



La Crosse FRO Accomplishment Highlights Report

Tribal Assistance & Interjurisdictional Fisheries:

Crews Experience Calm Waters on the Mille Lacs Lake Walleye Tagging Project **05/04/2003**

The population information that will be obtained through tag returns is vital to fishery managers to set harvest quotas for both the sport and netting/spearfishing harvest. Accurate information is critical to help sustain this incredible walleye fishery.

The spring walleye spawn came on strong during April and that means survey time. The Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission requested assistance from both La Crosse and Ashland FRO's. Dave Wedan, Heidi Keuler, Mark Steingraeber and Scott Yess (La Crosse FRO) and Gary Czepinski (Ashland FRO) all assisted on Mille Lacs Lake this year, in what proved to be the opposite extreme from last year. Weather conditions were favorable during the two week spawning run. Due to the ideal working conditions the team; which consisted of 2 GLIFWC boats, 2 FWS boats and 1 Fond du Lac boat tagged over 20,000 walleye. The majority of the fish were males in the 14-22 inch range.

This effort was conducted in conjunction with an effort by the Minnesota DNR which involved fyke netting. The information will be used to determine the overall population and make walleye harvest regulations. Mille Lacs Lake is the premiere walleye lake in Minnesota and for the last several years the harvest has been allocated for both sport fishing and Tribal spearing and netting. Harvest limits are set based on population estimates and the surplus that can be removed without damaging the population. Regulations are then set based on the pounds of fish to be harvested.

Scott Yess

Outreach:

La Crosse FRO Gave a "Shocking Performance" at the Upper Mississippi River Festival **05/13/2003**

Almost 800 students, teachers and chaperones learned how valuable a resource the Mississippi River is and how rich it is in culture and tradition. Students also learned how fishery biologists sample fish through different netting, trapping and electrofishing techniques.



Wildlife Refuge System and "Teddy Roosevelt's" vision of wildlife conservation. It was hoped that students, teachers and chaperones would learn how valuable a resource the Mississippi River is and how rich it is in culture and tradition.

Dave Wedan and Heidi Keuler and two volunteers from La Crosse Fishery Resource Office participated in the Aquatic Resources portion of the event with fish sampling techniques. Students were shown how fishery biologists collect fish through electrofishing, netting and trapping. Some groups of students viewed a live "shocking" demonstration and comprehended how effective of a sampling technique electrofishing is. Tagging and measuring equipment, used for lake sturgeon, paddlefish, walleye and many other species, was also shown to students and chaperones.

Groups of students did not visit each station during their rotation because it was hoped that students would share their different experiences on the ride home or back at school. Questions were taken from each presenter at the festival and were gathered into a "Who Wants to be a River Rat?" game modeled after the popular "Millionaire" game on television. This was excellent tool to help students learn facts they did not pick up at the festival and to help students comprehend what they learned.

There are plans to hold two Upper Mississippi River Festivals next year in order for more students in Wisconsin and Minnesota to participate.

Heidi Keuler

Outreach:

Tomah Fishing Tourney Benefits Veterans & Students **05/21/2003**

This annual project provides therapeutic recreational fishing opportunities for U.S. Armed Forces veterans served by the Tomah Veterans Administration Medical Center (many of whom are disabled and would not otherwise be able to enjoy sport fishing) and Tomah Middle School students.

For more than 50 years, Service employees at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) have annually raised a variety of game fish species for stocking in public waters, including the American Legion Fishing Pond at the Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center in Tomah, Wisconsin. Angling is a very popular activity here that provides Tomah VA clients with many hours of therapeutic outdoor recreational opportunities. Since 1991, Service staff and volunteers from the Genoa NFH, the La Crosse Fishery Resources Office, and the La Crosse Fish Health Center have helped sponsor a hospital-wide fishing tournament at the pond. The 2003 fishing tourney was held on May 21 under sunny blue skies with a stiff westerly wind that aided the casts of anglers on the handicap accessible fishing pier. Tomah Middle School students were also on hand to aid veterans who needed some assistance angling. Successful anglers then registered their catch to win prizes awarded by the Tomah American Legion. By all accounts, there was a lot of exciting action during this year's event as many more larger fish (rainbow trout, largemouth bass, bluegill) were caught than at any past tourney, making for some very memorable moments. The popularity of this annual event, complete with a lunchtime fish-fry prepared and served by Service staff, has grown into a highly anticipated and rewarding springtime event for all participants.



Mark Steingraeber