

# Sauk River Chain of Lakes

## Spring

# Newsletter



EST  1982

SAUK RIVER  
CHAIN OF LAKES

ASSOCIATION

"Stewards of the  
Sauk River Chain of Lakes"

WEBSITE: WWW.SRCL.ORG

MAY 2022

## President's Report

by John Rocky, President

Welcome to the Spring 2022 Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association (SRCLA) Newsletter!

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the SRCLA Association. On September 30th, 1982, the Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association was formed by a small group of concerned citizens over the degraded condition of our lakes. The original mission of the SRCLA Association was clear: Improve the water quality and recreational quality of the Sauk River Chain of Lakes. These goals hold true today in our current mission and work of the SRCLA Association. To celebrate 40 years of dedication, volunteerism, and hard work, our annual meeting on June 11th, 2022, will include a 40th year celebration outdoor picnic at Shady's Longshots. Mark your calendar and plan to attend!

Registration - 9:30 a.m.

Annual Meeting - 10 -11 a.m.

Picnic - 11 a.m. -1 p.m. (free picnic lunch to family members of the SRCLA - you can pay your membership dues at the meeting!)

Live Music - 11 a.m. -1 p.m.

Free SRCLA prizes to all member at-

tendees and free raffle drawings (must be present to win)

Our committees and volunteers have been very busy this past year working on projects to make a positive impact to the Chain of Lakes. Detailed committee reports are included in this newsletter. Please enjoy reading them and if you have any questions, the committee chairs will be happy to respond. Thanks to everyone who has helped throughout the past year!

As President of the SRCLA, I have had two personal goals to help make the SRCLA a success:

Increase membership and annual dues - we have increased our membership to over 500 members and received \$30,000 in dues in 2020 and \$39,000 in 2021.

Create a second income source - our gambling management of Shady's Long Shots made a profit of \$40,000 in 2020, \$70,000 in 2021, and anticipate \$80,000 in 2022.

These two income sources in addition to \$20,000 in grants this year has enabled the SRCLA Board of Directors to create and approve an operating budget of \$160,000 for 2022. A huge round of

thanks to the SRCLA Board of Directors for working diligently to make these goals a success!

Retirement - I have been on the SRCLA Board of Directors for 11 years and President for the last nine years. It has been a privilege and honor serving on the SRCLA Board of Directors and meeting so many great people on the chain! I am a firm believer that volunteer organizations need to have new leadership from time to time so that the organization can continue to be successful. So, with that said, I am retiring from the SRCLA Board of Directors at the end of my term on June 11, 2022, and will not seek re-election. I have truly enjoyed my work on the SRCLA Board of Directors and encourage/challenge you to volunteer for the SRCLA Board. It has been a great experience and is a great cause!

Enjoy the Summer and I hope to see you on the water!

*John Rocky*

President,  
Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association

## Sauk River Chain of Lakes History

by John Rocky, President

On September 30th, 1982, the Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association (SRCLA) was formed by a small group of concerned citizens over the degraded condition of our lakes. By March of 1983, a two-year diagnostic lake study, headed by Dr. Keith Knutson, Ph.D. of St. Cloud State University, was underway. At about the same time, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency also initiated a similar but less comprehensive study. Both studies were completed early in 1985.

As a result of the studies, it became apparent to the SRCLA, that any remedial work or additional studies would require

a larger financial backing than the members of the association would be able to supply. Consequently, an attorney was contacted to determine the feasibility of forming a watershed district. On January 17, 1986, a petition signed by 400 landowners was filed with the Minnesota Water Resource Board (WRB) for the establishment of the Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD). Public hearings were held in Cold Spring and Osakis, and the report of the presiding administrative law judge was received by the WRB on May 19, 1986. As a result of the studies, public testimony, and conditions of the water re-

sources, the Minnesota WRB established the SRWD on July 22, 1986.



It is important to understand that the founding members of the SRCLA understood the importance of the watershed and identified that several of the issues

Chain of Lakes History continued on page 2

that we were seeing in our lakes in fact comes down the Sauk River. Since 1982, your SRCLA together with the SRWD in 1986 have worked to protect and enhance our waters and natural resources.

The Sauk River Chain of Lakes starts where the Sauk River enters Horseshoe Lake from the west just south of Richmond and leaves the lakes 9.5 miles downstream at Knaus Lake near Cold Spring where it becomes a river again. Not all the lakes are a part of the direct flow of the Sauk River as many are peripheral lakes connected by channels, mostly natural. The Sauk River Chain of Lakes includes 15 lakes with a total of 2,849 acres of lakes and 876 miles of shoreline. For more info check out our website at: [www.srcl.org](http://www.srcl.org).

The Sauk River Watershed District ex-

tends from the Mississippi River near St. Cloud into the eastern portions of Douglas County to within 3 miles of Alexandria. The watershed, like the Sauk River, extends in a northwest to southeast direction. The overall watershed is about 75 miles in length with some areas being up to 20 to 30 miles in width. The Sauk River meanders for 120 miles. A watershed is the area within the geographic boundaries of land that drain into a surface water feature such as a stream, river, or lake and contributes to the recharge of groundwater. Watersheds are divided by areas of higher elevation that cause the drainage patterns of surface water within the watershed. There are 81 major watersheds in Minnesota, some of which overlap into adjoining states. Together, these watersheds make up the State's ten drainage

basins. The Sauk River watershed, located in Central Minnesota, is one of 16 major watersheds in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. According to data from the Minnesota Land Management Information Center (LMIC), the Sauk River watershed covers over 667,000 acres or approximately 1,041 square miles across portions of five counties. For more info check out their website at: [www.srwdmn.org](http://www.srwdmn.org)



Celebrating Our 40<sup>th</sup> Year



Join us at Shady's Long Shot  
On June 11<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m.

### 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party Annual Meeting

Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
At Shady's Long Shots

Celebrating Our 40<sup>th</sup> Year



Join us at Shady's Long Shot  
On June 11<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m.

# SAUK RIVER CHAIN OF LAKES ASSOCIATION



P.O. Box 369, Richmond, MN 56368

## 40th Year Anniversary of the Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association

For information on becoming a member of the association, please visit our website: [srcl.org](http://srcl.org). Membership dues fund projects and help us communicate with our members and the community. The more members we have, the stronger our voice and the more we can accomplish! Anyone who uses the lake is welcome to join.

*Please continue to support the SRCL by participating in our gambling opportunities at Shady's Long Shots in Cold Spring, along with their great drinks and food options. Gambling includes Bingo on Wednesday's, Meat Raffles on Friday's during winter months, year round Pull Tabs and E-Tabs*

*Please reach out to us if you are interested in volunteering opportunities!*



## Vice President's Message by Matt Noska

Hello residents of the Sauk River Chain of Lakes. As I sit here and write the Vice President's Message, I am hoping that we are actually able to get out on our currently frozen lakes for the walleye opener. As you may have read, our President and our Treasurer are retiring from the Board. Both John Rocky and Charlie Montreuil have been dedicated stewards of our lakes. I want to personally thank them for everything that they have contributed to the Chain of Lakes. When I joined the board eight years ago, I looked up to these two leaders for their willingness to think differently and be innovative and to not necessarily do things the way we have always done them. If you look at John Rocky's report, you will see that this lake association has thrived under their leadership and guidance. All lake homeowners have benefited from their contributions, and while they will be missed we have an incredible opportunity to bring in new people with new ideas to the Board. I truly hope that considering the importance

of our lakes to home values, water quality, fishing pressure, and our aquatic invasive species concerns, this inspires you to throw your name in the hat. Do you have a passion for the Sauk River Chain of Lakes? Are you willing to do the good work of being a steward for the Chain? Please consider joining the Board by calling me directly at (763) 913-5654, and we can discuss whether or not it is a good fit for you.

The SRCLA has had an amazing relationship with our Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) Area Fisheries Manager Joe Stewig. Joe has been kind enough each Spring and Fall to put together a summary of work that the MN DNR does here on the Chain of Lakes. Please read Joe's 2021 report below.

Regards,

*Matt Noska*

Vice President,  
Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association

## Financial Report by Charlie Montreuil

Our assets are now at an all-time high for the Sauk River Chain of Lake Association. Between checking, savings and certificates of deposits our total assets now exceed \$145,000. Our assets plus projected dues and gambling proceeds are what will allow us to make the significant investments that are outlined in the individual committee reports.

While we are very proud of our current

membership, we still have a large opportunity to obtain more members. Current membership is approximately only 38 percent of the ownership on the Chain. We will continue to make strong efforts to increase our visibility and our positive impact to prospective members. This will allow us to sustain and increase our investments as we maintain and improve the quality of our lake experience.

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**WWW.SRCL.ORG**

PO Box 369  
Richmond, MN 56368

Name:

Business Name:

Current Address (street, city, state, zip):

Lake Property Address (street, city, state, zip):

Lake you live on:

Home Phone:

Email Address1:

Cell Phone1:

Email Address2:

Cell Phone2:

### MEMBERSHIP DUES CONTRIBUTION

Individual/Family Membership Level:

\_\_\_\$40 Sunfish   \_\_\_\$60 Crappie   \_\_\_\$80 Walleye   \_\_\_\$100 Catfish   \_\_\_\$150 Bass

*(All Individual/Family Memberships receive a **SRCL Association Membership Decal**. See [www.srcl.org](http://www.srcl.org) for more information.)*

Business Member: \_\_\_\$75 *(Business name included in Membership Listings in the SRCL.org, Spring and Fall Newsletters.)*

Business ELITE Member: \_\_\_\$150 *(Business Member benefits PLUS your logo linked to your website/Facebook in SRCL.org's Business Carousel.)*

Donate additional amount for a specific area?

*(please identify additional amount into appropriate area below)*

Walleye Stocking: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Weed Control: \$\_\_\_\_\_

General Fund: \$\_\_\_\_\_

### ARE YOU INTERESTED IN DONATING YOUR TIME?

*(please circle interested area below)*

Invasive Species

Fisheries

Weed Control

Land Use

Water Quality

Road Cleanup

Gambling – Bingo night

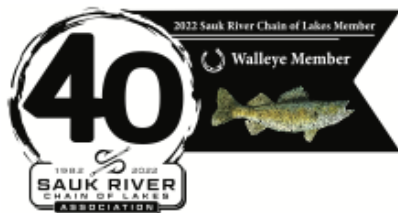
Gambling – Meat Raffle night

Board Member

***Your contribution is tax deductible!***



## Membership Levels



## Aquatic Invasive Species Report — by Brad Matuska

Last year was an extraordinary year with celebrations like the first use of the Eco Harvester to mechanically remove curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) and challenges like the discovery of an invasive species, hybrid water-milfoil (HWM), on Horseshoe Lake. There are now three aquatic invasive species in the Sauk River Chain of Lakes – CLP, HWM, and zebra mussels. The Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association (SRCLA) has committed just over \$110,000 to survey, chemically treat, and mechanically treat CLP and HWM. The funds to support this effort came from the gambling proceeds at Shady's Long Shots, membership dues, and a grant from Stearns County. Limnopro of St. Cloud, MN will be doing the survey work and chemical treatments, and Weeds Up will be doing the mechanical harvesting of CLP using the Eco Harvester. The SRCLA will monitor the results of these treatments and will continue to use best practices to manage CLP and HWM.

Unfortunately, there is no effective way to manage zebra mussels at this time. The SR-

CLA is closely watching the low copper dosage research and other research being done by the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center at the University of Minnesota to control zebra mussels.

Please remember to Clean, Drain, and Dry all of your equipment when entering or exiting the water. If you purchase a dock or a lift that is coming from another body of water, remember that it is required to have that equipment sit on land for at least 30 days. Any organisms on the equipment will die off in that time frame.

For any questions about aquatic invasive species, please visit our website at [srcl.org](http://srcl.org). The plant survey results and treatment area maps are continuously updated and located at [srcl.org/projects/](http://srcl.org/projects/). Please note, the SRCLA does not manage the aquatic plants along the frontage of properties. For resources on how to manage your frontage, type "Aquatic Plants" into the search engine at [srcl.org](http://srcl.org). If you have additional questions, please contact Gene Krebs ([gene.j.krebs@gmail.com](mailto:gene.j.krebs@gmail.com)) or Brad Matuska ([brad@mississippitopsoils.com](mailto:brad@mississippitopsoils.com)).

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# Water Quality Report by Aaron Schwartz

## Water Sampling

This past summer, we completed another round of monthly water quality sampling and testing. The Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association (SRCLA) again partnered with the Sauk River Watershed District to run the analytics on the samples and compiled it beautifully into a report that can be found on our website. This past summer brought some interesting challenges as well as some insight on the system of lakes. The low water levels led to warmer water temps as well as increased light penetration. The long periods without rain also influenced the amount of water flowing into our system. These are all variables that play a role in the results of the sampling that we perform. The big take away I gathered from the data this summer is that as a system, we have a Total Phosphorus (TP) load that is higher than we would like. These are dangerous levels. However, if you think of TP as plant/algae food, you can see how having an elevated amount in our system leads to increased plant growth and algae blooms. There are several contributing factors that can lead to elevated levels of TP in a water system. For example, things like lawn fertilizer and run off are usually top of the list, but there are several others including carp population. There is another factor that we are learning more about, that being legacy nutrients. These are nutrients that have accumulated over the decades and are laying on the lake bottoms. We currently don't have a clear picture of the impact of these nutrients in our system, but we hope that will change over time. We are currently ex-

ploring our options to begin a legacy nutrient testing program. It is the hope that this additional testing will provide a look into another contributing factor of the TP level. This additional information will help guide our action plans moving forward.

## Road Clean-up

I wanted to take this opportunity to again thank our wonderful volunteers that help us with the spring and fall Adopt-A-Highway road clean up. I am so grateful for the smiling faces that come out on these Saturday mornings to keep trash out of lakes. We will likely have already completed the spring cleanup (5/7/22) by the time this newsletter reaches you; however, we are always in need of volunteers. If you are interested in helping, please reach out to me at (320) 309-1492 or aarschwartz@gmail.com.



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Celebrating Our 40<sup>th</sup> Year



Join us at Shady's Long Shot On June 11<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m.

## Gambling Committee Update by Karla Smetana

We had another great season with our gambling operations at Shady's Long Shots. The 27-week season started on Wednesday, October 13th, 2021, and ended on April 15th, 2022. Thank you to the volunteers who signed up to help with Bar Bingo and the Meat Raffle.

Between October 1st, 2021, and March 31st, 2022, we transferred \$30,000 from our Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association (SRCLA) Gambling Fund into our SRCLA Operations Account. These proceeds will allow the SRCLA to continue to fund projects aimed at protecting and improving our Sauk River Chain of Lakes. Please continue to support Shady's Long Shots and thank them for supporting our Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association!

Volunteers and patrons alike were excit-

ed that restrictions were reduced, and we were able to move towards more normal operations this season. The SRCLA Gambling Committee has received some requests for changes, and we are looking into those for the next season.

A different volunteer system has been developed and will be implemented next season. In this new system, teams of volunteers have been created. The teams will have a list of substitute volunteers who are willing to be called on to take or swap a shift. Many of the 2021-22 season's volunteers have already committed to volunteering again next season. We truly appreciate their commitment. For information on gambling volunteer opportunities, please reach out to me at 320-492-6244 or email me at [sksmetana@gmail.com](mailto:sksmetana@gmail.com).



### Meat Raffle Friday Nights at 6 pm

Join us at Shady's Long for loads of fun!



During October



SAUK RIVER  
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### Bingo Wednesday Nights at 6:30pm





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## Land Use Grants

by Troy Atkinson

We started a new grant program in 2021 to help landowners to reduce runoff into the lake from their properties. We are striving to do this by adding native grasses and buffers between your yard and the lake to reduce the chemicals and fertilizers in our yards from getting into the lake. We did have some interest in the program, and I had discussions with a few homeowners. We did have one grant that was approved for last year, but with the dry summer, the project was delayed, so we will pay that out this year once they get the work finished. We will include some pictures and details of the project on

our website when we are able to get it.

For many landowners, they take great pride in their lawn and yard. While we understand the enjoyment that a nice lawn and landscaping can bring, we also want to make sure our water is a source of pride and joy. So, some compromise may be necessary to preserve both your yard and the waterfront. We are continuing to learn how our actions on the land influences our water and ways we can minimize our impact.

A great place for many landowners to research projects and ideas for their own property is through Greg Berg at Stearns

County Soil and Water Conservation District or even with local landscapers that specialize in shoreline restorations.

If anyone is interested in learning about the Land Use Grants to help pay for the cost of creating a lakeshore that truly reduces the runoff into the lakes or if you are interested in helping us with some brainstorming and research this winter contact Troy@pierceinsurance.com.

The application to apply for the Land Use Grant please complete an application that can be found online at [www.srcl.org/resources/](http://www.srcl.org/resources/) or in this newsletter.

### Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association (SRCL) Land Use Assistance Contract/Application

#### General Information

SRCL		Yes	No	Amendment <input type="checkbox"/>	Cancelled <input type="checkbox"/>
Organization	Contract Number	Other federal or other state funds?		Board meeting date(s)	

#### Applicant

Land Occupier Name	Address	City/State	Zip	Phone #
--------------------	---------	------------	-----	---------

#### Conservation Practice Location

Physical Address	Lake Name
------------------	-----------

#### Contract Information

I (we), the undersigned, do hereby request cost-share assistance to help defray the cost of installing the following practice(s) listed as described on the second page of this contract. It is understood that:

- In no case shall the SRCL provide cost-share assistance to a land occupier or landowner for the reapplication of a practice that was removed by the land occupier or landowner during its effective life without consent of the SRCL board or that failed due to improper maintenance. The specific operation and maintenance requirements for the conservation practice listed are described in the operation and maintenance plan prepared for this contract by the conservation district technical representative. If title to this land is transferred to another party before expiration of the aforementioned life, it shall be the responsibility of the land occupier or landowner who signed this contract to advise the new owner that this contract is in force.
- Practice(s) must be planned and installed in accordance with technical standards and specifications of the: USDA Field Office Technical Guide, and guidance from State of Minnesota and/or Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Items of cost for which reimbursement is claimed are to be supported by invoices/receipts for payments and will be verified by the SRCL board as practical and reasonable. The SRCL board has the authority to make adjustments to the costs submitted for reimbursement.

#### Applicant Signatures

The land occupier's signature indicates agreement to:

- Grant the organization's representative(s) access to the parcel where the conservation practice will be located.
- Obtain all permits required in conjunction with the installation and establishment of the practice prior to starting construction of the practice.
- As part of practice certification, the project site may be photographed. These photographs may be used by the SRCL for but are not limited to: reporting, documentation, and publications.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Landowner/Spokesperson \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Land Occupier \_\_\_\_\_ Address if different from applicant information \_\_\_\_\_  
if different from applicant signature

**Conservation Practice**

The land project for which cost-sharing is requested is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 1. What is the primary objective of project?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. How will this project help our lakes?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Effective life of project?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Technical Assessment and Cost Estimate**

- 1. Total project cost estimate \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Who has approved or engineered the project?

Entity \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

- 2. What percent is being paid by a government entity? What entity?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. How much are you needing or looking for to make sure project gets completed?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Amount Authorized for Financial Assistance**

The SRCL Organization Board has authorized the following for financial assistance, to be funded to applicant after project is completed.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_  
Enter program name and fiscal year

Board Meeting Date \_\_\_\_\_ Authorized Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Authorized \$ \_\_\_\_\_



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## AIS Transport Prevention Using I-LIDS by Steve Weeres

Managing the problem of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in the Sauk River Chain of Lakes requires a multi-pronged approach of measurement, control and prevention.

As part of our preventive strategy, the Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association (SRCLA) Board has partnered with a Minnesota company Environmental Sentry Protection, LLC to purchase, install and manage a network of its Internet Landing Installed Device Sensors (I-LIDS) at the four public access points on the Chain: Highway 23, Highway 22, Highway 71, and Long Lake. The I-LIDS system is designed automatically monitor boats/trailers upon entry or exit from the landing. When a rig is detected, I-LIDS plays multiple educational messages and triggers the camera to capture and transmit high-resolution videos of the boat/trailer's condition over the Internet to a remote server. There, the

videos are reviewed by trained personnel as part of an ongoing service provided by Environmental Sentry Protection. Videos are reviewed for compliance with state law relating to the transfer of aquatic plants on the boater's equipment. Videos of potential violations are further reviewed and posted on a secure website where we can review the videos for confirmation. If violations are detected, the Stearns County Sheriff is notified and the owner of the boat can receive a citation and/or fine.

The I-LIDS system provides other useful information besides the videos. I-LIDS pro-

vides a measure of the boat launch traffic at our public access points. For the time period May-September 2021, I-LIDS observed the following number of boat launches by location:

- Highway 23 access point: 824 launches
- Highway 22 access point: 463 launches
- Highway 71 access point: 411 launches
- Long Lake access point: 644 launches

This is a total of 2,345 launches for the season into the Chain. Each time a boat is launched in the water it is an opportunity to insert AIS into the ecosystem. With this high level of activity, it is paramount that we do all we can to ensure that those launching craft do the right thing and prevent the introduction of invasive species by inspecting their rig before entering the water. Correspondingly, there is a boat retrieval for every launch. It is equally important to emphasize proper procedures to prevent the export



of invasive species.

Clean. Drain. Dry.

The SRCLA Board is committed to continued investment into strategies to create awareness of this simple message. We can all do our part, both with our own activities and reminding visitors of the importance of following proper procedures when launching and retrieving watercraft.

We are always looking for new ideas to promote awareness of AIS transfer. If you have an idea or are aware of effective methods others have implemented, contact the author at [SteveSRCLB@gmail.com](mailto:SteveSRCLB@gmail.com).

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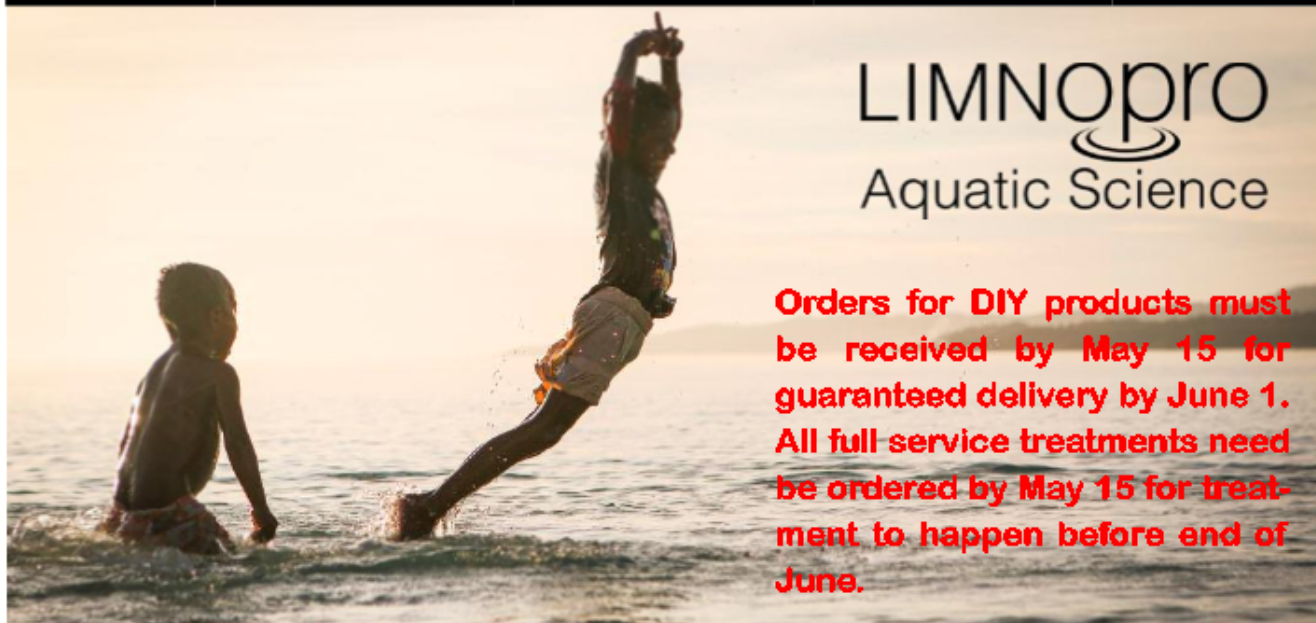
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Roundup Custom Liquid (2.5 gallon jug) = 15 treatments <i>Floating and emergent plants</i>	\$195.00
Bio-Buster Muck Reduction Pellets (25 lbs pail) = 25 treatments <i>Muck and other decomposing materials</i>	\$345.00
MN DNR Permit Application and EOY Reporting <i>*Includes the annual MN DNR \$35 permitting fee</i>	\$95.00

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# Sauk River Chain of Lakes Mission Statement

**SRCLA Motto:** Stewards of the Sauk River Chain of Lakes

**SRCLA Mission:** The Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association (SRCLA) is a registered non-profit that operates in Stearns County, Minnesota and is funded by membership dues, grants, and charitable gambling. It is a purpose driven organization that is made up of working volunteers whose goal is to work with all stakeholders to preserve and protect the Sauk River Chain of Lakes (SRCL). The stakeholders include but are not limited to property owners, visitors, and local businesses as well as

local and state governmental units. The SRCLA strives to preserve and protect the SRCL by being an educational resource while also implementing projects like water quality monitoring and improvement, aquatic invasive species monitoring and control, and fisheries monitoring as well as shoreland use and safety initiatives. The SRCLA is committed to continuously monitoring new research and technologies and endeavors to utilize innovations whenever appropriate. In addition, the SRCLA is committed to financial soundness and transparency through attentive budgeting

and regular communications with stakeholders via newsletters and an active website (srcl.org). Most importantly, volunteerism is key to the success of the SRCLA as it continues to foster a sustainable future for the SRCL for generations to come.

**SRCLA Vision:** To be a passionate group of volunteers that strive to be good stewards of the Sauk River Chain of Lakes by working with all of its stakeholders to preserve and protect water quality, wildlife, and lake life while also promoting improvements through learning, education, and assistance.



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## Marketing Report by Susan Antolak



The Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association is celebrating 40 Years!

We have a lot to celebrate and hope that you can join us for our 40th Year Anniversary party, that will be held immediately after our

Annual Meeting on Saturday June 11, 2022.  
 Our Annual Meeting and Anniversary Party will be held at Shady's Long Shots in Cold Spring.

9:30 a.m. Registration  
 10 – 11 a.m. Annual Meeting  
 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Picnic/Music/Prize Drawings

The SRCL Association is also proud to be sponsoring Richmond River Lake Days and Rock the River Concerts this summer.

We are also looking for volunteers to help on our committees. If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to one of our board members.

**EXCITING NEWS:** Please watch our website for a new online store with new SRCL apparel within the next couple of months!

## Rock Buoys by Troy Atkinson

The Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association (SRCLA) purchased and placed 15 buoys on the Chain of Lakes to mark rocks last year, and we will place them in the same locations this year. The buoys held up well after the first year of use, and we are able to reuse all 15 of them again this year.

If anyone finds or knows of any new rocks that we need to mark for 2022 please email Troy@pierceinsurance.com.



Fifteen buoys and cement anchors ready to be put in the Sauk River Chain of Lakes by the Stearns County Water Patrol on a rainy Saturday, April 30th.



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## **WE WANT YOU TO JOIN OUR BOARD!**

The Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association Board of Directors is looking for energetic, passionate lake home owners to:

- Influence decisions impacting the Chain of Lakes
- Build community and local government partnerships
- Act as a catalyst for improving the overall water quality
- Serve as an ambassador for the lake system we all love

**WE NEED YOU**



Our expectations are simple – Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association Board Members must:

- Attend monthly board meetings
- Contribute with to newsletters
- Actively lead a committee such as Marketing, Community Outreach, Fisheries, Charitable Gambling, Aquatic Invasive Species, Land Use, Water Quality, Road Clean-Up, or Local Business Partnerships etc.
- Represent the Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association Board at occasional external events
- Partner with peers such as the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Sauk River Watershed District, Stearns County Government Representatives, etc



If you believe you can add value to the Chain of Lakes and you would like to be an active participant with our group, we have an open board seat that you could fill. Please reach out to Matt Noska (763) 913-5654 to offer you commitment to our resource. We look forward to hearing from you!



# 2021 Lake Survey Summary

by Joe Stewig

In 2021, Sauk Rapids Area Fisheries staff conducted lake surveys throughout the Sauk River Chain of Lakes (SRCL). Sampling consisted of spring targeted Bluegill/Black Crappie surveys on Horseshoe and Cedar Island lakes and

summer gill nets (all lakes). The SRCL are surveyed every three years with gill nets and every six years with trap nets and bass electrofishing. This year was gill nets only and in 2024 the survey will consist of gill nets, trap nets and bass

electrofishing. Spring targeted Bluegill/Black Crappie assessments will be conducted every four to five years, and Young-of-the-Year (YOY) Walleye are sampled annually in October.

Sampling	Frequency (yrs)	Next Survey
Summer Gill Nets	3	2024
Summer Trap Nets	6	2024
Spring BLG/BLC	6	2024
Spring LMB/SMB	4 – 5	2025
Fall Walleye	annual	2022

A spring targeted Bluegill assessment was conducted on Horseshoe and Cedar Island Lakes from May 19 – 21, 2021, once water surface temperatures reached 60°F. Spring targeted Bluegill surveys tend to be better representative of the

overall size structure as opposed to summer trap net assessments. Sixteen trap nets were set into each lake and checked daily. A total of 548 Bluegills were sampled from the two lakes and ranged in length from 3.5 – 10 inches with an av-

erage length of 7.7 inches. Ninety-eight percent of the Bluegills caught were longer than six inches and 43 percent were longer than eight inches! The Bluegill population remains healthy in the SRCL.

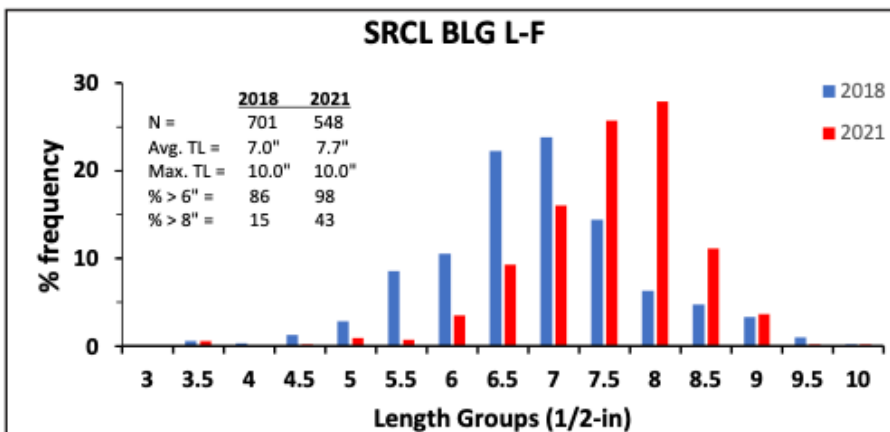


Figure 1. Length frequency of bluegill collected during spring targeted sampling on Cedar Island and Horseshoe Lakes (2018 and 2021; lakes combined).



**We are celebrating at the Annual Meeting on June 11<sup>th</sup>!**

Lake Summary continued on page 18











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Black Crappie continue to do well in the chain even though their numbers have dropped significantly from what they were in the 1980s and 90s. Spring sampling was conducted simultaneously with the Bluegill sampling in 2021 and sampled 346 crappies. Crappies ranged in length from 5 – 13

inches with an average length of 9.3 inches. Ninety-one percent of the crappies sampled were longer than eight inches and 30 percent were longer than 10 inches. Most of the fish were between eight and nine inches and should provide good fishing over the next few years.

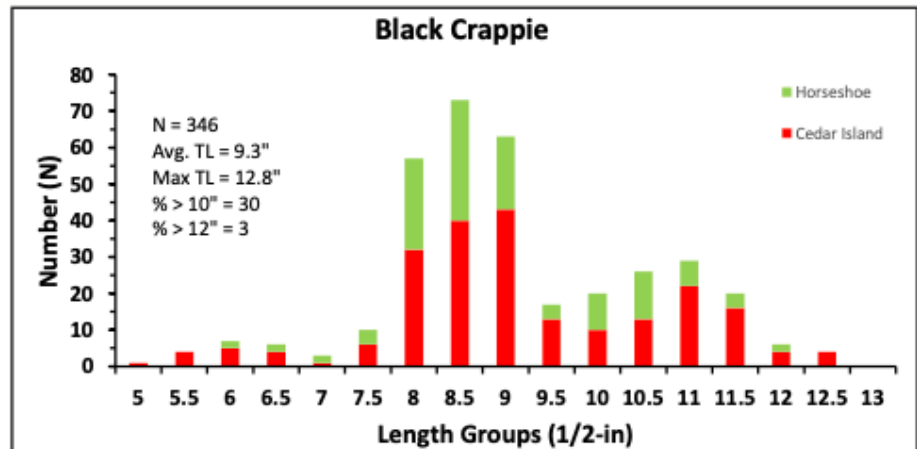


Figure 2. Length frequency of black crappie collected during spring targeted sampling on Cedar Island and Horseshoe Lakes (2021).

Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass were not sampled in 2021 but will be sampled again in 2024. With that

in mind here is a summary from the 2018 spring bass electrofishing. Two hundred and forty-two

Largemouth Bass were sampled in 2018 and ranged in length from six – 20 inches with an average length

of 11.6 inches. Forty-two percent of the catch were longer than 12 inches and 21 percent were longer than

15 inches. While not as numerous, we

did sample 116 Smallmouth Bass mostly out of Horseshoe and Cedar

Island Lakes. Smallmouth Bass also ranged in length from six – 20 inches with an average length of 13.6

inches. Seventy-five percent were longer than 11 inches and 52 percent were longer than 14 inches. The

SRCL is a destination lake for Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass anglers judging by the number of

permitted bass tournaments that are held there each year.



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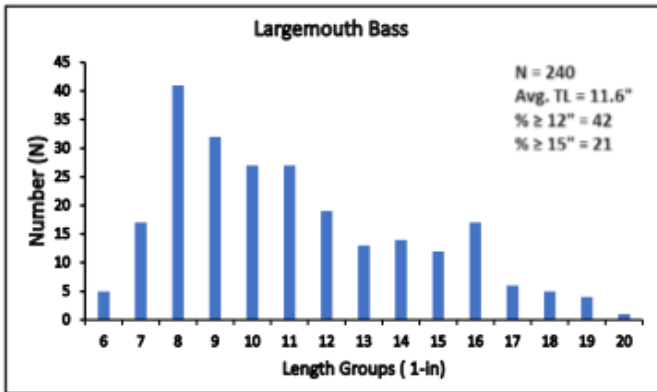


Figure 3. Length frequency of largemouth bass collected from the SRCL via spring electrofishing 2018.

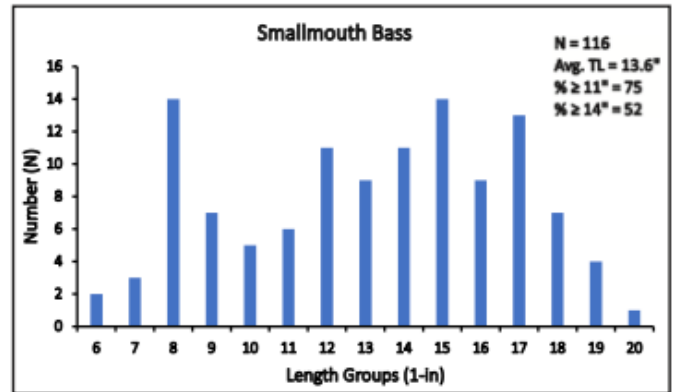


Figure 4. Length frequency of smallmouth bass collected from the SRCL via spring electrofishing 2018.

Channel Catfish abundance continues to decrease with a decreasing trend over the last three surveys. The catch in 2021 (12.3/gill net) was the lowest since 2003; however, the average size has increased. Four hundred and thirty-two catfish were

caught in 2021 ranging in length from nine – 29.1 inches with an average size of 21 inches and three pounds compared to 20 inches and 2.7 pounds in 2018. Catfishing continues to be terrific on the chain during both the summer and winter

months and the local conservation officer has mentioned that he is seeing many anglers taking advantage of the increased bag limit that was put in place in 2015.

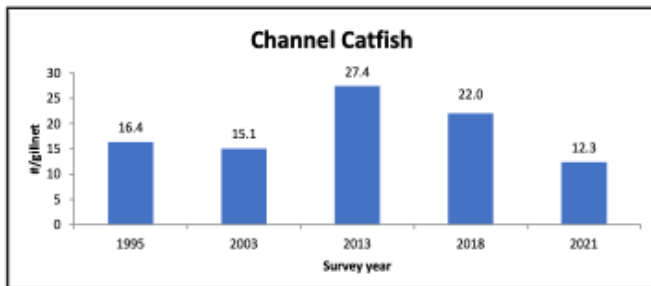


Figure 5. Historical gill net catch rates of channel catfish (lakes combined) for the Sauk River Chain of Lakes (1995 – 2021).

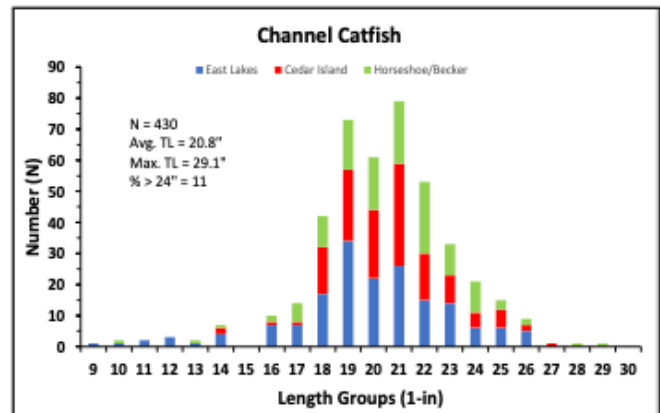


Figure 6. Length frequency of channel catfish collected from summer gill netting on the SRCL (2021).



**We are celebrating at the Annual Meeting on June 11<sup>th</sup>!**

Lake Summary continued on page 20

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Northern Pike have never been over-abundant in the SRCL with catches ranging from 2.7 – 7.0/gill net.

The catch in 2021 (4.9/gill net) was lower than 2018 (7.0/gill net), but still within the range of expected

values for the lake class. One hundred sixty-two pike were sampled in 2021 and ranged in length from 15

– 34 inches with an average length and weight of 21.5 inches and 2.1 pounds. Sixty-three percent of the

pike caught were smaller than 22 inches while nine percent were longer than 26 inches and three percent were longer than 30 inches.

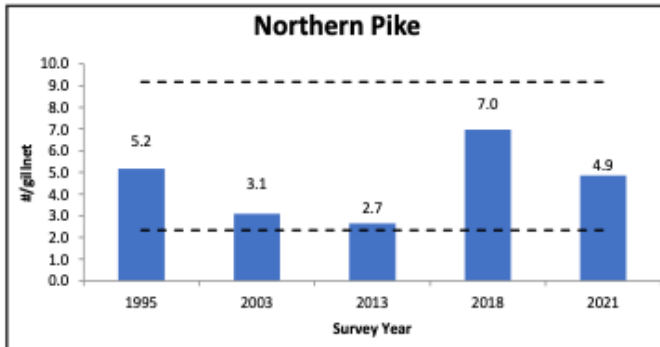


Figure 7. Historical gill net catch rates of northern pike (lakes combined) for the Sauk River Chain of Lakes (1995 – 2021). Dashed lines indicate the upper and lower level of what we would expect to see for lakes similar to the Sauk Chain.

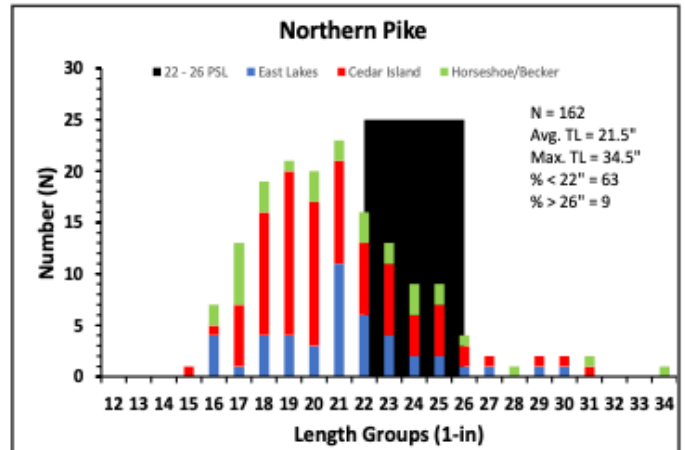


Figure 8. Length frequency of northern pike collected during the 2021 gill net survey. Black shaded area is the 22" – 26" protected slot for pike as part of the North Central Zone.

The Walleye population in the SRCL had been sustained through fry stocking Horseshoe (275,000 – 675,000 fry) and Cedar Island (755,000 – 1,355,000 fry) lakes since 2001 and prior to that through fingerling stocking. The SRCLA has also done some supplemental stocking as well (100,000 fry each year we stock). However, in 2015 during a routine fall young-of-year (YOY) Walleye assessment we noticed some Walleye

that were too big (9 – 11 inches) to be YOY. Upon ageing a sub-sample of these fish, we verified that they were from the 2014-year class a year in which we did not stock Walleye.

We have always assumed that some natural reproduction of Walleye was occurring within the chain, but to what extent was unknown. After 2015, we started conducting annual fall YOY Walleye assessments in order to document natural

reproduction. Since 2015, we have documented excellent natural reproduction in 2016 (107 YOY/hr), 2018 (149 YOY/hr), 2019 (120 YOY/hr) and to a lesser degree 2020 (74 YOY/hr) and 2021 (27 YOY/hr) many of these catches rival the catches during stocked years. For perspective, we consider anything between 25 and 50 YOY/hr to be successful.

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40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party  
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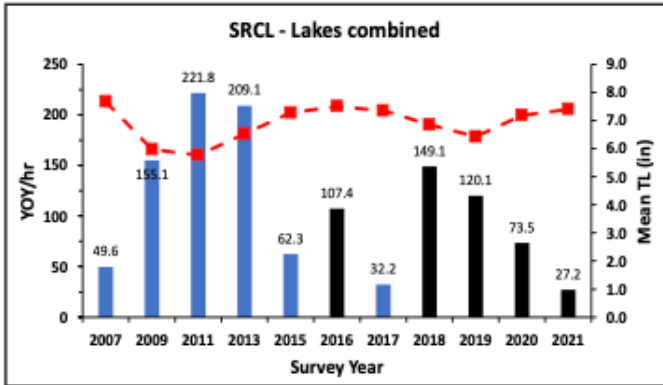


Figure 9. Fall young-of-the-year (YOY) Walleye catch rates from 2007 – 2021. Blue bars are stocked years and black bars are non-stocked years. The red dashed line is the average size of YOY Walleye.

That brings us to our 2021 gill net survey. The catch in 2021 (5.3/net) was the highest on record and slightly higher than 2018 (4.6/net). One hundred eighty-three Walleye were sampled and ranged in length from 9 – 27 inches with an average length and weight of 16 inches and 1.5 pounds. Fifty-nine percent of the Walleye

caught were longer than 15 inches and 12 percent were longer than 20 inches. Thirteen-year classes were sampled in 2021 dominated by age-2 and age-3 fish which made up 45 percent of the catch.

All told, 89 percent of the Walleye sampled were from naturally reproduced years!

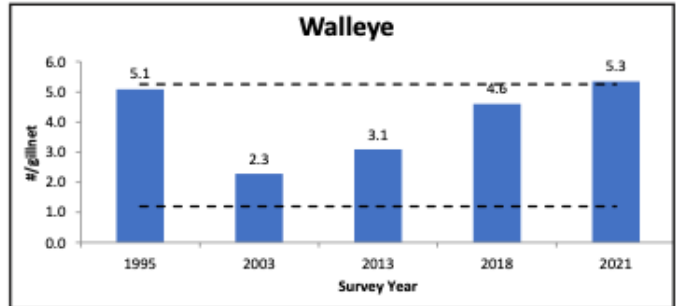


Figure 10. Historical gill net catch rates of walleye (lakes combined) for the Sauk River Chain of Lakes (1995 – 2021). Dashed lines indicate the upper and lower level of what we would expect to see for lakes similar to the Sauk Chain.

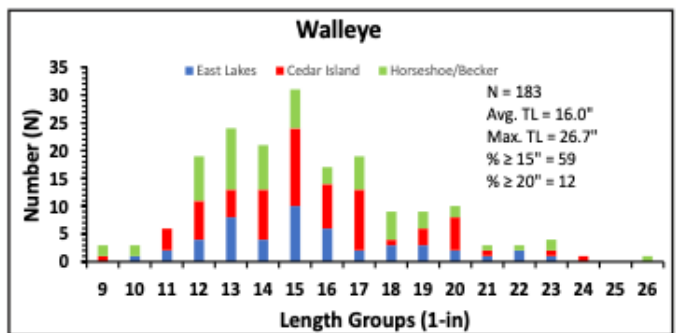


Figure 11. Length frequency of walleye collected during the 2021 gill net survey.

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To build on what we've observed during our fall YOY Walleye shocking (2015 – present) and our 2018 and 2021 gill net surveys, we have put a hold on all Walleye stocking and have ramped up our sampling effort on the SRCL to every three years to better monitor Walleye recruitment. We will also continue to monitor Walleye natural reproduction through annual fall electrofishing and plan any future stocking accordingly. Stocking is not off the table, but naturally reproduced fish typically have a genetic advantage over stocked fish. Based on our surveys no Walleye stocking is warranted or needed.

The SRCL was designated for Muskellunge Management in 2011 and in May 2011, 132 adult Muskies were stocked into Cedar Island Lake in order to jump start the population. We followed that up with 1,030 fingerlings (9 – 14 inches) stocked in October 2011. Since then, 1,030 Muskellunge fingerlings are stocked every other year. In

2013, we started tagging the fingerling Muskies with passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags in order to monitor growth information over time. As far as population assessments go, Muskellunge generally take six to seven years to recruit to our sampling gear so our first attempt to assess the Muskie population will not likely take place until 2025. Even then we would only have approximately 5,000 fish roaming the SRCL that is if they all survived. ☺ We have heard of anglers catching a few, but we would love to hear about your catch or if you would be willing to share your photos for our files that would be great.

Happy Angling!!!

Joe Stewig - Area Fisheries Manager  
Sauk Rapid Area Fisheries Office  
1035 South Benton Drive  
Ph: 320-223-7867  
Email: joe.stewig@state.mn.us

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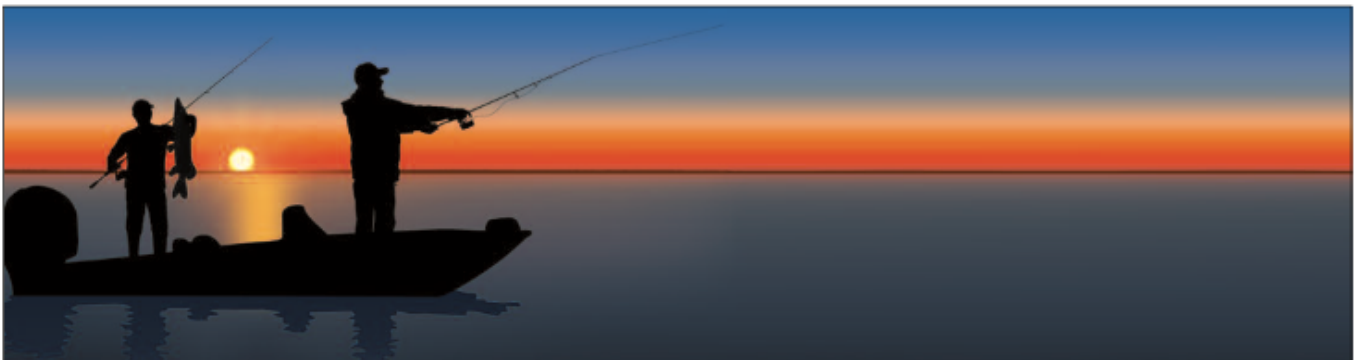
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## 2022 Fish Limits

Walleye & Sauger (Season: May 14, 2022 – Feb. 26, 2023) combined possession 6 total (not more than 1 walleye over 20 inches in possession)

Sunfish (Bluegill, Pumpkinseed, Green, Orangespotted, Longear, Warmouth, and their hybrids) combined daily limit 10 total.

Crappie (white or black and hy-

brids) combined possession limit 10

Northern Pike (Season: May 14, 2022 – Feb. 26, 2023) 10 total with not more than 2 over 26 inches; fish 22-26 inches must be immediately released.

Largemouth & Smallmouth Bass (Season: May 28, 2022 – Feb. 26, 2022) combined total limit 6

Muskellunge/hybrid Muskellunge (Season: June 4, 2022 – Dec. 1, 2023) 1 combined total a minimum size of 54 inches

Channel Catfish and Flathead Catfish combined possession limit 10, not more than two may be Flathead Catfish. Only one over 24 inches allowed in possession.



We are celebrating at the Annual Meeting on June 11<sup>th</sup>!



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## SRCL Board Member Contact Information

Board Member	Role/Committee	Phone	Email
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