

Favorite Fishing Destinations

Potential Records, Reduced Expenses Expected To Lure Anglers To Wisconsin

(NAPSA)—While, like the rest of the nation, Wisconsin has felt the pinch of the recession, one segment of the state's economy could stand to benefit—the recreational fishing industry.

Many anglers who've traditionally gone to Canada for big-time fishing action may cut their travel expenses and opt to visit the lake-filled Midwestern state instead. Literally millions of anglers are expected to fish Wisconsin's waters, and they'll be chasing more than just dinner. They'll be trying to make history, encouraged by a recent season that included several world fly-rod records for the legendary muskellunge (musky).

And that might just have been the beginning. As a relatively new way to fish for musky, some experts believe that world fly fishing records could fall in several categories this year.

"Last year, there were several line-class fly-rod musky records broken because it is a fairly new way to fish for musky," said Emmett Brown, executive director of the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame. "Some of these line-class records were relatively small, in the low 40-inch range, so I expect that you will see even more fly-rod line-class musky world records fall."

When the record does fall, there's a strong chance it will happen in the "Musky Capital of the World"—Hayward, Wisconsin.

Home to the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame and the catch site for last year's fly-rod record, the Hayward area waters are the stuff of legend. The most famous is the Chippewa Flowage, where the all-tackle world-record musky (a 69-pound, 11-ounce monster) was caught some 60 years ago.



Fly-Rod, world-record musky caught on Chippewa River.

Though it's arguably the state's most high-profile fishing location, Hayward is just one of many fishing hot spots throughout Wisconsin. Home to 15,000 inland lakes, 42,000 miles of streams and rivers, plus two Great Lakes and 260 miles of the Mississippi River, Wisconsin offers anglers plenty to choose from. About 1.4 million fishing licenses are sold in Wisconsin each year, making the state second only to Florida in the number of days nonresident anglers spend fishing.

According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service data, Wisconsin is the top fishing destination in the Midwest. Approximately 88 million fish are caught in a license year; an impressive number in and of itself, but even more so considering Wisconsin has just 5.6 million residents.

"All across the state, we have good populations of major game species such as walleye, bass, pike and trout as well as plenty of panfish like bluegills, crappies and

yellow perch," said Mike Staggs, Wisconsin DNR's fisheries director. "The great thing about fishing in Wisconsin is that there are species biting somewhere on almost every day of the year."

"Musky is our Wisconsin state fish and we have over 700 lakes and 50 different rivers where anglers can find them," said Staggs. "But these days, a lot of anglers are looking for a few fish to take home for dinner and you'll find those here also."

Anglers can start with salmon, steelhead and lake trout that are plentiful in Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. Many of the state's coastal communities have large charter fishing fleets, offering visitors a "deep sea"—type fishing experience—and, potentially, a cooler full of delicious filets.

Wisconsin also boasts some of the nation's best fishing for tasty walleye, including the world-famous Winnebago chain (including lakes Winnebago, Butte des Morts and Poygan) and the Mississippi River.

"Anglers should not overlook the opportunity to harvest a few bass or trout," said Staggs. "We have some areas where trout and bass are doing so well that our fish managers would like folks to take a few home so they don't become stunted. And anglers shouldn't forget that we have abundant panfish populations in lakes all across the state. Our Fishing Report can give anglers some ideas on where to find some fish for dinner."

For more information about fishing in Wisconsin, Wisconsin travel information and travel-planning guides, visit travelwisconsin.com or call the Wisconsin Department of Tourism's toll-free number, (800) 432-TRIP/8747.