

## Walleye -Aquatic Plant Research Project

One thing we heard from many groups across the state was an interest in doing more to support walleye, and specifically walleye habitat. We'll be highlighting some of these opportunities in the plan and laying out strategies for how we can all work together more effectively. But! **I have one of those partnership opportunities to share with you today! We are looking for match funding for a grant to study walleye and aquatic plant linkages.** This information will be very useful for management of both walleye and aquatic plants all across the state. If your group can help with match funding for this grant (and every little bit helps!) please contact [Zach.Feiner@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Zach.Feiner@wisconsin.gov). A project description is included below. Thanks for your interest in Wisconsin Walleye, and thanks for considering this proposal!

Max Wolter, DNR

### Project Summary

The goal of this project is to quantitatively link aquatic vegetation management to recreational fisheries management and provide decision tools and management frameworks to agencies and lake associations interested in actively using habitat management to promote/create better fisheries. Too often, vegetation and fish management have been considered somewhat separately (or even in opposition to one another), leading to unintended fishery outcomes driven by, for example, loss of macrophyte habitats following vegetation treatments. By combining extensive datasets for aquatic macrophyte and fish communities across thousands of lakes in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, we aim to deliver another tool to the lake management toolbox. In that vein, there are two specific questions that this project will tackle that are high priority for agencies:

1. What is the importance of aquatic vegetation for walleye recruitment, either as spawning or juvenile habitats?
2. How can aquatic vegetation management be used to promote desirable characteristics of popular recreational fisheries, including panfish, bass, and walleye?

In answering these questions, the project would be geared around quantifying relationships between plant community structure and composition and fish abundance, size structure, growth, and recruitment using data analysis and modeling, ultimately making predictions about how plant communities and fish communities can be holistically managed to provide beneficial outcomes for both. This information would then be delivered to biologists, lake associations, and other stakeholders in specific case studies to demonstrate how the management decisions we develop can be put into practice.

### Outcomes (tentative list) would include:

- Decision tools for plant-fish management strategies
- Fact sheets for agencies and lake associations
- Extension/outreach/workshops/curricula developed with university extension for stakeholder groups, classrooms, etc. (For example, workshops could be held at Trout Lake Station in northern WI)
- Data will be formatted and made available for inclusion into Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership database as another potential user tool

### Collaborators

University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Limnology  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

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Thanks for your interest! Here are some answers to your questions – if you need further information, please let me know.

### What is the total match requirement for the project?

The total match we're looking for is ~\$100,000. This is a large, 2 year project for which we need to hire a postdoc researcher, so the total budget is a little over \$200K. We're writing a proposal for funding from Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership which requires 1:1 match, so we're hoping they can fund one year and we can find matching funds for the second year. We're working with WDNR, UW-Madison, Wisconsin Sea Grant, and MN DNR to find matching funds, in addition to reaching out to organizations like yours to see if we can pull together the necessary match.

### Is there any kind of range or suggestion as to the amount that lake Associations should consider?

We don't have a suggested level for lake associations - every little bit helps to reach that 1:1 threshold!

### What is the timeline for the grant? When do you need a commitment from matching organizations.

The timeline is the hard part. MGLP put out a call for proposals on fairly short notice with a deadline for the grant of May 7<sup>th</sup>. I understand if that kind of turnaround isn't possible for many organizations. There is another grant possibility for later this fall (September), so even if May isn't feasible, it's good to have these conversations in case you'd be interested for the next round.

Hope these answers are helpful, and thanks again for reaching out!

Best,  
Zach

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