

LAKE WINNIPEG MEASURES TO ENHANCE SUSTAINABILITY

Manitoba Sustainable Development is developing a multi-phase sustainability plan for the Lake Winnipeg fishery as part of its department mandates to “develop a strategy to secure the certification of Manitoba’s commercial fisheries” and “develop comprehensive shared management strategies in consultation with First nations, Metis and licensed hunters and anglers to give local communities a greater voice and ensure long-term sustainability of our fish and wildlife populations”.

Manitoba’s largest commercial and recreational fishery, Lake Winnipeg, is considering the following changes in its management regime to enhance the sustainability of the commercial, angling and Indigenous fisheries.

This plan includes changes to regulations in both the commercial fishing industry and the recreational fishing industry.

Commercial Fishing Measures

1. Sustainable Development has implemented a Lake Winnipeg Individual Quota Entitlement (IQE) Buy-back Program. A willing seller based buy-back of Individual Quota Entitlements is an essential component of implementing the larger fishery sustainability strategy as it provides for a bottom-up, fisher supported approach to implementing management change. Quota buy-back will reduce the total available quota on the lake, which will work towards a sustainable commercial harvest for the lake.
2. Under the Manitoba Fishery Regulations, 1987, the Fisheries Act (Canada), Manitoba is proposing implementing a minimum gillnet mesh size of 3.75 inches (95mm) stretched mesh, for all areas of Lake Winnipeg for all three commercial fishing seasons, which had minimum mesh sizes of less than 3.75 inches (95mm). Currently, smaller minimum mesh sizes are allowed in the south basin and channel. Increasing the minimum mesh size will improve the fishery by allowing more immature fish to escape the fishery, grow larger and spawn once before being removed by the fishery. This will increase the reproductive potential of the walleye stock and at the same time increase the size of fish caught, which will both ensure maximal walleye yield from the fishery. Certain areas of the north basin of the lake will retain minimum mesh sizes of 4.25 inches (108mm). Mesh size increases will change in all three fishing seasons of Lake Winnipeg. These changes are expected to be implemented by November 1, 2019 for the opening of the Lake Winnipeg winter commercial season.

Recreational Fishing Measures

1. Under the Manitoba Fishery Regulations, 1987, the Fisheries Act (Canada), Manitoba is proposing for the Red River from the Canada/US border to Lake Winnipeg, including all tributaries between Lockport Dam and Lake Winnipeg and for the Winnipeg River from Pine Falls Generating Station to Lake Winnipeg to and including Traverse Bay, all walleye and sauger under 35 cm must be released. The current walleye/sauger limit is 4 and under the general limit only one walleye/sauger may exceed 55 cm. In addition, on the Red and Winnipeg rivers anglers may only retain one walleye longer than 70 cm per year. Licence holders who catch and retain one of these fish must immediately record the date on the back of their licence.
2. Under the Manitoba Fishery Regulations, 1987, the Fisheries Act (Canada), Manitoba is proposing for Lake Winnipeg and it's tributaries, all walleye and sauger under 35 cm must be released. The current walleye/sauger limit is 6 (regular licence) and 4 (conservation licence) and only one walleye/sauger may exceed 55 cm. In addition, on Lake Winnipeg anglers may only retain one walleye longer than 70 cm per year. Licence holders who catch and retain one of these fish must immediately record the date on the back of their licence.

This set of proposed changes is primarily focused on walleye, a highly valued species. There will be future opportunities to focus on others like, Whitefish, through our shared management approach to sustainable fisheries.

To voice your opinion on the above measures or other concerns regarding a sustainability plan for the Lake Winnipeg fishery please send your comments before April 10, 2019, including your full name and address to:

Email: fish@gov.mb.ca

Or

Mail: Box 20, 200 Saulteaux Crescent
Winnipeg, MB R3J 3W3

Your information is protected by the Protection of Privacy provisions of *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. If you have any questions about the collection, please contact: Access and Privacy Coordinator, 200 Saulteaux Crescent, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3J 3W3 (phone 945-4170).

Frequently Asked Questions

Lake Winnipeg Proposed Regulatory Changes and Individual Quota Entitlement Buy-back Program

Proposed Regulatory Changes

Why are minimum mesh size changes being proposed for the commercial fishery?

In some commercial fishing areas on Lake Winnipeg the department has allowed a minimum mesh size of less than 3.75" (95mm) stretched mesh. Experience on Lake Winnipeg and other lakes in Manitoba has shown that mesh sizes less than 3.75 (95mm) catch many Walleye before they spawn even once. Allowing more Walleye to live long enough to spawn will increase the reproductive potential of the Walleye stock and improve the status of the Walleye population over time, benefitting all users of the resource.

Have increases in minimum mesh sizes benefitted other commercial fisheries?

Yes. The Lake Manitoba fishery voluntarily requested an increase in the minimum mesh size from 3" to 3.75" (95mm) beginning in the winter of 2017/2018. Walleye yield has increased considerably since the minimum mesh size was increased.

Lake Winnipegosis commercial Walleye production has approximately doubled since the fishery switched from a 3" (76mm) minimum mesh to a 4" (102mm) minimum in 2006.

The now-certified Waterhen Lake fishery also saw a resurgence in Walleye abundance after the 3" minimum mesh size was replaced with 3.75" minimum mesh. For the Waterhen fishery, the minimum mesh size is additionally adjusted between 3.75" and 4.25" as Walleye vary in abundance, to assure the maximum yield of Walleye from the fishery.

Why is a minimum length for retention of Walleye and Sauger by anglers being established?

Some anglers retain small Walleye and Sauger before they grow large enough to mature and spawn. This new regulation is being proposed to ensure that these species have an increased chance to grow large enough to spawn before they are harvested. Allowing fish to spawn at least once is important to securing the sustainability of the fishery.

Why are the Red River, Winnipeg River and other Lake Winnipeg tributaries included in the minimum size regulations?

Walleye in Lake Winnipeg are known to move into tributary waters on a seasonal basis. To ensure Lake Winnipeg Walleye are sustainably managed year-round, it is important to have similar size regulations on tributaries as for the lake. This change should also improve the size structure of the Sauger population. Larger female Sauger and Walleye not only produce more eggs than smaller females, their eggs are also larger and produce higher quality offspring.

Why are angling limits for Walleye and Sauger lower in some tributary waters than on Lake Winnipeg?

The fishing pressure, in terms of density of anglers, is often considerably higher on tributary streams than on Lake Winnipeg. This is due to the relative safety of boating on rivers compared to Lake Winnipeg and the availability of shoreline angling opportunities on rivers. Limits are lower, four Walleye/Sauger instead of six, to reflect the increased angling pressure on tributary waters and to more equitably distribute harvested fish among anglers.

Quota Entitlement Buyback Program

Is the program voluntary?

Yes, the program is strictly voluntary and will be implemented on a willing seller basis.

Who is eligible for the program?

Any licensed Lake Winnipeg commercial fisher or Co-op who/that holds an Individual Quota Entitlement is eligible to submit a Notification of Interest (Appendix 1) with respect to this buy-back program.

If I want to sell a quota, what do I need to do?

To be eligible for quota buyback, a Notification of Interest must be received by Sustainable Development. Fishers can deliver their notifications in person, by sending a scanned copy of the Notification of Interest by email or by faxing the Notification of Interest to either the Gimli Regional Office or the Winnipeg offices of Sustainable Development at 200 Saulteaux Crescent. See contact information below.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the program?

Please contact either:

Mr. Kevin Casper at (204) 642 2240, fax (204) 642-6108, email Kevin.Casper@gov.mb.ca or

Ms. Laura Heuring at (204) 945-5466, fax (204) 948 2308, email Laura.Heuring@gov.mb.ca.

What is the deadline for submitting a Notification of Interest?

Notifications of Interest must be received by the department no later than **4:00pm March 21, 2019**

How much will I be paid for my quota?

The department will pay fair market value for quota. Following receipt of all notifications and with consideration of prices paid for recent quota transactions, the department will establish a bench mark market value that will apply to all quota purchases within specific lake basins.

Eligible fishers will be advised of the established price on March 25, 2019, **before** being asked to sign a formal purchase agreement and are **not obligated** to sell their quota if they disagree with the established price.

Fishers who agree to sell must complete and sign purchase documentation **on or before March 31, 2019**.

The program is resource limited. If there are large numbers of notifications, how will priority of purchase be determined?

All notifications will be date and time-stamped on their arrival to the department. Notifications will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis, based on Community Licensing Area and on their date and time stamp. Interested fishers should submit their notifications as soon as possible.

When will I be paid?

Fishers payments will be distributed no later than April 30, 2019.

What happens to the quota after it is purchased?

All purchased quotas will be retired.



For Office Use Only
Date Received:
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Lake Winnipeg Quota Buy-Back Program

Manitoba Sustainable Development is looking for Lake Winnipeg Fishers interested in selling Lake Winnipeg Quota.

This program is voluntary and for current Lake Winnipeg licenced quota holders.

A maximum amount of quota will be eligible from each Community Licensing Area.

The Department will pay fair market value for quota.

Please complete the form below expressing your interest in selling your quota by 4pm, March 21, 2019.

Email, fax or hand deliver to:

Hand Deliver: Gimli Regional Office #75, 7th Avenue, Gimli, Manitoba
 Email: kevin.casper@gov.mb.ca
 FAX: 204-642-6108

Fisher Name: _____ MB-_____ CF
 Mailing Address: _____

 Home Phone #: _____ Cell Phone #: _____

Quota Entitlement Number	Quota Weight in Kgs	Anticipated Price/pound*

*Final price/pound to be offered will be determined by the Department.

Eligible fishers will be contacted and will be advised of the price/pound at that time.

If you have any questions related to this program please call:
 Kevin Casper at 204-642-2240