Pickerel/Crane lake

Spawning Reef Project

Summary

Work officially began on the walleye spawning reef on February 4, 2019. Bill Marquardt spent 4 hours removing snow from the proposed reef area and completed about ¾ of the reef before nightfall. We were then blessed with a series of snowfalls, thanks to Mother Nature, including a two-day total of over 14 inches. On February 19th, Brad Graves (Brad Graves Landscaping) and Flannery Excavating began the 9-hour task of moving all of the accumulated snow and slush from the reef area pushing it back to the marking stakes using skid steers equipped with tracks. Once the reef was free of snow, Rob Aderholdt (Aderholdt Builders) was contracted to snowplow the area and keep the reef free of snow until our proposed construction dates of March 5-7. On Friday, March 2nd, Brad Graves again cleared the reef area of snow and slush. Rob Aderholt finished the job with a final snowplowing. This prepared the reef for the following week, as temperatures were below zero for the weekend, allowing the ice to thicken until the gravel could finally be deposited.

On Monday, March 4th, volunteers from Flannery Excavating, Brad Graves, Mike Preul (Mole Lake Fisheries Director), Greg Matzke (DNR Fish Biologist), Katie Renschen (DNR Fisheries Technician), and our own volunteers from the district (Gene Ebben, Jerry Hietpas /Hot Dog, Keith Verhagen, Mark Starich and Mike Stieve) showed up around noon to map out the various contours for the reef. We were able to initiate a trial run of the Flannery dump trucks driving down the slope from Alexander’s to the channel and then dumping the gravel on the ice at the beginning of the reef. The first load of gravel arrived around 3:00pm; unfortunately, the first dump truck proceeded to get stuck. Luckily, Flannery had a bulldozer on site and was able to pull out the truck and eventually dump the load of mixed gravel and rock. Small dump trucks were loaded using a skid steer and the rock was deposited and leveled according to the marked contours. Five loads of rock were put down the first day, beginning on the far west end of the reef.

On Tuesday, March 5th we moved approximately 28 truckloads (roughly 480 yards) of gravel. Mother Nature was not very kind again as temperatures hovered around the mid-teens. Kathy Kupfer (District Treasurer) provided lunch for all of the volunteers while Steve and Mike Alexander let us serve lunch for all the volunteers in their kitchen/dining area.

Wednesday’s temperatures brought more of the same weather temperatures but this time with 20 mph winds. Art Seidel joined the group on day 2 and we were able to finish the reef around 5:00pm, adding another 31 truckloads of gravel for a grand total of 64 truckloads and 1,018 yards of gravel! Lunch was again provided by Kathy and, thanks to the Alexanders, we were able to get out of the cold and wind.

Moving forward, once the ice goes out, Mike Preul (Mole Lake Fisheries Director) has agreed to test the viability of the reef by physically distributing walleye spawn eggs onto the newly-established reef to hopefully demonstrate that the enhanced reef is suitable for reproduction.

This fall, we will be receiving a total of 16,000 Walleye Fingerlings from the Mole Lake Hatchery, of which 3,500 fingerlings will be stocked into Crane and the remainder of 12,500 will be stocked into Pickerel. The Friday before these are stocked, Greg Matzke will conduct a boom shocking on Crane Lake, hoping to locate and identify newly-hatched walleye generated by the eggs Mike Preul dispersed.