

BUREAU OF FISH MANAGEMENT

Oshkosh

January 16, 1968

STURGEON SEASON NEWS RELEASE

Veteran sturgeon spearmen are anxiously watching weather reports as they realize that the success or failure of the season depends on Mother Nature between now and opening day. Heavy snows, dirty water, cold weather and variable ice conditions can have a much greater effect on the season than all of man's regulations.

Sturgeon spearing opens on Lake Winnebago Saturday, February 3 and extends through March 1, 1968. The season on lakes Poygan, Winneconne and Big Lake Butte des Morts, starts Saturday, February 10, 1968 but is open only two days--through Sunday, February 11, 1968. The 1967 spearing season was limited to Lake Winnebago where 1,423 fish were harvested. The largest for 1967 measured 76 inches and weighed 120 pounds.

The bag limit for speared sturgeon, is one fish per season. The minimum size remains at 40 inches.

A special \$2.50 sturgeon spearing license is required. No one can spear sturgeon under 14 years of age. A sturgeon tag is furnished with each license which must be locked to the tail of the sturgeon immediately after it is speared.

THIS YEAR FOR THE FIRST TIME IT IS UNLAWFUL TO TRANSPORT ANY STURGEON IN OR ON ANY MOTOR DRIVEN VEHICLE FROM THE TIME IT IS TAKEN UNTIL THE TIME IT IS LAWFULLY REGISTERED UNLESS THE STURGEON IS CARRIED OPENLY EXPOSED AND IN SUCH A MANNER SO THAT THE STURGEON TAG ATTACHED CANNOT BE HANDLED OR MANIPULATED BY ANY OCCUPANT OF THE VEHICLE.

THIS WILL CAUSE SOME PROBLEM FOR THOSE WHO USE SNOWMOBILES. IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO PULL THE STURGEON BEHIND THESE MACHINES BY MEANS OF A SLED, TOBAGGAN, OR EVEN A PIECE OF TIN OR HEAVY CARDBOARD. THEY CANNOT BE CARRIED ON THE MACHINE SO THE TAG COULD BE HANDLED OR MANIPULATED.

STURGEON SPEARING LICENSES WILL BE AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE SEASON. HOWEVER, THEY WILL BE AVAILABLE AT LICENSE DEPOTS AROUND THE LAKES ONLY THROUGH THE FIRST WEEKEND OF THE SEASON. (February 3 and 4--LAKE WINNEBAGO.) (FEBRUARY 10 and 11 UPRIVER LAKES.) AFTER THAT THEY WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLY FROM THE COUNTY CLERKS (CALUMET, FOND DU LAC, OUTAGAMIE, WAUPACA, WAUSHARA, AND WINNEBAGO COUNTIES) AND FROM THE CONSERVATION DIVISION HEADQUARTERS OSHKOSH AND THE FISH MANAGEMENT STATION AT CALUMET HARBOR.

We urge you to get your license early--they will be available at the license depots by Saturday, January 20.

To save time at the Registration Station you should detach and fill out the stub of your sturgeon spearing license before you leave your shanty.

Other general regulations have been briefed up and emphasized by Conservation Wardens to help keep sturgeon fishermen out of trouble. Regulations will be strictly enforced as the sturgeon requires utmost protection.

During the coming season, sturgeon may be taken only by hand-operated spears between sunrise and sunset. No spears are allowed in fishing shanties before the sturgeon spearing season opens or after the season closes nor between sunset and sunrise while the shanties are occupied.

All sturgeon tags and licenses must be in possession of the owner and they may be left in shanties only if the shanty is occupied in person by the owner of the tag.

All fishing shanties shall have the name and address of their owner painted on the outside and the door of each shanty or enclosure shall be equipped with a latch which permits the door to be opened from the outside while it is occupied.

Fishermen may fish other species with hook-and-line during the open season while spearing sturgeon, but no fish other than sturgeon may be speared.

It is unlawful for any person to cut, use or maintain a hole larger than 12 inches in diameter or square for the taking of fish in any manner through the ice, except for dip-netting or skin diving purposes; however, during the open season for spearing sturgeon, it shall be legal to cut, use and maintain holes of unrestricted sizes from 48 hours before and continuing through such season. Regulations prohibit holes larger than 12 inches in diameter or square, after the spearing season closes; however, this should not hamper fishermen who desire to leave their fishing shanties after the sturgeon season, as it would be legal for them to leave the holes freeze over and maintain the 12 inch hole for hook-and-line fishing. Persons moving their shanties during the season and after, are reminded that Wisconsin law provides a maximum penalty of \$100 for neglect to place a guard around the openings in the ice.

Research points out that concern of extinction is not the problem, but that overharvest of a slow-growing fish may easily ruin future spearing. Studies of the sturgeon population in Lake Poygan during the winter of 1962 showed that only 23 percent of the fish were large enough to spear. There is a large number of fish between 30 and 40 inches, so spearers will have to look close before throwing their spear. Known length decoys and measured marks visible on the bottom of the shallow lakes would help spearers estimate a sturgeon length. The attraction of sturgeon spearing is the chance to spear a trophy fish, not the harvest of 7 to 10 pounders, which would live to be a real trophy for their children 20 or 30 years hence.

It is for this reason department officials are making a special appeal to spearers on the smaller upriver lakes this year to not throw the spear unless they are certain their target is well over 40 inches. Restrictions on the smaller lakes can only be lifted when registration figures disclose that spearers are carefully judging their target and not throwing spears at small fish. Officials are anxiously

waiting for the final registration figures for 1968 hoping they will show a large percentage of the fish ranging in the 45 to 60 inch group rather than, as in 1965, when registration disclosed a large harvest of fish just within the legal 40 inch size. The results of the 1968 season will dictate future seasons on the little lakes.

On the same day a sturgeon is speared, it shall be registered in the county where taken at a registration station. At the station, a registration tag will be attached to the fish and both that tag and the fisherman's own sturgeon tag shall remain on the fish until it is prepared for eating. Below is a list of registration stations:

Registration stations for Lake Winnebago will operate from February 3 through March 1, from 11:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.:

East Shore:

Wally's Lunch--South of Sherwood Village on Highway 55.

Stockbridge----Building next to the road leading to the lake.

Manned by Wisconsin Conservation Department personnel.

Ecker's-----Shanty on ice off Ecker's Road--North of Quinney.

Brothertown----At crossroads leading to the lake across from Sket's Fishermen's Inn.

Calumet Harbor--State fisheries office. Manned by Wisconsin Conservation Department personnel.

South Shore:

Clarence's Harbor--On Highway 55--151--one mile East of Fond du Lac.

West Shore:

Wendt's Bar and Harbor--On Highway 45--eight miles North of Fond du Lac.

At Winnebago--Fond du Lac County Line.

Payne's Point Resort--On Winnebago County Trunk "A" about three miles South of Neenah.

North Shore:

Waverly Beach Resort--Road leading onto the ice.

Registration stations around lakes Poygan, Winneconne and Butte des Morts will operate from 9:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 10 and Sunday, February 11.

Welch's Landing--On ice, southwest corner of Lake Poygan off Winnebago County Trunk "B".

South Shore----On ice, midway between Herbst's and Brettschneider's landings. (Lake Poygan)

North Shore----On ice, southwest of the ice road from the mouth of Elder Creek at (Lake Poygan) the point where it joins the road to Tustin.

Richter's Landing--On ice, northeast ice road on Lake Poygan (Bay Boom area), off Winnebago County Trunk "MM".

Winneconne-----Village of Winneconne Fire Station.

For further information, please call:

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