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For investment advice contact John Volden in Annandale at 320-274-8216 on his cell phone at 612-501-1393 or by e-mail at jvolden@lakecentralbank.com.

For insurance needs, contact Paul Manuel in Maple Lake at 320-963-3163. You can always e-mail the agency at agency@lakecentralbank.com or visit www.lakecentralbank.com for more information on all three locations.

The three Lake Central offices have been open throughout the pandemic, if you prefer not to meet in person, all three offices have the technology to conduct business virtually.

Annandale office

Stephanie Halvorsen has been with Lake Central Insurance since 2015. She is fully licensed in property/casualty and life/health. Halvorsen is a native of the Annandale area and she knows just about everyone.

Annandale office: 320-274-8216

Maple Lake office

Krista Wurm, is licensed in property/casualty and specializes in personal lines, has worked in the Maple Lake office for 30 years. Caleb Haag and Lynne Lahr joined the agency in 2017. Both are licensed in property/casualty and life/health and handle all types of personal and commercial insurance. Both are Medicare certified and knowledgeable in all health insurance lines.

Maple Lake office: 320-963-3163

Clearwater office

Angie Simon has been with Lake Central Insurance in the Clearwater office since 2015. She is also licensed in property/casualty and life/health insurance.

Together, Lake Central staff have more than 90 years of combined experience.

Clearwater office: 320-558-2271



PAID ADVERTISEMENT

By Brenda Erdahl

With three convenient locations in Wright County, they are big enough to serve you, but still small enough to know you.

“We are in the relationship business you are not just a customer. When we sit down together, we have a conversation, and we do the best we can to educate and serve you,” said Paul Manuel.

Manuel manages Lake Central Insurance Services and John Volden is at the helm of Lake Central Investments. Two separate companies in one office, the experienced professionals who work there strive to protect your assets, whether they are cash or physical.

Lake Central’s roots go deep, all the way back to 1933 when Annandale’s two banks merged to form the Annandale State Bank. Twenty years later an insurance agency was established within the bank. That was the birth of what would become Lake Central Insurance Services. In 1978, the company opened a branch in Clearwater and in 2007 expanded to Maple Lake. Lake Central Investments was launched in 2011 and has worked in relation to Lake Central Insurance Services ever since. To Volden and Manuel, the relationship makes sense as both strive to protect their clients’ assets and financial future. Having three locations has the added benefit of convenience for clients to make appointments near their home or work. Manuel travels between the three offices and all are fully staffed with insurance professionals every day. Volden is based out of Annandale but can be seen at Clearwater and Maple Lake by appointment.

Lake Central Insurance Services

Manuel is an experienced independent insurance agent representing more than 25 highly regarded insurance companies that cover everything from home and auto to life and health insurance plus options for business and financial coverage. Manuel also handles all aspects of Medicare coverage. “If you have an insurance need, we have an outlet for it,” he said. The advantage of working with so many different companies is the variety of resources available to build an insurance program that works for each individual customer. “We have the ability to shop for your insurance in our portfolio of carriers where we’ll find you the best value. I like to tell folks, give us your info and let us do the shopping for you.”

Manuel is a native of Maple Lake where he



John Volden (left) is at the helm of Lake Central Investments. He can guide you through the turbulent waters of investing. At right is experienced, independent insurance agent, Paul Manuel, who manages Lake Central Insurance Services.



continues to live and work. In fact, all of Lake Central’s staff live in the communities they serve.

Lake Central Investments

With more than 35 years of experience, Volden can guide you through the turbulent waters of investing and provide you the tools needed to make sound investment decisions. He has weathered both the peaks and valleys when it comes to the market and he has the know-how to help his clients understand the tools of investing and their personal goals whether they are retired, just beginning, or somewhere in the middle. “Guiding you through and explaining this process is my job,” he said.

A common concern among his clients lately is how COVID and the change in administration in Washington has and will affect the market. He reassured that the market is apolitical. “It’s going to look at whatever administration is in place and adjust to it. The day the Capitol was breached the market finished the day higher than where it started. To me that is a wonderful reassurance,” he said.

Volden also noted that though COVID has affected the market, new opportunities have surfaced. “We are in an extremely low-rate fixed product environment which presents challenges, at the same time that will create opportunities in other areas.”

To learn more about today’s financial en-

vironment, contact Volden who is known for his low-key, low pressure, one-on-one approach.

He’ll sit down with you, review your investment needs and map out a plan.

“We simply have a conversation,” he said. “I do my best to educate you on the options available, determine your tolerance for risk, and define the purpose of your money. You take some time to consider the things we have discussed and then we move forward with your decision.”

Diane Binsfeld is Volden’s administrative assistant. The two have worked together since 2016 and can show you all that Lake Central Investments has to offer, from individual retirement accounts (IRA), and certificates of deposit, to stocks, mutual funds, bonds and more. Volden can also provide direction on when to use Roth or traditional IRAs, financial and estate planning and give advice on 401(k) rollover situations.

Productive partnership

Lake Central Insurance Services and Lake Central Investments have had a productive relationship since they were partnered in 2011, but what really ties them together is their mutual respect for the communities they live in and the people they serve.

“Small enough to know you, but big enough to serve you, the bottom line is, we pride ourselves on our customer service.”

The Lake Central Team



Stephanie Halvorsen
Annandale



Krista Wurm
Maple Lake



Caleb Haag
Maple Lake



Lynne Lahr
Maple Lake



Angie Simon
Clearwater



Dianne Binsfeld
Annandale

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LAKE Country Lure

Fishing Report



Photo by Don Dittberner

Anglers are reporting some luck with panfish, crappies and northern pike on area lakes, but it's been a slow bite, which is typical for February, experts say. Local bait shops report a gambit of baits being used with Euro Larvae and wax worms working the best for panfish. Anglers targeting northern pike have had some luck with suckers. Hampering fishing this season is the less-than-perfect ice conditions thanks to the mild winter. Kurt Segner, owner of Little Jim's Sport Shop in Maple Lake said area lakes have anywhere from 4 to 12 inches of ice. On a normal year ice ranges in thickness from 16 to 20 inches. While plenty of smaller vehicles have been on the lakes, the ice can't yet hold the big rigs, and plenty more anglers are choosing to walk out. That's different from years past when you could pretty much drive wherever you wanted to on the lakes, Segner said.

Buffalo Lake: In general fishing is slow, but anglers have had luck catching panfish in 25 to 30 feet of water. Some northern pike are biting.

Ramsey Lake: Fishing is slow.

Little Pulaski: In general fishing is slow, but anglers have been catching some sunfish and crappies in 25 to 30 feet of water. Anglers are also catching some northern pike here and there. Anglers report anywhere from 14 to 18 inches of ice.

Washington Lake: Panfish are biting if you have the patience to wait.

Rock Lake: Crappies and sunfish are biting well on everything from wax worms, crappie minnows and flat heads to sucker minnows and euro larvae.

Constance Lake: There was plenty of panfish action a few weeks ago. It's slowed down considerably, but you might catch enough for a meal.

Granite Lake: A few weeks ago, Granite was a hotspot for panfish, but as of last weekend, their bite has slowed. Anglers have had some luck with northern pike.

Little Maple Lake: An estimated 200

fish houses are set up on Little Maple and anglers are having a lot of luck catching crappies on euro larvae and crappie minnows.

Big Maple Lake: Small northern pike are active along the weeds in about four feet of water. Anglers have been catching plenty on sucker minnows. Anglers are also catching some sunfish near the Hwy. 55 access near town. There is about 12 to 13 inches of ice.

Clearwater Lake: Anglers have been reeling in some walleyes and panfish.

Lake John: Northern pike have been biting on sucker minnows. Sunfish are biting on euro larvae and wax worms.

Lake Francis: Anglers have had some luck catching walleyes and sunfish.

Indian Lake: Walleyes and sunfish have been biting.

Limestone Lake: Anglers have had luck catching sunfish and crappies using euro larvae and wax worms.

Pelican Lake: Spearing for northern pike has been good here. Since it's a shallow lake with not much fluctuation in its depth, pike have been caught all over the lake. Anglers are also reeling in crappies and northern pike.

Basin Basics

FOR

PANFISH



By Jerry Carlson

When it comes to winter ice fishing, I like to keep it simple. I also like to catch fish. And yes, these two concepts are totally compatible. One of the ways I keep my ice fishing simple is by focusing most of my 'searching for panfish energy' to one area. That area would be basins, or deep holes in a lake's structure that will range from 20 to 40 feet in depth.

Although not every lake has a nice deep basin or two that will congregate crappies and some bluegills, many of them do. Any lake map will clearly show the location of these basins and will make it easy for anglers to find them.

Often times, I find that other anglers have done the location work for me. Many of the lakes I fish will have small clusters of houses set up in and around the deep basin. There is usually a well traveled road right to these basin locations that makes navigation easy.

Once at the basin, I make an effort to a look for fish on the upward slope of the basin first and not necessarily in the very deepest part of the hole. However, since the fish I am targeting will be suspended, they can be over the very deepest depths, as well.



holes in the area usually allows me to find where they have wandered to.

Deep basin fish are real roamers and will move around even without being spooked by an auger. Having multiple holes allows me to have a better chance of finding them once they do move.

It is very rare to sit on a hole and catch one fish after another. They just wander too much. By staying in one place, odds are the suspended panfish will eventually return. However, I find I have much better success by trying to follow the fish as they roam about.

As always, my standard fishing rig for basin fish consists of two-pound-test line, a small tungsten jig (Clam's Drop Kick is my favorite) with a plastic tail and one Euro larva on the hook for good measure. I am a big fan of spring bobbers, as well. In really deep water, increase the weight of your jig.

Although I fish a variety of structural elements in the winter, there is no doubt that my favorite is deep basins. I have more success in these deep-water haunts than anywhere else.

I do most of my looking by pouring water on the ice and shooting through with my Vexilar. Depending on the snow conditions, this isn't always possible. However, when it works, it allows me to cover a lot of territory in a very short time. It also saves battery life on my auger and wear and tear on my body.

Recently, I have been incorporating a Garmin LiveScope to assist with my searching routine. This cuts the location time down significantly.

Once I do locate deep basin fish, which are usually crappies, I drill out a good sized area with my auger before I ever drop a line. I do this for a couple of reasons.

Many times, the fish that I locate will spook when I start working the auger. Multiple

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Sylvia gives up plenty of fish!

New fish limit restrictions go into effect on March 1, 2021

By Joe Stewig
Area Fisheries Manager

East and West Lake Sylvia: East and West Sylvia are two interconnected lakes located south of the City of South Haven in Wright County. The lakes have a combined area of 1,524 acres with only one public access (40 parking spots) located on West Sylvia. This access fills up quickly on weekends and holidays so get there early if you want a spot!!! East and West Sylvia offer a variety of fishing opportunities; however, the lake is primarily managed for Walleye and panfish. Walleye fingerlings have been stocked since the 1940's and on a more consistent basis since the 1970's. Currently, the lakes are stocked during even numbered years most recently this past October when 19,000 fingerlings were stocked. Even with all the stocking taking place, the present Walleye population is low to average, but gives anglers an opportunity to fish and catch them. In our 2020 survey of the lakes we caught 43 Walleye that ranged in length from 11.5 to 28 inches with an average length and weight of 17 inches and nearly 2 pounds. Growth is average for the area taking about three (3) years to reach 14 inches.

Northern Pike abundance has been high with a lot of "hammer handle" pike. Because of this, we implemented an experimental 24 - 36 inch protected slot limit on pike back in 2009 with the hopes of reducing the number of "hammer handle" pike in the lakes. After 10 years with this experimental regulation in place we did not see any significant changes in the size structure of pike and so it was removed in 2019. At the same time, DNR was pursuing changes to the statewide Northern Pike regulations shifting to a zone system which appeared to be better suited for these lakes. The "New" Northern Pike Zone regulations (see pgs. 24-25 of the 2020 Fishing Regulation booklet) went into effect March 1, 2018. East and West Sylvia are in the North Central Zone so for lakes in this zone

Lake of the Month

East & West Lake Sylvia

Nearest Town.... South Haven
Lake Area.....1,573.81 acres
Littoral Area18.67 miles
Maximum Depth..... 97 feet

Fish Species Present

black bullhead, black crappie, bluegill, brown bullhead, green sunfish, hybrid sunfish, largemouth bass, northern pike, pumpkinseed, rock bass, tullibee (cisco), walleye, yellow bullhead, yellow perch, bowfin (dogfish), common carp, white sucker, banded killifish, blacknose shiner, bluntnose minnow, brook silverside, shiners, spottail shiner

the regulation is a 22 - 26 inch protected slot with a possession limit of 10 of which only two (2) can be over 26 inches. This means that all pike between 22 and 26 inches inclusive have to be released immediately. The goal is to again increase harvest of the smaller pike while protecting some of the medium size pike. Pike numbers were still higher than we would like see in our 2020 surveys, but there are some nice pike roaming the lakes you just have to find them. In 2020, Northern Pike ranged in length from 10 to 32 inches with an average length and weight of 18 1/2 inches and 1 1/2 pounds. Growth is also average for the area, taking six (6) years to reach 25 inches.

East and West Sylvia also offers an excellent opportunity to catch Largemouth Bass. While bass were not sampled in 2020, numbers in 2015 were through the roof!!! Catch rates on both lakes were 2 - 3 times higher than average for the Sauk Rapids Fisheries Management Area. In 2015, bass ranged from 5 - 18 inches with an average size of 10 1/2 inches and 3/4 pounds. Almost 500 bass were sampled between the two lakes with 27% being 12 inches or longer and only 3% were 15 inches or longer. Even though we did not sample any bass over 20 inches in 2015 anecdotal reports indicate that there are bass that size in the lakes.



Black Crappie and Bluegill are also very popular species to fish for on these lakes and at certain times can provide excellent fishing. Based on summer surveys Black Crappie abundance appears to be low; however a 2017 spring Bluegill survey collected 250 crappies ranging from 5 - 15 inches long with an average length of just over 9 1/2 inches. Seventy-seven percent of the crappies sampled were longer than eight

(8) inches and 54% were longer than 10 inches. Growth is average for the area taking four (4) years to reach eight inches (8). In order to help maintain the existing size structure of Black Crappie, a bag limit reduction from 10 to 5 was approved by anglers this fall and will go into effect starting March 1, 2021.

Similar to crappie, Bluegill abundance also appears to be low based on summer surveys; however in that same 2017 spring Bluegill survey mentioned earlier we collected 1,252 Bluegill that ranged in length from 3 - 10 inches with an average length of almost seven (7) inches. Eighty-three percent of the Bluegill sampled

were six (6) inches or longer and 12% were eight (8) inches or longer. Which is excellent for this area. With that in mind, we selected East and West Sylvia to be part of the States Quality Sunfish Initiative which is a statewide effort to increase the average size of sunfish caught across the state. For more information check out the following link (Quality Sunfish Initiative info). These lakes were originally proposed for a reduced

daily bag from 20 to five (5); however based on public comments the proposal was modified to a reduced bag limit of 10 sunfish. These new regulations will also go into effect on March 1, 2021.

Besides the two new regulations that will go into effect this coming year, anglers and boaters need to be aware that these lakes are infested with three (3) Aquatic Invasive Species - Eurasian milfoil, stary stonewort and zebra mussels so care should be taken not to spread these invasive species. Remember to Clean, Drain, and Dry when you leave the water!!!

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DNR's 2020 FISH STOCKING SUCCESSFUL, DESPITE IT'S CHALLENGES

By the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Anglers can look forward to positive results from fish stocking that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources conducted in 2020, despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the vast majority of fish in Minnesota waters are the result of natural reproduction in healthy habitats, stocking can provide angling opportunities where they might not otherwise exist.

"This ended up being a productive year for fish stocking even as COVID-19 changed how we performed our work," said Brian Nerbonne, DNR central region fisheries manager. "Our staff were able to find creative ways to stock fish in Minnesota waters."

In mid-April, the DNR canceled its 2020 egg collection operations for walleye, northern pike, muskellunge and steelhead because the work could not be done safely under COVID-19 guidelines.

Without its own source of newly hatched fish (known as fry), the DNR could not stock its rearing ponds where fry grow larger

(into fingerlings) before being released into Minnesota's waters. But hatchery operations were able to continue with COVID protocols, and other sources of fry and fingerlings helped fill the gaps.

Walleye stocking

Collecting walleye eggs from spawning fish in the wild is a labor-intensive effort that requires teams of six to eight people working closely together. The DNR collects and fertilizes eggs each spring to hatch, raise and then release fish either as tiny fry or larger fingerling size. These fish are then stocked in Minnesota waters that have low or no natural reproduction.

This year, instead of relying on the usual spring egg collection, the DNR was able to use fish produced from other sources.

DNR fisheries crews harvested and stocked 42,000 pounds of 1-year-old walleye from rearing ponds that did not suffer winterkill in 2019. In addition, the DNR purchased about 40,000 pounds of fingerling-sized walleye from private producers.

The White Earth Nation assisted by stocking fry and fingerlings in several Becker County lakes and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe provided walleye fry that the DNR stocked in a hand-

ful of lakes. All told, the DNR stocked over 82,000 pounds of walleye, representing about 71% of stocking originally planned for the year.

"We have reason to be grateful despite a challenging year. We appreciate the creativity of our partners and DNR staff who found ways to locate and raise fish to stock," Nerbonne said.

Muskie work-around

Muskie stocking also helps grow populations for future angling. In a typical year, the DNR stocks about 28,000 muskie fingerlings in 35 to 40 lakes.

In late spring, Muskies Inc. chapters in the Twin Cities, north metro of the Twin Cities and Fargo Moorhead purchased year-old muskies from a private grower who had fish that survived the winter of 2019. Fish donated to the DNR grew over the summer at the DNR's Waterville hatchery, where they increased in size by another 5 inches.

The DNR was able to stock about 1,370 of these larger muskies. DNR crews also harvested and stocked nearly 600 yearlings that survived the winter of 2019 in natural rearing ponds.

"The muskies grown at the hatchery had over 91% survival in ponds through the summer, which is outstanding," said Craig Soupir, the DNR's Waterville area fisheries supervisor. "And these 17-inch muskies that were stocked will provide an opportunity in the coming years for us to learn important information about yearling stocking."

The DNR expects larger fall yearlings to have higher survival rates, and by stocking them, the agency may be able to achieve population numbers similar to those reached by stocking larger numbers of small fish.

Trout stocking continues

2020 presented little disruption to the usual stocking patterns for most trout species. Brook and brown trout, and two strains of rainbow trout, are raised using eggs and sperm from captive broodstock. The young fish are grown for several months in hatcheries, and were already growing there when the pandemic started. More than 400,000 rainbow trout, more than 40,000 each of brown trout and brook trout, 35,000 steelhead and 2,200 lake trout were stocked in lakes and rivers during the spring and summer.

Anglers curious about stocking efforts can check stocking reports for lakes across Minnesota by searching the DNR LakeFinder on the DNR's fishing webpage, or by contacting a DNR area fisheries office. Full information from 2020 will be available online in the future.



Collecting and fertilizing walleye eggs had some issues due to COVID, so the DNR used fish produced from other sources. Photo by Don Dittberner

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TEACHER of the MONTH



Welcome to our new Lure feature, Teacher of the Month

We want to recognize the hard work of both the Annandale and Maple Lake School Districts teachers and faculty each month by having readers vote on our website.

Teachers with the most votes will be considered the Teacher of the Month. We will feature a story on the Teachers of the Month on this page and each will be given a \$25 gift certificate from a participating business of their choice.

In February, we'll be voting on teachers from grades kindergarten through second. Make sure you vote for your favorite teacher by visiting the Advocate's and Messenger's websites. Polls close February 14.

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LAKE Country Calendar February 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 <p>February is Bake for Family Fun Month</p>	<p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annandale City Council Meeting, 7 p.m. 	<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silver Creek Township Meeting, 7 p.m. Corinna Township Meeting, 7 p.m. South Haven City Council Meeting, at the City Hall, 7 p.m. Groundhog Day 	<p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maple Lake Chamber of Commerce Meeting, 12 p.m. National Missing Persons Day 	<p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legion Riders Meeting, 7 p.m. at Maple Lake Legion Thank a Mail Carrier Day 	<p>5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear Red Day! 	<p>6</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chatham Township Meeting, 7 p.m. Legion Riders Meeting, 7 p.m. at Maple Lake Legion Maple Lake City Council Meeting, 7 p.m. Late Start - Maple Lake Schools 	<p>9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hasty-Silver Creek Sportsmen's Club Meeting, 8 pm Annandale Chamber Meeting, 11:30 a.m. 	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sons of the American Legion 8 p.m. at Maple Lake Legion Lions Club Meeting, 7 p.m. at The V by HH February New Moon 	<p>12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No School - Staff Development Day (Annandale School District) 	<p>13</p>
<p>14</p>  <p>VOTE by February 14 GO ONLINE TO VOTE FOR Annandale Teachers www.annandaleadvocate.com</p>  <p>Valentines Day</p>	<p>15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presidents Day No School (Annandale and Maple Lake School Districts) 	<p>16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corinna Township Meeting, 7pm Albion Township Meeting, 7 pm Maple Lake Twp Meeting, 7 pm Fat Tuesday 	<p>17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ash Wednesday 	<p>18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wright Saddle Club Meeting, 7:30 p.m. Maple Lake Legion Auxiliary Meeting, 7 p.m. 	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cherry Pie Day
<p>21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grad Banner Deadline To Save 10% See Ad Below! 	<p>22</p>  <p>AD DEADLINE for March Lure</p>	<p>23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wright Co. Snowmobile Assoc. Meeting, 7:30 p.m. at ML Legion National Banana Bread Day 	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full Moon - Full Snow Moon 	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p> <p>March Lure Published</p> 
<p>28</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>All events posted to this calendar may be affected by COVID-19. Please check with these events by calling or visiting their website.</p>



Throughout February, Minnesotan's enjoy comfort foods such as homemade soups, grilled cheese sandwiches, chili, stuffed peppers, and cherry pie. February may be one of the coldest months in Minnesota, however in the Southern Hemisphere, summer is now peaking.



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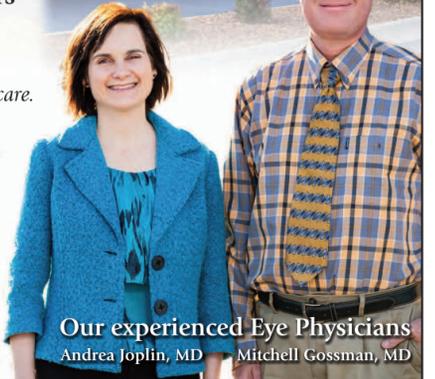


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Down but not out

ICE FISHING DERBY TO AUCTION FISH HOUSES AT LOCAL EVENTS

By Brenda Erdahl

As the date of what was supposed to be the 46th annual Maple Lake Ice Fishing Derby approaches, fans of the event should know all is not lost. Organizers have come up with a way to still provide a little fun, and more importantly, to put you in touch with some great prizes.

The Maple Lake – Lake Property Association has decided to auction off several of the grand prizes that would have been up for grabs at this year's event, set for Feb. 6, if COVID-19 hadn't shut it down.

Each year the derby committee purchases two new wheelhouse Ice Castle fish houses, Derby Chairman Greg Thomes said. This year, one would have gone to the angler who caught the 46th largest Northern Pike and the other would have been raffled off in a drawing.

Instead, on what would have been the derby weekend, live auctions will be held at two local establishments. On Friday, Feb. 5, at 7 p.m. the Maple Lake American Legion Club will host one of these auctions and on Saturday, Feb. 6, at 7 p.m. Madigan's Pub & Grill will host another.

While still more than a week away, in the meantime the fish



While COVID cancelled this year's derby, organizers are already planning for next year's event on Feb. 5, 2022. Photo from Messenger archives

houses may be viewed at both the Legion and Madigans. The committee is still deciding if they will have other fishing related items available in a silent auction, Thomes said.

The Ice Fishing Derby is one of Maple Lake's oldest events, and if not for COVID-19, it would have celebrated 46 years in 2021.

In a letter to the community, Thomes announced earlier this month that the Maple Lake - Lake Property Owner's Association was cancelling its annual event due to COVID-19 restric-

tions. "With the absence of a DNR tournament permit, due to COVID 19 restrictions, we will put our resources into the 2022 Ice Fishing Derby, Thomes wrote.

Current restrictions mandated by Governor Walz stipulate that a maximum of 250 people be allowed in any one outdoor gathering place, and even in its down years, the derby has attracted many more than that. Thomes said another option, to hold the derby virtually, appeared to committee members

to diminish the fellowship and impact for anglers and sponsors.

"We appreciate the many sponsors who have helped make the derby one of Minnesota's top winter events," Thomes continued. "We look forward to seeing all of you on Feb. 5, 2022."

The Maple Lake Ice Fishing Derby is the largest contest of its kind in Minnesota and one of the few in the state that allows fish houses. At its peak in 2019, it attracted an estimated 12,000 people and 3,000 or more fish houses. Residents on the lake commented "big" Maple looked like a "little Las Vegas" when the sun went down.

People come out in droves to Maple Lake for this event not just to have a good time and catch some fish, but for a chance to win two Ice Castle Fish Houses. In 2022, one fish house will be awarded to the holder of the 47th largest northern and the other is given away as part of a

The Maple Lake MESSENGER

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drawing.

In addition to the fish houses, anglers can win cash and other prizes for reeling in the three biggest game fish and the biggest pan fish. Hundreds of dollars in door prizes are given out throughout the day as well.

The derby kicks off with a Vintage Snowmobile Show followed by the Arctic Plunge. Jumpers are encouraged to wear costumes with the best dressed winning cash prizes. All proceeds from the plunge benefit the Maple Lake Volunteer Fire Department and the Maple Lake Property Owners Association.

Anglers and visitors also enjoy an Ice Auger Drilling Contest, kid friendly events and the after party under the tent with live music. Food stands are available on the ice throughout the day and the ice-cube bar provides adult beverages including Mill Creek Inn's famous Bloody Mary. A shuttle service is available to those who wish to park off the ice at any of several locations in the City of Maple Lake and be bussed to the event.

All proceeds from the Ice Fishing Derby go toward the maintenance and preservation of Maple Lake.

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