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## DNR: Sturgeon opening was 1 of the best ever

By Peggy Breister  
Of The Reporter Staff

It was one of the best opening weekends on record for sturgeon spearing on Lake Winnebago, says a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources biologist.

More fish were registered Saturday and Sunday than were registered during the entire 1997 16-day season, said Ron Bruch, Winnebago system sturgeon biologist.

At 6 p.m. Saturday, spearers waiting to register their fish formed a line a quarter mile long at Wendt's on the Lake. Bruch said he called in three teams and they registered fish until 8:30 p.m.

Last year, spearers registered 1,290 fish for the season. Through Sunday, 1,387 sturgeon were registered at several stations set up around Lake Winnebago. Since 1990, spearers have averaged

1,457 sturgeon per season.

Water so crystal clear "you can see a peanut in 20 feet of water" is the main reason opening weekend went so well, Bruch said.

"This certainly will cause us to take a good hard look at trends in water clarity and the long-term impact on the season," he said. "This is the clearest people can remember, ever."

Over the past 10 years, water clarity has been gradually improving, he said.

One theory is that there has been a reduction in the nutrients and sediments entering the lake, Bruch said.

It's too early to tell if further limitations on the season will be necessary, he said.

Sunday's high temperature near 50 degrees and a forecast of milder



Janet Stoegbauer/The Reporter

▲ Travis Sonnentag checks the weight Sunday at Wendt's on the Lake of the 59-inch, 57-pound sturgeon he speared.

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"because I knew

do if you expect them to make sense," he said.