



Illini Muskies Alliance

By Ray Thompson, Chairman
Illini Muskies Alliance

Recently, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) needed to replace or add new signs at muskie lakes throughout Illinois. The signs alert anglers that the lake contains muskie and asks for participation in an on-going creel survey. The Illinois Voluntary Muskie Creel Survey is a joint effort started several years ago between the IDNR and the Illini Muskies Alliance (IMA). The project is partially funded by the IMA and consists of a postage paid survey "Green Card". Anglers catching any size muskie in any Illinois body of water are asked to fill out the information requested and simply drop the card in the mail. The cards are available at IDNR site offices, bait shops or through the IMA at www.illinimuskiesalliance.org. Anglers can also register at the IDNR website at www.dnr.state.il.us/fish/muskiecard.htm.

The IDNR gathers the information and releases a report annually. Additionally, the reporting angler receives a certificate suitable for framing for their catch. The information gathered gives biologist an estimate on the health of the fishery. Data containing angling pressure, harvest, success rate, growth rates, predator densities and other information can be estimated for each body of water. Analyzing the data, site biologist can formulate a management strategy for each body of water. Future stocking rates, size limits, etc. are partially determined by studying the data.

The IMA uses the annual IDNR creel survey report along with results of the Muskies, Inc. (MI) annual members only fishing contest and annual fish contest results from non-MI member organizations to issue a summary of the Illinois muskie fishery. The summary contains comparisons of the top waters, along with catch details such as type of lure used, lure color, method of catch and largest fish reported. The same information is used to determine the winner of the annual IMA Trophy. The trophy is awarded to an angler in good-standing with one of the twelve IMA member organizations who releases the largest muskie captured for that year. The IMA member organization also receives a traveling trophy.

In 2009, the folks at Tri-Esox who organize the greatest muskie only fishing show in the country each year in Chicago, stepped forward and offered to donate roughly two-thirds of the funds needed to obtain new signs. The twelve IMA member organizations donated the remaining costs.

The signs are 18" x 24" aluminum with an expected life span of 10 years. The signs are being distributed to various IDNR sites in each of the five Illinois Regions and will be installed by the IDNR personnel on post at launching ramps or site information displays.

Please participate in the survey and help the IDNR properly manage you lakes. On behalf of the IMA, I'd like to thank Tri-Esox for their generous donation.