

From: [Hassett, P Scott - DNR](#)

Sent: Friday, May 18, 2007 4:42 PM

Subject: VHS Update from DNR Secretary Hassett

Dear Wisconsin conservationists, anglers, boaters and lake stewards:

Viral hemorrhagic septicemia virus, or VHS, was found last weekend in Little Lake Butte des Morts in Winnebago County. We have subsequently had seven samples from Lake Winnebago test positive for the disease. VHS is a serious threat to our fisheries and to Wisconsin's \$2.3 billion fishing industry. Although we've been preparing for its discovery here for some time, we've had to act swiftly and comprehensively this week to curb any possible spread to other inland waters.

At the state level, we are in the process of developing monitoring procedures to track VHS. We've suspended all stocking of fish, transfers of fish among hatcheries or water bodies, and collections of forage fish or eggs from the wild. In addition, I have appointed a VHS response team to compile information and develop recommendations as we move forward.

This week, the Natural Resources Board also extended an April emergency rule aimed at preventing the spread of VHS to include Lake Winnebago. It prohibits anglers and boaters on that water system -- as well as the Great Lakes and Mississippi River -- from moving live fish from the lake and requiring the drainage of boats and livewells before leaving the landing. I commend the NRB's swift action. We don't want anglers and boaters to accidentally spread the disease to any additional inland waters.

It's important for you to know, however, that VHS doesn't affect people -- you can still keep and eat the fish you catch -- but it can kill a broad range of game fish. We need to work together to stop the spread of this disease. It is difficult to say exactly what impact VHS will have on our fishery or how many species it might affect in Wisconsin. However, experience in other states indicates that fisheries can and have bounced back. We are still going to have a lot of fish in our lakes and rivers for anglers to catch and enjoy.

Some of the emergency restrictions put in place may cause an inconvenience, but there's a lot at stake here. Wisconsin's public is the first and last lines of defense against this disease, and without help, we cannot fight VHS. Where ever in Wisconsin you are enjoying one of our 15,000 lakes, you can help slow the spread by practicing the following precautions:

- Do not move water or live fish from one water body to another. Drain the bilge, bait bucket and live well at the landing, dispose of minnows in the trash and put your catch on ice at the landing.
- Clean plants and other debris from your boat before leaving the landing; and
- Buy minnows from a registered Wisconsin dealer or catch the minnows you use from the same water you plan to fish.

Wisconsin's natural resources belong to all of us, and we all have a stake in protecting them. I've attached some links to more information about VHS. My sincere thanks for your help in this important effort.

Sincerely,
Scott Hassett, Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources