

November 19, 2014

Jim Wolters  
Area Fisheries Supervisor  
MNDNR-Fish and Wildlife Division  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537

Dear Mr. Wolters

You asked that we put in writing the concerns of the Pelican Lake Property Owners (PLPOA) with regard to fish stocking in Pelican Lake. Specifically we are concerned about overall fishing quality of panfish, crappie, pike and walleye with the continued stocking of muskie by the MNDNR.

As we have stated, the Pelican Walleye foundation was absorbed into the PLPOA several years ago due to the challenge and details of managing two different organizations. At that time we renamed the effort the Pelican Sport Fishing fund, to better identify with all fishing.

At one of the PLPOA spring meetings this year more attention than usual was spent listening to members complain about the change in fishing quality. Generally comments were made regarding the difficulty in catching walleye, and summer crappie. As well as overall reduction in sunfish and crappie in the spring. All game fish seem to be harder to catch (and even see) off of private docks. At this point a suggestion was made to see if we could stop muskie stocking on Pelican. After much discussion it was decided a subcommittee would be formed consisting of Tom Sherman, Fred Manual and Dave Majkrzak. This group was asked to be active in working with the MNDNR to better understand our fishery, and to decide what our effort should be regarding future Muskie stocking.

We have the following concerns:

One, the recent change to 54 inch minimum size limit for muskie is an obvious (and stated) goal to further increase muskie population. This statewide limit was pushed though without most other sport fisherman's awareness, and more importantly without documented and proven effects on other sport fishing in Minnesota waters. We are very disappointed that the MNDNR was complacent in letting this get into state law.

Two: muskie stocking in Pelican has been occurring (with the Mississippi strain) for about 25 years, with documented muskie lifespan being about 30 years. We are yet to fully understand the effects of this highly aggressive fish on other sport fish, and the MNDNR is continuing to allow rule changes to further increase their numbers, and size.

Three: While all the muskie stocking and increase in size limit is continuing, the MNDNR has only done a total of four (4) muskie fish count assessments in Pelican, with the last assessment in 2005.

Four: According to MNDNR 14% of fish licenses get sold to muskie fisherman, with the remaining 86% sold to other sport fisherman. While minority interests and concerns need to be heard, since when does such a small number of fisherman dictate to all the others what happens in our lakes. Especially when the other sport fisherman belief and see a negative effect. The MNDNR needs to represent the 86% who fish other fish, not just the muskie fisherman. Local fisherman and property owners are not being listened to on this muskie stocking issue.

Five: As property owners we understand fishing is a public resource, and is to be shared by all. But experimenting in our lake, and ruining our sport fishing drives down our value, and our fishing experience for a minority. As property owners we are vested in fishing in our lake, where as non-property owners can simply go fish somewhere else. Several years ago I listened to the MNDNR Commissioner encourage lake property owners to take a more active role in lake management and to form Lake Improvement Districts, because the DNR was not always able to find the time and money to

get to know every lake. We see a vocal minority pushing through and changing muskie fishing, and we feel obligated to follow the commissioner's suggestion, and defend our lake.

Six: Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are also causing unknown shifts in fish balance in our lakes. We have had Zebra Mussels since 2009, and we are very concerned about this having a negative effect on sport fishing. AIS is defined as something that gets moved into an area that has not had this species in the past. While muskie may be native to some areas of Minnesota, they are not native to Pelican Lake, and most people consider them to be another type of AIS.

Seven: Data collected has not been consistent enough, or statistically sound enough to clearly support the muskie fisherman's "we don't hurt anything else" position. While you can point to walleye being good in Pelican, crappie and pike are down. And other muskie lakes (Detroit Lake, Mil Lacs etc.) show patterns that do not support Pelican's data. Years ago the pro muskie story was that muskie are good for walleye as they eat the tullibee and white fish, which eat walleye eggs. Now the pro muskie argument is that muskie eat small northern pike, who eat lots of walleye. The story keeps changing to try and justify the stocking of muskie. The bottom line is more muskie, and even bigger muskie will have a negative effect on other sport fish.

Eight: The MNDNR web site says 9.7 million pounds of panfish are harvested each year, followed by 4.6 million pounds of pike, and 4.6 million pounds of walleye, to be eaten by humans. The most caught fish is panfish, walleye and northern. Many fisherman depend on catching and eating sport fish in Minnesota. We have no argument that the trophy muskie fisherman enjoy his sport, until it starts to effect the 86% of sport fisherman who enjoy their sport of catching other fish and putting food on the table.

Nine: We need an unbiased, and independent study of muskie on Pelican Lake. We do not believe that you, or the MNDNR is unbiased in this area, and are very disappointed that the MNDNR is arguing this is good for license sales, when thousands of walleye fisherman from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois and Michigan drive through (out of) Minnesota, to fish walleye in North Dakota. 37% of fisherman on Devils Lake are nonresidents, with Minnesota and Wisconsin sharing the lead of nonresident fishing license sales in ND. We know lake circumstances and fishing production varies greatly, but it looks to us like you are losing the fishing battle on everything but muskie. No one knows what sport fishing for crappie, panfish, pike, bass and walleye would be like on Pelican without muskie stocking, but we believe it would be better.

Under separate cover I will send you the fishing part of a recent survey of PLPOA owners.

Jim our property owners, and other fisherman are very concerned about their experience fishing on Pelican Lake. We are ready to listen and understand all the facts, but we also stand ready to fight for our rights as well.

Sincerely, PLPOA Sport Fishing;  
Tom Sherman  
Fred Manual  
Dave Majkrzak