

Site Name: Hamlin Lake
Clerk Name: Nick Arend
Year: 2019

Seasonal fisheries overview:

Winter (if applicable): If you worked this season, tell us a little about how this fishery went (same for spring, summer and fall).

January

First day of creel was on January 12th, lake was checked on January 5th but the ice was unsafe. Beginning of the ice season was very good for limit catches of panfish. Guys were getting a mix of mostly bluegills and sunfish with good sized crappie and an occasional nice perch. Pike fishing was also very good for early ice though more people were bluegill fishing than pike fishing. Towards the end of January fishing slowed down due to bitter cold temperatures and heavier snow. Less fish were being caught and more people started to complain about catching lots of small perch.

February

February was overall slow for most fisherman with a ton of small (3-6") perch being caught. There were some locals who were doing well on panfish in upper Hamlin, but it would take them a few hours to catch their limit. Near the end of the month the crappies started biting in the crappie hole on Upper Hamlin, anglers were getting 10-20 crappies each per day. Unfortunately, this only lasted about a week and then it was done. I did see one musky speared in February, it measured 44.5" and weighed 20lbs with a 22" girth. Mark Tonello was very happy to see this fish. In February guys started targeting walleye on Lower Hamlin but not a lot were caught while I was working, I think most guys stay out past dark or come in early in the morning as walleyes bite early and late. I did creel a few walleye that were released and a couple keepers.

March

Fishing was very slow for most in the month of March. As in February there were a ton of small perch being caught as well as a bunch of spottail shiners. The few local guys who fished every day were still doing well in Upper Hamlin on panfish. They were catching a good mix of bluegills, pumpkinseeds, and crappie. Very few walleyes were creeled in March. Last day of winter creel was March 23rd due to poor ice conditions.

Spring (April and May):

April

First day of open water creel was April 6th. The highlight for April was the phenomenal shore fishing for bluegills and pumpkinseeds at Tamarac village and south bayou. Everyone was catching limits or near limits of panfish from shore at Tamarac Village. It was fun to sit and watch everyone catching fish. There were plenty of small fish as well to keep everyone busy between keepers. It usually took each angler about two hours to catch their limit. It was very enjoyable talking to the old timers while they were fishing from shore. There were very few boat fishermen in April but the few that were around were either bass fishing, perch fishing, or panfish fishing. A few bass were caught by the boat anglers. Those trying for perch in far upper Hamlin did very poor, and a few guys trying for panfish from boats did ok; but not as well as those fishing from shore.

May

May was a very good month for those fishing from a boat for panfish. Bluegill fishing was excelling on the Upper lake and a few spots on the Lower lake. I didn't see many limits but lots of good catches of bluegills and pumpkinseeds. Those fishing from shore for bluegill did not do as well as they did in March but still had good catches of bluegill and sunfish. Also, rock bass started showing up in big numbers, though not everyone likes rock bass. May is the month for crappie fishing on Hamlin Lake. Many people drift for them with minnows in front of boy scout camp and in front of Indian Pete's Bayou. Most people were catching good numbers and the crappie are big! A few anglers were out walleye fishing but caught more pike than walleye. May is also the month for bullhead fishing from shore at Victory Park- which Mark Vaas also partakes in. There can be many bullheads caught once the sun sets.

Summer (June – August):

June

The month of June was the busiest as far as having the most interviews in the year. Panfish fishing remained decent for most of the month. There were no limit catches but 10-15 panfish in a trip was common. More rock bass were caught in June than May, and it was interesting to see how many people kept rock bass versus those who didn't. Another species started showing up in big numbers in June- freshwater drum AKA sheephead. Most people dislike sheephead because they are regarded as a "trash" fish so many people catch them, kill them, and throw them back. But sheephead provide a good fight which some anglers appreciated them for that. Very few walleye were caught in June though some anglers said they did well after dark. Those bass fishing did ok; mix of largemouth and smallmouth bass throughout upper and lower Hamlin.

July

July was a very hot month on Hamlin Lake, and I think this negatively effected the fishing for the next couple months. Surface water temperatures got close to 80 degrees

some days. Many people were targeting panfish in the month of July, but most were doing poor. 10 fish days were considered good days when trying for bluegill/panfish. Lots of sheephead were caught by those trying for panfish as well. A few people tried eating sheephead and noted they were not actually that bad, hopefully more people come to this realization, so they stop killing sheephead and throwing them back. Those bass fishing did ok between upper Hamlin and lower Hamlin; 5-10 fish days were considered good days for bass anglers. Very few walleye anglers in July.

August

A few more walleye were caught in August than in previous months. Unfortunately, most Anglers were only catching one or two legal size fish per trip as well as 3 or 4 undersize fish. Even more sheephead were caught in August than previous months; some good-sized ones as well. August had some bass fishing tournaments also. Most anglers were catching 10-15 bass in the tournament with majority fish being largemouth bass and a few smallmouth bass. Those trying for bluegill or panfish did very poor with most fish being too small to keep. Lots of rock bass caught in August like in July. Water stayed warm in the upper 70's for most of August. Also, there were big algae blooms which may have affected the fishing.

Fall (September and October):

September

In September the fishing finally started to pick back up but the weather for September was rough at times. The one bass tournament in the month did very well. Most anglers caught 10-15 bass with a mix of other species as well. Towards the middle and end of the month the bluegill/panfish started picking up. 10-15 bluegill per trip was common, mostly in the upper lake. Very few walleye caught in September. As stated before, the issue with September is the poor weather; many windy white-cappy days and/or rain. The boat was pulled out of the water on the 29th and was the final day of open water creel on Hamlin Lake.

Stocking/Regulation specific comments from the public:

What comments did you see from the public about regulations and stocking?

Most anglers would like to see more stocking of walleye or at least the continuation of the walleye stocking. Those who mentioned they wanted more walleye stocking usually didn't know that there were 100,000 or more walleye stocked every other year. Once they knew about this they seemed less worried about stocking more walleye and thought it may be an issue of weather or some other reason why they were not able to catch any. One angler did mention he would like to see more muskies stocked throughout Michigan.

Parks/access sites specific comments:

What comments did you get from the public about access sites, fish cleaning stations, etc.?

The only comment I got about boat access was that Victory Park ramp is very weedy and most didn't launch there because of this. I did get a couple comments about the porta-potties at the accesses being very clean. I can attest to this as I used them a couple times and noticed myself that they were very clean. I believe they are ran by the city and they do a very good job of keeping them clean.

General comments from the public (I do not want to see this left blank):

What other comments did you get from the public? What are they happy with? What are they not happy with? Why?

The biggest complaint I got almost all year was about the abundance of sheephead in the lake. Once summer hit the sheephead really seemed to come out and were caught pretty much daily by almost everyone. Some boats said they had caught 20 or more in one trip and over 100 in a season.

The other complaint I got, and it was more during ice fishing season, was about the abundance of very small perch. Some realized it was good to see so many small perch as it is fish for the future, others saw it as a concern because there were very few large perch being caught. Some days there were over 100 small perch caught in one trip.

SASP –specific comments: please write here any comments you have about the SASP program. What comments do you have about how the creel program is run? What things confuse you? What things do you like? If you need gear or supplies do not put those comments here. Tell your lead worker or tech supervisor directly and they will obtain those for you. I do not order gear or supplies for you.

No issues with how the creel program is run. With inland creel there is a lot of flexibility with how things are done and with my prior inland creel experience on Mullett Lake I was able to help figure things out that Mark or Joe were unsure of. It is always enjoyable working with Mark and Joe as supervisors.

Site specific comments (locations to add/subtract, shift hours that should be changed, other): In consultation with your supervisor or lead worker I use what you put here when I am making the following year's schedules and instructions, if I can make the change I do. If I can't I do not.

For Hamlin Lake creel I would suggest a prop boat not a jet boat like I had. Hamlin Lake is very weedy, and it was a daily chore having to pull weeds out of the intake. This puts the driver, or whoever is pulling the weeds out, at risk of falling overboard because you must reach over the back of the boat to get the weeds off. My other suggestion would be to set up an account to get gas somewhere on the lake. I was able to get gas on the water on Mullett Lake, but it was never set up for Hamlin Lake. Instead gas cans had to be hauled in the car. It is much easier to fill up on the water, and safer. A jet boat would be ok for the spring but once the weeds start to pop up and the water levels come up a prop boat would be advised.

Other comments/questions? Put here anything that you would like to say that did not fit the structure of this write up!

Hamlin lake is a fun lake to creel. It is almost if there are two lakes in one with the upper and lower. It was also interesting how many days you couldn't get on the water due to wind. With the lake being so close to Lake Michigan, you feel the effects of the wind even more it seems like. If it is blowing bad on Lake Michigan you could almost bet it was going to be blowing pretty bad on Hamlin Lake. Pat Barcelli was a huge help with him living right next to the boat launch and letting us store the snowmobile there for the winter creel. Wayne Andersen, president of Hamlin Lake Preservation Society was also a big help. He answered any questions I had about the lake and invited me to come talk at some of the meetings and to present at the annual Hamlin Lake meeting. Also, would like to give thanks to Jim and Barb Beckstrom for letting us keep the boat at their dock on Indian Pete's Bayou.