



Houghton Lake: Annual Physicals Show Lake Remains Healthy

With a surface area of 20,044 acres, Houghton Lake is the largest inland Lake in Michigan. It also boasts one of the most abundant fish populations. Since the 1930's, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) has identified 39 different species of fish in the lake including sunfish, perch, northern pike, walleye, and largemouth and smallmouth bass. Since 1994, Houghton Lake has had over 330 entries in the DNRE Master Anglers Program. Recent fishery surveys performed by the DNRE indicate Houghton Lake maintains a robust fishery dominated by panfish, walleye, and northern pike.

Houghton Lake has been studied extensively. Scientific studies of the water quality and vegetation in Houghton Lake have been performed by both federal and state agencies, and samples are collected from the lake each year to gauge the overall health of the lake. Houghton Lake consistently maintains good water quality and supports a full array of recreational activities. The construction of a sewer system around the entire lake in the 1970's has helped to maintain the quality of the lake.

The Houghton Lake Improvement Board was established in 2000 under state law and made the coordinated management of Houghton Lake possible. In 2002, the lake board initiated a treatment program to control the spread of an invasive plant called Eurasian milfoil. The plant had infested nearly 11,000 acres of the lake and presented a serious threat to recreation, the local economy, and the lake's ecology. The treatment program has restored full recreational use and enjoyment of Houghton Lake.

In addition to the milfoil treatment program, the lake board oversees a variety of projects to improve and protect Houghton Lake. At the urging of the lake board, all four townships bordering the lake and Roscommon County adopted ordinances restricting the use of lawn fertilizers that contain phosphorus, a nutrient that causes excessive aquatic plant growth. Each year, the lake board coordinates lake-wide vegetation surveys and water quality assessments, and reports annually on the health of the lake. The lake board has compiled a wealth of data about Houghton Lake and meets regularly throughout the summer to update lake residents on project activities.

Plant and water samples are collected annually to gauge the health of Houghton Lake.

