

# Resolution to reopen the Wisconsin River

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009, a committee from the Lake Alice Association attended the State Conservation Congress Warm Water committee meeting in Stevens Point, WI. We were there to oppose the resolution to re-open the Wisconsin River.

The Warm Water Committee of 26 members, each from a different county voted UNANIMOUSLY not to advance the resolution further.

There were also some very strong and favorable comments in agreement. Attached is the letter that was presented to the Warm Water Committee and also other information explaining the rule change.

We would like to hear your comments on the rule change. You may address them to Mike Sigl. His email address is [gbfdcapt4b@yahoo.com](mailto:gbfdcapt4b@yahoo.com).

There are many exciting projects coming up in phase 2 of our Lake Planning Grant. Some are a volunteer anglers survey, develop an amphibious frog and toad protocol, water quality, and plant community data. We need volunteers and cannot do this alone. If you can help, contact Mike Sigl at: [gbfdcapt4b@yahoo.com](mailto:gbfdcapt4b@yahoo.com).

Neil Peitenpol  
Mike Sigl

This letter was sent to all Warm Water Committee members before the hearing on December 5, 2009.

We , the Lake Alice Association and concerned citizens, recommend that the Warm Water Committee vote NO on resolution 350/09 to re-open the Wisconsin River.

The vote in 2008 at the Spring Hearings was overwhelmingly in favor of making this portion of the Wisconsin River and Lake Alice consistent with most other inland waters.

We have already had some success from this closure. The fishing for legal size walleye this spring was the best in years. Instead of catching the majority of fish in a short two week period of intense fishing pressure, these fish had a chance to spawn and spread out in Lake Alice and the Wisconsin River. This gave local fisherman, lake residents, tourists and fishing guides months of good fishing rather than just a couple of weeks during the spawn. This in turn helps commerce in Tomahawk. Money is spent in our gas stations, bait shops, and grocery stores over the summer tourist season.

If the current fishing season is working well in Oneida, Price and Vilas counties, and most of Wisconsin, why shouldn't Lincoln county do the same? In the past there were many complaints about erosion of the shoreline from the intense boating traffic on the river during the spring spawn. If the wild rice beds and good natural vegetation along the river are destroyed, the invasive species Curly Leaf Pond Weed and Eurasian Water Milfoil may replace them.

The old continuous open season included Smallmouth Bass. This allowed the river to often be the site of very early spring Bass fishing, targeting Smallmouth on their spawning beds. Many of the large pre-spawn Bass were taken from the river because the other lakes in the area were closed. The 2008 vote to make the Bass fishing season consistent with most other inland waters in northern Wisconsin has helped this fishery.

We have an invasive Rusty Crayfish in Lake Alice which could destroy native vegetation if their numbers increase. The Smallmouth Bass is a predator of these crayfish and will help keep their numbers in check.

I would like to address the resolution because it is misleading and non-factual.

This 22 mile section is segmented by Regis Dam, Rhinelander. Spawning

Walleye stack up at Menard Island (5 miles north of Lake Alice) at Hat Rapids Dam and St. Regis Dam, Rhinelander. This makes it very easy to over harvest spawning fish. The DNR wardens stated that a closure was the only way to stop the illegal over-harvest of fish during this time.

What is not said in this new resolution is that the Wisconsin River, from its beginning at Lac Vieux Desert, through Vilas Co, and all the way to St. Regis Dam in Rhinelander, Oneida Co. is closed during this time. The 2008 vote added the small, narrow, segmented 22 mile section of the river, from Rhinelander to Kings Dam, to that. It is absurd to compare this small section of the river to the large river systems of the lower Wisconsin, the Fox and the Wolf Rivers.

Due to a lack of data, the slot size was not supported at the state level. Yes, Lake Alice has a large population of Walleye under 15" and the Lake Alice Association will continue to work with the DNR fisheries on a solution for this. Also our Smallmouth population seems to be declining and the Northern size decreasing. The last lake net sample survey was done in 2003 and it might be another decade before another is done.

The process to protect this fishery started in 2005 when everyone had different ideas on what to do. With the capable leadership of Steven Avelallemant, Northern Region Fishery Specialist, and John Kubisick, Fishery Biologist and Dave Seibal, fish management and Rick Peters and Ron Nerva the local wardens, The Lake Alice Association, the Warm Water Committee and the Conservation Congress and the Bureau of Fishery Management the end result was to make this section of the Wisconsin River consistent with most inland waters.

Please vote NO on resolution 350/09 on re-opening of this section of the Wisconsin River and give the 2008 resolution time to work.

Respectfully,

Neil Pietenpol

*Dave  
Seibel*



## Wisconsin DNR News Release

### New regulation changes game fishing on Wisconsin River between Rhinelander and Kings Dam

News Release Published: February 20, 2009 by the Northern Region

Contact(s): Dave Seibel (715) 623-4190 ext. 3112

**RHINELANDER** - A 22-mile stretch of the Wisconsin River from Rhinelander to Kings Dam will now be closed to game fish angling starting April 1, 2009 and reopen with the statewide opener on May 2. That section of the river -- which had been open in the past to fishing year 'round -- is being closed to protect spawning game fish.

"This part of the river was once one of the most polluted in the state," said Fisheries Manager Dave Seibel, "and closed seasons were not needed to protect fish that people did not want and weren't plentiful. Since the passage of laws like the Clean Water Act in 1972 and other regulations, however, the river has made a dramatic comeback and the abundance of bass and walleye have increased along with fishing pressure."

The regulation change now makes the section of the river consistent with most inland waters in northern Wisconsin. After April 1 and in the future, game fishing on the river will open the first Saturday in May and run through the first Sunday in March. Also applicable this year and in the future is a catch and release only season on bass from the first Saturday in May through the Friday before the third Saturday in June. After that the daily bag limit is five with a minimum of 14 inches.

The river portion included in the change begins at the Rhinelander Paper Mill (St. Regis) Dam down river to Kings Dam including Hat Rapids, Osceola and Lake Alice.

Copyright 2009 Wisconsin DNR. All Rights Reserved.

# CHANGES IN GAME FISHING REGULATIONS

A 22-mile stretch of the Wisconsin River from Rhinelander to Kings Dam will now be closed to game fish angling starting April 1 and reopen with the statewide opener on May 2. That section of the river, which had been open in the past to fishing year 'round, is being closed to protect spawning game fish.

"This part of the river was once one of the most polluted in the state," said Fisheries Manager Dave Seibel, "and closed seasons were not needed

to protect fish that people did not want and weren't plentiful. Since the passage of laws like the Clean Water Act in 1972 and other regulations, however, the river made a dramatic comeback and the abundance of bass and walleye have increased along with fishing pressure."

The regulation change now makes the section of the river consistent with most inland waters in northern Wisconsin. After April 1 and in the future, game fishing on the river will open the

first Saturday in May and run through the first Sunday in March. Also applicable this year and in the future is a catch-and-release-only season on bass from the first Saturday in May through the Friday before the third Saturday in June. After that, the daily bag limit is five with a minimum of 14 inches.

The river portion included in the change begins at the Rhinelander Paper Mill (St. Regis) Dam down river to Kings Dam, including Hat Rapids Flowage and Lake Alice.

## Why is it that walleye fishing is closed in the spring on most lakes, yet you can fish them on the Wisconsin River?

- Bruce,  
Rhinelander

The *Star Journal* asked John Kubisiak, a fisheries biologist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in Rhinelander. Kubisiak responded:

"Basically, it's because of tradition. We have closed seasons on game fish to protect spawning fish. However, years ago, the Wisconsin River faced very little fishing pressure. This was likely because of the pollution in the river. The DNR figured that, even if someone caught a fish on the river, they wouldn't be eating it.

"However, that has changed quite a bit. The Wisconsin River is now as clean as most lakes. Still, the rule has never changed for walleyes, making the river pretty much the only water body where you're allowed to catch game fish. The Wolf River and the Great Lakes, along with a few lakes in the southern part of the state, have similar season rules. This year, walleye fishing on Sherman Lake in Vilas County was changed to a year-long season. This is for an experiment that the DNR is doing to find out how an increase in the walleye harvest affects the lake.

"Right now, there are movements to make the seasons match. People with the Lake Alice Lake Association, which connects to the Wisconsin River, are spearheading the movement. They're hoping that the DNR will make the rules match up across the board."

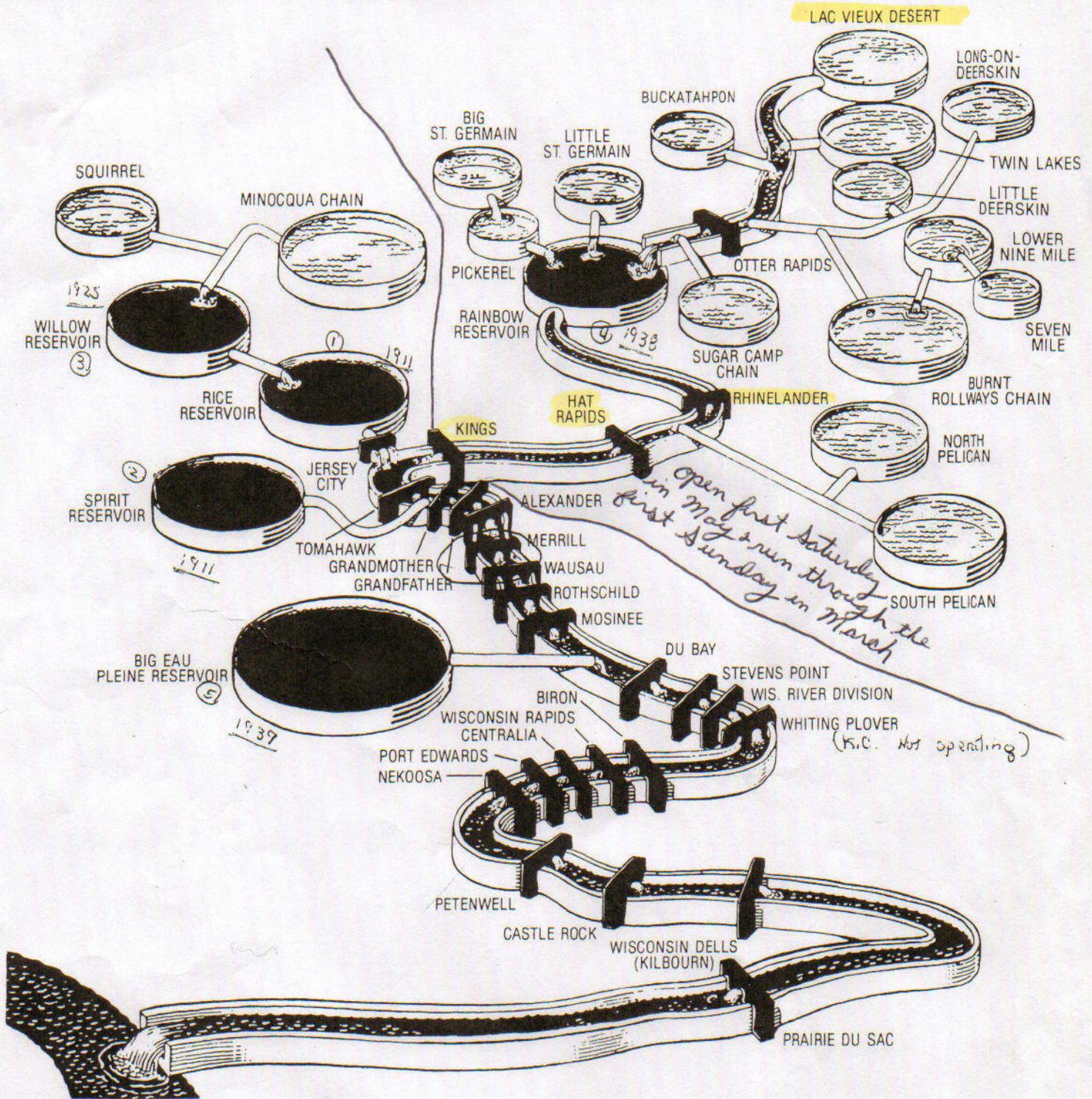
## Alice, Hat Rapids on WI River to close to fishing

A 22-mile stretch of the Wisconsin River from Rhinelander to Kings Dam will now be closed to game fish angling starting April 1, 2009, and reopen with the statewide opener on May 2. That section—which had been open in the past to fishing year 'round—is being closed to protect spawning game fish.

The regulation change now makes the section of the river consistent with most inland waters in northern Wisconsin. After April 1 and in the future, game fishing on the river will open the first Saturday in May and run through the first Sunday in March. Also applicable is a catch-and-release-only season on bass from the first Saturday in May through the Friday before the third Saturday in June. After that the daily bag limit is five with a minimum of 14 inches.

The river portion included in the change is from the Rhinelander Paper Mill (St. Regis) Dam down river to Kings Dam including Hat Rapids Flowage and Lake Alice.

# WISCONSIN RIVER RESERVOIR SYSTEM



**LEGEND**

- NATURAL LAKE RESERVOIR
- MAN MADE RESERVOIR
- HYDRO ELECTRIC PLANTS AND DAMS

Reservoirs conserve water by storing seasonal high flows which otherwise would be wasted (not used to make electricity) or cause flooding. Water is released from reservoirs during low flow seasons. As a result of storage and release uniform flow is maintained.

Sharpest drop sees river fall 625 feet in 150 miles. Hydro electric dams are most numerous here to take advantage of the water's fall or hydraulic power to generate electricity.

26 hydro plants in 315 miles generate 930 million kilowatt hours of electricity annually. Power dams are located below reservoirs to make the greatest use of the water. The largest power dam is lowest on the river where the flow is greatest.

