

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ten Indicted in Connection with Illegal Poaching of Walleye on Leech Lake and Red Lake

MINNEAPOLIS—Four federal indictments have been filed against a total of 10 individuals in connection with illegal poaching and marketing of walleye and other protected fish on the Red Lake and Leech Lake Indian reservations. All ten people were charged with one count of transportation, sale, and purchase of fish taken in violation of the Lacey Act.

The first indictment charges Larry W. Bellefy, age 53, of Bagley; Thomas P. Sumner, age 54, of Red Lake; and Brian W. Holthusen, age 47, also of Red Lake. The second indictment charges Michael D. Brown, age 45, of Cass Lake; and Michael J. Nei, age 48, of Bemidji. The third indictment charges Jerry A. Reyes, age 51, of Cass Lake; and Marc L. Lyons, age 61; Frederick W. Tibbetts, age 65; and Alan D. Hemme, age 55, all of Bena. The fourth indictment charges Larry Good, age 58, of Red Lake. All four indictments allege that the defendants knowingly engaged in conduct that involved the sale and purchase of fish with a market value in excess of \$350.

The first indictment alleges that between July 2009 and July 2011, Sumner and Holthusen took fish from Red Lake for commercial purposes without the approval of the Red Lake Fisheries Association. The indictment specifically asserts that Sumner and Holthusen caught the fish and that Sumner and Holthusen then sold the fish to Bellefy, who resold them.

The second indictment alleges that between July 2010 and July 2011, Brown netted fish on the Leech Lake Reservation for commercial purposes. That indictment specifically states that Brown netted the fish and then sold them to Nei and others.

The third indictment alleges that between September 2010 and July 2011, Reyes, Lyons, and Tibbetts, took fish for commercial purposes from several lakes on the Leech Lake Indian Reservation. That indictment specifically claims that Reyes, Lyons and Tibbetts netted the fish and then sold them to Hemme, and others.

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The fourth indictment alleges that between October 2010 and July 2011, Good took fish from Red Lake for commercial purposes without the approval of the Red Lake Fisheries Association. The indictment specifically states that Good then sold the fish.

Authorities began investigating these black-market activities in July 2009. During the course of that investigation, officers conducted numerous controlled purchases of illegally obtained fish. They also seized fish during the execution of several search warrants. Authorities estimate the fair market value of the fish illegally obtained through the activity covered by these four indictments to be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

If convicted, the defendants face a potential maximum penalty of five years in federal prison on each count. And because the federal justice system does not have parole, a convicted offender will spend virtually his entire sentence behind bars. Any sentence, however, would be determined by a federal district court judge.

These cases are the result of investigations by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Leech Lake Division of Resource Management, and the Red Lake Department of Natural Resources. They are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Calhoun-Lopez.

For more information on the Midwest Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service visit <http://midwest.fws.gov>.

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