



Between 2011 and 2014, fisheries biologists with the Department of Natural Resources solicited public input on all aspects of panfish management. They found that although anglers are not interested in sweeping changes to state-wide panfish regulations, they are interested in addressing specific lakes with overharvest issues. With this in mind, the Department developed a regulation package to increase panfish size on 94 selected lakes where harvest appears to be a problem. The regulation package was supported at the 2015 spring hearings and will go into effect in 2016. A thorough evaluation will be conducted in 2021 and the findings shared with the public to decide what to do next.

### What we know

- 1) The size of panfish has decreased over time, particularly on certain lakes (see Figure 1).
- 2) Many lakes in WI have great panfishing, yet many are full of small fish.
- 3) Studies in MN and WI show that reduced bag limits can increase the average size of bluegills, particularly in lakes with fast growth.

### What we propose

A total of 94 lakes across the state were identified by biologists and anglers as underperforming - that is the mean length of bluegill and crappie is less than desirable but growth potential is good (See Figure 3 and Table 1 on back for complete list).

The goal is to determine the best regulation that will increase the average size of bluegill and crappie on the selected lakes. Ultimately, a single regulation will be chosen and used to address similar lakes not meeting panfish management goals.

### Proposed regulations

An effective regulation has to be restrictive enough to affect harvest but still be socially acceptable. Finding a regulation that strikes the balance between effectiveness and angler acceptance can be very challenging.

The following three options explore that tradeoff and will be applied to 94 lakes (see back for details):

- 1 A total of 25 panfish but no more than 10 of any one species (25/10).
- 2 A total of 15 panfish but no more than 5 of any one species during May and June (15/5 seasonal) - 25 panfish in total the rest of the year.
- 3 A total of 15 panfish but no more than 5 of any one species (15/5).

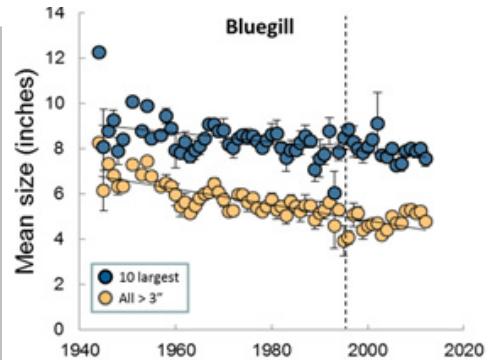


Figure 1. Decline in mean size of bluegill over time. Dashed vertical line indicates 1998 panfish bag limit change from 50 to 25.

### NEXT STEPS and EVALUATION

**Summer 2015** – Up to date baseline data collection where needed; electrofishing and angler surveys

**April 1, 2016** – Regulations go into effect (pending NRB and governor approval)

**2019 – 2021** – Regulation evaluation sampling; electrofishing and angler surveys

**Fall/Winter 2021** – Initial evaluation complete, results distributed, public meetings held

### CONSIDER THIS

#### Why are all the panfish so small?

There are two primary reasons why a panfish population is dominated by small fish:

1. **Stunting** = limited resources diagnosed by slow growth rates.
2. **Overharvest** = all the large individuals kept by anglers diagnosed by decent growth rates.

Even though anglers would take home fewer fish from some lakes, the expected increase in average size should result in the same amount of, or more, meat for the frying pan.



Figure 2. The number of bluegill by length that you would have to keep to equal 1/2 pound of fillets.

## PANFISH STUDY LAKES



**Figure 3.** Distribution of 94 study lakes identified through fisheries biologists and angler surveys with populations of panfish that exhibited poor size and decent growth.

**Table 1.** Panfish study lakes and the designated regulation option randomly assigned to each.

County	Lake/Chain Name	Regulation <sup>1</sup>
Adams	Crooked	15/5 Seasonal
Adams	Parker	15/5
Adams	Arrowhead	25/10
Adams	Camelot	25/10
Adams	Sherwood	25/10
Eau Claire	Eau Claire	25/10
Florence	Halsey	25/10
Florence	Sea Lion	15/5
Florence	Spread Eagle	15/5 Seasonal
	Chain of Lakes	
Forest	Wabikon & Riley (Wabikon)	25/10
Kenosha	Paddock	15/5 Seasonal
Langlade	Big Twin	25/10
Langlade	Long (T33N R10E S35)	25/10
Langlade	Moose	15/5 Seasonal
Langlade	White	15/5 Seasonal
Langlade	Crystal	15/5 Seasonal
Langlade	Dynamite	25/10
Langlade	Meyer	15/5
Langlade	Mueller	25/10
Lincoln	Crystal (Lincoln)	15/5

County	Lake/Chain Name	Regulation <sup>1</sup>
Lincoln	Hilderbrand	15/5 Seasonal
Lincoln	Echo	15/5
Lincoln	Rice Reservoir Chain	25/10
Lincoln	Hilts	25/10
Lincoln	Pesabic	15/5 Seasonal
Manitowoc	Bullhead	15/5 Seasonal
Manitowoc	English	15/5
Manitowoc	Long	15/5
Manitowoc	Harpt	25/10
Manitowoc	Pigeon	25/10
Marathon	Pike	15/5 Seasonal
Marathon	Lake Wausau	25/10
Marathon	Mud	15/5
Oconto	Caldron Falls	25/10
Oneida	Boom-Rhineland	
	Chain	15/5 Seasonal
Oneida	Gilmore	25/10
Oneida	Oneida	15/5
Oneida	Squaw	15/5
Oneida	Moen Chain	25/10
Oneida	Carrol	25/10
Oneida	Madeline	25/10
Oneida	Indian	15/5
Portage	Emily	25/10
Portage	Lime	25/10
Price	Pike Chain	25/10
Price	Solberg	25/10
Price	Butternut	25/10
Price	Phillips Chain	25/10
Racine	Bohners	15/5
Rusk	Lower Flambeau	
	River Flowages	15/5
Sawyer	Black Dan	15/5
Sawyer	Blueberry	15/5 Seasonal
Sawyer	Evergreen	15/5 Seasonal
Sawyer	Loretta	15/5 Seasonal
Sawyer	Mason	15/5 Seasonal
Sawyer	Osprey	15/5 Seasonal
Sawyer	Windigo	15/5
Sawyer	Connors	25/10
Sawyer	Lake of the Pines	25/10
Sawyer	Lost Land & Teal	25/10
Sawyer	Round & Little Round	25/10
Sawyer	Spring	25/10
Sawyer	Winter	25/10
Sawyer	Durphee	15/5
Sawyer	Lower Holly	15/5
Sawyer	Island	15/5 Seasonal
Shawano	White Clay	25/10
Sheboygan	Crystal	15/5 Seasonal
Taylor	Rib	25/10
Taylor	Chequamegon	
	Waters	15/5 Seasonal

County	Lake/Chain Name	Regulation <sup>1</sup>
Vilas	Kentuck	25/10
Vilas	Little Saint Germain	25/10
Vilas	Palmer	25/10
Vilas	Pickerel	25/10
Vilas	High, Fishtrap & Rush	15/5
Vilas	Partridge	15/5 Seasonal
Walworth	Tripp	25/10
Washington	Big Cedar	25/10
Washington	Little Cedar	25/10
Washington	Silver	15/5
Waupaca	Graham	15/5
Waupaca	Hartman	15/5
Waupaca	School Section	25/10
Waupaca	Stratton	25/10
Waupaca	White	25/10
Waupaca	Shadow	15/5 Seasonal
Waushara	Witters	15/5
Waushara	Big Hills	25/10
Waushara	Irogami	15/5 Seasonal
Waushara	Kusel Lake	15/5 Seasonal
Waushara	Porters	15/5
Wood	Nepco	15/5 Seasonal

<sup>1</sup>Regulation:

**25/10** - a total of 25 panfish but no more than 10 of any one species.

**15/5** - a total of 15 panfish but no more than 5 of any one species.

**15/5 Seasonal** - A total of 15 panfish but no more than 5 of any one species during May and June, 25 panfish in total the rest of the year.

For more detailed information and to keep up-to-date on panfish management in Wisconsin visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "panfish plan."

