

New Life for an old Wright County Lake

The attached article from July 6, 1998 provides a bit more history of the reclamation.

The Area Fisheries Supervisor at the time, Paul Diedrich hosted a meeting with a number of DNR staff at Ney Park back in 1998; four years after the reclamation project. I offered the pontoon and dock for Paul to use to entertain DNR staff from the state and regional offices after their meeting at Ney Park. This was an opportunity for Paul to show what a successful reclamation Mink and Somers was.

This outing made local and state news. Our Lakes have been viewed by DNR local and state levels as having a very pro-active and active Lake Association.

The article was written by C.B. Bylander a DNR employee and exceptional writer.

I have spoken to some of DNR staff recently that fished here in 1998 and they still have fond memories of their outing after all these years.

The attached article is a quick and good read describing the project and the improvement in the lakes as a result of the reclamation.

Dan



Herald and Journal, July 6, 1998

New life for an old Wright County lake

By C.B. Bylander
DNR Information Officer

Joe and Terry, the gray beards of our fishing party, were first to catch the problem.

They counted six anglers but only one boat with four seats. Two people, they quickly concluded, would have to fish from shore during this impromptu outing at the lake home of a friend of a friend.

This dilemma meant two people would have to dunk worms from the picturesque wooden bench at the end of the dock - the bench with the comfortable back rest, wide arm rest and handy drink holder on the starboard side, not to mention a commanding view of the lake and perhaps the promise of evening shade.

"You, younger bucks take the boat," said Joe the Gray Beard as he waved his angling brethren toward the tied-up pontoon. "Terry and I will fish from here. We don't care if we catch anything. It will be nice to just sit back and relax."

Joe and Terry, of course, caught more fish than the rest of us. I can't say how many more because Joe, a cunning sort, likes to blend blarney with his bluegills. Still, one thing was for sure: none of us would have caught the plump gills and eating-size perch we did had we fished this lake several years ago.

Back then, Mink Lake in Wright County was chock-full of carp and bullhead. So was Somers, its companion to the south. That changed in 1994. That's when the Montrose Area Fisheries Office applied a selective toxicant to the lake called rotenone, which is a chemical derived from the bark of a South American tree.

Rotenone kills by preventing gill-breathing fish, amphibians and invertebrates from using oxygen. It is basically harmless to you, me and other life forms. It breaks down into carbon dioxide and water within a few weeks. Studies suggest a 132-pound person would have to drink 4,000 to 5,000 gallons of rotenone-treated water to ingest a lethal dose.

The chemical, however, did net hundreds of thousands of pounds of bottom-feeding carp and bullhead, whose rooting around had made Mink and Somers Lakes murky messes.

These asphyxiated fish floated to the surface and were hauled away by the Department of Natural Resources and others. Then the lake was stocked. Today, largemouth bass are 16 inches long. The walleye are plump. About one third of the bluegills are seven inches long. In short, the fish community is robust again.

A special regulation may help keep it that way: the panfish limit is five, or just one-sixth the statewide possession limit.

You and many other Minnesotans may never fish Mink or Somers lakes. And that's fine. In fact, it's probably good. They are fairly small lakes and, frankly, they can't handle a lot of fishing pressure. Still, they represent the kind of enlightened fish management that constantly occurs in Wright County and local communities across the state.

For example, a number of special fish management projects are scheduled in east-central Minnesota this year. They include:

- Reclaiming Pleasant Lake in Crow Wing County and Diamond Lake in Cass County, which will be restocked with suitable fish species.
- Reclaiming Crawford Lake in Wright County, which will be restocked. Also, this lake will be outfitted with an aeration unit to prevent winterkill of fish.
- Intensive creel survey of night fishing at Lake Mille Lacs. This survey intends to determine the size and number of fish that are caught between midnight and dawn. Such information currently doesn't exist.
- New culvert-style fish barrier at Arco Mine Pit Lake on the Cuyuna Range to enhance trout management by blocking the movement of northern pike into the system.
- Improving habitat on a pair of nice trout streams: Stoney Brook in Cass County and Morrison Brook in Morrison County.
- Creel surveys (interviewing anglers) at Alexander, Fish Trap, and Shamineau Lakes in Morrison County; Mink, Somers, and Sugar Lakes in Wright County; and Hill and Taylor Lakes in Aitkin County. These surveys will tell fish managers numbers and species of fish anglers are catching, and angler attitudes about other unique aspects of these particular lakes.

These and other special projects are above and beyond the day-in, day-out lake survey work, fish stocking operations, and other forms of management that aim to maintain healthy fish populations. You may not see these special projects while they are under way, even if you fish a lot.

Still, like Joe and Terry, there's good chance you or your friends will someday reap the rewards, perhaps while simply sitting at the end of a dock on a summer night.

Outdoors: [Home](#) | [Outdoors Columns](#) | [Honor Roll](#) | [Library](#) | [Links](#)

Howard Lake Herald & Winsted-Lester Prairie Journal
[Stories](#) | [Columns](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Obituaries](#)