



THE SMALLMOUTH HORIZON

Helping to Protect and Preserve Quality Smallmouth Bass Fishing

June 2014

Roger LaPenter inducted into Hall of Fame

Roger, who owns Anglers All retail shop and guide service on Chequamegon Bay in Ashland, is a great friend and supporter of our club. And his induction to the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame in Hayward is a well-deserved honor.

Around 1985, while guiding on Chequamegon Bay, Roger recognized that such extensive popularity, and resulting fishing pressure, was putting the fishery, particularly smallmouth bass, at risk. Many anglers were consistently removing high numbers of trophy size smallmouths. Of course, he knew something had to give or the smallmouth fishery would not last much longer.

So LaPenter, along with other concerned anglers, began to lobby for stricter regulations that would protect the Bay's great, but declining bass fishery. After years of work, Roger's hard work paid off as new bass regulations were enacted. The new regulations, established in 1994, included a creel limit of only one smallmouth bass per day and measuring a minimum of 22 inches in length. This new regulation single-handedly assured Chequamegon Bay of a trophy and high numbers smallmouth fishery for the foreseeable future.

Smallmouth bass fishermen and women from around the country have Roger to thank for his many years of tireless work. LaPenter's biography would take a novel of epic proportions to capture. In terms of guiding, he began in the Rocky Mountains with one of the first rafting companies in the Aspen Valley.



He spent years fishing all of Florida's waters, which later prompted him to start a fishing camp in Mexico. His travels have led him to fishing destinations including Alaska and Central America, and perhaps most notably, 40 years of fishing the Bahamas. After years of guiding in tropical waters, LaPenter fell in love with the rugged wilderness of northern Wisconsin and its excellent fishing.

After convincing his newlywed wife, Carolyn, that Ashland, Wisconsin was where they should grow old together, they moved in 1983. It didn't take long for them to open a bait and tackle store overlooking the Bay, as well as starting a guiding service.

As a lifetime achievement, LaPenter's endeavors helped pave the way to insure a sustainable fishery in Northern Wisconsin by advocating for trophy catch and release regulation for smallmouth bass on Chequamegon Bay. The results, and lasting impact, speak for themselves as this fishery, 18 years in the making, now thrives with some of the largest smallmouth bass in North America.

New trolling rule approved by Natural Resources Board

by Wisconsin DNR

MADISON - A proposed rule allowing anglers to troll for fish on inland waters statewide was modified Wednesday by the Natural Resources Board.

Beginning in 2015:

Trolling would be legal with at least one line per angler on all inland waters in Wisconsin.

In 55 counties in the state, all inland waters would be open to trolling with up to three lines per angler.

In the remaining 17 counties - on waters not currently open to trolling - trolling would be allowed but would be limited to one line per angler and no more than two lines per boat, which means no more than two anglers trolling at a time. (Door, Florence, Fond du Lac, Iron, Jackson, Lincoln, Marathon, Marquette, Menominee, Milwaukee, Oneida, Ozaukee, Sawyer, Sheboygan, Vilas, Washington and Waushara.)

The board also added a three-year sunset clause meaning the new rule, which would take effect in 2015 pending legislative review, will revert to the current rule in 2018 unless the board takes additional action.

This action will give the DNR and the Wisconsin Conservation Congress time to engage anglers and explore issues related to trolling in counties where the proposal was opposed during the spring fish and game hearings.

"Trolling" means trailing a lure or bait from a boat under power by means other than drifting or rowing.

The proposal to allow trolling statewide with at least one line per angler was supported at the spring fish and game rule hearings by a majority of individuals - 3,646 to 2,250 - and by 61 of the state's 72 counties.

One key goal of the proposal, sought by musky anglers, is to legalize the practice of trailing live bait behind a boat, while casting with another rod. Under current rules, trailing a sucker or other minnow behind the boat while under power, however briefly, is considered trolling.

Trolling is currently allowed on all waters in 18 counties; on one or more specific waters in 45 counties (105 total waters); and on the boundary waters with Iowa, Minnesota and Michigan, except on Vilas County boundary waters. Trolling is not allowed on any other waters, except that certain disabled anglers can troll anywhere by special permit.

DNR biologists told the board Wednesday that years of data have shown no harmful biological effects to fisheries in lakes where trolling has been legal. Trolling is broadly allowed in surrounding states and in Canadian provinces.



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Articles, photos, and calendar events for the newsletter are encouraged and should be submitted by the 1st day of the month to: Dan Johnson, 426 Glenway St. Madison, WI 53711. Send to: johnson7@tds.net, editor.

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Vilas County Trip Report

by Andy Davidson

After breaking three ribs April 22 on Timber Coulee Creek, I was itching to go fishing. I managed to sneak out for a couple of hours on April 21 to Lake Mendota where I found a normally clear lake a muddy mess. No fish that day, so now I was really looking forward to the Vilas County trip with Rick Reese.

It had been a brutally cold winter with a colder than average spring. We were unsure what this would bring as far as fishing – pre-spawn, spawn, or post-spawn. Well, that is just what we found. The first lake that we tried gave us a surprisingly good feeling when we arrived.

This lake had been so low in previous years that the water line was ten feet below the bottom of the ramp. Now, there was enough to launch Rick's 19' behemoth (it is a very comfortable boat to fish from).

In this clear water lake, we found fish both staging and on beds. Water temperatures varied from 60 degrees in the main lake basin to 64 degree in the shallow, dark bottom bays. Rick fished a jig and I fished a perch colored suspending jerkbait. We caught some four and five pound small-mouth.

Casting the jerkbait on the 7'-6" spinning rod I got at the WSA Auction I felt a fish, set the hook and was into the best smallmouth (and maybe my best one of the year) of the trip. After a great fight, Rick netted the fish. Pre-spawn female just over six pounds and 21.75 inches.

The next day we hit another favorite. This time the fish were a little tougher and temperatures were about the same. It really surprised me when Rick weighed the fish on a Boga. They were very heavy for their weight. An 18" fish was pushing five pounds.

Here again these fish were on a bar off shore. After eating lunch, we headed for another favorite but



Maggie admires Rick's chunky pre-spawn female.

did not fish because of cloudy water and we have never done well when the water was in that condition.

Heading to another smaller lake, the water level had really come up and not only was it finally on the

concrete, but it was actually up in the brush.

Normally, we catch quite a few smallies in a trip around this 120 acre lake which has rock bars, but this trip although we did catch a few, it was not what we usually found for numbers.

The next day brought the chance of thunderstorms, so we were cautious about where we went. This lake is one of the largest, deepest, and clearest lakes in Vilas County. Temperatures on arriving were only 55F. We again headed for some off shore rock bars. With the cold water, all that we caught was one 16" walleye.

The last day, we fished a lake that I had never been to previously. After winding

what seemed like forever on two lane roads, we ended at the boat ramp. As Rick readied the boat, my



Andy's first, and perhaps biggest, smallmouth of the season.

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We caught some fish and as the water warmed, we decided to eat lunch. Once again, I threw the retrieving dummy for Maggie until my arm wore out. After lunch with warming water, we decided to check out the formerly empty beds on some off shore rock bars. Voila! They were now on beds.

Rick decided to cut across to the deep side. Oops! Shallow rock bar. He had to really slow down before we ran aground. Detouring around, we found cruising fish and they were willing. We caught some more smallmouth then decided to call it quits for the day and the trip. The three of us Rick, Maggie, and I had a good trip. We did not catch as many fish as previous trips at this time of year, but the size of the ones that we did catch was impressive.

chore (as it was at almost every boat ramp) was to throw the retrieving dummy for Maggie. Maggie is Rick's two year old yellow lab who will retrieve until either she drops or my arm gives out - usually, it is my arm.

As we motored out into the lake, Rick seemed to be taking a roundabout path to where he said we were going. Soon, I saw why. This clear water lake is filled with shallow rock bars, some of them coming up very quickly out of deep water. The previous night was cold, and as we checked out some rock bars, the beds were empty. With a water temperature of 58F, it was possible that the male smallmouth had moved off the beds.

Trying a different tack, we headed for a shall, dark bottom bay to the south. Once again, we had to slow down to cross the saddle between two widely spaced points. Now finding 62 degree water, there were fish on beds and others moving toward the beds.



Our Next Meeting:

See you in September!

Upcoming Meetings:

June 20 -22nd Embarrass River trip

Saturday, August 2nd BFF picnic
Donald Park

August 30 - September 1st Wisconsin River trip

Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance meetings are normally held on the third Tuesday of each month. The Badger Fly Fishers meet on the fourth Monday. Both groups meet at the Mapletree Restaurant on Highway 51, in McFarland, Wisconsin. Programs begin at 7:00 p.m., dinner at 6:00 p.m. **Visitors and guests are always welcome!**