

# Whitefish River Fisheries UPDATE

Spring Walleye Index Netting / Tagging

January 2013

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Whitefish River First Nation (WRFN) members have observed higher numbers of Walleye at Swift Current—a first in more than 20 years. The area is a popular spot for angling and WRFN has expressed interest in studying the Walleye utilizing the area after the spring spawn. The Walleye spawn normally occurs in the Whitefish River (Bay of Islands area) as well as in McGregor Bay.

Whitefish River spring spawning walleye have been previously studied in 2001, 2002, 2004—2006, and 2011.

Because Whitefish River First Nation's relationship with aquatic resources in their traditional territory are of utmost importance, the First Nation wishes to continue the monitoring of the Walleye species during and after the spring spawn. In cooperation with the Anishinabek/Ontario Fisheries Resource Centre, a Spring Walleye Index Netting / Tagging was proposed.



**Retrieving a fish out of a trap net. The trap net works like a holding pen, allowing the trapped fish to swim around until they are pulled out.**



**A captured Walleye from the Whitefish River with lymphocystis growths.**

## METHODS

Six foot trap nets were set at the mouth of the Whitefish River immediately after ice-out and when the water temperature ranges between 3-4°C to ensure captures during the start of the Walleye spawn.

Walleye were measured for length and weight, external determination of sex, collecting of ageing structures (spine from the dorsal fin), and tagged. All fish were released alive. Trap netting ends when water temperature reaches 10°C or when the spawn stops.

## RESULTS

The project began April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the mouth of the Whitefish River and continued until April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012 catching a total of 120 walleye. Of these 1120 Walleye, nine were recaptures that were previously tagged (in 2011 and previous years).

An interesting capture involved a walleye that had lymphocystis growths on its fins and body. Lymphocystis is a fish virus characterized by raised, rough, nodular masses of generally light colored, somewhat opalescent white, gray or cream-colored tissues that superficially resem-

ble warts. Larger, more developed lesions may have areas of pinkish or reddish coloration due to blood vessels in the infected tissues. Eventually these cells burst or slough off, releasing the virus and leaving a light colored scar. Lymphocystis usually appears in the spring and reaches maximum development in the summer. It would be recommended to not eat or consume a fish such as the one in the picture.

## CONCLUSION

Data from all years studied will be compiled to give a detailed look at the population dynamics of the Whitefish River Walleye. A full technical report is currently being drafted and is expected to be complete in 2013.



**The mouth of the Whitefish River.**



**Attempting to measure a walleye before releasing it back into the river.**



For more information on this or other fisheries projects please contact the A/OFRFC:

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