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**EXECUTIVE OFFICERS:**  
Ron Schara – President  
John Peterson – V. P.  
Dave Osborne – Treasurer  
Chip Leer – Secretary

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**  
Jeff Arnold  
Frankie Dusenka  
Nicole Jacobs  
Garry Leaf  
Tom Mackin  
Kristen Merwin  
Tom Neustrom  
Jay Pederson  
Steve Pennaz  
Dick Sternberg  
Craig Wilson  
Babe Winkelman



# MN-FISH NEWS

“Official Newsletter” of the MN-FISH  
Sportfishing Foundation & Coalition

## A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

by Ron Schara

April 2020

A year ago, a new non-profit fishing organization called MN-FISH was launched for the purpose of “shortening-the-time-between-bites”. Our goal was to give state anglers what we haven’t had; greater representation in the Minnesota Legislature. We also intended to act as a watchdog and support DNR fish management decisions when appropriate.

During this startup period, we discovered MN-FISH would face its own growing pains and hurdles; such as attracting and communication with members, developing social media, news releases and the like.

As the MN-FISH president, I feel we have accomplished most of our year-one goals. However, I regret that we’ve failed to keep some of our members, state anglers and business stakeholders more informed about what we’re doing. This has been due to lack of frequency of our MN-FISH E-News and social media posts – and of SPAM/junk email issues some MN-FISH members have experienced. We have taken action to correct these issues in this newsletter, which is the main reason for contacting you directly by mail.

We are a volunteer based organization and most of our board members have full-time jobs and families like the rest of you. But, I can assure you

our MN-FISH board of visionary anglers and fishing industry representatives are working daily to keep our eye on the mission. However, the success of MN-FISH really depends on its membership.



If you’re a member, please renew your membership and volunteer at sport show and events we attend. Tell your friends about MN-FISH and ask them to get onboard. If you don’t like the fishing success or regulations on your favorite lake, don’t just sit in the boat and bitch about it. If the future of fishing in Minnesota declines, we’ll have only ourselves to blame. Don’t let the “A” in Apathy stand for Angler!

## GET ON-BOARD!

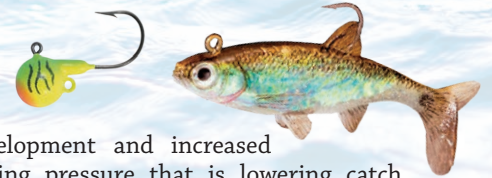
**JOIN US** by going to MN-FISH.com and sign up for a FREE 2-Year Charter membership, a \$35 Founding or \$250 Life Membership. Your donation and participation will help to grow our coalition so we can voice your concerns, lobby and negotiate better legislative fishing programs and policies to secure the future of sportfishing here in Minnesota.

## LEADING THE WAY

by John Peterson

MN-FISH was founded and being directed by a diverse, passionate and experienced board of fishing industry executives, business stakeholders and hall-of-fame anglers driven to lead the way to Minnesota’s Fishing Future.

Led by President Ron Schara, the MN-FISH Sportfishing Coalition & Foundation board is doing its part to help reverse the negative trends and threats our industry is facing like; invasive species, habitat loss, lake access, lakeshore



development and increased fishing pressure that is lowering catch rates. We are also witnessing a major decline in kid/youth fishing participation, a reduction in fish stocking programs and fishing license sales due to an aging generation of anglers.

Here is a list of our MN-FISH board member’s occupations and areas of expertise.

### MN-FISH Executive Board Officers:

President - Ron Schara (*CEO of Ron Schara Enterprises/Minnesota Bound TV*)  
Vice President - John Peterson (*Northland Fishing Tackle Founder*)  
Treasurer - Dave Osborne (*Business Executive & CEO of Clam Outdoors*)  
Secretary – Chip Leer (*Fishing the Wildside Founder*)

### MN-FISH Board of Directors:

Jeff Arnold (*Reed’s Outdoor Outfitters*), Frankie Dusenka (*Frankie’s Marine*), Nicole Jacobs (*Pro-Angler/Fishing Ambassador*), Garry Leaf (*Computer Consultant*), Tom Mackin (*Rapala USA President*), Kristen Merwin (*Women Anglers of Minnesota Pres.*), Tom Neustrom (*DNR Fisheries Advisory Board*), Jay Pederson (*Attorney*), Steve Pennaz (*Lake Commandos TV Host*), Dick Sternberg (*Retired DNR Fisheries*), Craig Wilson (*Duluth Steelhead Assoc.*), Babe Winkelman (*Good Fishin’ TV Host*)



“Leading the Way to Minnesota’s Fishing Future”





## MINNESOTA FISHING FACTS



**Over 1.4 Million Anglers**



**11,842 Lakes  
5,400 Fishable**



**90,000 Miles of Shoreline**



**18,000 Miles of Fishable Rivers & Streams**



**162 Species of Fish**



**825,000 Registered Boats**



**#1 in \$\$ Spent in Freshwater Fishing**



**Supports Over 43,000 Fishing Related Jobs**



**\$2.8 Billion in Retail Spending**



**Generates \$271 Million in Tax Revenue**

## LOOKING BACK & MOVING FORWARD by Steve Pennaz

Just over 12 months ago, a group of concerned, passionate anglers came together to form the MN-FISH Sportfishing Foundation & Coalition. Our goal – to unify the voice of Minnesota anglers and stakeholders before the State Legislature and DNR on fishing-related issues. At the time, there was no COVID-19 pandemic and the term social distancing meant - not fishing too close to other anglers. Much can happen in a year.

We officially launched MN-FISH at the Northwest Sport Show in March of 2019, with volunteers from the MN-FISH board and Twin Cities Walleye's Unlimited chapter introducing the organization to thousands of anglers. We also met with anglers and stakeholders at the 2019 Governor's Opener, Game Fair, Big Rock Distributor Show in St. Cloud and St. Paul Ice Fishing Show, along with many other clubs, associations and organizations in the state.

### MN-FISH.COM

MN-FISH also developed and launched a website, membership brochure, board committees, a social media presence, digital media advocacy plan and hired a Fulfillment Agency to administer our membership. To date, more than 1,800 state anglers and 60 Corporate Benefactor Sponsors have joined the organization. Our goal for 2020 is to quadruple our Individual Membership and double our Corporate Benefactor Sponsors.

Mission work started with meetings with new DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen and Legislators to focus on key issues; including investing in our state's hatcheries, restoration and enhancing of public accesses, shoreline facilities and youth educational funding for the High School Fishing League and Minnesota Fishing Museum.

While word that the 2020 Governor's Fishing Opener's cancellation is being shared, there is good news as well. The 2020 fishing opener will continue as planned, a big event at a very difficult time.



In the coming weeks, we'll be announcing and launching several new initiatives. The first is a retail promotional prize drawing called "WIN-A-MN-FISH TRIP" that will grow membership and support key retail sporting goods partners. We are also launching a series of membership ads on social media. Test ads will run through April and rollout will take place in May. Membership communication will also improve greatly as we have staffed and budgeted for regular communication to begin, both digitally and via mail.



Garry Leaf from MN-FISH and John Jordan from Walleye's Unlimited were two of many that helped man the Northwest Sport Show booth in 2019.

## MN-FISH LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

Do you know what percentage of your Minnesota income tax dollars has been appropriated by the Legislature for DNR fisheries programs over the past 10 years? The answer is ZERO or close to it! This needs to change!!



The MN-FISH 501c4 Coalition has proposed a range of initiatives to "Keep Minnesota Fishing" for the 2020 Legislative session. We are working to secure up to \$30 million in bonding dollars to modernize our aged walleye hatcheries and another \$10 million for restoration and improvement of public boat accesses, ramps and docks. MN-FISH is also pursuing ways to increase the Walleye Stamp sales which proceeds are used to stock walleye from private sector vendors.



In addition, we have had meetings with Legislators, DNR officials and Governor Walz to explain who we are and what we hope to accomplish. These behind the scenes efforts have already paid off, as



## MN-FISH LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES *Continued*

MN-FISH helped to secure \$200,000 in grants for high school fishing programs.

We've heard complaints from anglers who questioned why MN-FISH hasn't jumped into the Mille Lacs fishing issues. If we had a solution to the lake's walleye management roller-coaster, we would have. Privately, we have had discussions with DNR fisheries officials about their estimated fish mortality findings. We've responded in support of other fishing issues, such as changing walleye limits, bluegill regulations and keeping

lake accesses open to all. Other issues MN-FISH is following is two-line fishing and minnow importation.

### "Keep Minnesota Fishing"

Understandably, the COVID-19 pandemic hitting Minnesota may stall our mission and legislative priorities. However, we believe this is a temporary setback. Like a tough day on the water, we'll keep plugging. Stay tuned and Keep Minnesota Fishing by supporting your local retail fishing and boat dealers!

## MN-FISH COMMUNICATION LINKS *by Chip Leer*

### Hello? Hello? . . . is there anyone out there?

Have you ever shouted in the woods only to wonder if anyone heard you? Sent an email or made a phone call to voice your opinion, only to be left feeling like it fell upon deaf ears? As you find yourself sheltering at home you maybe wondering what MN-FISH has been up to, as I have seen few notices or updates.

It's no secret the first-year organizational tasks of any business or non-profit are many, and here at MN-FISH we found this to be true. Our staff of volunteers have been busy, mostly behind the curtain establishing systems and procedures all while working in St. Paul to ensure your voices and our missions are being represented. President Ron Schara and Steve Pennaz



are toting our activities in other written pieces. I'm here to share with you our communication promise. Here is how you can expect to be updated on how MN-FISH is working for you as we grow.

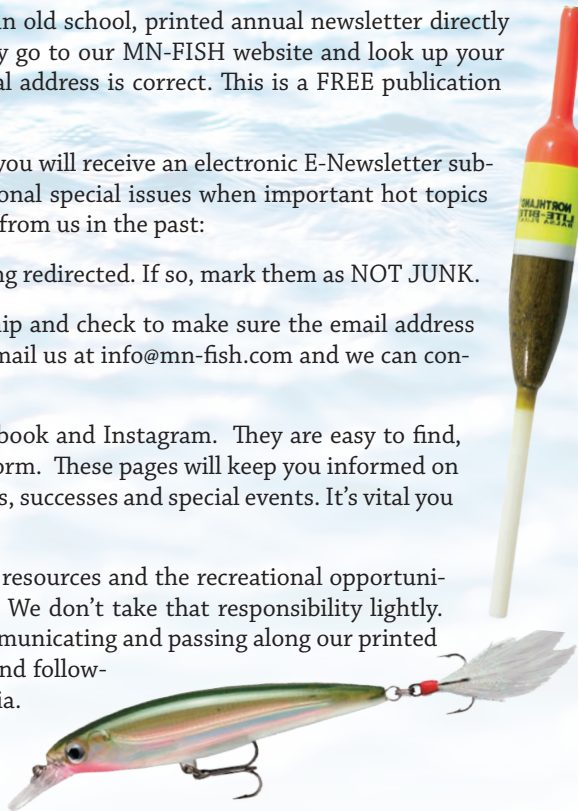
**MN-FISH News** – Every spring we will send an old school, printed annual newsletter directly to you via U.S. mail. To ensure delivery, simply go to our MN-FISH website and look up your membership data to confirm that your physical address is correct. This is a FREE publication paid for by your donations.

**MN-FISH E-News** – Each quarter (4X a year) you will receive an electronic E-Newsletter submitted to your email address. Look for occasional special issues when important hot topics arise. If you HAVE NOT been receiving emails from us in the past:

1. Check your JUNK MAIL where it's likely being redirected. If so, mark them as NOT JUNK.
2. Go to MN-FISH website, click on membership and check to make sure the email address listed for you is correct. You are welcome to email us at [info@mn-fish.com](mailto:info@mn-fish.com) and we can confirm it for you as well.

**Social Media** – We have active pages on Facebook and Instagram. They are easy to find, just search MN-FISH Sportfishing on the platform. These pages will keep you informed on a daily/weekly basis on important issues, events, successes and special events. It's vital you follow LIKE and SHARE MN-FISH content.

You're a member of MN-FISH because aquatic resources and the recreational opportunities they provide are vitally important to you. We don't take that responsibility lightly. Thus, we ask you to support our efforts by communicating and passing along our printed and e-newsletters to potential new members and following LIKE and SHARE our posts on social media. Communication takes more than one person, so please JOIN US by unifying our voices to achieve our MN-FISH Missions.



## MN-FISH MISSIONS

Become a grassroots sport fishing, marine and angler advocacy network to give anglers and business stakeholders a voice before the State Legislature and DNR.

Seek greater reinvestment back into sport fishing of the estimated \$271 million in state taxes derived from Minnesota's robust \$4.2 billion fishing industry.

Act as a watchdog and support DNR fish stocking policies and fish management programs when appropriate.

Support scientific and common-sense fish management of all gamefish species to "shorten-the-time-between-bites".

Advocate and promote youth fishing recruitment and fishing programs in school curriculums.

Seek funding and assist in expanding the Minnesota Fishing Museum/Hall of Fame/Education Center programs and facility.

To restore, protect and enhance Minnesota Sportfishing for present and future generations of anglers to enjoy.

**"Shorten-the-Time-Between-Bites"**





# MN-FISH SPORTFISHING FOUNDATION & COALITION

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## *Restore, Protect and Enhance Minnesota Sport Fishing*

### **BUILDING A COALITION OF BUSINESS PARTNERS** by Chip Leer

Minnesota is a leader nationally, ranking in the top handful of states in terms of angling participation, boat registrations and dollars spent on the sport. These impressive statistics were the focal point when a meeting of prominent fishing industry executives and outdoor media professionals gathered to discuss the State of Fishing in Minnesota 18 months ago. When the meeting began, it was a dizzying array of facts and figures that any data-driven, Excel file geek would adore. And it can be said, the CEO's and CFO's came with an eye on the prize.

Those discussions were short lived however, as one by one each of the business stakeholders had a unique story to share regarding the sport of fishing and how outdoor recreation truly influenced and changed their lives. These spirited human-interest stories launched what is now known as MN-FISH. The meeting concluded with the

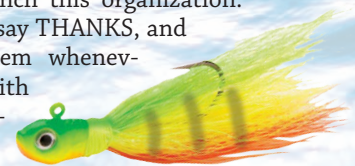
question; what do we need to do to ensure our aquatic resources and fishing opportunities we grew up with are preserved for our children, grandchildren and future generation of anglers to enjoy?

Strong partnerships are a key ingredient to grow any business or organization, and MN-FISH quickly aligned ourselves with the best in our industry. At first glance, the Corporate Benefactor Sponsors that support MN-FISH appear to be a mesmerizing list of companies focused on advertising and profiting from Minnesota's robust \$4.2 billion sport fishing industry. Truth is . . . they are more motivated and concerned about giving back to the resource than profiting from it!

So, what has become obvious after we completed our first year, is that our industry partners are choosing to support MN-FISH to keep Minnesota's family traditions and

values alive . . . and not simply working to influence their profit/loss statements. Our corporate partners are our friends and neighbors who live, work, fish and have multi-generational families in Minnesota. They have come onboard with us to ensure that Minnesota's fishing traditions and opportunities are protected and continue to prosper for generations to follow.

Please review the list of supporting companies below that provided the financial foundation to launch this organization. Reach out to say THANKS, and SUPPORT them whenever possible with your purchasing habits.



### **Corporate Benefactor Sponsors - (Copper level or higher)**

Johnson Outdoors, Rapala USA, Clam Outdoors, Vexilar Inc., Big Rock Sports, Metro Marine Dealers, Yamaha Motors, Evinrude Outboard, Northland Fishing Tackle, Reed Family Outdoor Outfitters, Otter Outdoors, Diawa Corp., HT Enterprise, Lake Master, Pradco, Aqua-Vu, EBSCO Industries, Normark Corp., Catchcover, Jiffy, Frankie's Marine, Lindner Media, Pennaz MultiMedia, Ron Schara Productions, Rassat Outdoor Group, Fishing The Wildside, Trappers Landing Lodge, Arneson's Resort, Deco Pumps, Arrowhead Fulfillment, Rainy Lake Houseboats, Babe Winkelman Productions, Environmental Troubleshooters, Phillips Wine & Spirits, Factory Motor Parts, Village Bank, Fuller Wallner Law, Innovative Outdoor Solutions and Don Coffee Agency.

**Corporate membership supports MN-FISH grassroots advocacy work, legislative activities and public policy development to win pro-angler policy and legislative victories to Keep Minnesota Fishing. Please JOIN US!**

### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

May 9	Minnesota Walleye/Pike Opener
May 23	Minnesota Bass Opener
June 6	Minnesota Muskie Opener
Aug. 7-9	Game Fair
Aug. 14-16	Game Fair

[www.MN-FISH.com](http://www.MN-FISH.com)



**"Leading the Way to Minnesota's Fishing Future"**