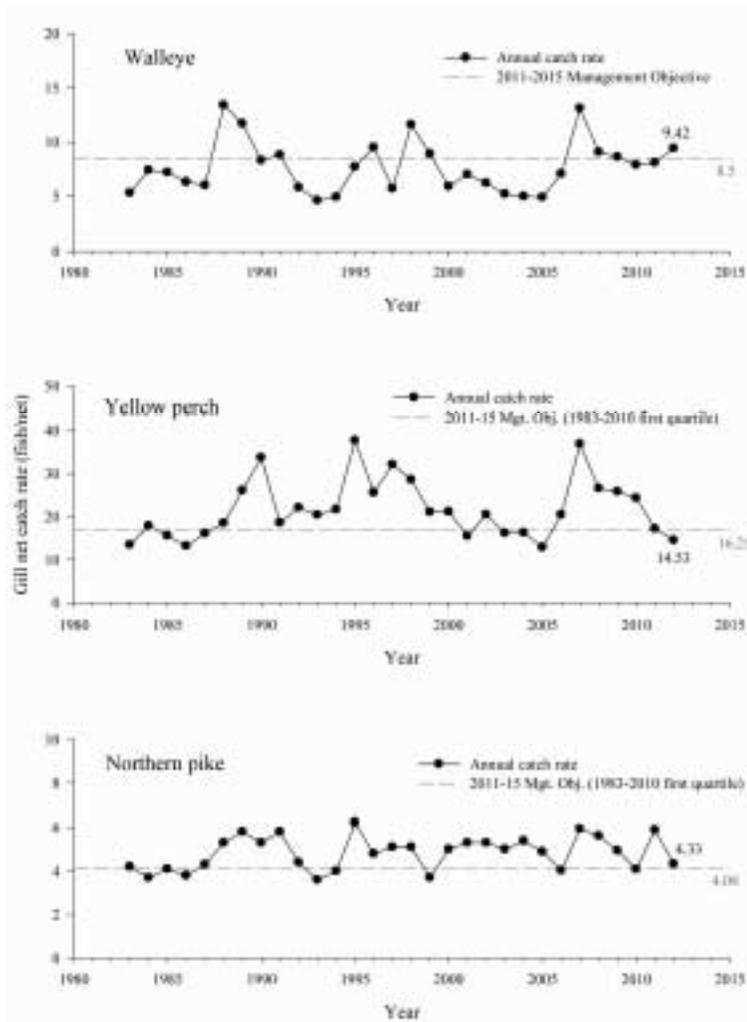
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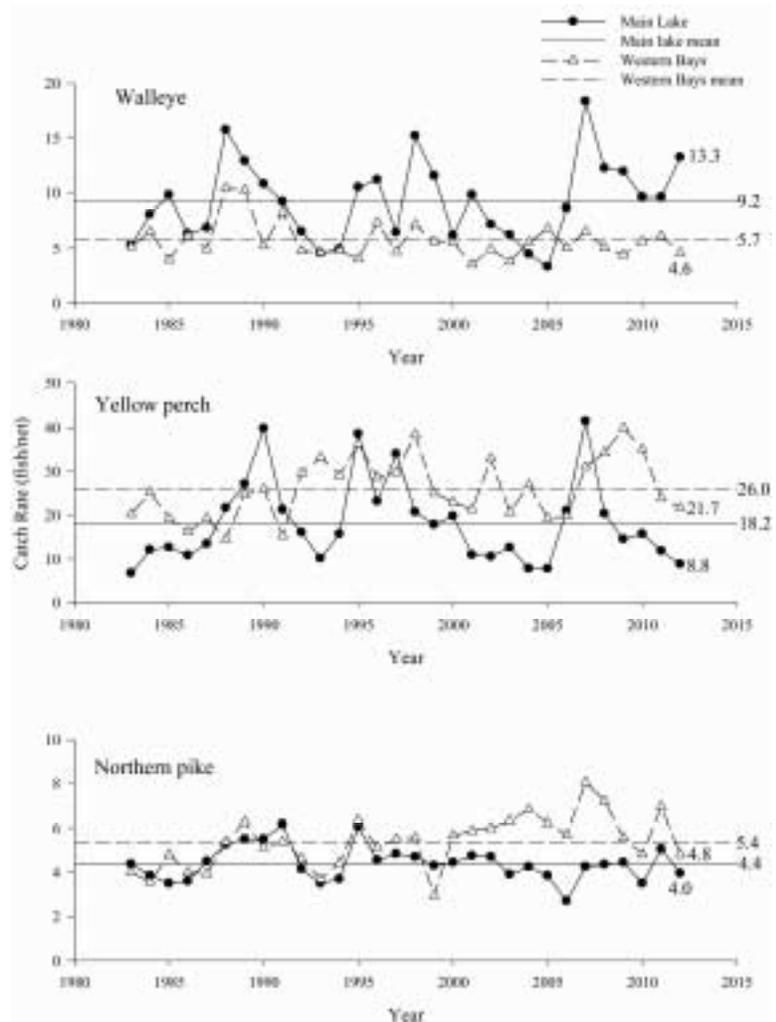
- Cormorant management continued during 2012 under the supervision of the Leech Lake Tribe Division of Resource Management (DRM). Some 1684 birds were removed.
- In the area of habitat protection, critical shorelands were identified in Miller Bay, Uram Bay, and Ottertail Peninsula. Acquisitions completed or pending.
- The number of invasive rusty crayfish entangled in gill nets increased during 2012, possibly due to the decline in perch numbers.



**Figure 1.**



**Figure 2.**

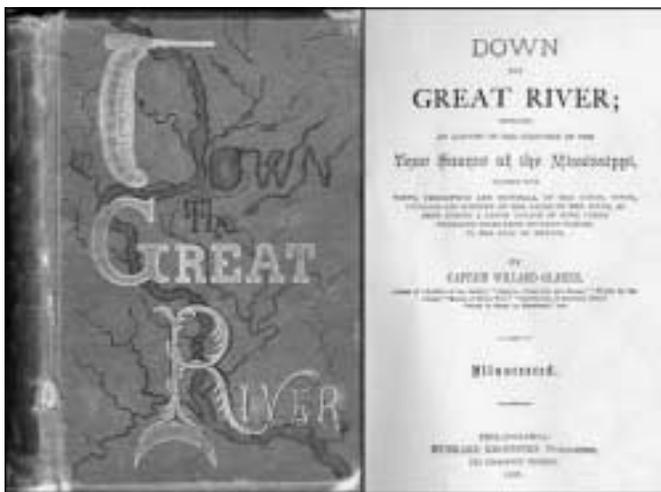


Figures 1 & 2 show gill net catch rates for primary fish management species from 1983 -2012.

## LEECH LAKE IN ANTIQUITY

In 1884 Captain Willard Glazier, a Civil War Veteran and explorer, traveled by way of Leech Lake to find the “true source” of the Mississippi River. While Schoolcraft had identified Lake Itasca as the river’s source as early as 1832, Glazier had heard rumors that there were waters flowing into Lake Itasca from somewhere beyond, and that this “somewhere beyond” was the “true source.” He believed that discovering the “true source” would make him famous, and also give him material for a book., which he did in fact write. He recounts his adventures in the book titled “Down the Great River; An Account of the Discovery of the

stantly increasing current. The strong rapids continued at intervals, and were rendered more dangerous by limbs of trees which stretched across the stream, threatening to sweep everything movable out of the canoes.



True Source of the Mississippi,” published by Hubbard Publishers of Philadelphia in 1891. His book provides an interesting picture of the Leech Lake country as it was in 1884, before the arrival of the loggers and homesteaders. Excerpts from his book will be included in this Newsletter from time to time. The book also includes an 1880's map of the Leech Lake area, which seems surprisingly accurate for its time (enclosed). In prior issues, Captain Glazier described his trip from Brainerd to Leech Lake, his stay at Agency Bay while awaiting Indian guides, and their arduous journey to Lake Itasca. They have now arrived at Itasca, and points beyond, but their food is gone and starvation begins.

### *The Journey Continues (in the words of Captain Glazier)*

Breakfast over, we were soon again gliding rapidly down the river, our speed greatly accelerated by a con-

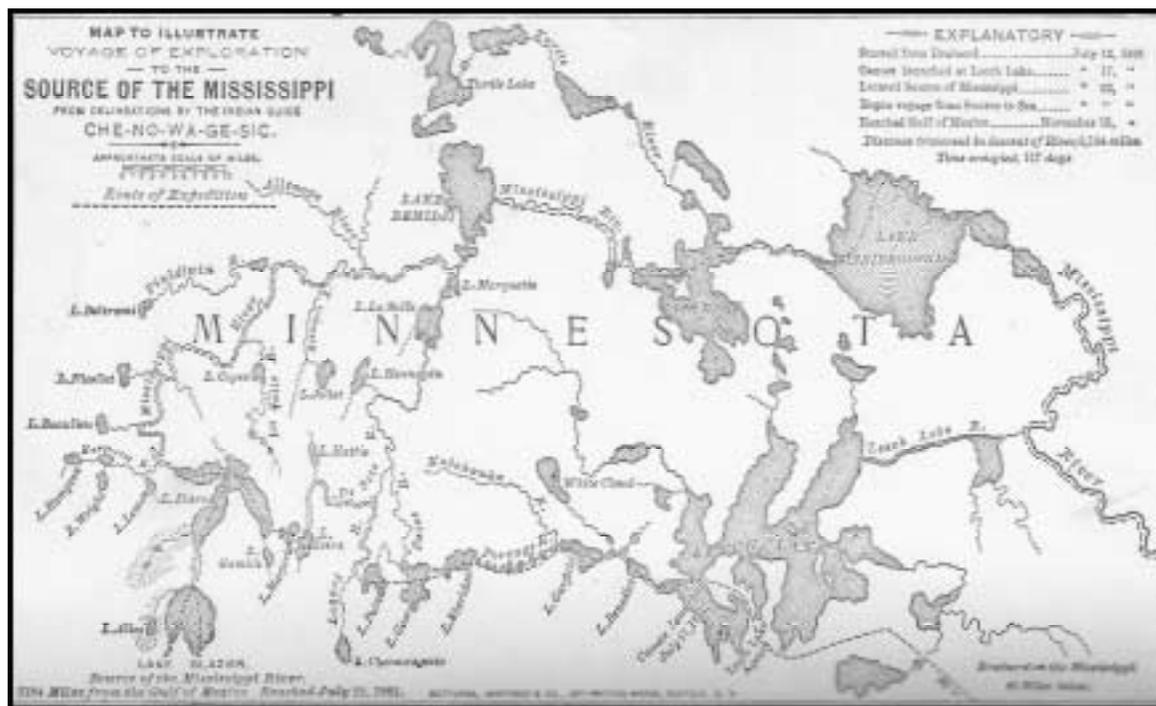
The series of rapids encountered during the day and the consequent interruption to navigation, kept us so well employed, that even had game been seen, no time was found for hunting, and it was with sensations of hunger, as well as fatigue, that we debated the situation in our new camp. The propriety of eating the otter killed in the morning was freely discussed. I knew from early information obtained as a trapper, that this animal was seldom, if ever, eaten by white men, and then only when driven to great extremity. Their catlike appearance is quite enough to neutralize the cravings of hunger under ordinary circumstances. George and Paine declared they would starve before eating anything so repulsive in appearance, and started in search of blueberries. Lagard and Chenowagesic said that otter was as good as baked dog, and proceeded to dress it for supper, while Sebatise made a small fire of pine knots, with which to roast their prize; for the Indians were determined to show us the edible qualities of the otter.

Returning to camp after a fruitless search for berries, George and Paine were in a humor to join me in an otter steak a la Chippewa. It is perhaps needless to add that Mr. Otter is not so black as he has frequently been painted, and the only regret upon devouring our rather unsavory supper was, that our four-legged friend had not been of larger dimensions, for he was both small and poor. I may further observe that it is quite natural to conclude that, as this animal subsists chiefly on fish

*(Leech Lake in Antiquity continued on page 12)*

*(Leech Lake in Antiquity continued from page 11)*

## 1880's MAP: HEADWATERS OF THE MISSISSIPPI



and vegetables, it may be eaten without hesitation, whenever the hunter finds himself in straits for more palatable food.

Although the day was one of incessant toil with axes and paddles, we only advanced fifteen miles. Greatly refreshed, however, by our evening meal and thankful that our condition was no worse, we retired to our tents hopeful for the morrow.

Being still without rations, all hands went in pursuit of blueberries at six o'clock this morning, but soon returned after a fruitless search, and again launched our canoes trusting to the fates for something of an eatable character.

Another chain of rapids was encountered a few yards below Camp Otter. We were nearly an hour in passing down these rapids, when we reached the Kakabikons Falls. This little cataract is a swift rush of water, bolting through a narrow gorge, without a perpendicular fall. Chenowagesic suggested that we should make a portage, but after consultation, we decided to keep the canoes in the water as their crews were so reduced in strength as to be unable to carry the luggage.



While halting at its head for Paine to come up George caught hold of my canoe in order to bring his own to a stand. He succeeded in his purpose. But being checked suddenly, the stern of his canoe swung across the stream, which permitted his pilot (guide) to catch hold of the limb of a fallen tree. Thus stretched tensely across the rapid stream, in an instant the water burst over the gunwale, precipitating its contents into the swift current. The water was about four feet deep.

*(Leech Lake in Antiquity continued on page 13)*

*(Leech Lake in Antiquity continued from page 12)*

George and his pilot found footing with considerable difficulty, but his canoe, tent, blankets, gun and everything was swept over the falls and lost. He clung to his paddle, however, and by feeling with his feet brought up his fowling piece.

Following the overturned canoe, we came up with it at the foot of the rapids, but injured the balance of our little fleet so much in the descent as to cause us considerable delay. It was hoped that this misfortune would prove a valuable lesson to George, who, notwithstanding the fact that he had already been capsized five or six times, had yet, it seemed, much to learn about navigation in birch canoes.



The physical nature of the stream made this part of our journey a most rapid one. Willing or unwilling, we were hurried on; but indeed, we had every desire to hasten our descent, for hunger, gaunt and stern, still stared at us from each succeeding bend of the river. Towards evening, Sebatisse caught two black bass with a hook made from a small piece of tin, while I killed four mallard ducks with three rounds of my shotgun.

***George and his pilot found footing with considerable difficulty, but his canoe, tent, blankets, gun and everything was swept over the falls and lost.***

We disembarked a little before sunset and pitched our tents on a hillside covered with Norway Pine. After carefully discussing the situation, it was unanimously voted that the ducks should be reserved for breakfast, as we had learned from experience that we could better dispense with our rations at night than in the morning, when we had a day of paddling before us. My surprise can be well imagined when about midnight I heard loud grumbling in the tent occupied by the interpreter and guides. They had reconsidered their vote and were now in favor of eating fish and ducks at once. Believing that the course we had previously decided upon was best for all, I reasoned with the guides and then ordered the guns and game into my own tent. This put an end to the disaffection and we again retired to sleep as best we could. I may add here that in my experience among Indians I have observed that when in the possession of food they seldom defer eating it, but when their larders are empty they patiently submit to the gnawing of hunger.

***To be continued...***

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## **POSTSCRIPT:**

### **AND THE SNOW KEPT COMING...**

Since this newsletter was completed on March 1, the Leech Lake area has been buffeted by one snowstorm after another. The snow is thigh-deep in the woods and a mile high on our roofs and along our driveways. No worries now about insufficient snowmelt to fill our lake and the other northern reservoirs. A more real concern is potential flooding downstream which might force Federal Dam to release its excess water more slowly than desired, resulting in higher than optimum spring water levels. And we still need spring rains to replenish our soils and aquifers. So the issues are complex, and time will tell.

Dave Laursen



## VISIT OUR LLA WEBSITE AT:

[www.minnesotawaters.org/group/leech/home](http://www.minnesotawaters.org/group/leech/home)

It continues to be hosted by Minnesota Waters/ Conservation Minnesota.

We try to keep the website updated with current information. We now have included the 2012 LLA Lake Management Plan and the latest Newsletters, listed under 'Publications'. Also, local news and information is available under 'Links' which includes items such as the Walker Pilot -Independent, Chamber of Commerce fishing reports & events calendar, DNR Fisheries Management Reports, and much more.



## REMINDER: TIME TO RENEW MEMBERSHIPS FOR 2012-2013



Because our fiscal year runs from July to July, the date of our Annual Meeting is when memberships expire and dues are collected for the coming year. ***This year our annual meeting will be held on July 25th.*** The notation '13' beside your name on the mailing label means that your membership is up to date through July 2013. Those with an 11 or 12 beside your name means your membership has expired. Those with expired memberships will receive a self-addressed envelope and renewal form along with this newslet-

ter. We sincerely hope that you will renew your membership and encourage your friends and neighbors to do likewise. There is strength in numbers, and your dues allow our volunteers to carry on their work, which is to protect Leech Lake, guard your interests, and communicate with you through press releases and this newsletter.

**Thank you in advance,  
The Membership Committee**



**PLEASE RECYCLE**

Recycling is an important way for us to conserve energy, reduce waste in our landfills and conserve our natural resources for many years to come. Please take a moment to recycle that water bottle, aluminum can, or glass spaghetti jar

instead of tossing it into the garbage. Our earth will thank you for it.

For more information go to <http://www.environment-green.com/>



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## WELCOMES NEW SPONSORS



We are very grateful to all those who have chosen to become or remain sponsors of the Leech Lake Association (\$100 and above). Your generous donations, plus the annual dues of all our members, allow us to continue our mission of protecting Leech Lake and environs. A special thank you to:

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- ◆ Robert & Patti Gisvold, Walker, MN

A special welcome to all our new members, and to all of you who have continued to support us over the years as the walleye fishery has recovered.

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

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