



# 2025 SPRING FISHERIES SURVEY SUMMARY

## MOOSE LAKE, SAWYER COUNTY

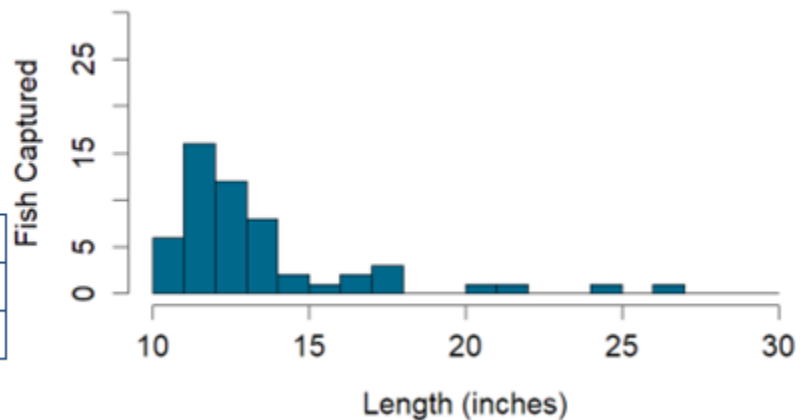
Report by Max Wolter

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Hayward Fisheries Management Team conducted a fyke netting survey on Moose Lake from May 12-15, 2025. The primary targets were muskellunge and black crappie, but useful data were also gathered on walleye, northern pike, bluegill and smallmouth bass. Up to eight nets were set overnight for three nights which resulted in 24 net-nights of effort. Quality, preferred and memorable sizes referenced in this summary are based on standard proportions of world record lengths developed for each species by the American Fisheries Society.

### WALLEYE



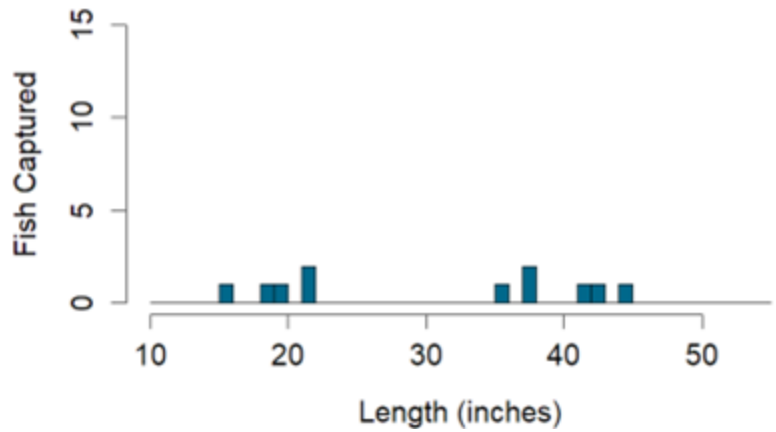
Captured 3 per net-night $\geq$ 10 inches	
Quality Size $\geq$ 15"	19%
Preferred Size $\geq$ 20"	7%



### MUSKELLUNGE



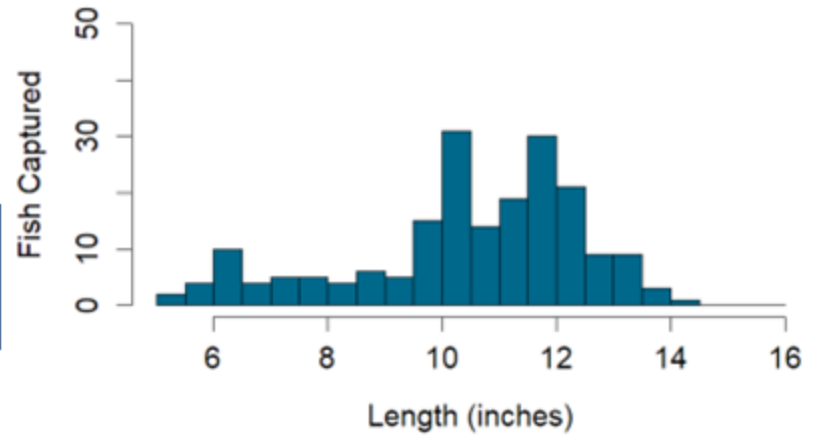
Captured 0.4 per net-night $\geq 20$ inches	
Quality Size $\geq 30$ "	75%
Memorable Size $\geq 42$ "	25%



### BLACK CRAPPIE



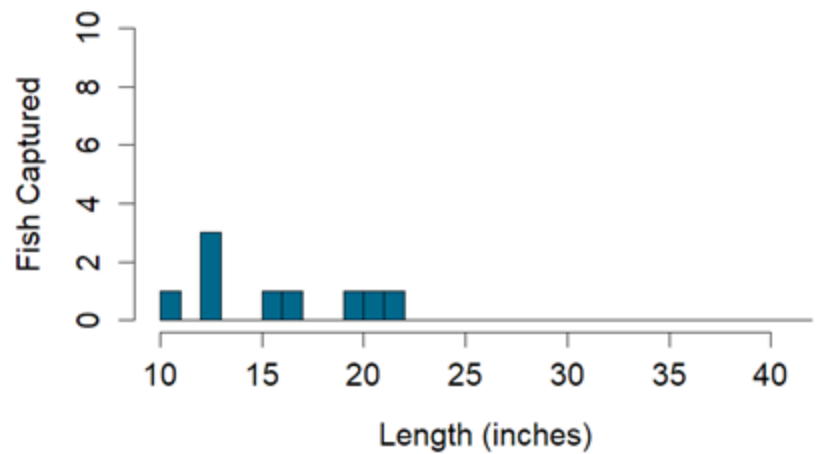
Captured 8 per net-night $\geq 5$ inches	
Quality Size $\geq 8$ "	85%
Preferred Size $\geq 10$ "	70%



### NORTHERN PIKE



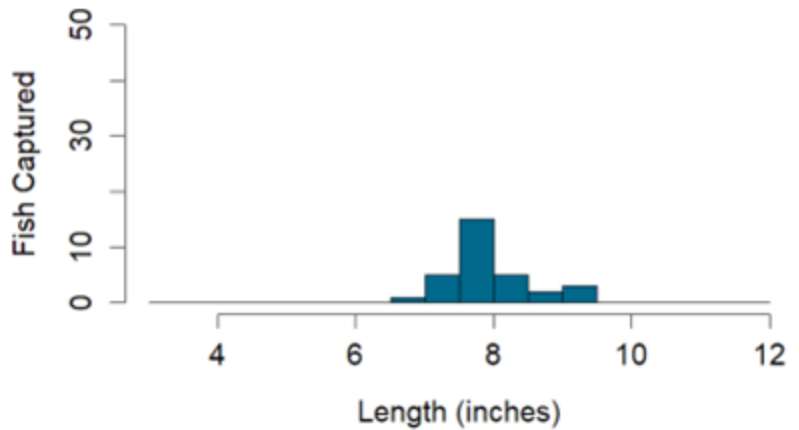
Captured 0.4 per net-night $\geq 14$ inches	
Quality Size $\geq 21$ "	20%
Preferred Size $\geq 28$ "	0%



### BLUEGILL



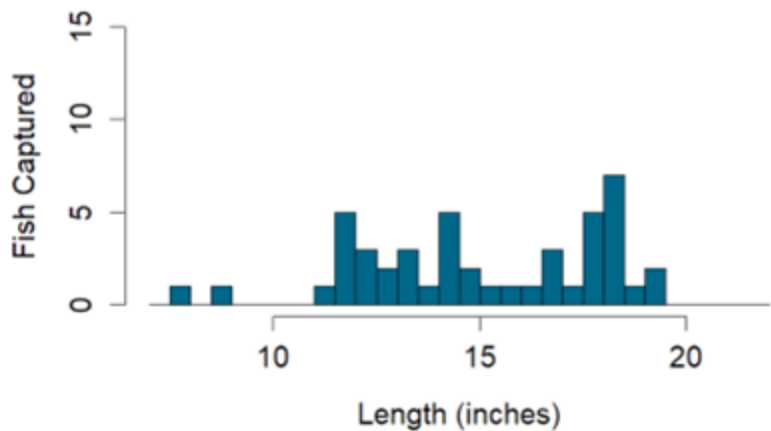
Captured 1.3 per net $\geq$ 3 inches	
Quality Size $\geq$ 6"	100%
Preferred Size $\geq$ 8"	32%



### SMALLMOUTH BASS



Captured 2 per net-night $\geq$ 7 inches	
Quality Size $\geq$ 11"	96%
Preferred Size $\geq$ 14"	63%
Memorable Size $\geq$ 17"	35%



## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This survey provides a snapshot of the Moose Lake fishery but comes with several caveats. The methods and timing are most appropriate for crappie and muskellunge. However, we saw this as an opportunity to collect data on some other important species as well (bluegill and smallmouth bass) since electrofishing on Moose Lake has limited effectiveness. The netting survey was late in the spring, making it not ideal for sampling walleye. Interpreting our results for northern pike, walleye, bluegill and smallmouth bass should be done carefully considering we used non-standard timing and/or gear for these species.

Moose Lake is a unique waterbody with a strong riverine influence. As such, it is classified as a "riverine" lake in our fisheries classification system. Comparisons are

made in this report to other riverine lakes. Moose Lake has very dark stained water, which is another characteristic that structures the fishery.

## WALLEYE

This survey was not well-timed to accurately gauge walleye abundance in Moose Lake, but we can still make some general conclusions about size structure. Most walleye captured were less than 15 inches, continuing a historic trend of lower size structure resulting from slow growth. This is a reason why Moose Lake has often had angling regulations that allow harvest of smaller walleye. There is no minimum length limit for walleye on Moose Lake, but only 1 walleye over 14 inches can be harvested. **Note:** this regulation may be changing after 2026. Check for updates in the DNR's fishing regulation booklet or signs at access points.

## MUSKELLUNGE

Muskellunge catch rate in this survey was relatively low compared to past surveys of Moose Lake but still ranked between the 50<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles in comparison to other riverine lakes. Moose Lake has historically been known as an “action” muskellunge fishery with higher angler catch rates but generally smaller size. However, this survey found 25% of all muskellunge captured were over 42 inches. This is representative of a shift that has been happening in the fishery towards larger fish, but possibly lower abundance. Future surveys may help us better understand potential changes in this muskellunge population. There is a 40-inch minimum length limit for muskellunge on Moose Lake and a 1-fish daily bag limit.

## BLACK CRAPPIE

Crappie are one of the most valued fish in Moose Lake and this survey demonstrated why. Abundance of crappie is in the 50<sup>th</sup>-75<sup>th</sup> percentile compared to other riverine lakes, but size is exceptional with 70% of the population over 10 inches and a large proportion approaching or surpassing 12 inches. Moose Lake currently has an experimental size and bag limit for panfish, which allows the harvest of only one panfish over 12 inches and a 5-daily bag limit.

## NORTHERN PIKE

Northern pike are a relative newcomer to Moose Lake, and a mostly unwanted one at that. Pike are believed to have emigrated downstream from the Clam Lake system where they appear to have been illegally introduced. The first pike showed up in a Moose Lake fisheries survey in 2022, when a single pike was captured. The 2025 survey resulted in nine pike being caught. Anglers and fisheries staff have taken note

of this increase and what it might mean for the rest of the fishery. Anglers are encouraged to harvest northern pike they catch as part of their regular fishing (the daily bag limit is 5-fish).

## BLUEGILL

Bluegill exist in Moose Lake in an interesting hyper low-density but excellent size state. Bluegill are self-sustaining, but at a low level, with their abundance likely limited by dark water, abundant predators and only sparse aquatic vegetation. This survey found a continuation of this status for bluegill, with low catch but all bluegill captured being quality size.

## SMALLMOUTH BASS

Netting is not our preferred method for surveying smallmouth bass in Wisconsin lakes, but it is one of the only readily available methods for us to gather data on this population. Smallmouth captured in this survey showed impressive size, with 35% over 17 inches. Smallmouth are the more abundant bass species in Moose Lake (largemouth are quite rare), and they are well-suited to the dark water, rocky and woody shorelines and riverine influence of Moose Lake.

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*Reviewed and approved by Aaron Cole*