



NOTICE OF PROPOSED FISHING REGULATION CHANGE ON BUTTERNUT LAKE IN PRICE AND ASHLAND COUNTIES

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources proposes to change a fishing regulation for muskellunge in Butternut Lake in Price and Ashland counties.

Currently, muskellunge 28" or longer may be kept. This special harvest rule is no longer necessary in a fishery management strategy to reduce high population abundance. Under s. NR 20.35(3), Wisconsin Administrative Code, removal of this special regulation is warranted.

This proposal would apply Wisconsin's standard muskellunge harvest regulation: a daily bag limit of one muskellunge 40" or longer may be kept. Our objectives are to simplify fishing rules and to protect muskellunge until they grow to 40". The proposed change would take effect on April 1, 2021.

Surveys in 2018 and 2019 confirmed that Butternut Lake's muskellunge population now has the desired density (0.2-0.3 adults/acre) and size distribution (25-50% \geq 38"), meeting the goals that stakeholders helped to define in the 2005 *Butternut Lake Fishery Management Plan*. Now reduced from high to moderate abundance, musky growth rate and size structure have rebounded, and there is no longer reason to promote selective harvest of medium-size fish.

A public meeting to hear comments and provide information about the proposal will be held, if requested in writing within 10 days of the publication of this notice. Public meeting requests and comments on this proposal should be sent to Jeff Scheirer, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 875 4th Ave S, Park Falls, WI 54552 by November 16, 2020. E-mail requests may be sent to Jeffrey.Scheirer@wisconsin.gov, and comments may be received by phone at 715-762-1354.