



THE SMALLMOUTH HORIZON

Helping to Protect and Preserve Quality Smallmouth Bass Fishing

JUNE 2012

Northern bass zone harvest season opens June 16th

by Wisconsin DNR

WOODRUFF – Long story short: despite one of the earliest ice-outs on record, anglers will find smallmouth and largemouth bass in their typical late spring haunts when the 2012 northern bass zone harvest season opens June 16, state fisheries biologists say.

“Even though we had one of the earliest ice-outs in history for this area, steady and cool water temperatures persisted through mid-May, slowing the timing of bass spawning to near-normal,” says Mike Vogelsang, Department of Natural Resources fisheries supervisor in Woodruff.

Bass will be done spawning by the harvest season around the Woodruff area, he says, “so expect fish to be off the nests and a bit more difficult to target. Don't let that stop you for trying for them, however, since bass are one of the easier fish to catch during summer.”

Vogelsang advises anglers to look for smallmouth bass on rock bars in open water, cruising rocky shorelines, or holding tight to woody cover. “Live bait is always a great option, with jigs and leech combinations working well. Plastic baits such as crawfish colored tube jigs are excellent too because they simulate one of their favorite prey items...the crayfish. They are almost always rigged ‘weedless’ too, so you can pitch them into tight spaces and not worry about getting snagged as much.”

Vogelsang's counterpart in Hayward, Dave Neuswanger, also marvels at what he calls “the earliest, most on-again, off-again bass spawning season” in his 10 years in Hayward.

“The water will warm, the male bass will come into the shallows and build some nests, and then frequent cold fronts will send them sulking back offshore,” he says. As of May 22, bass have done some spawning in only the warmest, shallowest lakes in the Hayward area. Many female largemouth and most female smallmouth were still full of eggs.

“This is what we should expect at a time when spring-time water temperatures are rising faster than ever into the upper 50s when bass feel the urge to nest,” Neuswanger says. “More ‘false starts’ seem likely under this scenario, and we can expect to see a wider range of dates at which bass spawn, starting much earlier than even a decade ago when most bass did not spawn in northern Wisconsin until early June.”

Neuswanger says that this year, if the weather stays stable, he expects almost all bass nesting, spawning, and male brood guarding to be completed weeks before the June 16 harvest opener in the Hayward area.

Mike Donofrio, a fisheries supervisor based in Peshtigo and whose waters include those in Oconto and Marinette counties, says bass populations are in good shape for anglers in that area, based on what DNR crews saw during spring fish surveys. “It seems like any water we go into we find nice bass – both size and population-wise.”

He advises anglers that there are very nice largemouth populations on the flowages on the Peshtigo system, and says Cauldron Falls and High Falls are the best bets.

On the Menominee River system, there are 11 dams and anglers “could go to any one of the impoundments created by those dams and catch a lot of legal-sized smallmouth bass.”



A couple of pretty smallmouth on a beautiful little Oneida County lake taken by Andy Davidson (above) and Dan Johnson.



Along with an ambitious little largemouth, and some curious bluegills.



Please give us your input for a club trip

ROCK LAKE – LAKE MILLS. Rock Lake is a 1,142 clear water lake in the village of Lake Mills. This lake has a variety of structure including lily pads, reeds, rock bars and one substantial point. Rock has a substantial amount of good sized smallmouth in addition to great largemouth structure, walleye, and northern pike. The landing is on the north side of the lake and has paved ramps with docks. There is a fee to launch, but it is not substantial. The west side of the lake has extensive weed beds and you will find smallies as well as largemouth off the west side of the lake. The northeast corner of the lake is a huge rock bar, and fishing off this bar is a great spot for smallmouth. A lake map is available on the WDNR website.

DEVILS LAKE - BARABOO. Most of us are familiar with Devils Lake State Park, probably one of the nicest parks in Wisconsin. There are landings on both the north and south shore of the lake. This is also a clear water lake but without much structure. There are rock bluffs dropping to deep water on both east and west sides of the lake and fishing off these bluffs usually yields some nice smallmouth. As a bonus, the WDNR annually stocks trout in Devils Lake, and there were some large brood stock trout stocked this year. Access to this state park requires an annual sticker or a daily fee. A lake map is available on the WDNR website.

The other possibilities are several trips of varying lengths on the Wisconsin River, and these possibilities are:

SAUK DAM TO HWY 12 - 2.8 MILES As you can see from the mileage listed, this is a relatively short trip through some rocky structure. This is a short trip and an easy shuttle.

HWY 12 TO BLACKHAWK LANDING - 3.1 Mi. Again, a relatively short trip, and the shuttle although on opposite sides of the river is short.

BLACKHAWK TO FERRY BLUFF - 2.4 M Mi.

This stretch offers some great fishing, but the shuttle is relatively long due to the access points being on different sides of the river.

HWY 12 TO FERRY BLUFF.- 5.5 Mi. Would be a good choice since there is some varied river structure and the shuttle is relatively short. Fishing around the islands at Ferry Bluff can be terrific.

FERRY BLUFF TO ARENA - 6.0 Mi. Again, this shuttle is a long one.

ARENA TO HWY 14 - 7.8 Mi. Again a nice trip and the landing are on the same side of the river.

HWY 14 TO RIVERSIDE - 3.6 Mi A relatively short trip and an easy shuttle..

PINE ISLAND TO PORTAGE - 5.7 Mi. An easy float and an easy shuttle.

NEWPORT LANDING TO PINE ISLAND - 11 Mi.

Although this is an excellent trip and has good structure, the trip of 11 miles is long, and the shuttle takes approximately one hour. Also remember that there will be an "aluminum hatch" on the river most weekends, so keep this in mind.

Most of us know that this river holds some pretty good smallmouth as well as other species, and one person we all know actually caught an alligator on a fly a number of years ago. All of the trips shown hold substantial numbers of smallmouth.

Noticeably absent from this selection of trips is Lake Mendota which is one of the premier smallmouth lakes in Wisconsin. We ruled this out because of the need for a good sized boat.

What we would like is input from the club members as to which trips in which you might participate.

Please select three trips in order of preference and we will endeavor to accommodate your wishes.

Contact Jerry Pasdo or Andy Davidson (See bottom of page 3.) Also state your preference as to a weekday trip or a weekend trip.

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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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Our Next Meeting:

**Tuesday
September 18th**

**Send us your fishing
photos and stories!**

Upcoming Events:

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!**