Two lakes and wetland area treated

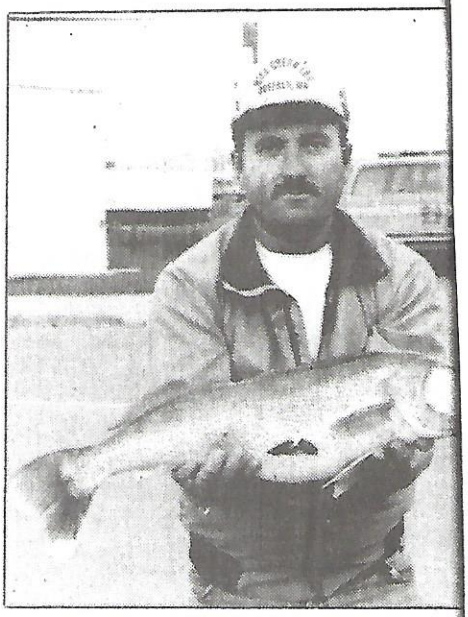
by Harold Brutlag

In an effort to make fishing better on Mink and Somers lakes, those two lakes and an adjoining wetlands (to the north) were treated with rotenone Monday.

The reclamation project was undertaken by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in cooperation with the Mink and Somers Lakes Association and is intended to kill off existing fish populations which consist of game and rough fish.

The project got underway at about 9 a.m. according to Montrose Fisheries Manager Paul Diedrich. He anticipated it would take three units applying rotenone most of the day to cover the 300 acre Mink Lake and 150 acre Somers Lake. The 200 acre wetlands to the north of Mink was also included in the project and he figured a portion of it would be done by helicopter and the rest by an air boat which could negotiate the approximately 18 acres of open shallow water. Diedrich said the wetlands serves as a nursery for all types of fish in Mink and Somers and had to be included in the fish kill to make the program effective.

The boats used on Mink and Somers were equipped with a pump which draws water into the boat, mixes it with rotenone, and pumps it back into the lake from the bow. Diedrich said the employees on the boats making the applications wear pesticide gear and are equipped with a breathing mask that utilizes clean air pumped via a hose to the helmet. He said other employees wear the proper clothing, goggles and use a pesticide respirator for breathing.



Steve Mooney and one of three 9-pounders he and others pulled from Mink Lake when they started to die.

Dan Swanson, Brainerd DNR Fisheries Office, with the clipboard; and Terry Ebinger, with the DNR Regional Fisheries, were at the Mink Lake public access Monday morning to assure the program was undertaken with prescribed safety measures. Fisheries technician LeRoy Collett, Brainerd, is in the boat with a load of rotenone which was taken to boats on the lake.

On Saturday the dead fish will be collected by members of the DNR, the Mink and Somers Lakes Association and other volunteers. Diedrich said two pits have been dug, one on each end of Mink Lake, to accommodate the carcasses.

Diedrich said the wetlands portion of the project may have to be delayed because of inclement flying weather Monday when it was cloudy and misting. He said a slurry application would be used on the wetlands.

Restocking of the lakes will commence once the lake de-toxifies. Yellow perch will be the first fish introduced into the lake. During the spring the lake will be restocked with walleye fingerlings, bluegill and largemouth bass adults, and minnow species.

Fishing restrictions on the lakes were lifted Sept. 13 when the lakes were opened to most any type of fishing, except fyke nets, explosives, hoop nets and seines.

On Monday employees reported the minnows were beginning to show the effects of rotenone about an hour after it was applied. By early afternoon game fish were surfacing and some of the suffocating fish were retrieved. Steve Mooney filled his chest cooler with small walleyes and one that weighed nine pounds. He said the toxicant paralyzes the fish's gills and they come to the surface when they are unable to breath. He said there were lots of different species of game fish surfacing including a large number of crappies. He said some of the carp were enormous and he anticipated cleaning up on Saturday (he'll be helping) will be a big job.

When asked what he planned to do with the nine pound walleye, he said, it's too big to eat and he would probably give it to a taxidermist