

NLA WALLEYE PROJECT

FISHERY INITIATIVE

November of 2017 the most recent GLIFWC Fishery data was released and the numbers show a significant decline in Walleye numbers in the Lake. Numbers were down to 2.3 per acre. At this release, the NLA board, local business owners, and concerned residents met and created the Namakagon Lake Fishery Initiative. Scott Toshner our DNR fisheries biologist, along with interested members have created this document to guide our successful rejuvenation of this significant Walleye Fishery. Mark Luehring GLIFWC biologist is working with the Tribes, (Bad River, and Red Cliff) and they share all of our same concerns and want to work with us, as this is important to all who love this wonderful Fishery. The goal is to return our numbers to a long standing population level of 5 adult Walleyes per acre. Both Habitat improvement and stocking will be utilized. Certainly, harvest needs to be addressed and we are working on a number of tactics affecting harvest. This is a great natural Walleye Lake and we need to help it right now. If you want to help immediately, creating buffers on some of your shoreline would be fantastic. We will be exploring the opportunity for Woody Habitat starting this summer also. Not all is lost, the NLA is “on it”, and taking action, and the Walleye recruitment years were quite positive in 2016, so look for fair numbers coming soon. For any questions you can call me, Mike D’Andrea, and I’ll do my best to provide answers.

PROJECT UPDATE ANNUAL MEETING 2018

Annual Program “Walleye – State of the Lake” presented by Mike D’Andrea. Chair Namakagon Walleye Project. He presented the history of the walleye density on the lake and the recent data showing that the numbers have now dropped to 2.3 walleye/acre. There is recognition from the tribes and the DNR that these numbers are too low. Scott Toschner feels this is a natural walleye lake and there is strong support to bring Lake Namakagon back to 5 walleye/acre or better density. While there has been significant concern that tribal spearing has been a major source of the drop in numbers, hook and line fishing harvests 3 times the numbers of the tribal take. Extensive communication and meetings over the past months have resulted developing a fisheries initiative with three initiatives.

1. Environmental – Focusing on improving the environment for walleye. There are grant dollars available to land owners focusing on woody structures to keep bait fish closer to shore to allow development of walleye. Anyone interested in having additional wood structures dropped into the waters near their land should contact Mike D’Andre. This is different than the fish sticks, but does require trees from more than 35 feet from shore and would not use shoreline trees.
2. Decreased harvesting – Tribes have cut their harvest by 50%. Signs will be posted asking anglers to consider catch and release or decreasing their harvest. Mr. D’ Andrea estimated that in 2017, the tribes took 1300 walleye, while fisherman took 2900, which is estimated to be 57% of the walleye population.
3. Stocking – Mr. D’Andre discussed options for stocking and why we were unable to stock in 2018. Also Muskie stocking continues, but is not the reason for the drop in Walleye on the lake as the primary food source of muskie is perch. Partnerships have been developed with the tribes from Red Cliff and Bad River as well as UW Steve’s Point, which has a state of the art facility for developing walleye. There is an opportunity for a fall stocking but will cost \$5000. Optimal size for stocking is 6-8 inches. Going forward there is an opportunity to stock for the next 3 years at a cost of \$20,000 year (goal is 20,000 6-8 inch walleye per year). Recent experience has 40% success rate at near by lake. There is a meeting on September 25th to further discuss the topic.

PROJECT UPDATE SPRING 2019

With the temperature low this morning, at -23 below, it’s hard to think of spring, but it’s coming soon. We hope. Plans are in place this spring to harvest eggs and milk from Namakagon Walleyes, hatch them, raise fry, to fingerlings, and then to extended length (6-8”) Walleyes for stocking. The Goal will be to stock 30,000 extended length Walleyes late September 2019. The fish will be raised at the UWSP, Northern Aquaculture Demonstration Facility, in Red Cliff. I will be organizing with the facility director 1 to 2 tours

to visit the facility, and our fish this summer. It's a fascinating facility, and hopefully many will be interested in seeing this place, and the fish. We do have an opportunity to construct some fish stick complexes yet this winter in a few locations on the shorelines of a few of our property owners. With success this next year of seeking grants, our environmental efforts to improve habitat will expand. The goals are to build shoreline buffers and add fish stick complexes where welcomed. These actions keep our lake cleaner, and add more yellow perch and biomass for fish. Keep in mind, grants can help on our environmental efforts, but our fish stocking comes from you! NLA is a 501c3, and we still need donations for our stocking efforts in 2019. Thank you all for your contributions. Finally, we hope to have a Walleye Banquet this spring. Stay tuned for details. This will be a fun fundraising event.

PROJECT UPDATE SUMMER 2019

Harvest of 7 quarts of walleye eggs, which was less than goal, but still deemed successful. Collaboration with WDNR suggested options for next year may increase harvest of eggs to go into stocking program. Plan would be to alternate years with large and small restocking based on success in prior experiences. As of June, there are 20,000 fry in pond and the plan is to grow all of them to an extended length. The number that will grow and be stocked this fall cannot be determined. There will be ongoing need for substantial financial resources and fund raising will need to be a continual activity to support the initiative to restock walleyes in Lake Namakagon. The current fund has >\$30,000 but a portion of this will be used for stocking this year.