



**Re: Mississippi River Pool 4 Fishery – Public Input Meeting – May 14, 2018**

The Red Wing Wildlife League is a non-profit organization located in Red Wing, Minnesota that was founded by local sportsmen in 1935. Our current membership totals nearly 300 individuals, all of which span a range of age and avocation. Despite the variability in interests our members are bound by a common thread – utilizing the Mississippi River and backwaters for an array of recreational uses and promoting for sound management of land, fish, and wildlife to ensure a sustainable resource is available for future generations to enjoy.

One theme that seems to resurface in our circle of members is the perceptible change in the fishery on this stretch of the Mississippi River. Through the combined experiences of our members we feel there has been an increase in fishing pressure, advancements in technology allowing for increased catch rates, an upsurge in communication and awareness of this fishery through modern media outlets, degradation of habitat due to erosion and sedimentation, and the continued threat of invasive species. Despite an evolution of fishing and fishery dynamics on this stretch of the Mississippi River, we are also keenly aware that the existing regulation structure has not changed in decades. As a result of these combined effects coupled with stagnant regulations, we feel there has been an observable decline in both the quality and quantity of fish such as walleye and sauger through recent years.

It has been communicated to fisherman of this area that the fishery is robust and can fully support the existing regulation structure. To this point, a change in management hasn't been warranted. In other terms, nothing needs to be done. Existing scientific data has supposedly supported this notion. While we are in full support of science-based management and decision making, our observations, experiences, and perceptions of the fishery tend to contradict the notion that nothing needs to be done.

Although we support maximizing fishing opportunities to the greatest extent feasible, we also understand that increased regulation or shortened seasons may confine present day opportunity. Nevertheless, we strongly feel the obligation to effectively manage this fishery

for the generations of tomorrow – both fish and fishermen – far exceeds the desire to manage this resource for a bountiful yield today. We certainly do not have solutions or answers, but we surely have a voice, and we want it to be heard.

For these reasons, we are requesting both the Minnesota and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources work collaboratively and proactively to investigate the current regulation structure across game species that inhabit the Mississippi River to determine if changes are warranted and implement new rules where necessary. Negative impacts to this cherished fishery will disregard individual state lines and rulemaking timelines. A preemptive approach may safeguard this resource before its too late to respond. We are very fortunate that both natural resource agencies are seeking input and willing to listen to individual sportsmen and organizations like the Red Wing Wildlife League. We truly hope solutions can be found that continue to manage this fishery for the generations of tomorrow – both fish and fishermen.

Respectfully,

Red Wing Wildlife League – Board of Directors

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