

# Walleyes for Tomorrow '23 stocking recap

## Ninth Annual Dinner Banquet scheduled for June 22

By Trevor Greene  
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

Walleyes for Tomorrow is an effort to restore healthy walleye reproduction cycles and habitats in lakes across the state.

The Headwaters Basin Chapter encompasses the Manitowish Waters and Minocqua chain of lakes and has been going strong now for seven years.

Their work has not only included the construction of reefs, but also the stocking of fish from portable fish hatcheries dubbed "Walleye Wagons."

Tom Kramer, president of the Headwaters Basin Chapter, said on Monday the group stocked its last batch of walleye fry (recently hatched) in the Manitowish chain, the chain he primarily works on.

This is the third year the group has stocked the Manitowish chain, and Kramer said he thought this year was a successful one.

He said the plan is to stock the Manitowish chain again next year.

Kramer said it's too early to tell if their stocking and habitat rehabilitation effort has made much of a difference.

"Maybe next year we might be seeing something," he said.

Currently, there's a three-bag limit on walleyes for the Manitowish chain — walleyes 15 to 20 inches can be kept.

And while Kramer is in favor of the current bag limit set on the Manitowish chain, he said there's still work to be done to recover population levels of the past and to get back the natural reproduction cycles.

Kurt Justice, guide and owner of a Kurt's Island Sports Shop, has been a member of the Headwaters Basin Chapter since its beginning. He has helped lead the work on the Minocqua chain the last few years.

Unlike the Manitowish chain, no walleyes can be kept on the Minocqua chain because of an agreement between multiple organizations — including the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians.

The 10-year agreement is in its eighth-year.

Justice said the last batch of fry were stocked Tuesday on the Minocqua chain.

Three million were stocked, though the group was hoping for four million, he said.

Hatcheries with the DNR, Justice explained, have also stocked the Minocqua chain with "extended growth" walleyes that are six to eight inches long. However, there is still a male to female ratio issue disrupting the natural reproduction cycle.

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Casey Strasburg uses a net to transport a walleye in recovering walleye eggs.



Tim Onofryton, left, and Tom Bird measure and mark another walleye.



Kurt Justice and Tim Onofryton measure a walleye.



The jars filled with walleye eggs will develop into fry over several days and be released into the Minocqua chain.



Casey Strasburg puts a walleye in the tank to be processed.

“Our goal isn’t just (adding) adult fish, though, we want adult fish that will naturally reproduce and restock the lake itself.”

Kurt Justice

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“We’re hoping with this fry experiment we can get a better balance of males and females,” he said, adding there’s a goal of eventually getting the Minocqua chain to the three-fish-per-acre status. “Our goal isn’t just (adding) adult fish, though, we want adult fish that will naturally reproduce and restock the lake itself. So ... (stocking fry) will go on for another two years — 2025 it will end — and hopefully by then we’ll start seeing some signs of good natural reproduction.”

#### Annual banquet

The Headwaters Basin Chapter of Walleyes for Tomorrow is set to hold its Ninth Annual Dinner Banquet on Thursday, June 22, starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Whitetail Inn in St. Germain. Dinner is scheduled for 7 p.m. and there will be prize boards and “something for everyone.”

Tickets, which can be purchased at multiple area businesses including Kurt’s Island Sports Shop, *The Lakeland Times* and Townline Sports in Manitowish Waters, cost \$250 and come with a 50-ticket super pack.

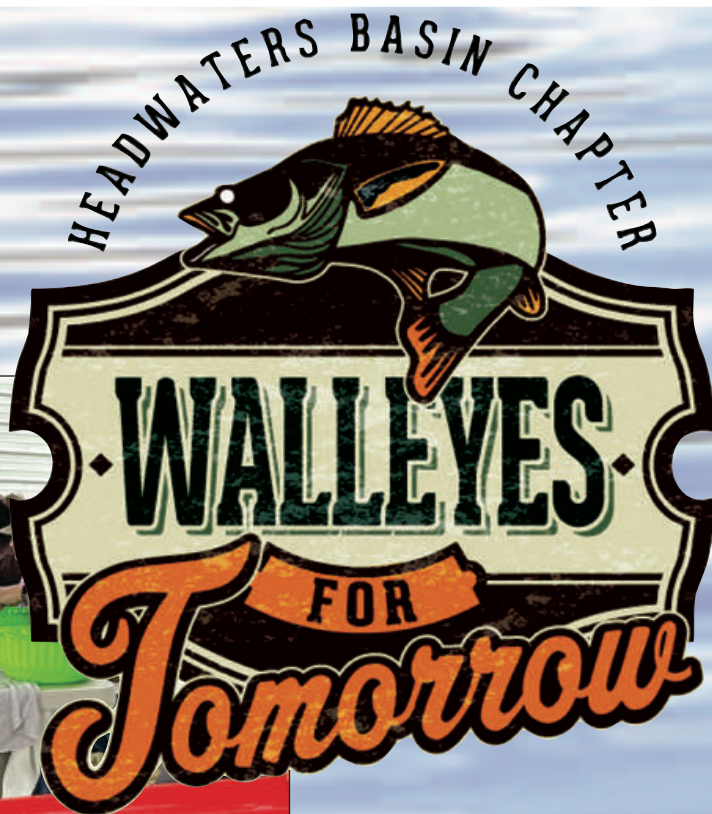
There’s a limited number of tickets, which can also be purchased by emailing [bearcountrytom@gmail.com](mailto:bearcountrytom@gmail.com).

Funds raised from the event will be used to assist the Walleyes for Tomorrow Headwaters Basin Chapter’s effort to mitigate walleye populations in Lakeland area lakes.

Kramer said he wanted to thank all the volunteers that have helped make this year a success.

“We couldn’t do it without them,” he said.

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Steve Notteson works closely during the egg fertilization process.



Carson Schumacher releases a walleye into the Minocqua chain.



Jake Strasburg strips a walleye of its eggs to begin the fertilization process.



Volunteers Travis Strasburg, Nolan Nicholson, Casey Strasburg and Tyler McMahon work in the water while Carson Schumacher, Ted Wrona, Kurt Justice, Jake Strasburg, Logan Strasburg and Steve Nottershime work on the shoreline. Manning the boat is Gregg Walker, Jessie Loomis, Caleb Loomis and Sam Walker. Volunteers of Walleyes for Tomorrow work to improve the walleye population and natural reproduction cycles on the Minocqua chain.