

Dept. of Natural Resources: Announces changes to northern Wisconsin walleye regulations for 2022 fishing season

Posted on Wednesday, Apr 13, 2022

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) today announced that new fishing regulations will go into effect on numerous northern water bodies for the 2022 fishing season.

Regional Walleye Regulation Change

The walleye regulation for multiple water bodies in the Flambeau River, South Fork Flambeau River and Elk River watersheds in Ashland, Iron, Price, Rusk, Sawyer and Vilas counties will switch to the standard walleye regulation for the Ceded Territory in northern Wisconsin.

Anglers may keep a daily bag limit of three walleye at least 15 inches but less than 20 inches, or they can keep two walleye 15 to 20 inches and one over 24 inches. The change will be in effect for the May 7, 2022, fishing season opener.

“Over the past 15 years, we have observed a decline in walleye populations in these waters,” said Jeff Scheirer, DNR fisheries biologist.

This regulation aims to protect the young walleye that most of these populations are still producing, but at much lower rates than in the past. The new regulation will allow anglers to harvest adult walleye while protecting young walleye until they mature.

“The current rule that allows anglers to keep three walleye of any length, but only

one over 14 inches, is no longer the proper fit for populations with dwindling recruitment,” Scheirer said. “If the population rebounds and the new regulation helps more walleye mature into adults, we can reassess whether this new regulation is still needed down the road.”

Waterbodies changing to this regulation include:

- Big Falls Flowage (Rusk County)
- Crowley Flowage (Price County)
- Dairyland Reservoir (Rusk County)
- Elk River (entire) (Price County)
- Flambeau River, including waters of the North Fork Flambeau River, between Turtle-Flambeau Dam and Thornapple Flowage Dam (Ashland, Iron, Price, Rusk and Sawyer counties)
- Grassy Lake (Price County)
- Lac Sault Dore (Price County)
- Ladysmith Flowage (Rusk County)
- Lower Park Falls Flowage (Price County)
- Phillips Chain (Duroy, Elk, Long, Wilson lakes and connecting waters combined) (Price County)
- Pike Lake Chain (Amik, Pike, Round, Turner lakes and connecting waters combined) (Price and Vilas counties)
- Pixley Flowage (Price County)
- Solberg Lake (Price County)
- South Fork Flambeau River (entire) (Price, Rusk and Sawyer counties)
- Thornapple Flowage (Rusk County)
- Upper Park Falls Flowage (Price County)

Escanaba Lake Walleye Season And Regulation

The Ceded Territory standard walleye regulation will also apply to Escanaba Lake, a research lake in Vilas County that is part of the Northern Highland Fishery Research Area. Moving to the Ceded Territory regulation from the previous regulation of a 28-inch minimum length limit and a daily bag limit of one will allow DNR scientists to test the effects of the Ceded Territory regulation on this local walleye population while providing additional opportunities for anglers to catch walleye. However, the DNR will establish an annual quota in pounds of walleye for Escanaba Lake, limiting angler harvest.

Additional changes to the season framework on Escanaba Lake will go into effect at the same time as the regulation change. The season will open on June 11, 2022, and run until the general game fish season closure on March 5, 2023. Once anglers reach the annual walleye harvest quota, only catch-and-release fishing for walleye will be allowed for the rest of the season. The transition to catch-and-release fishing will be announced each year locally.

“This regulation change aims to allow us to specifically assess the influences of walleye harvest under the Ceded Territory walleye regulation, including the effects of production overharvest—harvesting more walleye than are produced each year,” said Greg Sass, DNR fisheries research team leader. “Tribal and angler participation will be a key component of the experiment.”

The DNR requires anglers wishing to fish on Escanaba Lake to obtain a daily permit from the Escanaba Lake check station. Also, no lead tackle (specifically split shot and jigheads) is allowed when fishing on this lake.

Other Northern Wisconsin Fishing Regulation Changes

Additional fishing regulations will go into effect for other lakes, rivers and streams within northern Wisconsin. The complete list of regulation changes for 2022 is available on the [DNR's Fishing Regulations webpage](#).