

and invested resource users. Andrew Heald (son of Chris Heald, MWF Executive Directors) took one for the team and volunteered to be the muscle behind pulling up the nets. Blaine and I assisted Kevin with removing the fish as Andrew hauled the net into the boat. Over the next two hours, the Minister and I picked Kevin's brain on how recent management and regulation changes have ensured sustainability of Lake Winnipeg's Fishery, as well as how the commercial fishing sector is surviving significant impacts due to Covid-19.

Win-Win-Win - 3 Regulation & Management Changes With Direct Benefits To The Fishery

I feel like I had a solid background and understanding on the need for the implementation of the first Lake Winnipeg Quota Buy Back Program, the new minimum mesh size changes and the recent changes in angler regulations. However, this was the first time the science was explained to me as to how those changes have and will have direct benefits to the Lakes Walleye and Sauger populations going forward.

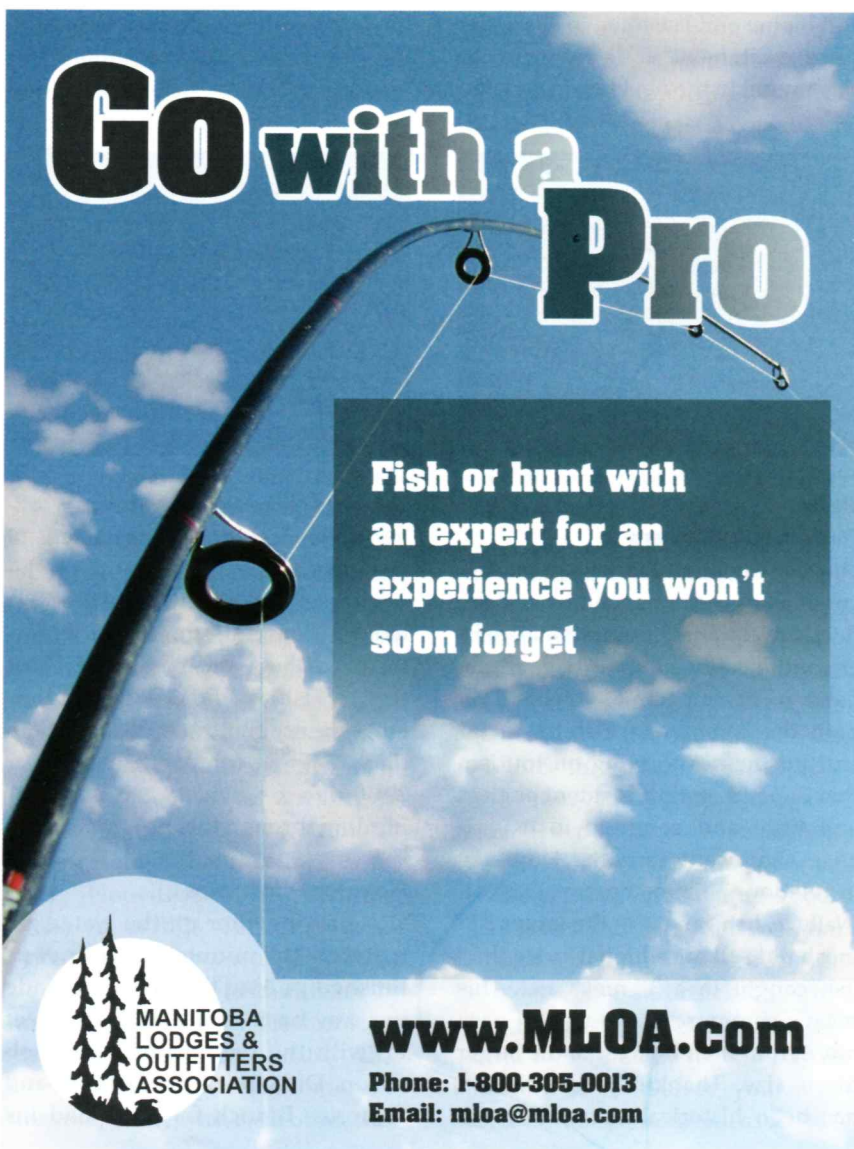
Before we dive into some interesting science, I'll quickly recap on the changes that were implemented. The first round of Quota Buy Back was completed in March 2019 where nearly 520,000kg of quota was retired from 89 fishers (127 individual quota entitlements purchased) for a cost of \$5.4 million. ARD implemented a new minimum mesh size of 3.5 inches in the South Basin and Channel of Lake Winnipeg on April 1, 2020. In conjunction with the new mesh size on the South Basin, ARD put forward the new angler regulation establishing that Walleye and Sauger less than 35cm in total length must be released on Lake Winnipeg, the Red River and The Winnipeg River and their tributaries up until the first impassable barrier for fish. The combination of the angler regulation change with an

increase in minimum mesh size will allow a greater proportion of smaller fish to grow to spawning size before they can be harvested, increasing the overall natural productivity of fish stocks. Win...Win...Win!

2019 Index Data Collected On Lake Winnipeg

I will try not to get too far over my head on the science. However, Kevin's explanation on the impact of increasing the minimum mesh size to 3.5" from 3" has on improving the long-term sustainability of fish stocks in the lake is information we all need to hear!

Walleye caught in 3.5" mesh nets are 32% larger in weight than Walleye caught in a 3" mesh net. So, this means that roughly 30% less individual fish would be caught by a commercial fisher for the fisher to reach their quota. Thus, 3.5" mesh nets will allow more fish to be unharvested and left to spawn. A larger minimum mesh net size will also assist female Walleye to reach maturity. 50% of female walleye caught in the 3.5" mesh nets have reached maturity (able to spawn) compared to using a 3" mesh net where only 34% of female walleye will reach maturity. What this means is the Walleye caught in the 3" nets ▶



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