

Report on Oakwood Lakes by Jeff Grendler, Brookings Conservation Officer

The weekend of February 6-7 walleyes started showing up near the culverts between West and East Oakwood. There appeared to be about 20-30 walleyes of all sizes. They looked rather sluggish. We suspected low oxygen levels were probably the cause. On Tuesday Feb 9th we again looked at the culverts and there appeared to be about 50 – 60 walleyes, with some dead walleyes in the water. At that time a person could reach down and grab these fish out of the water by hand. We suspected low O₂ levels and began the procedure to possibly open both East and West to liberalized fishing. Part of this procedure was to test O₂ levels. Tests were done on the fish and O₂ levels were checked on Thursday Feb. 11. I visited the site on Friday Feb 12 and all the walleyes were dead. Rough fish, perch, a few northern had moved in and thousand of fathead minnows were present. Main concern was the perch and they were doing fine. Very few dead perch. As a department we decided to not pursue opening the lake to liberalized fishing. This decision was made because:

1) Perch and northern are more tolerant to low oxygen levels. They were alive and doing well. We suspect that they will do fine with very limited winterkill.

2) we suspected that most of the walleyes were dead as they are the least tolerant of low O₂ levels. With no live walleyes present there would be little to no chance to harvest any fish. All died with three days.

We checked both east and west lake for O₂ levels at both ends of the culverts and found less than 1 ppm O₂ levels (not good, fish stress at less than 2ppm). In the main body of East and West (West-100yards from old boat ramp) we found right at or slightly above 1ppm (not good). We suspect that there will possibly be a pretty good winterkill of walleye on both east and west Oakwood. Much like the 2008 winterkill on East Lake. Perch and northern should do fine and make it through as they have in the past.

Least tolerant fish to most tolerant fish are as listed below.

Walleye>Bass>Crappie/Bluegill>Carp>Perch>Northern

A few things to think about.

Most of the fish that have died will probably decompose on the bottom of the lake.

After the winterkill of 2008 in test nets we found good numbers of perch and the Department even spawned perch on East Lake.

We never have a complete winterkill and after a lake winterkills the lake is usually highly productive with fast growing fish.

With high water levels where we spawn and take walleye eggs we should be able to gather and stock walleye fry and fingerlings into East and West lake this year.

Note - This report was reprinted and put into pdf format by Janie Wittmeier from an email sent by Jeff Grendler with Jeff approving the reprinting and posting on the web site. Thanks Jeff for your information.

Dated this 2nd day of March 2010