



FISHERIES MANAGEMENT.....we make fishing better



NELSON LAKE 2014 FISHERIES UPDATE

Max Wolter- WDNR

Let me introduce myself

- ❑ Originally from Chippewa Falls
- ❑ Studied at UW Stevens Point and U of Illinois
- ❑ Started with the WDNR in 2012
- ❑ Fisheries Biologist for Sawyer County



My goals for today

- Discuss the state of the fishery over the last few years
- Update you on 2014 spring survey results
- Check in with our fishery objectives
- Discuss upcoming management plans and proposals
- Answer questions from YOU!



Pressing fishery issues

- Sometime in the last 15 years Nelson Lake stopped naturally producing walleye...
 - ▣ Habitat? MHW Comment- Darker water seems to be good for walleye here
 - ▣ Competitors or predators?
- Largemouth bass numbers higher than in the past
- Panfish size worse than in the past (but numbers higher) MHW Comment- Panfish size benefits from having a dominant predator like walleye to keep the numbers down, that allows for faster growth
- Not just Nelson... this has happened on many lakes in the area! MHW Comment- Sissabagama, Chetac, Chippewa Flowage, Durphee, Blueberry, Smith, Teal...

Recovery Planning

- Restoring walleye as the “top-dog” is key to the health of this fishery
 - ▣ Viable walleye fishery
 - ▣ Panfish size
- Aggressive stocking plan undertaken by Lake Assoc. and WDNR
- Largemouth bass regulations liberalized, walleye regs more conservative

Year	Natural born catch rate	No. Stocked
2005	0.0	11,000
2006	0.3	12,512
2007	0.0	4,258
2008	0.4	2,012
2009	1.1	11,042
2010	2.6	
2011	0.0	
2012	0.0	12,515
2013	0.1	12,510

Well below average of 33 Total =65k

Big questions for the fishery

- Has stocking been working to increase numbers of adult walleye?
- Has bass abundance dropped or size improved?
- Has panfish size improved?
- Pike health?



2014 Spring Surveys

- Ambitious plans in 2014
 - ▣ Netting for adult walleye, pike, and perch
 - ▣ Population estimate for walleye MHW Comment- walleye given fin clip
 - ▣ Electrofishing for bass, bluegill, and juvenile walleye
- ▣ Likely will return this fall to look at stocking success...

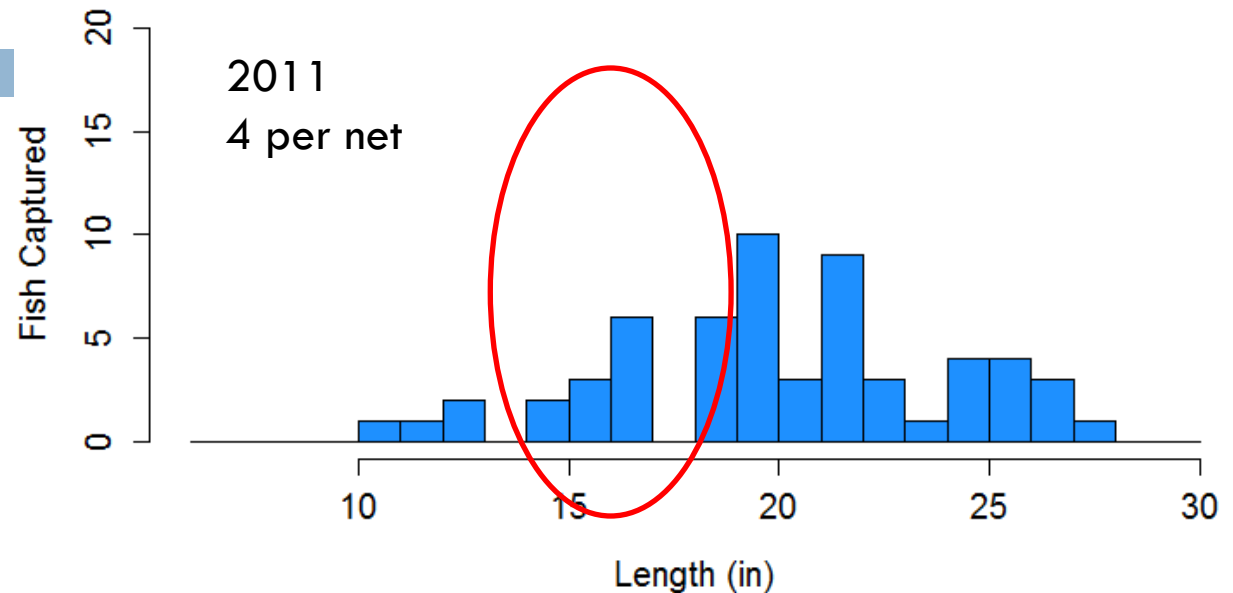


Walleye

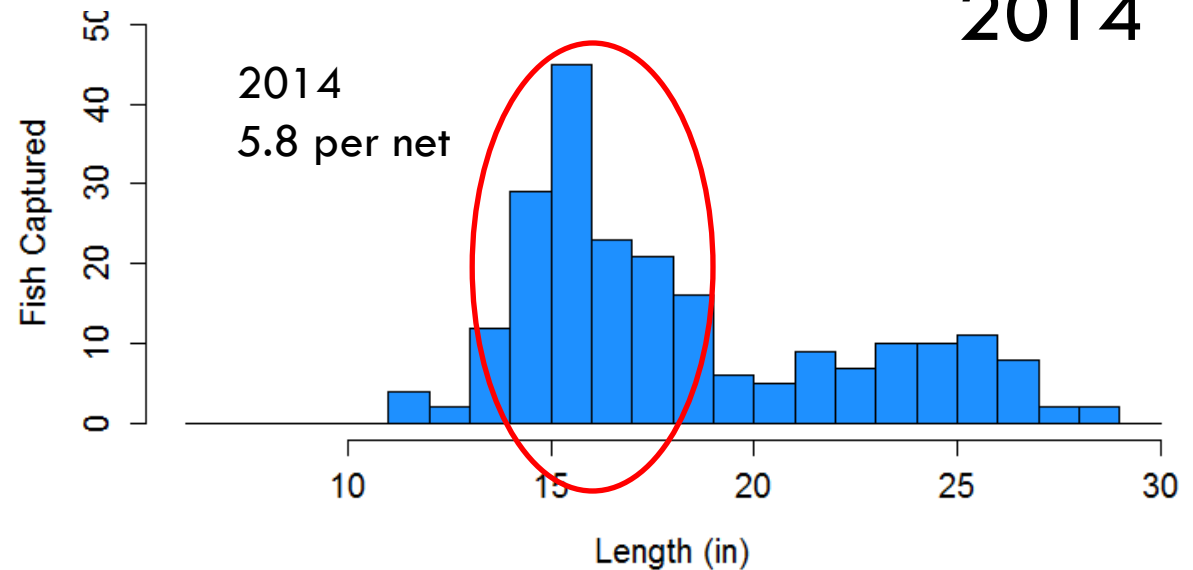
□ Increase in
catch rate
since 2011

MHW Comment- Many
more young adult
walleye in the lake now,
excellent sign of things
improving

2011

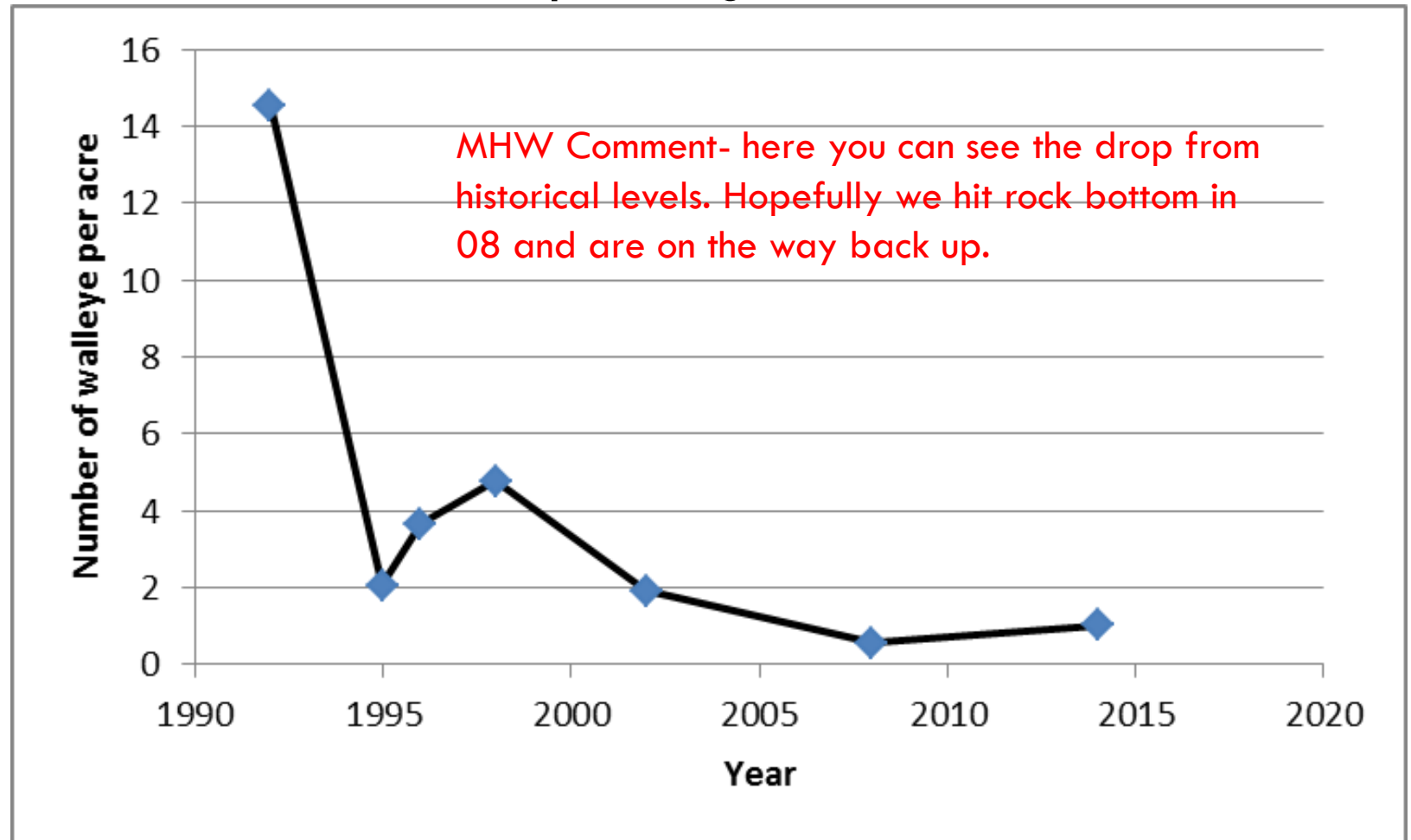


2014

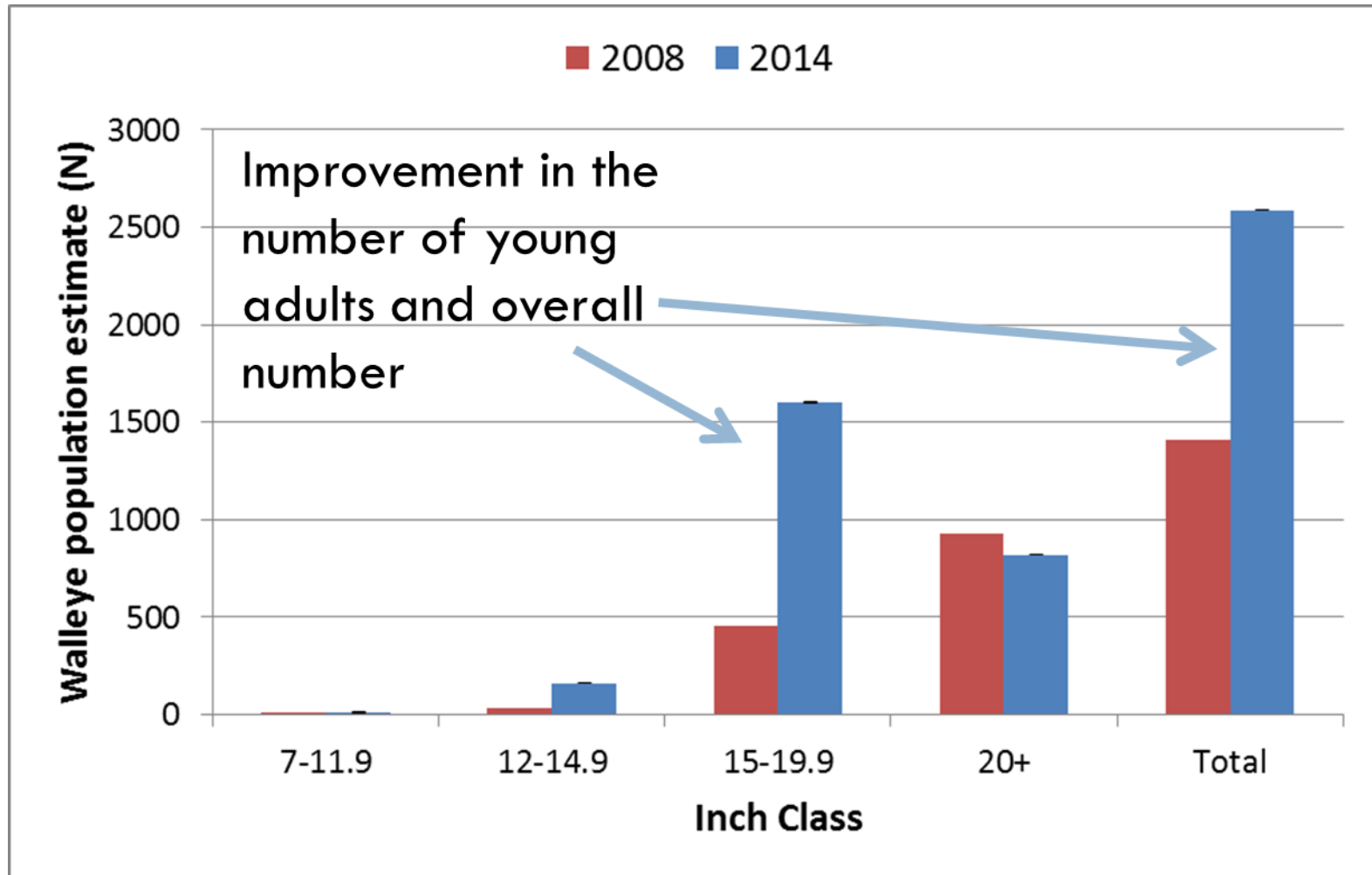


Walleye continued

□ Adult abundance improving



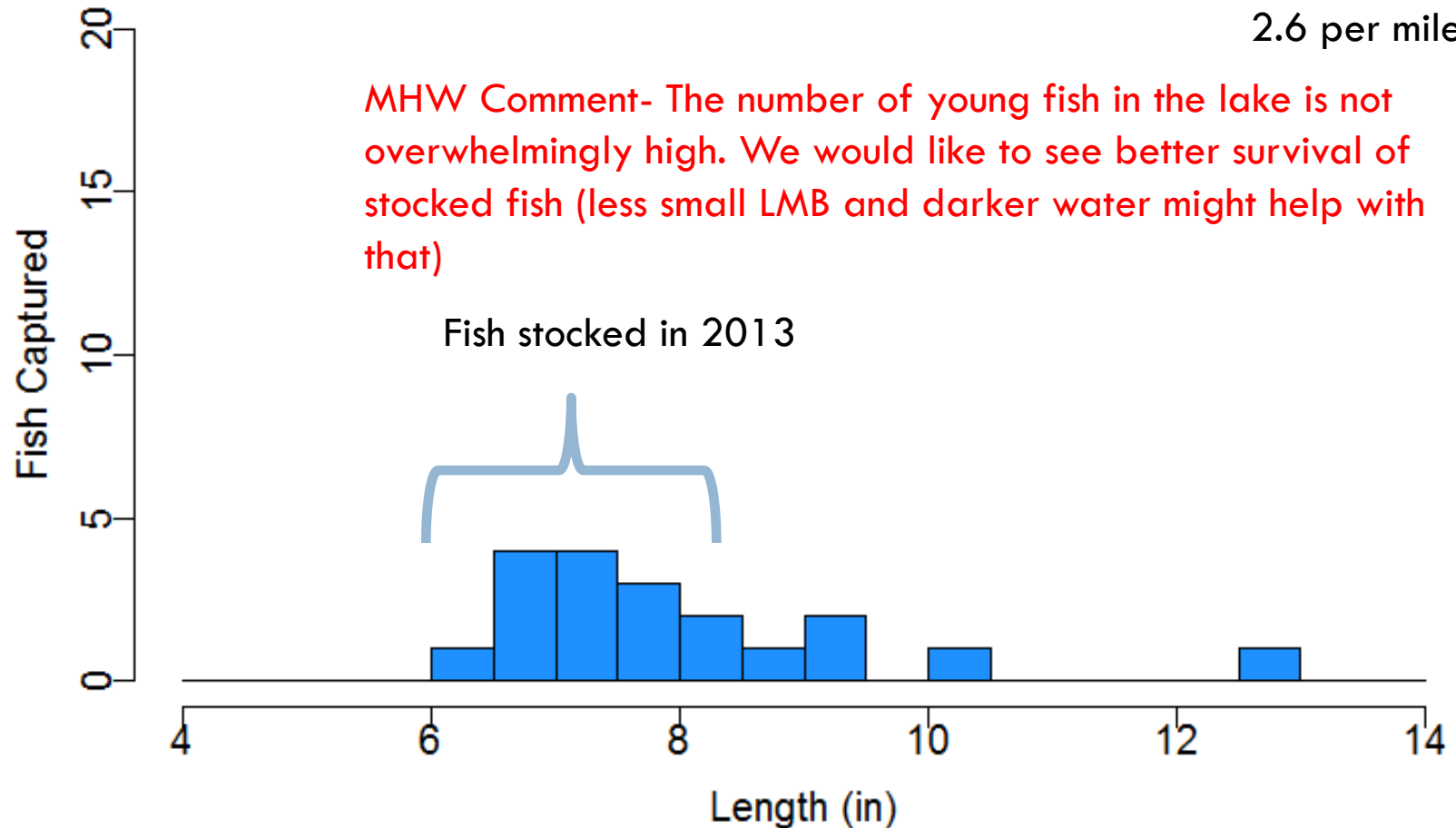
Walleye continued



Young walleye...

2.6 per mile

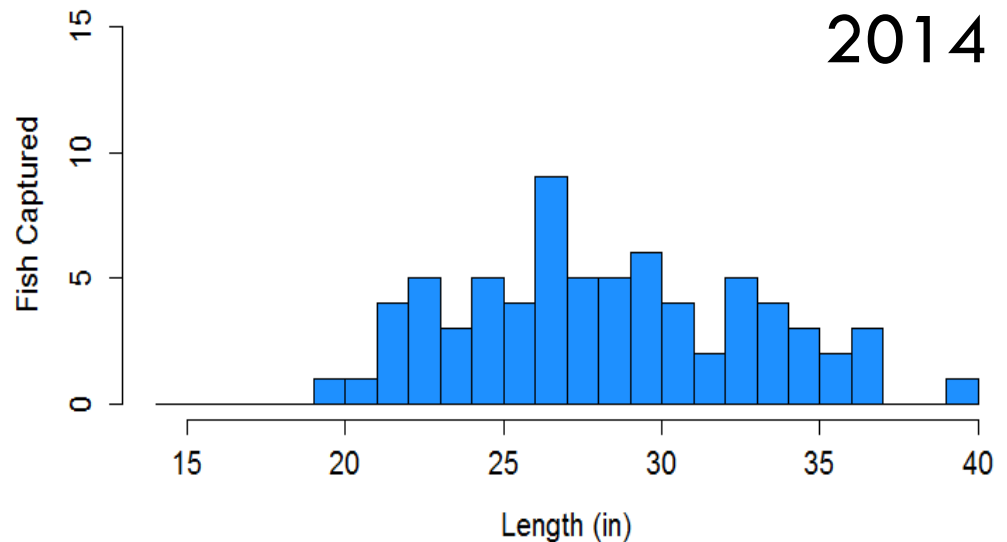
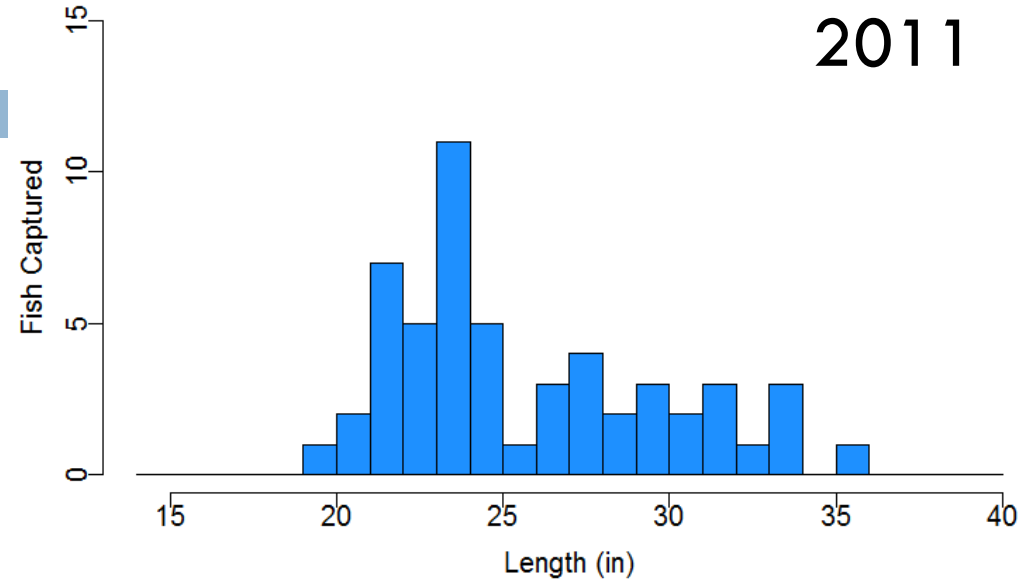
MHW Comment- The number of young fish in the lake is not overwhelmingly high. We would like to see better survival of stocked fish (less small LMB and darker water might help with that)



Northern Pike



- Excellent size- moderate numbers
- Esocid Lymphosarcoma appears to have declined.

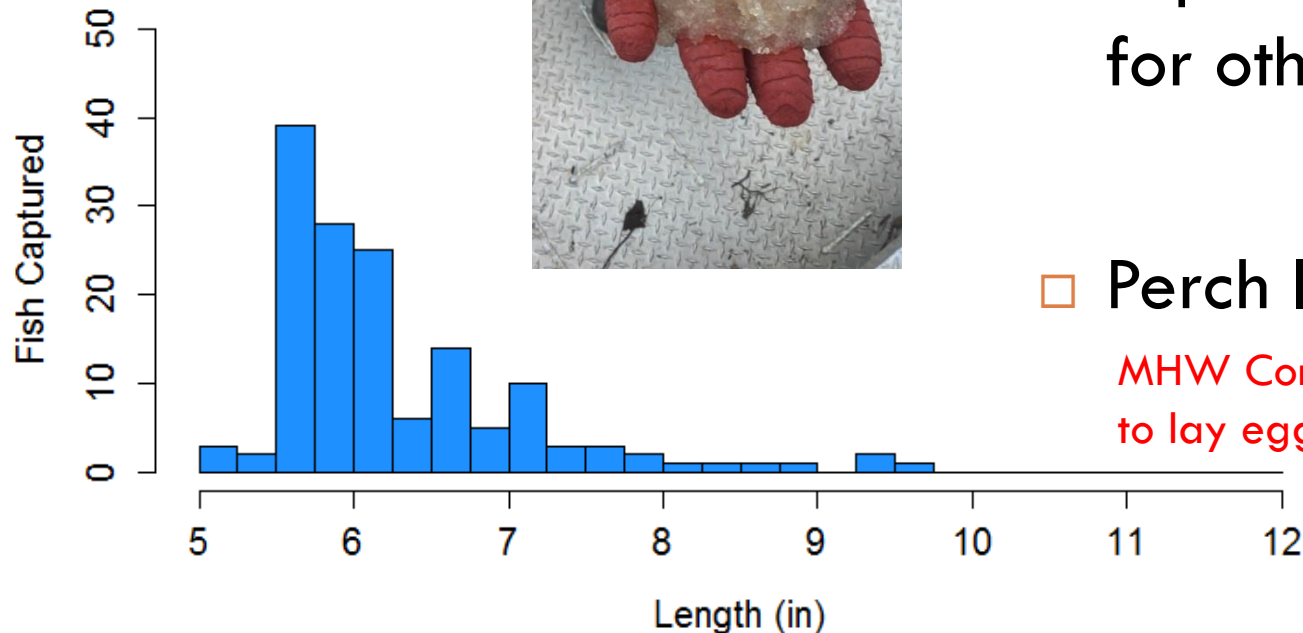


Black Crappie

- ❑ Did not target crappie in 2014...
- ❑ But, we still ran into some nice ones
- ❑ My impression is that size is still not what we want it to be, but may be improving



Yellow perch



- Not many large perch in our sample

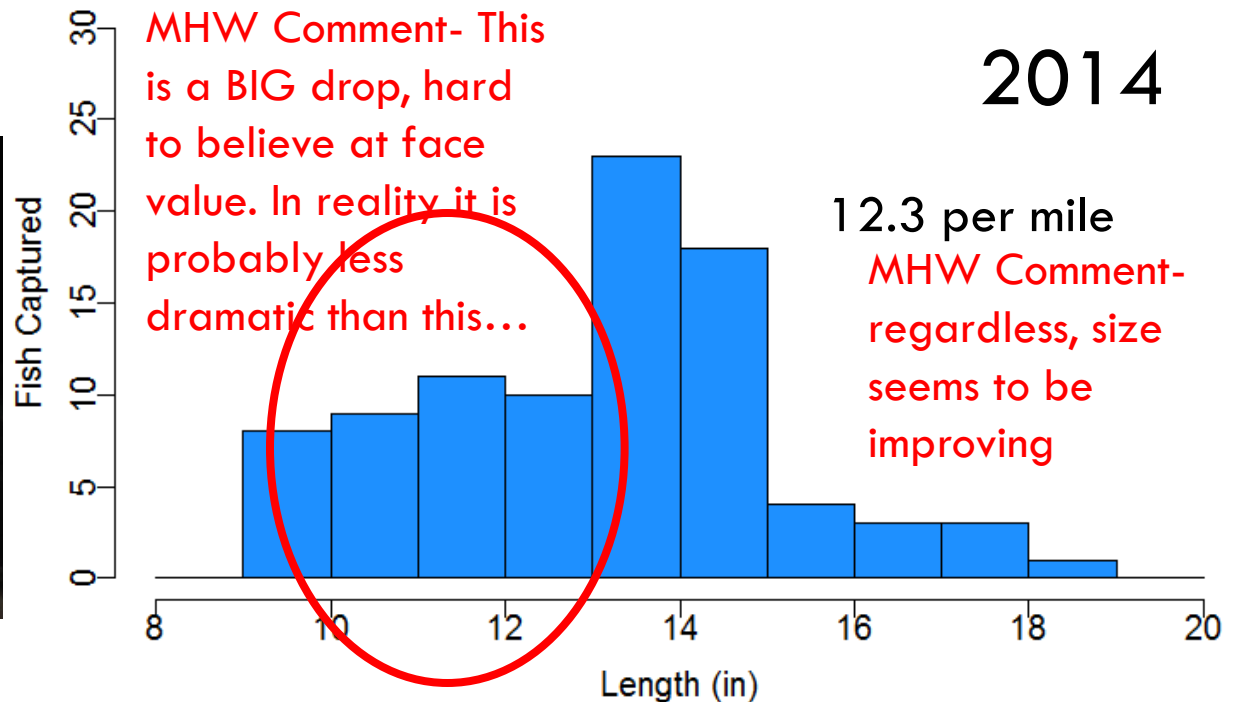
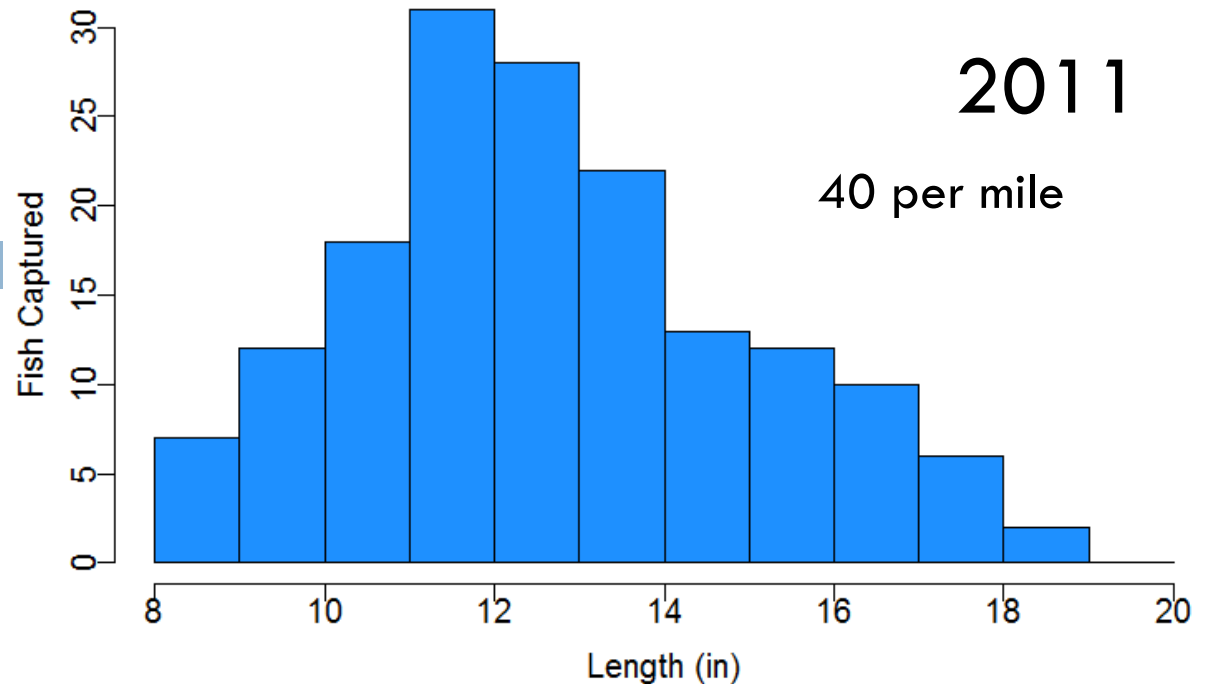
- Important food item for other species

- Perch love fish sticks!

MHW Comment- Perch need structure to lay eggs on, fish sticks are perfect!

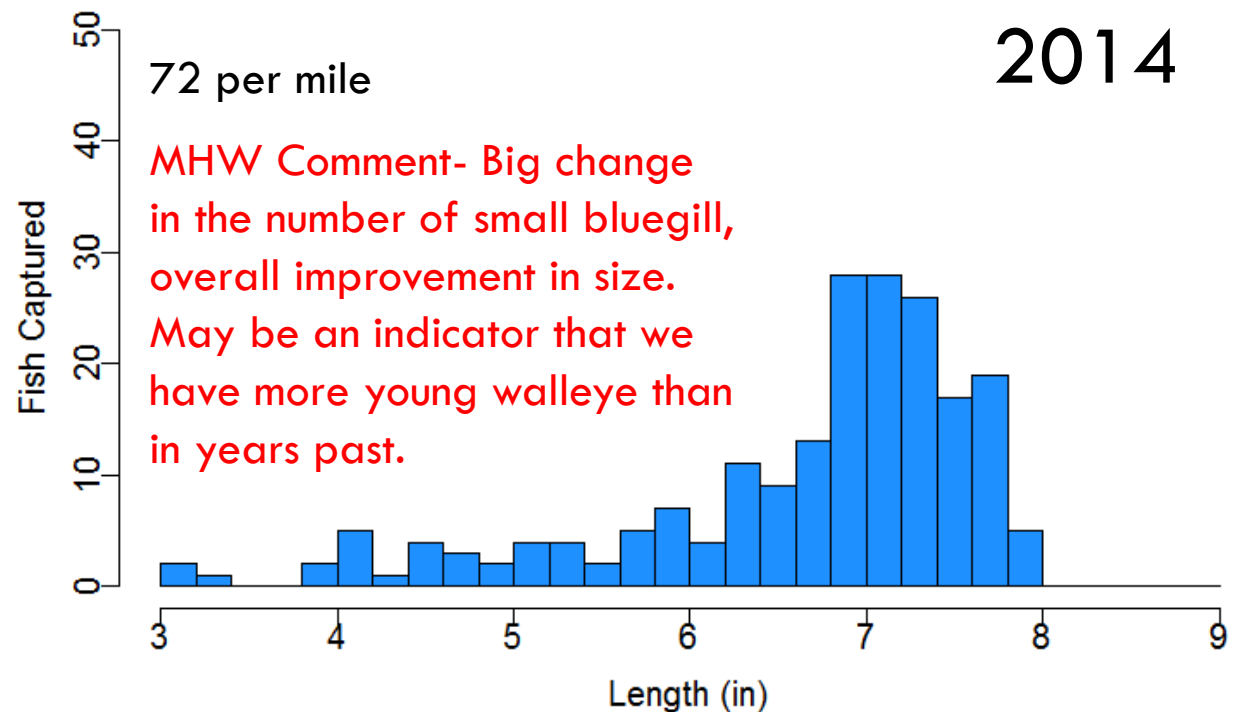
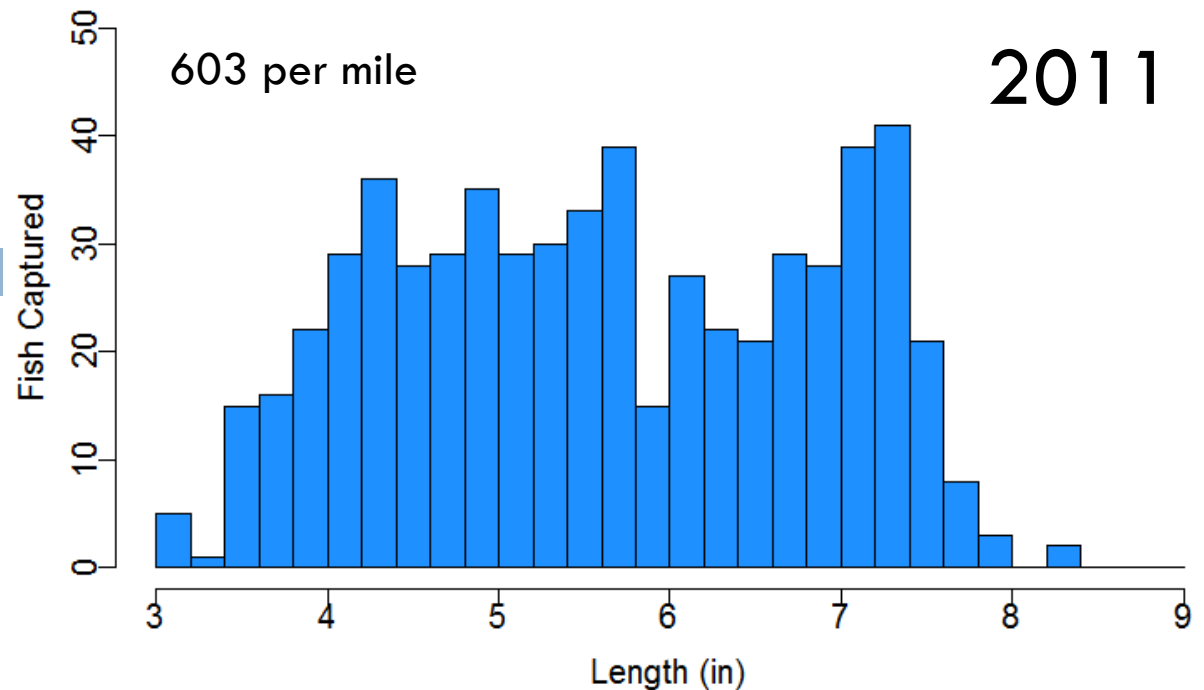
Largemouth bass

- Numbers dropped and size improved since 2011



Bluegill

- Less small bluegill in the 2014 sample
- Still lots of “keepers”



Management Objectives

MHW Comment- if you want to know more about these objectives see the fishery management plan

2011

2014

Species	Abundance	Size	Abundance	Size
Walleye	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Bluegill	HIGH	LOW	GOOD	LOW
Black Crappie	NA	LOW	NA	LOW
Northern Pike	NA	GOOD	NA	GOOD
Largemouth bass	HIGH	GOOD	Slightly High	LOW
Smallmouth bass	None surveyed	None surveyed	None surveyed	None surveyed

Objectives based on input from stakeholders at the 2004 Visioning Session

Future management plans

- Continue to stock extended growth walleye

MHW Comment- Every other year (odd) at 10 per acre

- Continue to assist lake association with fish sticks projects

- Continue to promote harvest of small largemouth bass

MHW Comment- Less than 14 inches



Questions???



