

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resources Board Agenda Item**

Item No. 6.C.

SUBJECT: Summary of public input on Fisheries Management's advisory questions from the 2022 Spring Fish and Wildlife Hearings

FOR: May 2022 Board meeting

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Meredith Penthorn, Fisheries Management policy specialist

SUMMARY:

This presentation will summarize public input on the Fisheries Management 2022 Spring Hearings advisory questions. Those questions included the following:

Question 1: Create a standard statewide musky season by modifying the northern zone muskellunge season structure to provide harvest opportunity beginning on the first Saturday in May, and specifying that the season ends on December 31 on open water statewide.

Question 2: Establish a walleye daily bag limit of 3 on all inland waters.

Question 3: Add a new walleye rehabilitation regulation to the management toolbox of an 18" minimum length limit, no harvest of walleye from 22-28", and a daily bag limit of 1.

Question 4: Require small fishing tournaments (those that do not require a permit under current rules) to self-register with the department to provide better data on the distribution, number and frequency of small tournaments.

Question 5: Allow non-commercial harvest of minnows from VHS-affected waters, where personal minnow harvest is currently prohibited, but prohibit transport of live minnow bait away from the water of harvest regardless of the source of the bait.

Question 6 and 7: Create lake sturgeon hook and line catch-and-release seasons on waters with healthy sturgeon populations to provide more sturgeon fishing opportunities.

Question 8 - 10: Make the St. Croix (Wisconsin-Minnesota boundary waters) game fish regulations more consistent with those of the Mississippi River, develop more appropriate catfish regulations, and establish a fish refuge. These proposals have been developed jointly with the Minnesota DNR.

RECOMMENDATION: Information only

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS (check all that are applicable):

- ☒ Background memo
☐ Type name of attachment if applicable

- ☐ Type name of attachment if applicable
☐ Type name of attachment if applicable

Approved by	Signature	Date
Justine Hasz, Fisheries Management bureau director	DocuSigned by: <i>Justine R Hasz</i> 258C7DEA9052409...	4/28/2022 8:22 AM CDT
Tami Ryan, FWP deputy division administrator	DocuSigned by: <i>Tami Ryan</i> F0E3A490A31C481...	4/28/2022 10:46 AM CDT
For Preston D. Cole, Secretary	DocuSigned by: <i>Sarah Barry</i> A7D70DC3770642F...	4/29/2022 10:38 AM CDT

cc: Board Liaison – AD/8

by Sarah Barry

DS
WR

This page was intentionally left blank.

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 26, 2022

TO: All Members of the Natural Resources Board

FROM: Preston D. Cole, Secretary

SUBJECT: Background memo relating to the summary of public input on Fisheries Management's advisory questions from the 2022 Spring Fish and Wildlife Hearings

This memo summarizes public input received on the DNR's Bureau of Fisheries Management advisory questions at the 2022 Spring Hearings.

Background

The Bureau of Fisheries Management annually prepares rule proposals and advisory questions on topics relating to fishing and fisheries management on inland, outlying and boundary waters. The spring hearings, held jointly with the annual Wisconsin Conservation Congress advisory hearings in every county starting the second Monday in April, are the most common route for obtaining public input on these proposed regulations.

In 2022, Fisheries Management proposed 10 advisory questions for the Spring Hearings, which were held online via a questionnaire from April 11-14, 2022. Even years are advisory-only with rule questions proposed in odd years, so the 2022 statewide and regional questions will be discussed further based on this year's public feedback and available data, and may advance as part of a rule package in 2023 along with regulation change proposals for individual waters. All of these proposals would then receive additional public input at the 2023 Spring Hearings.

Summary of Results

Over 28,000 people participated in the 2022 Spring Hearings by submitting responses through the online questionnaire. All 10 Fisheries Management questions received support from the majority of attendees. The statewide results for Fisheries Management advisory questions are summarized below.

		All Participants			Wisconsin Residents		
Question		Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion
1	Do you favor implementing a standard season structure statewide (including boundary waters and the Great Lakes) for muskellunge with opening day of the harvest season beginning the first Saturday in May and extending to December 31 in open water only?	10586	3248	7175	10415	3165	7009
2	Do you favor a statewide walleye bag limit of 3 per day on all inland waters? Bag limits for Great Lakes (including Green Bay) and Wisconsin-Iowa, Wisconsin-	13728	3800	3223	13465	3765	3113

	Minnesota, and Wisconsin-Michigan boundary waters would be unchanged, as would any water with a bag limit currently lower than 3.						
3	Would you favor the DNR adding a rehabilitation regulation to the management toolbox that reads as follows: 18" minimum length limit, no harvest of walleye from 22-28 inches, and a 1-daily bag limit (allows harvest of one total walleye, either between 18-22 inches or over 28 inches).	10562	5517	4451	10331	5462	4332
4	Would you support the DNR implementing a mandatory self-registration system for small tournaments that could be used to collect data on the number and types of small tournaments and participants across Wisconsin waters?	10966	5613	3847	10729	5553	3746
5	Do you support allowing personal bait harvest of minnows from VHS-affected waters, using legal nets and traps, as long as no live minnows are moved away from the waterbody regardless of source of the minnows?	9169	5812	5302	9028	5684	5176
6	Do you favor creating a catch-and-release season for lake sturgeon on a subset of waterbodies already open to lake sturgeon hook and line harvest? This proposal would maintain the existing hook and line harvest season, and anglers would not need a harvest tag to catch and release lake sturgeon.	9020	4664	6449	8869	4574	6300
7	Would you support expanding hook and line catch-and-release opportunities to additional waters where lake sturgeon populations are determined to be healthy enough to support these activities?	9966	4281	5886	9819	4174	5750
8	Would you support the Wisconsin DNR working with the Minnesota DNR to establish game fish regulations and a continuous season for the St. Croix River from Taylors Falls downstream to Prescott that are consistent with those of the Mississippi River?	11009	1202	7795	10811	1168	7639
9	Do you support the Wisconsin DNR establishing separate bag limits for each catfish species in the St. Croix River from Taylors Falls downstream	8195	2408	9328	8022	2377	9146

	to Prescott concurrently with Minnesota?						
10	Do you favor establishing a fish refuge season above the State Highway 8 bridge to the St. Croix Falls dam from March 1 to June 1 in the St. Croix River, Polk County concurrently with Minnesota?	9400	1429	9051	9185	1408	8906

The department also received 1 written comment relating to the questions above, which is summarized in the table below.

Question	Support/Oppose	Rationale
1 – Standard musky season structure	Supports early musky season opener, opposes disallowance of ice fishing for muskies during the later part of the season	Feels that eliminating musky ice fishing would not prevent anglers from targeting muskies under the ice (as fishing techniques are similar to northern pike), ice season would be very short, small number of musky anglers that ice fish would result in minimal impact

Additional comments on fish-related topics other than these advisory questions included a comment in favor of prohibiting lead fishing tackle to protect birds, and a comment in favor of increasing the bag and possession limits for trout in response to stream trout population restoration.

Drafter: Meredith Penthorn

This page was intentionally left blank.