

2019 FISHING OUTLOOK



Lakes managed by the DNR Waterville Area Fisheries range from deep, stable lakes to prairie potholes - and provide a true variety of fishing opportunity for anglers. Waterville Fisheries staff follow strategic lake management plans, conducting rotating lake surveys to monitor fish populations in Le Sueur, Blue Earth, Faribault, Waseca, Steele, Dodge, Freeborn, Mower, and Rice counties in southern Minnesota.

The data provided here show a breakdown of fish caught during sampling in 2016, 2017, and 2018 for selected species, by size. We hope you can use this information to decide what to fish for and where in 2019.

Winterkill

Some Waterville Area lakes experienced a winterkill of some degree during January and February 2019. Greenleaf Lake and Sunfish Lake experienced complete winterkills and will be restocked in 2019 according to their specific management plans, but will not offer quality fishing in 2019. Other lakes experienced partial winterkills but will still offer fishing in 2019. Also, many lakes not listed in this publication, such as small Walleye rearing ponds, may have had some degree of winterkill. If you are unsure if the lake you want to fish experienced a winterkill contact the Waterville Area office or a local baitshop prior to fishing that lake.

Bluegill

Most lakes in the Waterville Area have Bluegills, but the best Bluegill lakes are the lakes with the best habitat. Anglers looking for Bluegills should first look for habitat, namely vegetation. Lakes with good vegetation such as Francis, St. Olaf, and the German/Jefferson chain are consistent Bluegill producers. Big Bluegills are often found in lakes with lower Bluegill numbers. Waterville area lakes capable of producing large Bluegills include German, Horsehoe, and Roberds. Large Bluegills are hard to find anywhere in the state and deserve special attention, and protection. Please practice selective harvest of large Bluegills – those large fish can be especially vulnerable in the spring and are not easily replaced.

Crappie

Anglers have plenty of choices for crappies in the Waterville Area. Crappies in the area are generally of the black variety, but some lakes in the area also have white crappies. The German/Jefferson chain of lakes has a healthy population of eater sized crappies. Clear Lake, in Waseca, has historically been known for abundant,

but small crappies. However, crappie sizes have improved greatly on Clear Lake making it worth a trip. Large crappies, those fish over 12 inches in length, don't always show up in survey nets but rest assured, they are out there. Some lakes where large crappies were surveyed include Lura, Elysian, and Roberds.

Yellow Perch

Quality sized Yellow Perch can be difficult to come by in most areas. However, anglers willing to put in a little work can find good Yellow Perch in the Waterville area. Circle Lake, near Faribault along with Roberds, Crystal and Elysian are some of the best bets for Yellow Perch. Pickeral Lake, near Albert Lea boasts a large population of Yellow Perch, although many run on the small side.

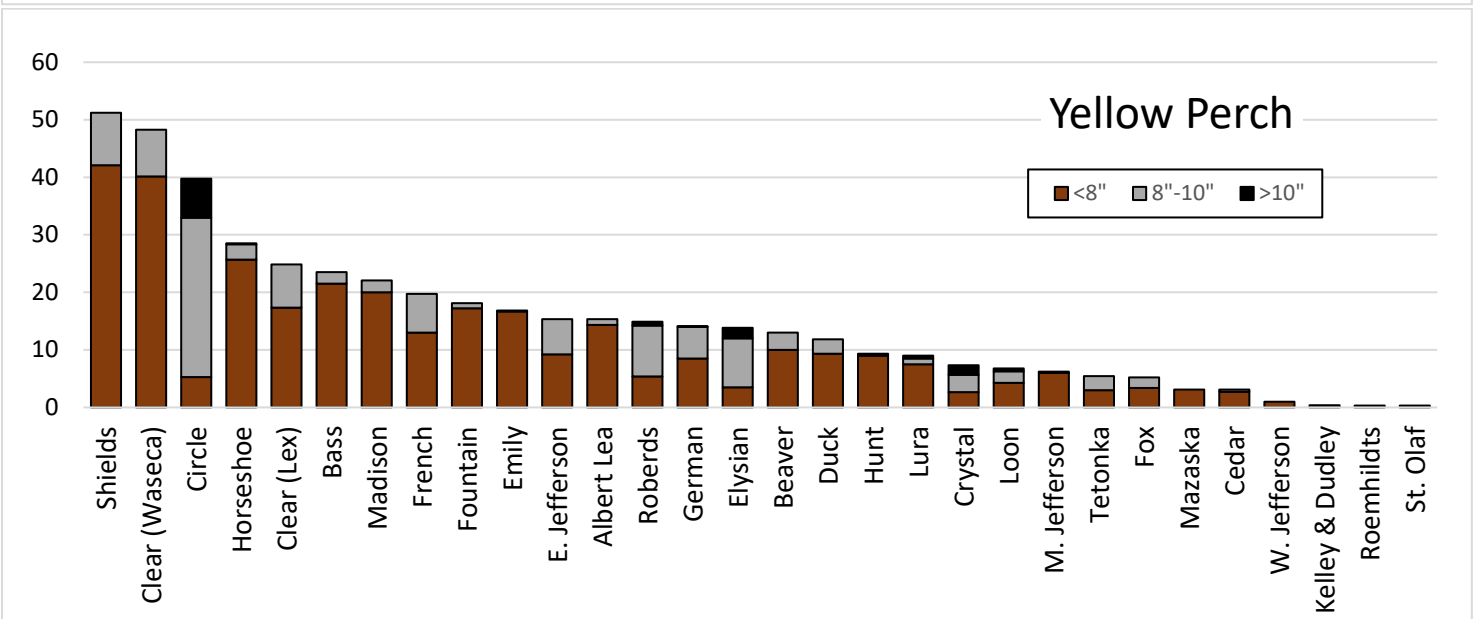
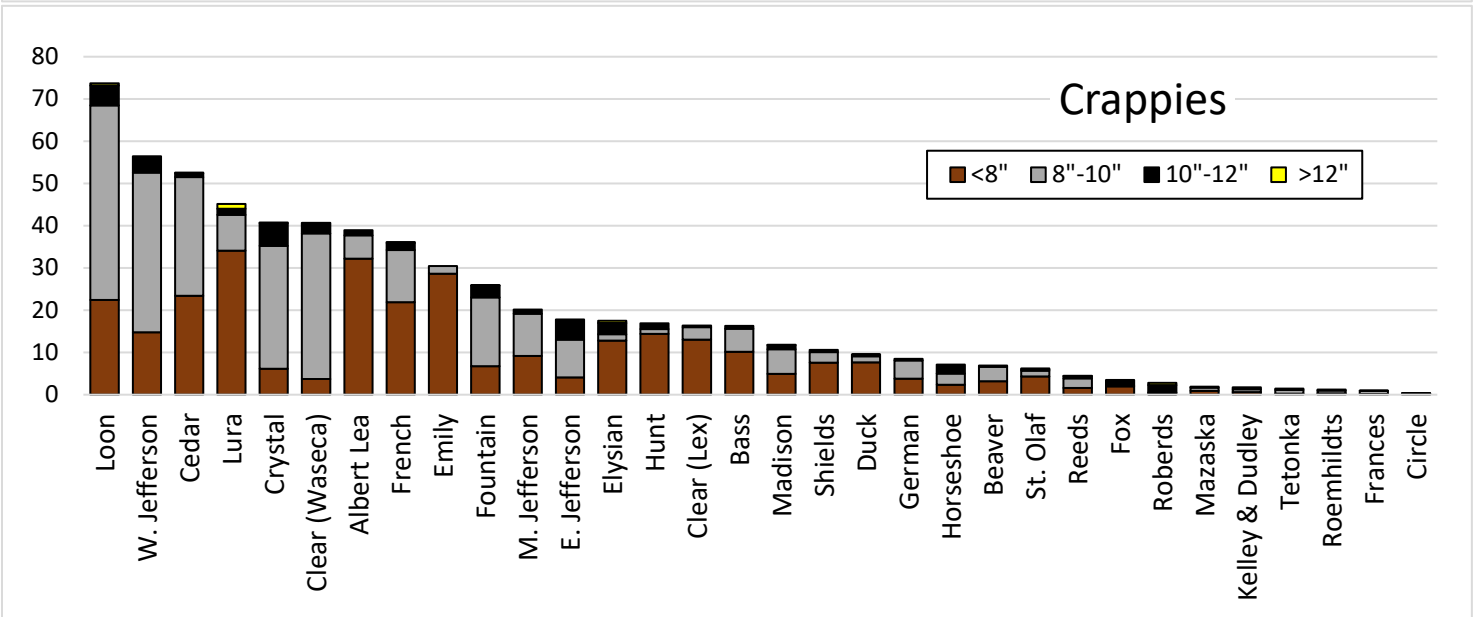
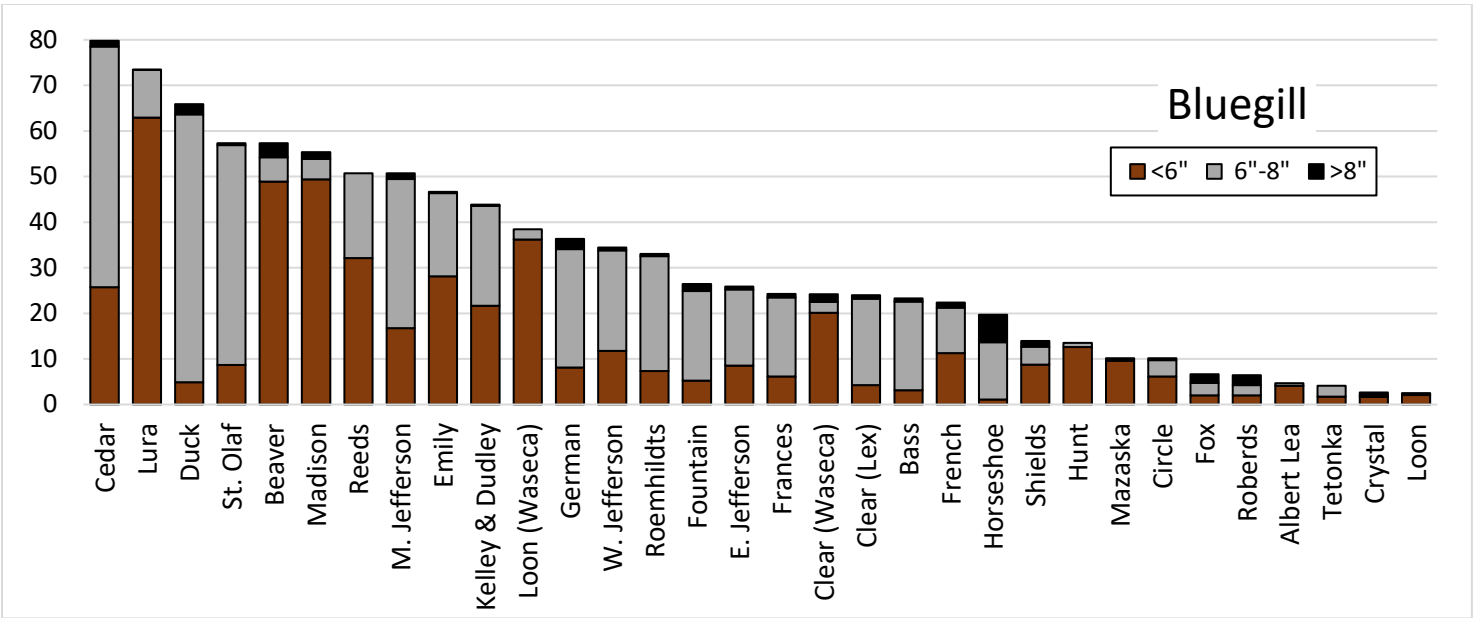
Walleye

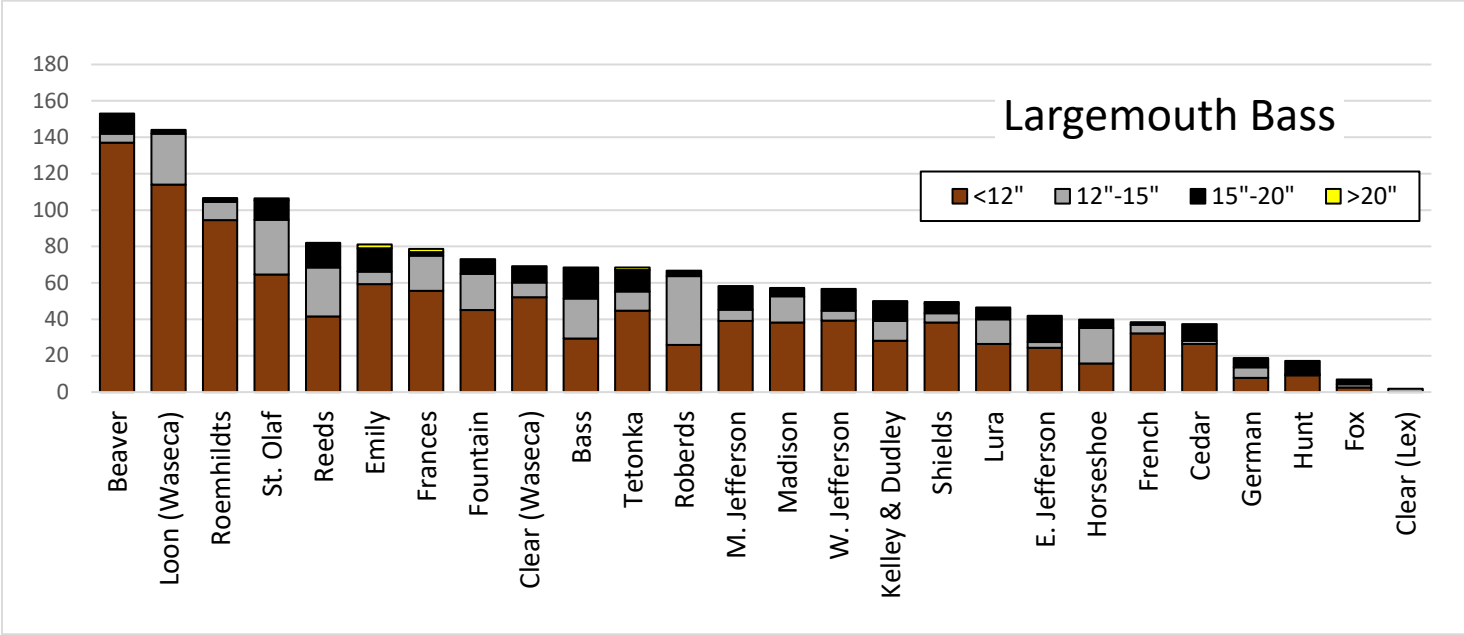
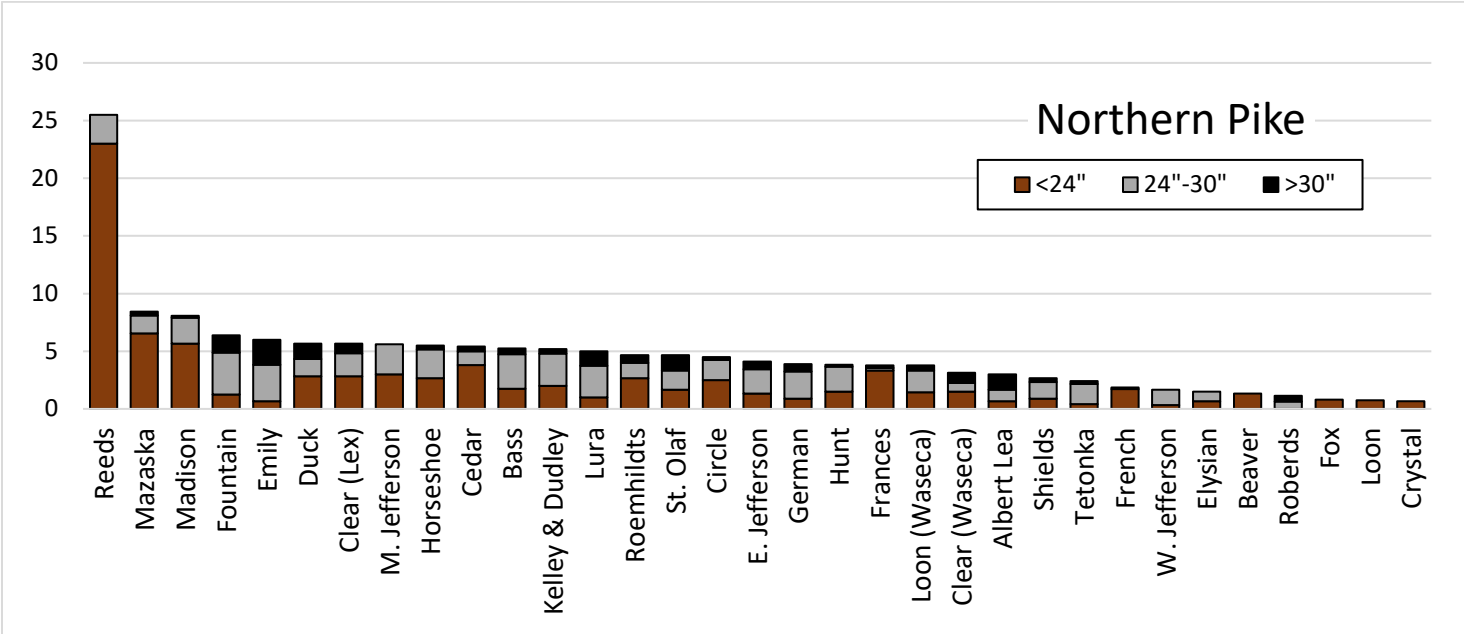
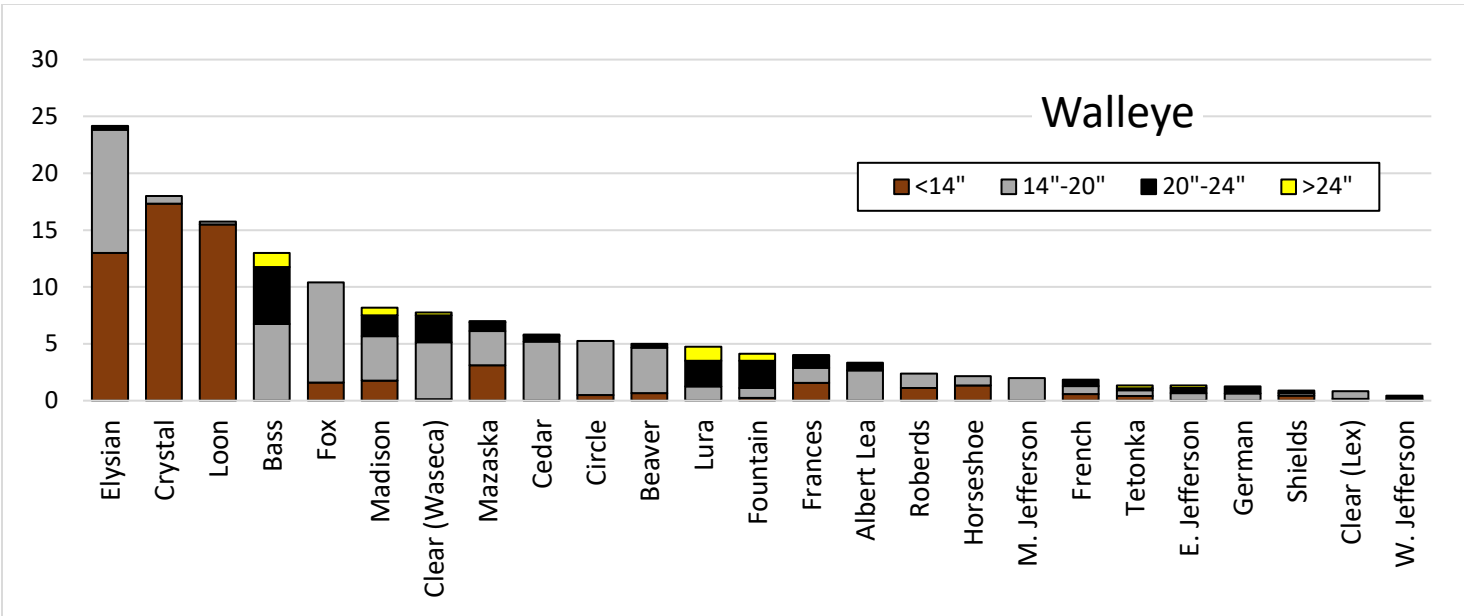
Walleye are king in most of Minnesota and the Waterville Area is no different. Top bets for Walleye in 2019 include the usual suspects like Madison, Washington, and the Minnesota River. The Waterville area is also home to many boom/bust Walleye fisheries that are currently booming – check out Elysian, Loon, or Crystal for Walleyes sized just right for the frying pan. In search of something bigger than a meal? Madison, Bass, and East Jefferson boast populations with Walleye over 24 inches. Fountain Lake, in Albert Lea, has a relatively small walleye population, but if you can find fish odds are good they will be big.

Northern Pike

Northern Pike are maintained in most Waterville Area lakes by stocking and numbers are usually low because of limited habitat and low natural reproduction. However, low numbers of Northern Pike usually means bigger Northern Pike. Waterville Area lakes are part of the new Southern Zone, which means anglers can only keep 2 Northern Pike that must be at least 24 inches long. Finding a 24 inch Northern Pike shouldn't be much of a problem, especially at lakes like Fountain or the German/Jefferson chain of lakes. Duck Lake also has the potential to kick out fish 30 inches and longer, as do Lura, Hunt, and Clear (near Waseca) to name just a few. St. Olaf Lake near New Richland has a 30 inch minimum size limit that will remain in effect.

(more species on back page)





Largemouth Bass

The Waterville Area is full of quality Largemouth Bass lakes. For fast action anglers should check out lakes with high bass numbers such as Reeds, Francis, or Sunfish. Lakes with low to medium densities of bass such as Lura, East Jefferson, and Shields often offer the best crack at fish topping the 20 inch mark.

Catfish

The Minnesota River is the best bet for Channel and Flathead Catfish in the Waterville area. The stretch from Cortland to Henderson holds a variety of catfish habitat, especially woody snags. The Le Sueur and Blue Earth rivers are also excellent choices for Channel Catfish. In addition, Fountain, Loon (in Waseca), and Morin in Alden have Channel Catfish.

Bullheads

Waterville is the Bullhead Capital of the World, after all. Despite what you may have heard, bullheads can still be found. Most lakes in the area have decent numbers of bullheads in them, but size is often considered too small. Head to Frances Lake in Elysian or Clear Lake near Waseca for some whopper Yellow Bullheads. Clear Lake in Waseca along with Clear Lake near Lexington and Horseshoe Lake all have good populations of eating sized Black Bullheads.

Muskellunge

French Lake, by Faribault, is the only Muskie lake in the Waterville area. Recent sampling shows a population of about 200 adult Muskie in the lake, or only 1 fish for every 4 acres of water. There may not be a lot of Muskie in French Lake (and that's by design) but fish over 40 inches are common and fish over 50 inches are a real possibility. French Lake is also home to a small population of big Northern Pike and a very healthy Crappie population.

Trout

A few options exist for those seeking trout in the Waterville area. The ponds at Paul's Creek near St. Peter are stocked every spring with 5,000 ten to twelve inch Rainbow Trout. If you prefer to fish moving water check out Rice Creek, by Dundas, for Brook Trout. Rice Creek is loaded with small to medium sized Brook Trout and some large fish. Although not technically in the Waterville area, Seven Mile Creek between Mankato and St. Peter is stocked every spring with adult Brown Trout.

Other Species

For those seeking something off the beaten track, the Waterville area offers a host of "other" fish. Lakes like German and Mazaska offer Longnose Gar. Mazaska also sports a healthy population of big, hard fighting White Bass. The Minnesota, Le Sueur, and Blue Earth rivers (as well as other, smaller rivers) are a bonanza for anglers looking for less sought-after species like various redhorse, White Suckers, Shovelnose Sturgeon (catch and release only!), and gar. Tetonka Lake, along with the Cannon River, Straight River, and the Minnesota River offer an opportunity to catch a Smallmouth Bass or two. Options are nearly endless for anglers or those looking to arrow a carp. Also, Waterville Fisheries manages many kids fishing ponds across our nine counties. We keep kids fishing ponds stocked with fish such as Bluegills, Largemouth Bass, and crappies. These are fantastic places to take kids or introduce someone to fishing!

For more information visit LakeFinder on the MN DNR website (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/index.html>).

Lake survey year

2016 - Duck, Loon (Blue Earth County), Greenleaf, Roemhildts, Frances, Washington, Kelly & Dudley, Mazaska, Cedar, St. Olaf, Madison, Reeds.

2017 - French, Roberds, Shields, Tetonka, Lura, Beaver, Circle, Fox, Hunt, Sunfish, Emily.

2018 - Clear (Le Sueur County), Albert Lea, Bass, German, Horseshoe, Middle Jefferson, West Jefferson, East Jefferson, Clear (Waseca County), Fountain, Loon (Waseca County).

2019 lake survey schedule

The following lakes will be surveyed with gill nets, trap nets, and electrofishing during the summer of 2019:

Cedar Lake	Fish Lake
Frances Lake	Frances Lake
Mazaska Lake	Volney Lake
Duck Lake	Ballantyne Lake
Washington Lake	Steele Lake
Gorman Lake	



WATERVILLE AREA FISHERIES

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