

Area Fisheries Office, 1201 East Highway 2, Grand Rapids, MN 55744
(218) 999-7821
October 6, 2005

Itasca County Commissioners
123 NE 4th Street
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Re: Deer Lake – Kocemba's Bay

Dear Commissioners:

The purpose of this letter is to attempt to describe the fisheries habitat value located within the area known as Kocemba's Bay, located in T 57, R 26, S 34, on Deer Lake. Part of the shoreline is protected by a conservation easement while an area to the north is protected as a State Aquatic Management Area.

The lake is generally shallow in this area with several islands located within the bay. The shoal water soils vary from rubble and sand to marl. Rubble provides spawning habitat for a variety of fish. The marl substrate is an important substrate for different vegetation, notably chara, which is important spawning habitat for muskellunge.

The principal habitat value of this area is as a muskie spawning area. Deer Lake presently has an excellent muskie population sustained exclusively by natural reproduction. In our most recent spring assessment netting done in 2003, 30% of the muskies sampled on the lake came from the nets set in this area. Muskies spawn in the early spring and require specific habitat for successful spawning.

In addition to the muskie spawning habitat this area also provides spawning habitat for a number of other species, including smallmouth bass and walleye. A number of non-game fish species also rely on the type of habitat found here for several life history stages.

The marl substrate is particularly sensitive to disturbance. Marl, by definition, is precipitated calcium carbonate, and is very fine and easily displaced. Chara is a green algae and does not have a defined root system. Disturbance or destruction of this habitat could be detrimental to the overall health and sustainability of muskies in Deer Lake. Furthermore, recent research has shown that many species of fish are negatively affected by the loss of both riparian and aquatic vegetation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments relative to the fisheries and aquatic habitat value of this area. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Kavanaugh
Area Fisheries Supervisor

c. Don Dewey