

June 3, 2019

Mr. Michel Leclaire
The Wildlife Society, Manitoba Chapter, Inc.
tw.manitoba.chapter@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Michel Leclaire:

Thank you for your email of April 10, 2019 regarding the management of the Lake Winnipeg fishery.

Manitoba Sustainable Development is committed to ensuring the sustainable management of Lake Winnipeg's fish stocks for the purpose of maintaining vibrant and valuable Indigenous, commercial net, commercial tourism, and angling fisheries. In March, the department proposed a suite of measures to improve the sustainability of the Lake Winnipeg fishery. The elements included a voluntary Lake Winnipeg Quota Buy-back Program; a proposal to increase the minimum mesh size of gillnets that could be fished in the south basin and channel; and, a proposal to set a minimum size of Walleye and Sauger that could be retained by anglers.

The department's voluntary quota buyback program, which offered to purchase quota from commercial fishers at fair market value, resulted in expressions of interest from more than 100 commercial fishers, and the eventual purchase and retirement of approximately 520,000 kilograms of Lake Winnipeg quota. This program has resulted in significant progress towards better matching lake quota to the long-term sustainable yield of Walleye, Sauger, and Lake Whitefish from Lake Winnipeg.

As part of the consultation on proposed regulatory changes to the commercial and angling fisheries, we heard from many individuals and groups regarding the proposed minimum mesh size for commercial fishing and minimum length measures for anglers. These included concerns from commercial fishers about the short-term effects of a move from 3 inch to 3.75 inch mesh, as well as the proposed November 2019 implementation date. The regulatory changes announced on May 6, 2019 incorporated this feedback and we have moved forward with a 3.5 inch minimum mesh size, to be implemented on April 1, 2020. The proposed 35 cm minimum retention size limit for Walleye and Sauger will be implemented for the start of the 2020/2021 angling season.

To improve transparency, Lake Winnipeg fishery data is being published on the department website. Manitoba has made fishery reports and provincial index-netting data available at https://gov.mb.ca/sd/fish_and_wildlife/fish/commercial_fishing/netting_data.html. Additional data and information will follow over time.

Manitoba remains committed to implementing a shared management model for Lake Winnipeg that includes a broad spectrum of fishery participants who share a common objective of ensuring the continued vitality and health of the Lake Winnipeg fishery.

Thank you again for sharing your views.

Sincerely,



Rob Olson
Director