

Summary of Spring 2024 Comprehensive Fish Survey of Pigeon Lake

Spring Fyke Netting Survey:

Fyke nets were set at 5 locations on March 5, 2024. Nets were checked starting on March 6 until they were pulled on March 17. The primary species that were targeted with these nets were northern pike and walleye.

Northern Pike: A total of 22 northern pike were captured during the fyke netting survey. Northern pike ranged in size from 14.6-30.9 inches with a mean length of 22.2 inches. Growth rates of northern pike in Pigeon Lake were slightly below the statewide average. Anglers have noted the high number of sub-legal northern pike in the lake. While preparing for our spring electrofishing survey, DNR staff observed anglers catch several small northern pike from the dock at the boat launch in a short amount of time.

Walleye: A total of 4 walleye were captured during the fyke netting survey. Walleye ranged in size from 19.5-25.2 inches long with a mean length of 23.2 inches. Fewer stockings of large fingerling walleye in recent years in combination with the very early ice off likely contributed to the low number of walleyes captured in 2024. The WDNR switched from stocking small fingerling walleyes to large fingerling walleyes in 2023 in hopes the large fingerling walleyes survive better.

Yellow Perch and Rock Bass: Even though the fyke netting survey was not specifically targeting these two species, good numbers of both species were captured with plenty of harvestable size individuals.

Spring Electrofishing Survey:

A nighttime spring electrofishing survey was conducted on Pigeon Lake on the evening of May 23, 2024. The primary species that were targeted during the electrofishing survey were largemouth bass and panfish.

Largemouth Bass: A total of 24 largemouth bass were captured during the electrofishing survey. Largemouth bass ranged in size from 7.1-15.2 inches with an average size of 11.5 inches. Growth rates of largemouth bass were slow, likely due to the high density of largemouth bass in the lake.

Bluegill: A total of 80 bluegill were captured during the electrofishing survey. Bluegill captured ranged in size from 2.9-8.2 inches with an average size of 4.6 inches. Size structure of bluegill improved following the implementation of the special panfish regulation in 2016.

Summary of Spring 2025 Comprehensive Fish Survey of Bullhead Lake

Spring Fyke Netting Survey:

Fyke nets were set at 5 locations on March 18, 2025. Nets were checked each day starting on March 19 until they were pulled on March 23. The primary species that were targeted with these nets were northern pike and walleye.

Northern Pike: A total of 143 northern pike were captured during the fyke netting survey. Northern pike ranged in size from 21.1-28.9 inches with a mean length of 24.2 inches. Fin rays were collected from northern pike for age and growth analysis. Staff are still working on estimating ages and growth rates from these samples.

Walleye: A total of 5 walleye were captured during the fyke netting survey. Walleye ranged in size from 13.3-23.6 inches long with a mean length of 15.8 inches. Four of the five walleye captured were 13.3-14.2 inches long and were from the 2023 stocking of large fingerling walleye, which was the first stocking of large fingerling walleye by the DNR in Bullhead Lake. Historically, the DNR only stocked small fingerling walleye in Bullhead Lake. Large fingerling walleyes are stocked in fall when they are about 8 inches long compared to small fingerling walleye that are stocked in June when they are about 2-3 inches long. Large fingerling walleye tend to survive better because of their larger size at stocking. The previous

stocking of any walleye other than small fingerlings occurred in 2012 when 397 walleye that average 6 inches long were stocked as a private stocking.

Spring Electrofishing Survey:

A nighttime spring electrofishing survey was conducted on Bullhead Lake on the evening of May 19, 2025. The primary species that were targeted during the electrofishing survey were largemouth bass and panfish.

Largemouth Bass: A total of 272 largemouth bass were captured during the electrofishing survey. Largemouth bass ranged in size from 4.9-16.7 inches with an average size of 10.3 inches. Fin spines were collected from a subsample of largemouth bass for age and growth analysis. Staff are still working on estimating ages and growth rates from these samples. Management of largemouth bass will be a focal point for Bullhead Lake moving forward. Largemouth bass have become overabundant and are likely having a significant negative impact on other species through predation.

Bluegill: A total of 66 bluegill were captured during the electrofishing survey. Bluegill captured ranged in size from 2.3-9.1 inches with an average size of 4.7 inches. Otoliths were collected from the bluegill for age and growth analysis. Bluegill size structure improved following the implementation of the special panfish regulation in 2016.

Summary of Spring 2025 Comprehensive Fish Survey of Long Lake

Spring Fyke Netting Survey:

Fyke nets were set at 5 locations on March 17, 2025. Nets were checked each day starting on March 18 until they were pulled on March 22. The primary species that were targeted with these nets were northern pike and walleye.

Northern Pike: Long Lake had a history of stocking northern pike to sustain the fishery. The last year of stocking was in 2019. One of the primary objectives of this survey was to evaluate the potential for natural reproduction to sustain the northern pike fishery in the future. A total of 85 northern pike were captured during the fyke netting survey. Northern pike ranged in size from 13.8-35.0 inches with a mean length of 23.9 inches. Twelve northern pike ≤ 18.1 inches were captured. All 12 of these northern pike are likely < 6 years old and are naturally reproduced fish. Fin rays were collected from northern pike to confirm ages.

Black Crappie: A total of 1,364 black crappies were captured in the fyke netting survey. Crappies remain overabundant in Long Lake.

Spring Electrofishing Survey:

A nighttime spring electrofishing survey was conducted on Long Lake on the evening of May 13, 2025. The primary species that were targeted during the electrofishing survey were largemouth bass and panfish.

Largemouth Bass: A total of 97 largemouth bass were captured during the electrofishing survey. Largemouth bass ranged in size from 6.1-21.3 inches with an average size of 13.8 inches. Long Lake continues to support a healthy largemouth bass population.

Bluegill: A total of 69 bluegill were captured during the electrofishing survey. Bluegill captured ranged in size from 3.5-10.4 inches with an average size of 6.5 inches. Long Lake continues to support a quality bluegill fishery.

Regulation Change proposals on the 2025 Spring Hearings:

All Manitowoc County fishing regulation change proposals on the 2025 spring hearings received favorable support at the statewide and local level. These regulation changes are still being reviewed by the state legislature. As long as they pass legislative review, these regulations will go into effect on April 1, 2026.

Cedar Lake Northern Pike: Results from the **2022 comprehensive fish survey** of Cedar Lake showed there was an overabundant, stunted northern pike population in the lake. It was recommended that a new northern pike regulation with a 25-35 inch protected slot limit and daily bag limit of 2 be implemented. This will allow harvest of the smaller stunted northern pike while protecting the fastest growing fish that grow into the slot limit from harvest. This should improve the quality of the northern pike fishery in the lake.

Silver Lake Northern Pike: Silver Lake still has the 32 inch minimum length limit and daily bag limit of 1 regulation that was implemented following the restoration efforts over 20 years ago. Results from the **2023 comprehensive fish survey** of Silver Lake showed there was an abundant northern pike population in Silver lake. This highly restrictive regulation is no longer needed as the northern pike population has fully recovered. It was recommended to go back to the southern zone northern pike regulation of a 26 inch minimum length limit and daily bag limit of 2.

Special panfish regulations:

Five lakes in Manitowoc County have special panfish regulations that were set to sunset on March 31, 2026, unless new regulations were proposed on the 2025 spring hearings. New regulations were proposed for all 5 of these lakes and they were on the spring hearings. Below is the new regulation that was proposed for each lake:

- Long Lake: 25 aggregate bag limit for panfish but no more than 5 bluegill. Went with 25 aggregate bag limit because of the very high density black crappie population.
- English Lake: 10 aggregate bag limit for panfish but no more than 5 bluegill.
- Pigeon Lake: 10 aggregate bag limit for panfish.
- Bullhead Lake: 10 aggregate bag limit for panfish.
- Harpt Lake: 10 aggregate bag limit for panfish but no more than 5 yellow perch. This lake is included in a special evaluation looking at restrictive yellow perch regulations.

Cedar Lake panfish regulation: Cedar Lake was added as a lake with a special panfish regulation. The proposed regulation was a 10 aggregate bag limit for panfish but no more than 5 bluegill. Cedar Lake receives significant fishing pressure and recent surveys have shown a decline in the quality of the bluegill population. This regulation will protect some bluegill from harvest and improve the quality of the panfish fishery.

Please note that the WDNR will be posting new fishing regulations signs at all lakes that have regulation changes prior to the start of the 2026 fishing season.

If you have any questions, please direct them too:

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