

# Talking points- Pokegama Lake Muskie Management

*MN DNR Grand Rapids Fisheries Area. Fall 2011.*



## ***Need for Muskie Management***

- *Fishing for muskellunge has become increasingly popular across Minnesota and in the Grand Rapids area. Anglers from across the state have requested DNR fisheries to expand muskie angling opportunities.*

## ***Considerations for Muskie Management***

- *Expanded muskie management involves identifying lakes that have good potential to support healthy muskie populations. Some of the best muskie lakes are relatively large, deep, and clear. These lakes have more area for muskie to roam and are large enough to disperse fishing pressure across an expansive area. Large lakes also tend to support a higher diversity of fish species and produce more preferred food items for muskie such as suckers, tullibee, and whitefish. Muskie management should fit with the ecology of the lake and with other management goals.*
- *Fisheries managers must also consider location, infrastructure, and social acceptance when considering a lake for muskie management. Good candidates should provide a unique opportunity within a reasonable distance from a population center. The lake should have adequate public access with boat launches and ample parking.*
- *Muskie management must be acceptable to the people that use the lake and a candidate lake must go through a thorough public input process before muskie management can begin.*

## ***Pokegama Lake***

- *Pokegama Lake is a great candidate for muskie management. The lake is large, sprawling, and deep with over 6,000 acres and nearly 60 miles of shoreline providing extreme diversity in habitat types. The lake features numerous shallow shoalwater areas, ample mid-lake structure, depths in excess of 100 feet, and a diverse aquatic plant community that provides important fish habitat. Recent assessments indicate a very diverse fish community exists that includes tullibee, suckers, and smelt.*



- *Muskie are an ecologically sound fit for the Pokegama Lake fish community and are native to the lake and watershed.*
- *The lake has multiple public accesses and is near the population centers of Grand Rapids and Hibbing.*
- *Discussions with the local angling groups, responses to a question asked a 2000-2001 Pokegama Lake creel survey, and broad public input indicated support for managing muskellunge in Pokegama Lake.*
- *Requests for public comments were published in local newspapers and the DNR website in 2006. A public input meeting was also held in August of 2006 in Grand Rapids. A total of 257 comments were received, 227 (88%) of which supported muskie stocking into Pokegama Lake. The Greater Pokegama Lake Association also polled their members and generally supported the stocking.*
- *The Minnesota DNR began stocking muskie fingerlings into Pokegama Lake in 2008 with the expectations of creating a popular and successful muskie fishery.*



### ***Pokegama Lake Management Plan***

- ❖ *The goals of the Pokegama Lake Management Plan are to continue to provide quality angling opportunities for walleye, northern pike, bass, and panfish while providing additional opportunities for muskellunge and “bonus” opportunities for lake trout.*
- ❖ *Opportunities for winter spearing for northern pike will be maintained.*
- ❖ *DNR management activities on Pokegama will include annual walleye fingerling stocking and surplus lake trout stocking. The DNR will continue to conduct regular assessment netting to monitor the fish community.*
- ❖ *Muskellunge stocking is expected to improve angling opportunities in Pokegama. Leech Lake strain muskellunge will be stocked at a rate of 1 per littoral acre (1,978) every other year. Muskie will be stocked in 5 out of 9 years until 2016, followed by a period of evaluation to determine if natural reproduction can sustain the fishery. Muskie fingerlings were initially stocked in 2008 and stocked again in 2010. The next scheduled stocking will occur in 2012.*
- ❖ *The next scheduled assessment will be in 2015.*



*More information about the status of the Pokegama lake fishery can be requested by contacting the Grand Rapids Area DNR Fisheries at (218) 327-4430.*