

# Hamlin Lake Fisheries Management: Past, Present, and Future



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# Hamlin Lake

- Originally a natural “drowned rivermouth” lake, enlarged to 5,350 acres with the construction of the dam in 1913.
- Hamlin Lake dam has a head of about 12 feet.



# Hamlin Lake- Early Historical Issues

- Aquatic macrophyte control.
- Lake level control.
- Fish stocking, fish transfers over the Hamlin Lake Dam.



# Survey History

- First MDOC fisheries survey done in 1932.
- Creel survey in winter 1935-36.
- Subsequent fisheries surveys done in 1942, 1953, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1983, 1992, 1997, 2004.



# 1932 Survey

- The following game species were found:



- largemouth bass
- smallmouth bass
- yellow perch
- muskellunge
- rock bass
- black crappie
- northern pike
- walleye
- pumpkinseed sunfish
- bluegill



# 1932 Survey, cont'd.

- Yellow perch abundant
- Northern pike “on the decrease”
- Largemouth bass more abundant than smallmouth bass
- Limited number of muskies taken each year
- Bluegills present, but not abundant



# Early Stocking History

- Late 1930s, early 1940s MDOC stocked smallmouth and largemouth bass fingerlings, walleye fry, bluegill fingerlings, and yellow perch fingerlings.
- Fish were also lifted over the Hamlin Lake Dam, including steelhead, adult walleye, adult pike, etc.
- Stocking programs discontinued after 1942, because of recommendations in the 1942 MDOC Fisheries survey.



# Common themes in fisheries surveys over the years:

- Perch small, growth poor.
- Northern pike mostly small, poor growth.
- Population levels and growth good for other desirable species (walleye, bass, panfish).



# Recent Hamlin Lake MDNR Stocking History

- Tiger muskies stocked from 1969 until 1988.
- Modern walleye program started in 1989.
- A total of 987,254 walleye have been stocked since 1989.
- The last major stocking was 163,081 walleye fingerlings in 2003.



# 2004 Fisheries Survey

- Consisted of one week of netting with gill nets, trap nets, and fyke nets, and one night of boomshocking.
- A total of 3,464 fish were captured representing 20 different species.



# 2004 Survey, Panfish

- **Black crappie:** 104 from 4-13", average 9". Growth good.
- **Bluegill:** 902 from 2-9", average 7". Growth good. Very strong 1999 year class.
- **Pumpkinseed sunfish:** 288 from 4-9", average 6". Growth good.
- **Rock bass:** 1,001 from 3-11", average 7". Growth average.
- **Yellow perch:** 275 from 2-11", average 6". Growth slightly below average. Strong 2000 year class.



# 2004 Survey, Gamefish



- **Largemouth bass:** 269 from 4-20", growth good.
- **Northern pike:** 73 from 13-29", growth good. Only ten over 24".
- **Walleye:** 27 from 7-26", growth good, fish represented from both stocking and non-stocking years. Good 2003 year class.
- **Smallmouth bass:** Only 3 caught, 11-18".



# 2004 Survey, other species

bluntnose minnow

bowfin (dogfish)

brown bullhead

common carp

white sucker

freshwater drum

(sheephead)

longnose gar

shorthead redhorse

yellow bullhead



# Where do we go from here?

- It's about balance! We want to maintain both the panfish and gamefish fisheries.
- A new 6-year Prescription will ask for 150,000 fingerling walleye stocked **every other** year (starting next year), instead of 134,000 every third year.
- The new Prescription may also call for 10,000 muskies stocked for three years, and then every third year after that.



# Hamlin Lake Master Angler Entries Since 1994

Freshwater drum- 24 entries

Brown bullhead- 16 entries

Bluegill- 14 entries

Rock bass- 14 entries

Bowfin- 12 entries

Yellow bullhead- 9 entries

Channel catfish- 8 entries

Black crappie- 4 entries

Largemouth bass- 2 entries

Smallmouth bass- 2 entries

Northern musky- 1 entry

Tiger musky- 1 entry

Walleye- 1 entry

Pumpkinseed- 1 entry

Black bullhead- 1 entry

Longnose gar- 1 entry

Quillback carpsucker- 1 entry



# Where do the stocked walleye come from?

- The vast majority of the walleye stocked into Hamlin Lake have come from the Mason County Walleye Association ponds.
- Walleye from the Mason County ponds have gone into many other area lakes, including Hackert, Big Star, Portage, Bear, the Herring Lakes, etc.



# Here's the process:

1. MDNR takes walleye eggs from the Muskegon River.



# Walleye raising, cont'd.

2. From there they go to Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery for a month or so to hatch out.
3. After hatching, the fry are stocked into rearing ponds all across the state.
4. After six weeks in the ponds, they're harvested and stocked into lakes and rivers.



Thank you!



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