

Dead Lake-Fishery Status Update-2023

Dead Lake is a 7,901-acre mesotrophic (moderately fertile) lake located in central Otter Tail County approximately three miles south of Dent, MN. It is the second largest lake in Otter Tail County. The Dead River outlet is located along the southeast shoreline and flows south into Walker and Otter Tail Lakes. The Walker Lake State Fish Hatchery is located on the Dead River. Dead Lake is also connected to Star Lake by a non-navigable channel under County Road 35. The immediate watershed is composed primarily of agricultural and marsh lands interspersed with hardwood woodlots. The maximum depth of Dead Lake is 65 feet; however, 83% of the lake is less than 15 feet in depth. The secchi disk reading during the 2021 lake survey was 4.4 feet. Previous secchi disk readings have ranged from 3.0 to 6.0 feet.

The majority of the shoreline of Dead Lake remains undeveloped. Approximately 70% of the shoreline is composed of mixed hardwoods or marshlands. Homes, cabins, and resorts occupy the shoreline that is developed. State owned public water accesses are located along the north, west, and east shorelines. Large stands of hardstem bulrush, common cattail, and wild rice are prevalent throughout the lake. Emergent aquatic plants such as bulrush, cattail, and wild rice provide valuable fish and wildlife habitat, and are critical for maintaining good water quality. They protect shorelines and lake bottoms and can actually absorb and break down polluting chemicals. Emergent plants provide spawning areas for fish such as Northern Pike, Largemouth Bass, and panfish. They also serve as important nursery areas for all species of fish. Because of their ecological value, emergent plants may not be removed without a DNR permit. To maintain the excellent water quality and angling that this lake has to offer, it is imperative to preserve the quality of the aquatic habitat.

There is a 90-acre Aquatic Management Area (AMA) located on Dead Lake. It adjoins a State-Owned Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The Dead Lake WMA/AMA is approximately 895 acres. The AMA portion contains two islands and the eastern shoreline of the unit. The WMA/AMA is located on the central part of Dead Lake. The entire unit is primarily managed and overseen by the Division of Wildlife.

Dead Lake has a reputation as one of the best all-around fishing lakes in Otter Tail County. Walleye, Northern Pike, Largemouth Bass, Black Crappie, and Bluegill are the dominant gamefish species in the fish community. The abundance of these species can be attributed to the diversity of suitable spawning habitat that is available.

The recent trend has been an increase in Walleye abundance. Walleyes ranged in length from 9.5 to 22.4 inches with an average length and weight of 14.9 inches and 1.2 pounds. Age data indicate that the 2018-year class is very strong and should provide consistently good Walleye angling for several years. Walleyes attain an average length of 15.1 inches at four years of age.

Northern Pike abundance has remained stable over the recent series of surveys; however, size structure has remained poor. Pike ranged in length from 13.0 to 20.9 inches with an average length and weight of 16.5 inches and 0.9 pounds. Pike reach an average length of 16.1 inches at five years of age.

Bluegill abundance has also remained stable. The general trend has been for an increase in Bluegill size structure. Fifty-six percent of the Bluegills were 7.0 inches or greater in length, while 16% were 8.0 inches or greater in length. Bluegills attain an average length of 7.8 inches at seven years of age.

Black Crappie reproduction appears to be consistently good. Forty-two percent of the crappies were 10.0 inches or greater in length. Black Crappies attain an average length of 10.1 inches at five years of age.

Dead Lake is a popular lake with Largemouth Bass anglers. Several permitted Largemouth Bass tournaments are held annually on Dead Lake.

Anglers can maintain the quality of angling by practicing selective harvest. Selective harvest encourages the release of medium to large size fish while allowing the harvest of more abundant smaller fish for table fare. Releasing the medium to large fish will ensure that the lake will have enough spawning age fish on an annual basis and will provide anglers with more opportunities to catch large fish in the future.

Dead Lake was listed as infested with zebra mussels in 2019. Aquatic invasive species are threatening Minnesota waters. Aquatic invasive species can potentially harm water quality, water recreation, aquatic habitat, native species, and fish populations. Anglers can help prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species by following watercraft transportation laws.

Recent Fish Stocking History (past 10 years)

YEAR	SPECIES	SIZE	NUMBER	STOCKED BY
2023	WALLEYE	FRY	6,500,000	DNR
2021	WALLEYE	FRY	6,537,000	DNR
2019	WALLEYE	FRY	6,537,000	DNR
2017	WALLEYE	FGL	6,537,000	DNR
2015	WALLEYE	FRY	6,537,000	DNR
2013	WALLEYE	FRY	8,037,000	DNR

Contact Information:

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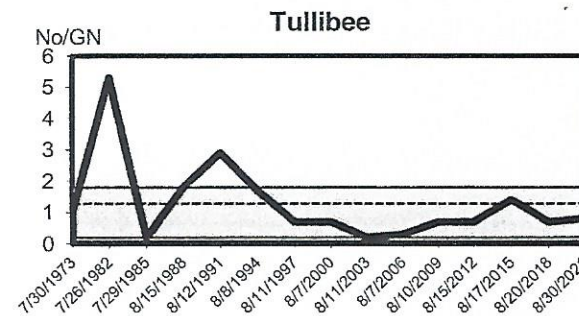
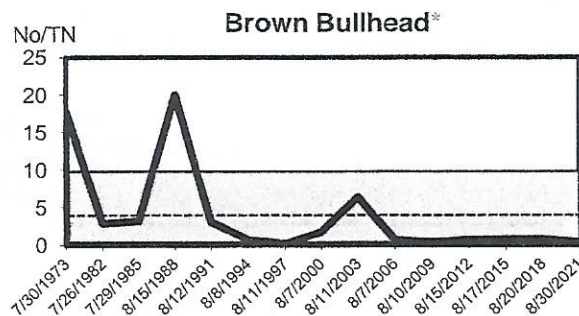
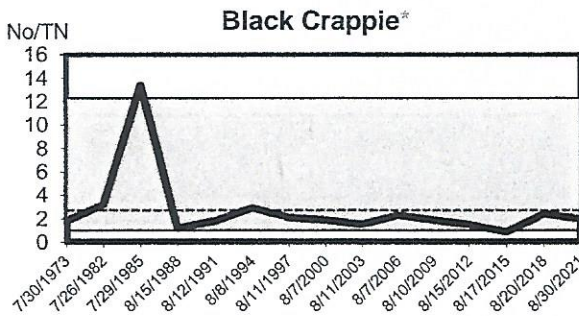
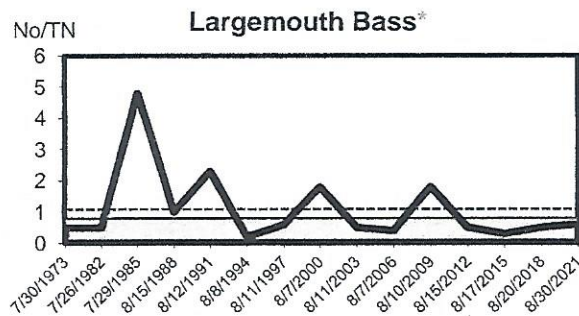
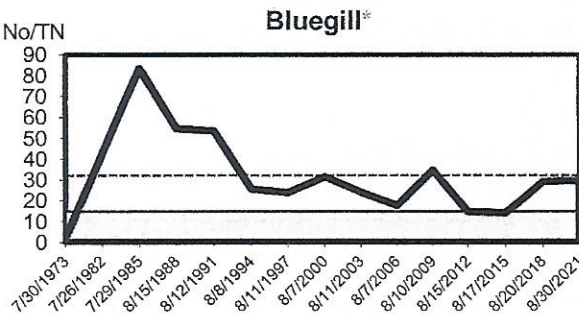
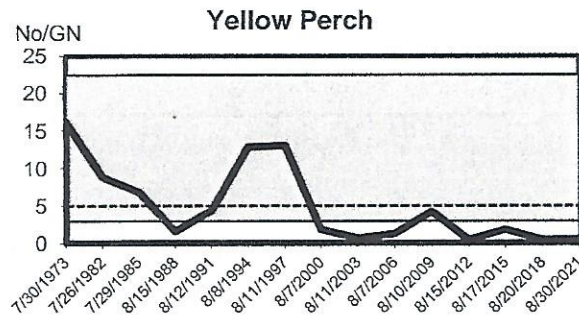
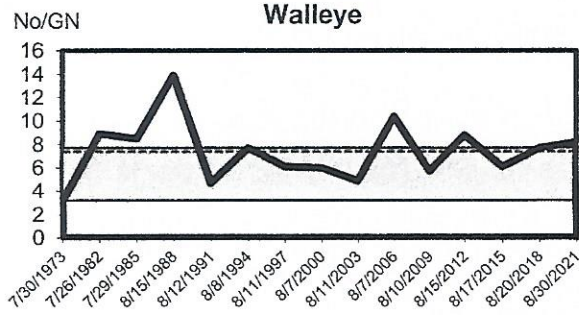
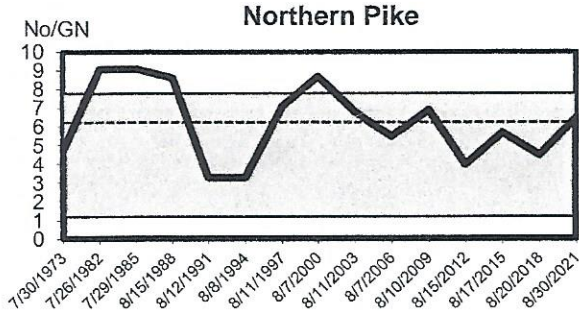
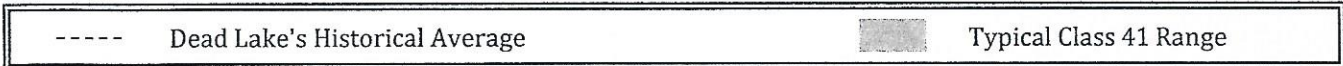
Area Fisheries Supervisor

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Dead Lake Historical Net Catch

Lake Class 41



* No trap nets used in the 2021 survey