



Hello Farm Island Lake,

## Gill Net Update for Farm Island Lake

The DNR performed a gill net survey on Farm Island Lake between July 23 – 24, and below is a recap of DNR Rick Bruesewitz's report. Due to COVID-19 the DNR will not do any stocking of walleye fry this year, but for this season they don't think we need to worry about it based on their gill net findings. They plan again to electrofish in October. This report is also on your website under Newsletters/Lake info.

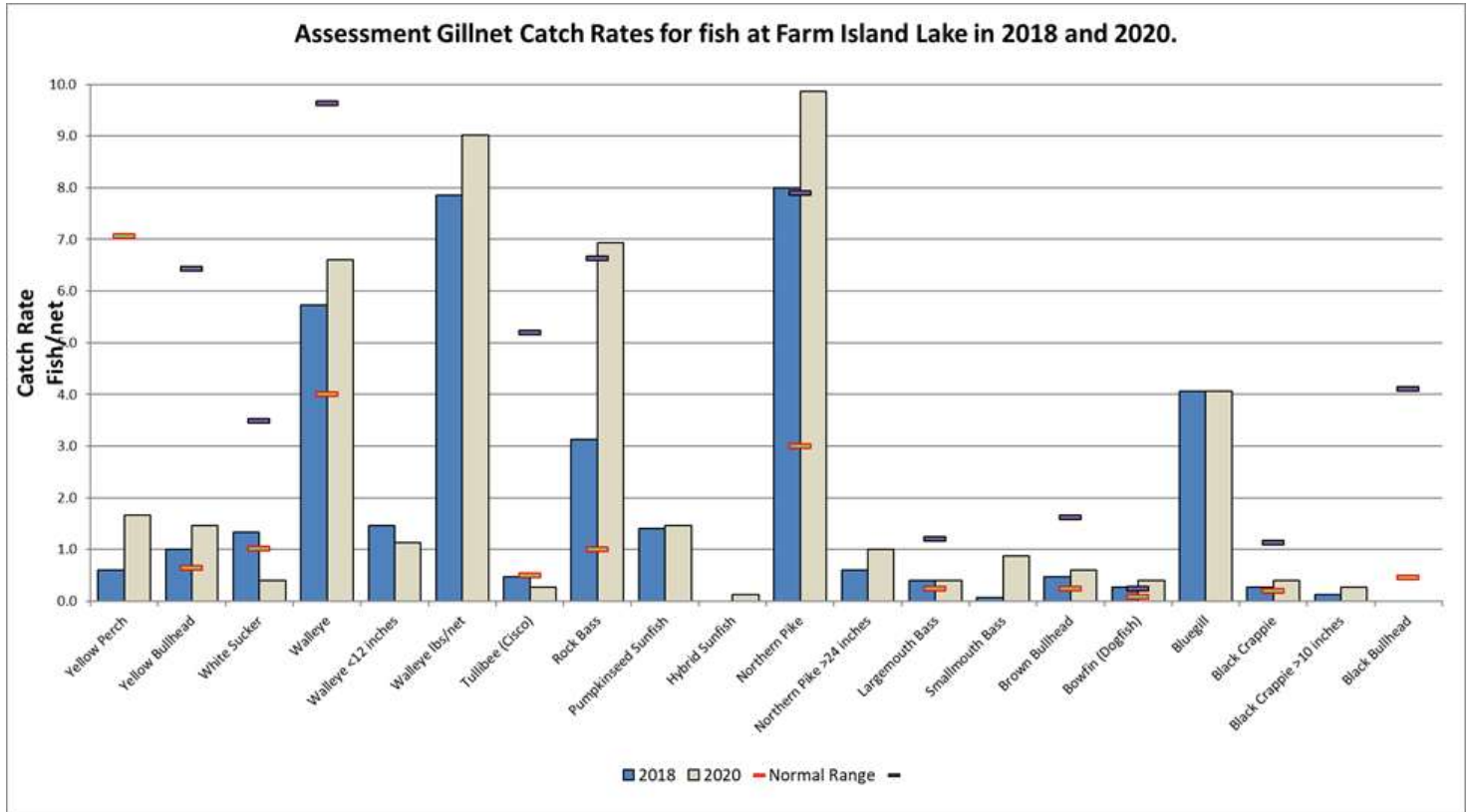
### Walleye results

1. Walleye catch was up to 6.6/net (right at median levels) with decent numbers of smaller fish that I would guess to be both age 1 and 2. We'll know more once we complete our age analysis this winter, but at this point I am not too concerned about the lack of stocking in 2020. I have no interest in stocking other species as they are in fine shape. Bluegills actually look really nice, although the gill net survey isn't usually the tool we use to assess them. None-the-less, seeing plenty of fish over 8 inches and one even approaching 10 inches is always a good sign. Typically the only time we stock panfish in the area is in a severe winterkill situation. Farm Island's Bluegill and Crappie populations appear to be just fine and I see no need for any additional stocking.
2. Last fall the DNR found some surplus fingerlings (425 lbs) and stocked them outside our plans since I could see a gap coming in year classes. It appears that either my concerns about the lower fry survival last year were unwarranted, or else the fingerling stocking we did resulted in a boost to the year class strength enough that they now appear to be pretty good (the median age 1 catch is about 0.6/net and we saw 0.9/net in our nets last week). With two juvenile year classes currently in the mix I think it would be best to wait again until such time as we see a large gap coming. At this point, because the 2019 year class is looking pretty good, stocking more fingerlings would likely just increase intraspecific competition and not be all that successful. On top of everything else, we really don't know how successful the 2020 year class of naturally reproduced Walleyes has been. We will know more after our fall electrofishing survey for these juveniles.

### Other fish species

1. Other fish species of interest in the survey were the thirteen Smallmouth Bass we caught and the four Tullibee. I was actually surprised to see any Tullibee since the water quality was pretty poor for their survival, with warm water extending pretty deep into the water column (still 72F at 24ft) and low oxygen from that point to the bottom. They were big too, a couple over 18 inches, which is pretty typical for lakes like this.
2. I was also really surprised to see so many Smallmouth Bass. While we've seen one or two on occasion, this level of abundance is likely a substantial increase in population abundance. I suspect anglers are starting to see more in their catch too. While 1/net is really not that abundant, I would not be surprised to hear concerns coming in regarding Walleye anglers starting to catch them too. While Smallmouth Bass have become a bit controversial, the bottom line is they tend to specialize in eating crayfish and tend not to compete with Walleye

or even Largemouth Bass. What has been happening in much of Minnesota is that environmental conditions have become more favorable for Bass. Basically longer summers and shorter winters favor Bass while shorter summers and longer winters favor Walleye and Perch. That being the case, I would not expect much recruitment for Smallmouth in the last couple years simply because we've had some pretty harsh winters the last few years.

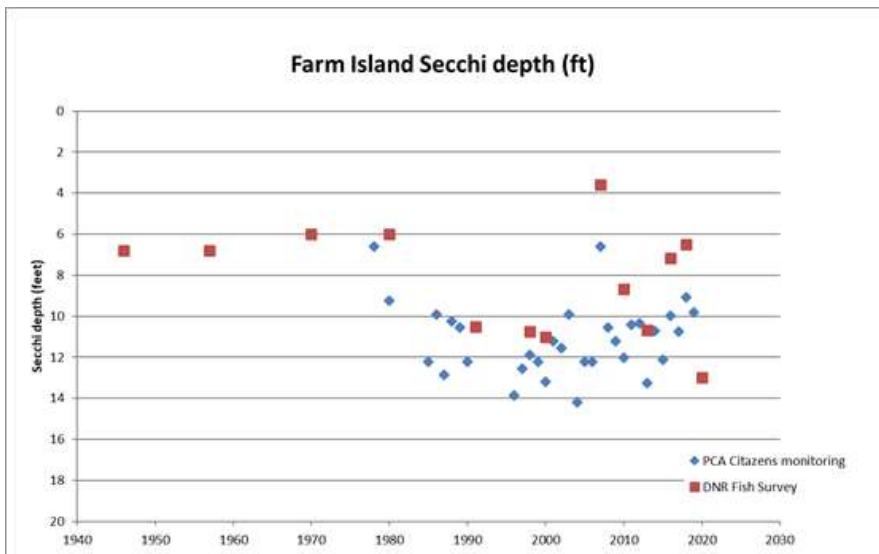


**Zebra Mussels**

Although water was warm and low in oxygen at depth, we did notice relatively clear water. Below is the historical observations we have made with each of our past surveys (red), along with the average of the PCAs citizen’s monitoring data. You can see that we usually have a bit lower numbers overall but follow a similar trend. Our values are typically lower since we do our surveys in the end of July or early August when algae blooms are typically heavier. I will be curious to see if the PCA monitoring also sees an increase in water clarity. Interestingly, this is the typical response to an infestation of zebra mussels, however we did not observe a single mussel when we lifted our nets (we usually see them when they’re abundant), so I don’t think the clearer water we observed could be due to zebra mussels at this time.

Note from FILIA: PCA is acronym for Pollution Control Agency. More than 1,400 Minnesotans track the health of their favorite lake or stream. Volunteers measure the water clarity of lakes and streams, and the MPCA uses that valuable data to make decisions on watershed protection and restoration. For some lakes and streams, volunteer monitoring provides the only data available, making this work indispensable.

Thank you to association member Russ Hoppe who does this for Farm Island Lake. See our water clarity readings below.



### Extra pressure on Farm Island due to Mille Lacs

From DNR Rick Bruesewitz. Regarding the extra pressure on Farm Island due to the Mille Lacs situation, I would be happy to examine alternative or additional regulations to augment protection of the Walleye population. The 16-19 inch slot was implemented not to protect the fishery, but to increase angling catch rates, which it has. I do think it has also prevented further losses in recent years of extra high pressure. One additional regulation you may wish to consider is the 3 fish limit. This was just implemented on Lake Minnewawa, and could *possibly* be implemented by spring 2022 if that is something the association would want to pursue. I know the extra effort from Mill Lacs is real; I would have thought it would have subsided by now, but obviously it hasn't. Let me know if this is something you want to pursue. Also let me be clear that this type of regulation doesn't offer that much added protection, but is designed more to spread the harvest out among more anglers. I see that as a good goal for this situation.

*Note: When government, local agency and county information is included we are serving as the messenger to keep you informed of their activities concerning Farm Island Lake.*

### Membership Update

We have 176 paid members! Thank you for your membership. Close to 50% have used the online payment option on our website. A membership application is online, or you can pay online using your credit card at your website FarmIslandLake.org, or you can mail your check to the address below without the application if your contact information is current. If you can't remember if you paid your dues a current member list is online or send me an email.

### Mass Mailing

The mass mailed newsletter was snail-mailed July 22 to the 367 property owners that are currently listed with Aitkin County. The cost was \$687.18, which is typical for a 3-page letter. The three pages were not stapled to save on postage.

## OHWL Sign

The OHWL sign is in place by the culvert leading into Little Pine. Water level is normal for this time of year at 3 inches under the Ordinary High Water Level. Thank you to board member Bill Haroldson and association member Dave Tyson for installing the sign.



## Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center Showcase Sept. 22-24



The 7th annual MAISRC Research and Management Showcase will be held online, the afternoons of **Sept. 22-24, 2020**. You are invited to learn about the latest findings in AIS research, useful management tools, and ask questions directly to the researchers. Check it out at their website: [www.MAISRC.umn.edu/showcase](http://www.MAISRC.umn.edu/showcase).

### About the Showcase

Every fall, MAISRC hosts a public event to showcase their most recent research and updates from previous studies. Attendees vary from lake association members and local government employees, to concerned citizens and resource managers. Anyone interested in aquatic invasive species is welcome to attend! Traditionally, the Showcase was a one-day, in-person event. However, due to COVID-19, the 2020 Showcase will be held fully online.

### Water Clarity Readings for Farm Island Lake

These readings are in feet.

Apr 23	9.5
May 25	12.0
Jun 28	14.5
July 28	8.5

Be well and be safe.

Sincerely,

Cheryl McDonough

FILIA Treasurer/Secretary

[FILIALake@gmail.com](mailto:FILIALake@gmail.com)

Your questions and comments are welcome.

[FarmlandLake.org](http://FarmlandLake.org)

### ***Did you know?***

*55,741,205 gallons*

*It takes the loss of 55.7 million gallons  
of water for the lake to go down  
1 inch!*

FILIA

PO Box 135

Aitkin, MN 56431