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Dave Osborne – Treasurer
Chip Leer – Secretary

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Jeff Arnold
Frankie Dusenka
Nicole Jacobs
Garry Leaf
Tom Mackin
Kristen Merwin
Tom Neustrom
Jay Pederson
Steve Pennaz
Dick Sternberg
Craig Wilson
Babe Winkelman



MN-FISH NEWS

“Official Newsletter” of the MN-FISH
Sportfishing Foundation & Coalition

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT by Ron Schara

July 2020

Fellow anglers/members:

When it comes to Minnesota fishing seasons, the 2020 version may be the most unusual in history and it's not over yet. Anglers wearing masks in bait shops, asking for a dozen shiners but the muffled request sounds like “give me a frozen miners.” No guides for opening day; no launches. Confusing orders: Fish close to home but resorts can be open?

The 2020 fishing season also might be remembered as the year more Minnesotans discovered the value of fishing, a pastime for hope, patience, solitude and joy—sometimes—on the end of the line. Through all of the chaos, MN-FISH continued its mission to act as a voice for state anglers. Through the power of social media, MN-FISH launched campaigns to urge anglers to buy a walleye stamp, to purchase a fishing license and to practice safe distancing.

When fishing guides, houseboat operators and others were still sitting on the shore, MN-FISH sent letters to Gov. Walz urging more common-sense with the fishing restrictions. MN-FISH positions were quoted in news stories in the Star Tribune, Outdoor News and other news outlets. We like to think MN-FISH made a difference, large or small.

As for the Legislature, well, COVID-19 was uppermost on the minds of legislators and then came the murder of George Floyd, the protests, riots and looting in Mpls and St. Paul. Suddenly, our MN-FISH legislative goals—bonding money to improve boating accesses and modernize walleye hatcheries—went lower on the list of priorities. While understandable, you should know we—your MN-FISH organization—is not going away or giving up. There will be more opportunities in the future to make our angling voices heard at the Capitol.

What's ahead? When Covid 19 concerns diminish, MN-FISH intends to increase our dialogue with the DNR fisheries leadership to discuss a number of fish management issues as we see them or to simply learn why and how DNR makes its fish management decisions. We—MN-FISH and DNR fisheries—both have the same goal—to shorten the time between bites.



LEADING THE WAY by John Peterson

MN-FISH was founded and being directed by a diverse, passionate and experienced board of fishing industry executives, business stakeholders and hall-of-fame anglers driven to lead the way to Minnesota's Fishing Future.

Led by President Ron Schara, the MN-FISH Sportfishing Coalition & Foundation board is doing its part to help reverse the negative trends and threats our industry is facing like; invasive species, habitat loss, lake access, lakeshore



development and increased fishing pressure that are lowering catch rates. We are also witnessing a major decline in kid/youth fishing participation, a reduction in fish stocking programs and fishing license sales due to an aging generation of anglers.

Here is a list of our MN-FISH board member's occupations and areas of expertise.

MN-FISH Executive Board Officers:

President - Ron Schara (*CEO of Ron Schara Enterprises/Minnesota Bound TV*)
Vice President - John Peterson (*Northland Fishing Tackle Founder*)
Treasurer - Dave Osborne (*Business Executive & CEO of Clam Outdoors*)
Secretary - Chip Leer (*Fishing the Wildside Founder*)

MN-FISH Board of Directors:

Jeff Arnold (*Reed's Outdoor Outfitters*), Frankie Dusenka (*Frankie's Marine*), Nicole Jacobs (*Pro-Angler/Fishing Ambassador*), Garry Leaf (*Computer Consultant*), Tom Mackin (*Rapala USA President*), Kristen Merwin (*Women Anglers of Minnesota Pres.*), Tom Neustrom (*DNR Fisheries Advisory Board*), Jay Pederson (*Attorney*), Steve Pennaz (*Lake Commandos TV Host*), Dick Sternberg (*Retired DNR Fisheries*), Craig Wilson (*Duluth Steelhead Assoc.*), Babe Winkelman (*Good Fishin' TV Host*)



“Leading the Way to Minnesota's Fishing Future”



MINNESOTA FISHING FACTS



Over 1.4 Million Anglers



**11,842 Lakes
5,400 Fishable**



90,000 Miles of Shoreline



18,000 Miles of Fishable Rivers & Streams



162 Species of Fish



825,000 Registered Boats



#1 in \$\$ Spent in Freshwater Fishing



Supports Over 43,000 Fishing Related Jobs



\$2.8 Billion in Retail Spending



Generates \$271 Million in Tax Revenue

WITH PANDEMIC SURGING, MN-FISH STEPS UP

By Steve Pennaz

I'll be the first to admit, when we launched the MN-FISH Coalition in March of 2019, most of us believed we'd be fighting for things like habitat improvement, more stocking and creating opportunities to increase youth involved with fishing

Instead, this year, we found ourselves in the middle of a battle to preserve fishing opportunities and re-open outdoor recreation businesses that closed because of COVID-19. And this battle still continues, serving as an important reminder of the importance to continue working with state, regional and local leaders to make well-informed decisions that affect the \$4.2 billion sportfishing and marine industry in Minnesota.

Pandemic Challenges

MN-FISH publicly took steps to address COVID-19 on March 30 through social media. Our goal was to keep anglers informed that state waters remained open for angling, and to also share the news that many states had closed fisheries because of the pandemic. Publicly and behind the scenes, MN-FISH leadership worked to keep state waters open. We asked the Governor to publicly announce that the Minnesota Fishing Opener would not be cancelled in 2020, which he did April 1. We shared this breaking news via social media that same day, reaching more than 13,000 state anglers.

On April 15th, we encouraged state anglers to buy a \$5 Minnesota Walleye Stamp after the Minnesota DNR announced it had suspended its egg-stripping efforts, essentially shutting down the state's fish stocking program. MN-FISH promoted the Walleye Stamp to sustain some level of walleye stocking this year.

Our press release was carried by media outlets across the state and nationally, and our social media post generated 41,100 impressions. More importantly, Walleye Stamp sales spiked 60% ahead of the walleye opener.

On April 16, MN-FISH continued to fight hard for outdoor/recreational businesses including bait shops, guides, resorts, boat dealerships and charter services by requesting that Gov. Tim Walz clarify his Stay at Home Order and allow

for statewide travel. On April 17, the governor announced the re-opening of bait shops and boat dealers.

Statewide Travel

Meanwhile, the governor's office would not take a public stand on statewide travel, leaving state anglers and the businesses that support them unable to plan for the future. So, on April 28th, the MN-FISH board released its Position Statement. It read:

"MN-FISH Sportfishing Foundation believes recreational fishing is culturally important to Minnesota's heritage and is an inherently safe and healthy activity that's also an important food source for many Minnesotans. MN-FISH strongly encourages state and local leaders to not only maintain traditional statewide fishing opportunities, but also designate the \$4.2 billion sportfishing and marine industries as essential, and allow supportive businesses to open, such as sporting goods stores and fishing guides that can operate within established safe social distancing guidelines."

"Keep Minnesota Fishing"

That same day we published an Open Letter to Gov. Tim Walz with the following recommendations:

***Support Statewide Travel for Anglers and Boaters.** Recreational fishing and boating are critical to the economic health of the state, particularly in rural locations. Every week lost during the vital spring/summer fishing season is financially devastating to these businesses. Supporting statewide travel will help businesses survive; it will also reduce crowding on boat ramps and lakes in populated areas across the state.

***Encourage Anglers to Purchase Fishing Licenses and Walleye Stamp Online or by Phone.** This will reduce lines at traditional license vendors to make transactions safer for all. Licenses are available through DNR website or by calling 1-MN-LICENSE.

***Promote May 9-10 as Take Mom Fishing Free weekend.** Celebrate Mother's Day as only Minnesotans can—by going fishing for free (no license is required for Minnesota resident moms)! Consider expanding this program this year for health care workers on the front lines of the COVID-19 fight as well.

***Go Fishing on Opening Day of Fishing Season.** Help state residents celebrate the Fishing Season Opener by fishing yourself that day.



"Restore, Protect & Enhance Minnesota Sportfishing"

WITH PANDEMIC SURGING, MN-FISH STEPS UP

Continued

***Allow Fishing Guides/Charter Services to Re-open.** Most states guide businesses are sole proprietors that cater to individuals or groups of 1-3. Guides can operate within established safe social distancing guidelines by limiting the number of guests allowed on board. The same is true for charter operations that generally operate in larger craft.

These two posted reached more than 65,000 via our social media channels, and generated more than 5,000 Engagements from state anglers.

Finally, on May 13, Gov. Walz announced that fishing guide businesses could reopen with restrictions. The news was shared through our social media channels, generating more than 93,700 and nearly 10,000 engagements from anglers,

guides and other fishing-related businesses. Finally, on June 1st, launches, charter services and public and private campgrounds re-opened, another win for state anglers.

The Future

As we approach August 2020, the pandemic continues to affect folks across Minnesota and around the world. There is some good news... millions of new and former anglers and boaters are returning to the water to recreate with family and friends, while still able to maintain social distancing. At MN-FISH, we welcome all outdoor enthusiasts as we continue to work for the improvement of fishing and boating experiences in Minnesota, and ask those who aren't already MN-FISH members to join us as we continue with our vital missions.



MN-FISH MISSIONS

Become a grassroots sport fishing, marine and angler advocacy network to give anglers and business stakeholders a voice before the State Legislature and DNR.

Seek greater reinvestment back into sport fishing of the estimated \$271 million in state taxes derived from Minnesota's robust \$4.2 billion fishing industry.

Act as a watchdog and support DNR fish stocking policies and fish management programs when appropriate.

Support scientific and common-sense fish management of all gamefish species to "shorten-the-time-between-bites".

Advocate and promote youth fishing recruitment and fishing programs in school curriculums.

Seek funding and assist in expanding the Minnesota Fishing Museum/Hall of Fame/Education Center programs and facility.

To restore, protect and enhance Minnesota Sportfishing for present and future generations of anglers to enjoy.

MN-FISH COMMUNICATION LINKS by Chip Leer

It's no secret the first-year organizational tasks of any business or non-profit are many, and here at MN-FISH we found this to be true. Our staff of volunteers have been busy, mostly behind the curtain establishing systems and procedures all while working in St. Paul to ensure your voices and our missions are being represented. President Ron Schara and Steve Pennaz are toting our activities in other written pieces. I'm here to share with you our communication promise. Here is how you can expect to be updated on how MN-FISH is working for you as we grow.



MN-FISH News – Every spring we will send an old school, printed annual newsletter directly to you via U.S. mail. To ensure delivery, simply go to our MN-FISH website and look up your membership data to confirm that your physical address is correct. This is a FREE publication paid for by your donations.

MN-FISH E-News – Each quarter (4X a year) you will receive an electronic E-Newsletter submitted to your email address. Look for occasional special issues when important hot topics arise. If you HAVE NOT been receiving emails from us in the past:

1. Check your JUNK MAIL where it's likely being redirected. If so, mark them as NOT JUNK.
2. Go to MN-FISH website, click on membership and check to make sure the email address listed for you is correct. You are welcome to email us at info@mn-fish.com and we can confirm it for you as well.

Social Media – We have active pages on Facebook and Instagram. They are easy to find, just search MN-FISH Sportfishing on the platform. These pages will keep you informed on a daily/weekly basis on important issues, events, successes and special events. It's vital you follow LIKE and SHARE MN-FISH content. We've gained over 1,100 followers and likes since March.

FOLLOW US



@MNFISHSportfishing



@mnfish_



"Shorten-the-Time-Between-Bites"



MN-FISH SPORTFISHING FOUNDATION & COALITION

Restore, Protect and Enhance Minnesota Sport Fishing

MN-FISH LAUNCHES MAJOR MEMBERSHIP DRIVE by Steve Pennaz

In May, MN-FISH partnered with Big Rock Sports, Blackfish Gear and 50 sporting goods retail outlets across Minnesota to promote MN-FISH Sportfishing foundation and grow membership. To enter the "WIN a MN-FISH Trip" prize drawing for a chance to win a trip with Rainy Lake Houseboats or a day of fishing with legendary angler Al Lindner, participants sign up for a free, 2-year Charter Membership, \$35 Founding Membership or \$250 Life Membership. Winners will be drawn September 30 and trips will be enjoyed in 2021 or sooner.

Participating retailers ([CLICK HERE FOR LIST](#)) all display the "WIN a MN-FISH Trip" entry box and provide official entry forms. All entries are collected monthly and processed at our fulfillment facility in Grand Rapids.

Chris Winchester, General Manager at 4

Season Sport Shop in Red Wing, says supporting MN-FISH is important. "It's good to have a strong organization that supports anglers and angler-related businesses in the state," he said.



MN-FISH is launching a second "WIN a MN-FISH Trip" promotion in November that focuses on the ice fishing market. Details on that promotion are being finalized

now and will be shared in the next MN-FISH newsletter. The MN-FISH Sportfishing Coalition is a non-profit 501c3 organization of anglers and fishing industry stakeholders. Our primary mission is to restore, protect and enhance Minnesota sportfishing for present and future generations of anglers to enjoy.

If you are not already a MN-FISH member, consider joining as you'll help build a large, active and influential membership of anglers, industry stakeholders, marine, tourism and economic beneficiaries to maintain and grow Minnesota's robust \$4.2 billion fishing economy.



Corporate Benefactor Sponsors - (Copper level or higher)

Johnson Outdoors, Rapala USA, Clam Outdoors, Vexilar Inc., Big Rock Sports, Metro Marine Dealers, Yamaha Motors, Northland Fishing Tackle, Reed Family Outdoor Outfitters, Otter Outdoors, Diawa Corp., HT Enterprise, Lake Master, Pradco, Aqua-Vu, EBSCO Industries, Normark Corp., Catchcover, Jiffy, Frankie's Marine, Lindner Media, Pennaz MultiMedia, Ron Schara Productions, Rassat Outdoor Group, Fishing The Wildside, Trappers Landing Lodge, Arneson's Resort, Deco Pumps, Arrowhead Fulfillment, Rainy Lake Houseboats, Babe Winkelman Productions, Environmental Troubleshooters, Phillips Wine & Spirits, Factory Motor Parts, Village Bank, Fuller Wallner Law, Innovative Outdoor Solutions and Don Coffee Agency.

Corporate membership supports MN-FISH grassroots advocacy work, legislative activities and public policy development to win pro-angler policy and legislative victories to Keep Minnesota Fishing. Please JOIN US!

GET ON-BOARD

JOIN US by going to MN-FISH.com and sign up for a FREE 2-Year Charter Membership, a \$35 Founding or \$250 Life Membership. Your donation and participation will help to grow our coalition so we can voice your concerns, lobby and negotiate better legislative fishing programs and politics to secure the future of sportfishing here in Minnesota.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Aug. 7-9 Game Fair / canceled
- Aug. 14-16 Game Fair / canceled
- Oct. 30 Sweepstakes Winner Announcement

www.MN-FISH.com



"Leading the Way to Minnesota's Fishing Future"