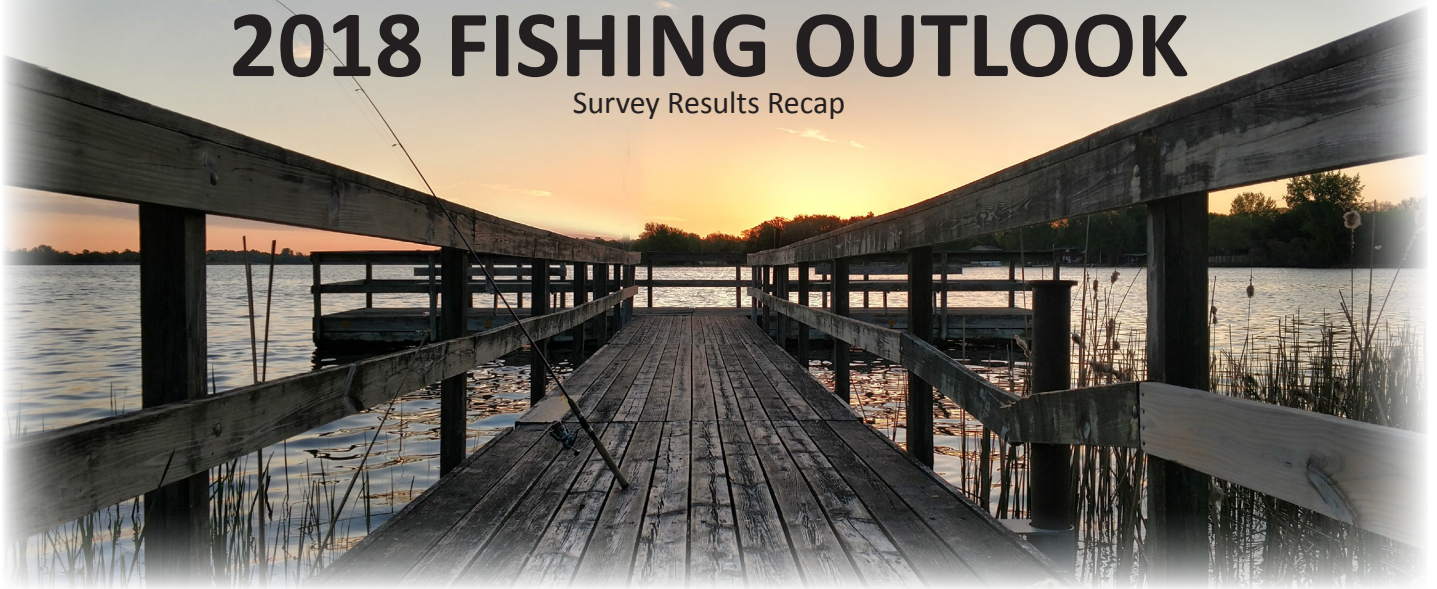


Waterville Area Fisheries

2018 FISHING OUTLOOK

Survey Results Recap



Lakes managed by DNR Waterville Area Fisheries range from deep stable lakes to shallow prairie potholes - and provide a true variety of fishing opportunity for anglers. Waterville Fisheries staff follow strategic lake management plans, conducting rotating lake surveys to monitor fish populations in Le Sueur, Blue Earth, Faribault, Waseca, Steele, Dodge, Freeborn, Mower and Rice counties in southern Minnesota.

The data provided here show a breakdown of fish caught during sampling in 2016 and 2017 for selected species, by size.

Walleye

The Waterville area is fortunate to have a number of fine walleye lakes. The fertile waters of southern Minnesota grow lots of fish and grow them fast. Top bets for walleye in 2018 include the usual suspects like Madison Lake, Washington Lake, and the Minnesota River, but don't rule out smaller lakes like Fox Lake near Faribault or Beaver Lake by New Richland. The Waterville area is also home to many boom/bust walleye fisheries that are currently booming – check out Elysian, Loon, or Crystal for walleyes sized just right for the frying pan. In search of something bigger than a meal? Madison, Tetonka, or Lura lakes boast populations with walleye over 24 inches.

Crappie

Year in and year out, crappie are always among the most targeted species in the state. Anglers should find willing fish at lakes both big and small. Madison, Washington, French, and Elysian are examples of big area lakes boasting big populations of crappie. But smaller lakes such as Reeds, Loon, and Crystal can provide fast fishing as well. Rice County favorites such as Mazaska, Cedar, should also be on your list.

Northern Pike

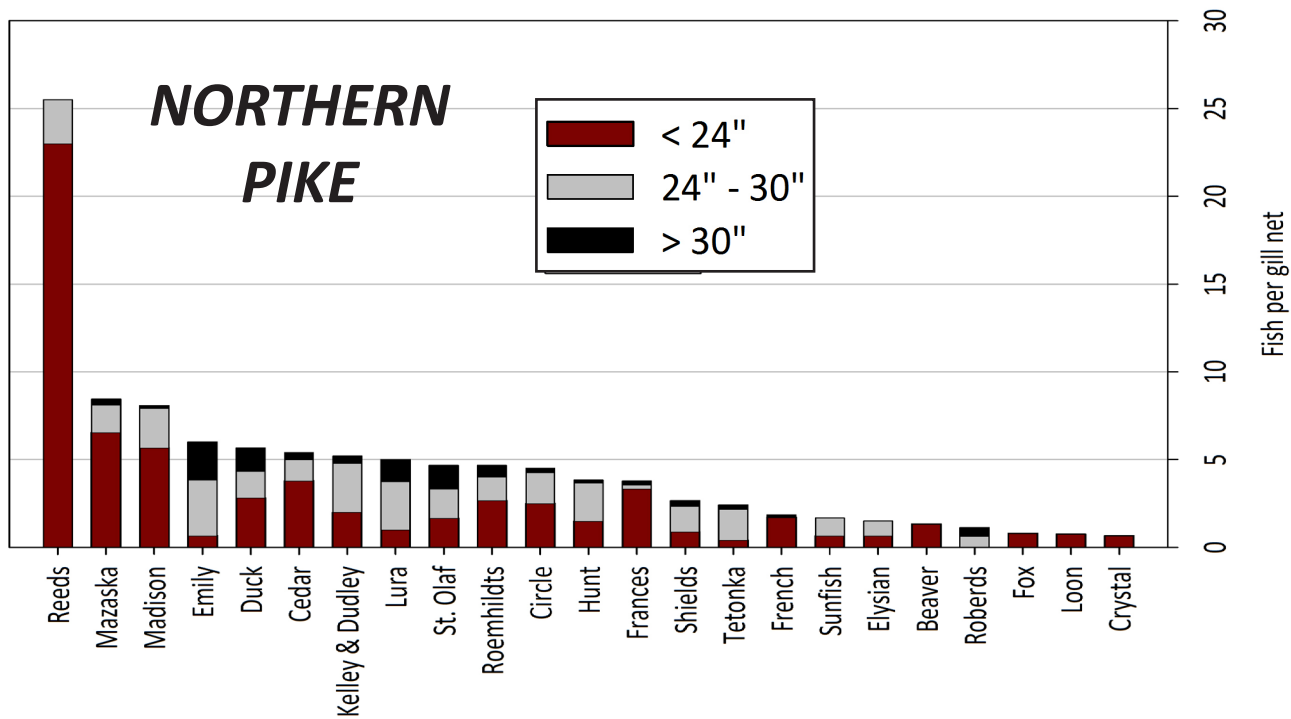
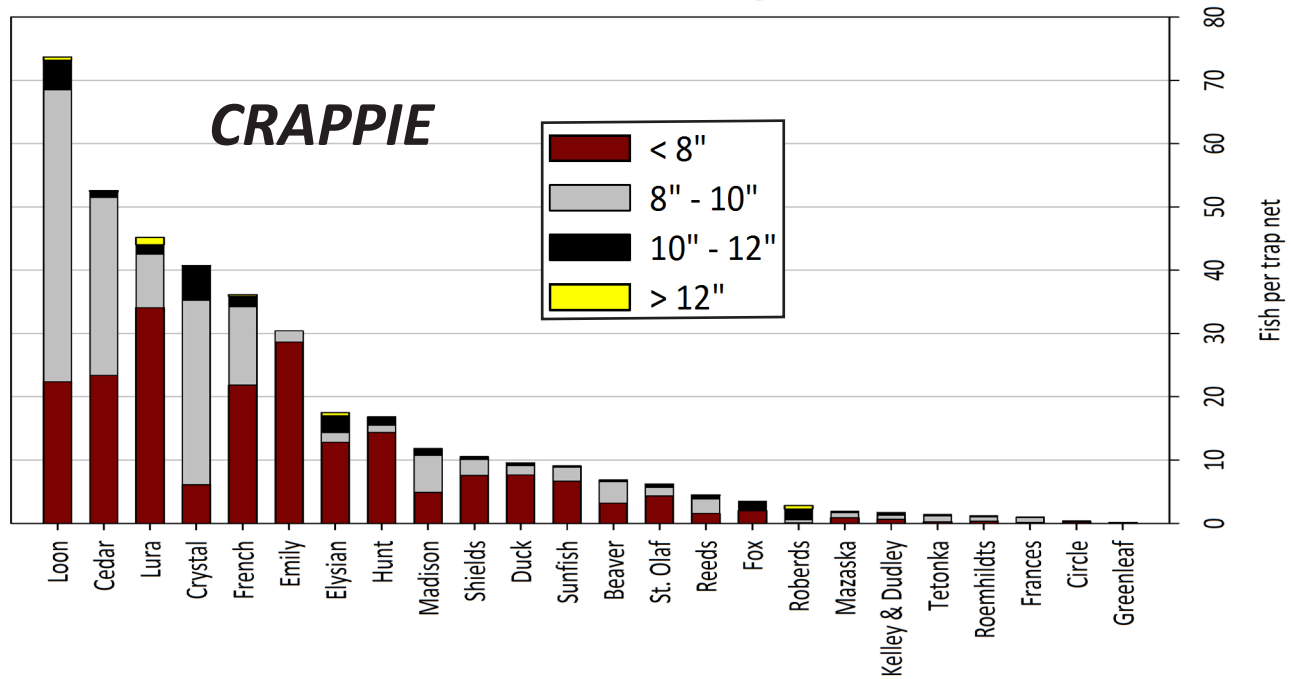
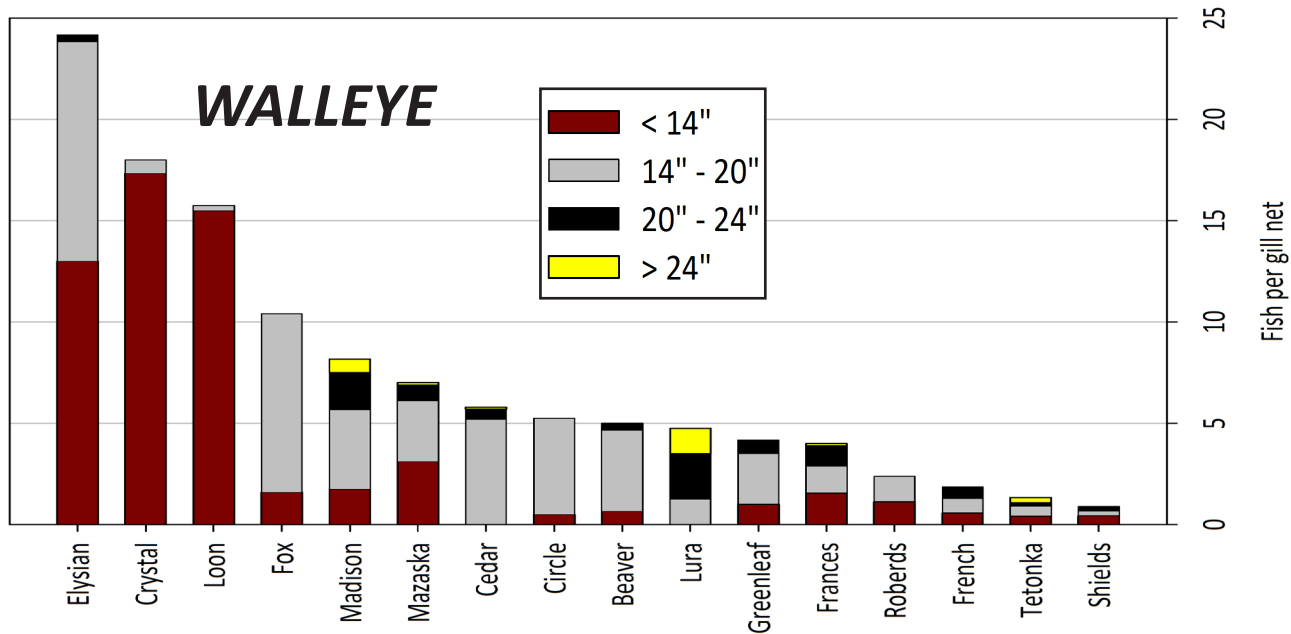
Many popular lakes in the Waterville area have healthy northern pike populations that are maintained by stocking. Waterville area lakes are part of the new Southern Zone, which means anglers will be allowed to keep 2 northern pike that must be at least 24 inches long. New northern pike regulations will be in effect on opening day. Finding a 24 inch northern pike shouldn't be much of a problem, especially at lakes like Madison, Duck, or Kelley & Dudley. Duck Lake also has the potential to kick out fish 30 inches and longer, as do Emily, Hunt, and Tetonka to name just a few. St. Olaf Lake near New Richland has a 30 inch minimum size limit that will remain in effect.

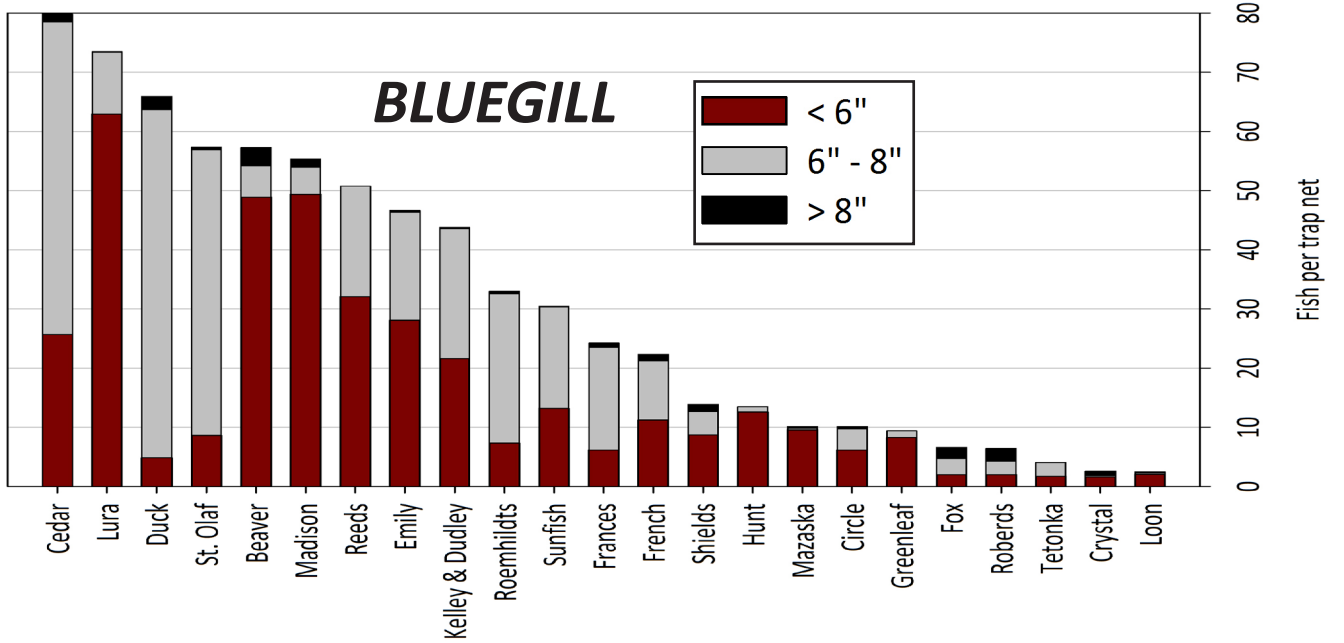
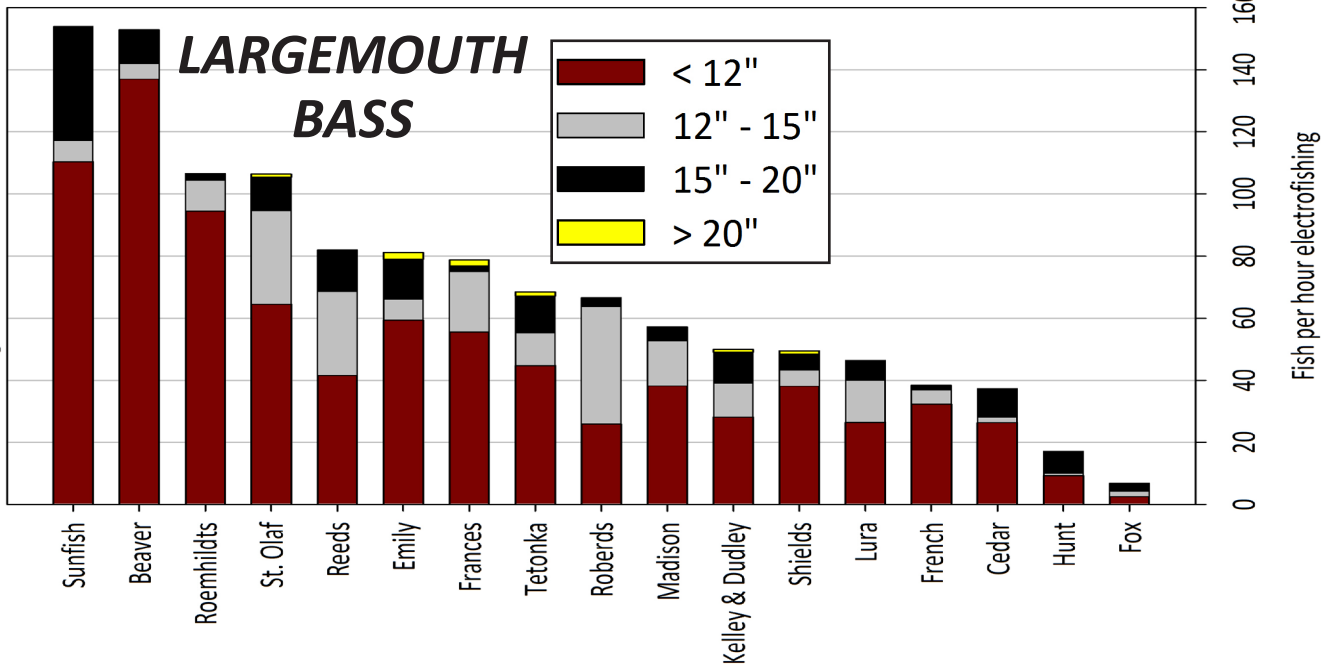
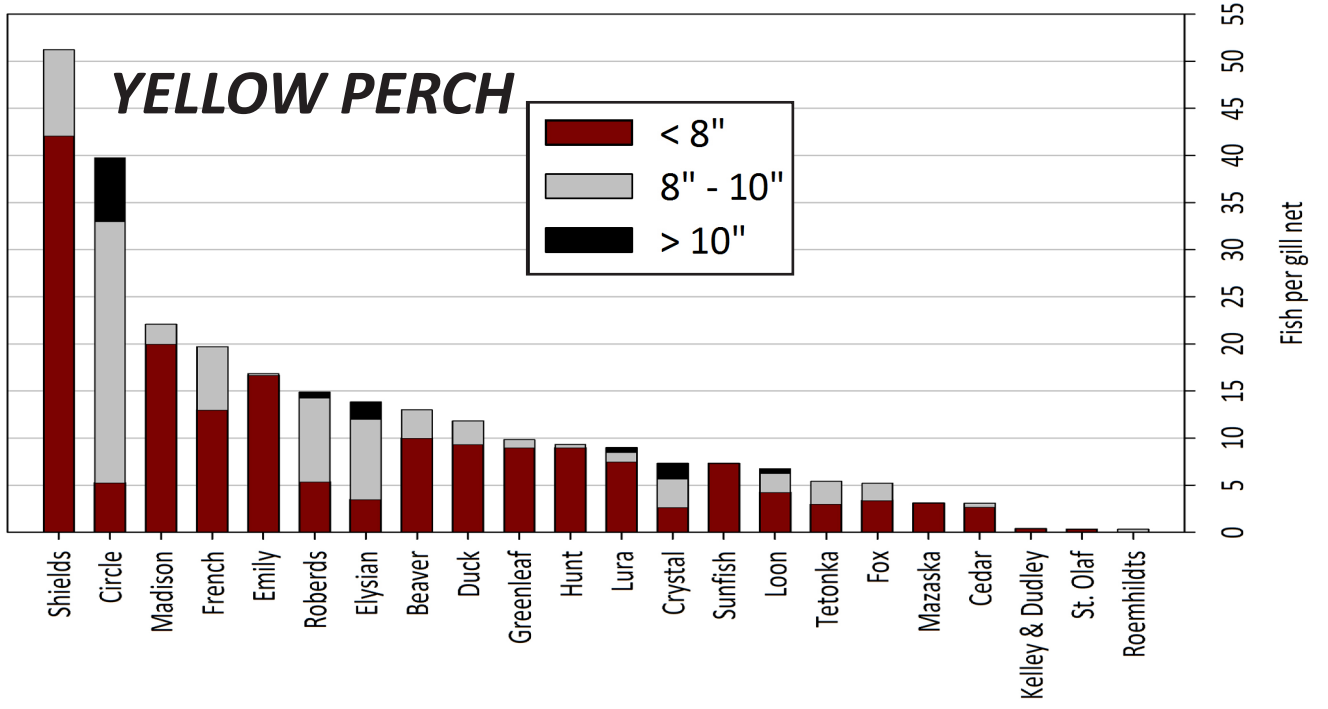
Bluegill

Nearly all lakes in the Waterville area contain bluegills, but some contain a whole lot more than others. Anglers looking to take home a meal of medium sized bluegills should focus on lakes such as Cedar, Duck, or St. Olaf. Larger bluegills are hard to find anywhere in the state and deserve special attention, and protection. Waterville area lakes capable of producing large bluegills include Mazaska, Madison, and Roberds. Please practice selective harvest of large bluegills – those large fish can be especially vulnerable in the spring and are not easily replaced.

These graphs on the following pages show a breakdown of fish caught during sampling in 2016 and 2017 for selected species, by size. High catch rates in nets does not guarantee angling success.

(more species continued on back page)





Yellow Perch

Many anglers tend to think of yellow perch as a winter-only affair, and for good reason. Jumbo yellow perch tend to be easier to find and catch through the ice. However, early spring can be a good time to target these tasty fish. Circle Lake, near Faribault along with Roberds, Crystal and Elysian are some of the best bets to find keeper sized yellow perch in the area. Two lakes in Freeborn County, Geneva and Pickeral, are managed specifically for yellow perch and northern pike and both should provide ample yellow perch again in 2018.

Largemouth Bass

Largemouth bass thrive in clear water with lots of vegetation and woody habitat. Anglers should check out clear water lakes such as Reeds, Frances, and Kelley & Dudley when searching for largemouth bass this summer. Anglers should also keep in mind that lakes with high largemouth bass populations don't always have the biggest fish. Lakes with low to medium densities of bass such as Emily, Tetonka, and Shields often offer the best crack at fish topping the 20 inch mark.

Catfish

The Minnesota River is the best bet for channel and Flathead Catfish in the Waterville area. The stretch from Cortland to Henderson holds a variety of catfish habitat, especially woody snags. The Le Sueur and Blue Earth rivers are also excellent choices for channel catfish. In addition, Fountain Lake, Lake Tetonka, and Morin Lake in Alden have channel catfish.

Bullheads

Waterville is the Bullhead Capital of the World, after all. Despite what you may have heard, bullheads can still be found. Head to Frances Lake in Elysian for some whopper yellow bullheads or Lura Lake near Mapleton for black bullheads. Small lakes, prone to winterkill such as Wita, Henry, and Sprague all have large populations of bullheads. You might even run into some "rough fish" like a walleye while you're there.



Muskellunge

French Lake, by Faribault, is the only muskie lake in the Waterville area. Recent sampling shows a population of about 200 adult muskie in the lake, or only 1 fish for every 4 acres of water. There may not be a lot of muskie in French Lake (and that's by design) but fish over 40 inches are common and fish over 50 inches are a real possibility. French Lake is also home to a small population of big northern pike and a very healthy crappie population.

Trout

A couple options exist for those seeking trout in the Waterville area. The ponds at Paul's Creek near St. Peter are stocked every spring with 5,000 ten to twelve inch rainbow trout. If you prefer to fish moving water check out Rice Creek, by Dundas, for brook trout. Rice Creek is the only self-sustaining brook trout fishery in the area. Although not technically in the Waterville area, Seven Mile Creek between Mankato and St. Peter is stocked every spring with adult brown trout.

Other Species

For those seeking something off the beaten track, the Waterville area offers a host of "other" fish. Lakes like German and Mazaska offer longnose gar. Mazaska also sports a healthy population of big, hard fighting white bass. The Minnesota, Le Sueur, and Blue Earth rivers (as well as other, smaller rivers) are a bonanza for anglers looking for less sought-after species like various redhorse, white suckers, shovelnose sturgeon (catch and release only!), and gar. Tetonka Lake, along with the Cannon River, Straight River, and the Minnesota River offer an opportunity to catch a smallmouth bass or two. Options are nearly endless for anglers or those looking to arrow a carp.

For more information, or information on lakes sampled prior to 2016, visit LakeFinder on the MN DNR website (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/index.html>).

WATERVILLE AREA FISHERIES

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<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/areas/fisheries/waterville/index.html>

Hatchery tours available upon request!