

2017 Northeast Glacial Lakes Fishing Forecast – Week 1

Presented by Fishermens Net Guide Service LLC

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The ice fishing season is just about over as we've experienced warmer than normal temperatures. Many anglers are anxiously waiting for ice out so they can get their boat in the water and start chasing their favorite species.

What I plan to do here for the next few weeks is not to give a fishing report (because we're entering a transition period, ice to open water) but to highlight a few lakes every week and a lake survey history along with my 2017 fishing forecast. Not only will we visit the more popular lakes, I'll hit some of the lakes that are more off the beaten path.

Cottonwood Lake (Clark County) – This 525 acre lake had a moderate to fairly good population of perch. Cottonwood was last surveyed back in June 2015 with 3 nets placed in the lake. The nets averaged roughly 20 perch per net, half of which measured between 8" and 12 ½". Cottonwood was hit pretty hard during portions of the ice fishing season so we'll have to see how it does later on. The lake also has a fairly decent population of walleyes. The GF & P has been stocking walleye fry in 2015, 2016 and again in 2017.

Cottonwood has a good population of northern pike. The nets averaged 17 northern pike per net and approximately 35% were between 28" & 34" long. Another 35% fell between 21" & 28" in length. This is certainly a destination lake if you're a northern pike fisherman and it would be a great place to take the family and kids for a day of pike fishing. There is a primitive landing on the south end of the lake. I'll see you out there as I love pickled northern! I also like it fried or poor man's lobster for that matter too.

Lake Poinsett – Poinsett has a high population of walleye, perch and smallmouth bass. In 2015, the latest survey results show an average of 20 walleyes per net. Half of which fell in the 10" to 15" range. Approximately 15% were over 15" and a few exceeding 20". Keep in mind this is a net survey and not every fish swims into the net. In June 2016 there was an Angler/Young Angler fishing tournament on Lake Poinsett sponsored by Lund Boats and Weiland Marine. It consisted of 2 anglers 17 years old and younger and 1 adult. Many boats reported 100 fish a day! According to the GF & P it takes around 3 years for walleyes to reach the legal length limit of 15" on Lake Poinsett. Anglers will catch a lot of walleyes this year with June historically being the hot bite.

Perch are a popular fish here. The latest survey results show close to 30 perch per net with 75% falling into the 10" to 12" range and a hand full over 12 inches. Perch grow fast in this lake as the average length for a 2 year old perch is 8". In 2015 the weighted mean of a 2 year old perch was 8.9". Some anglers struggled on this lake during the 2016 ice fishing season but the perch are there!

If you're a smallmouth bass fisherman I would highly recommend Lake Poinsett. It held the State record for a couple years and there are some dandy smallmouth's in Poinsett.

Swan Lake – This 1,600 acre lake located south of Webster, SD is managed for walleye, perch and northern pike. The latest survey was in 2015 and shows that walleyes are in good shape. Estimates show that 8 year classes were represented in the net results, 2005 and 2008 through 2014. Two year old walleyes are in the 11 ½” range while a 3 year old walleye is 15 inches. Nets averaged 10 fish which I’d say 40% were in the 15” to 20” range while 30% were 20” to 25”. The remaining were 15” and less. Overall they are nice fish but older. The GF & P did stock 1,000,000 walleye fry in 2011 and 750,000 fry respectively in 2013 and 2015. The outlook for Swan looks very good as long as we all practice some form of conservation.

Perch are below the GF & P’s management objectives. There is 4 year classes of perch in Swan Lake, 2011 – 2014 and 90% plus of perch caught in the nets were from 2013. A 2 year old Swan Lake perch is approximately 6 ½”. While healthy they are on the small side for harvesting.

Didn’t see your favorite lake? Check in next week as we’ll highlight other lakes in Northeast South Dakota. Also, check out our Facebook Page. <https://www.facebook.com/fishermensnetsd/>