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Special Walleye Licence leads to more angling opportunities

Edmonton... Following a highly successful two-year pilot program, the Alberta government has approved the Special Walleye Licence as a permanent management tool for Alberta's fisheries.

During the two-year pilot program, the Special Walleye Licence provided more than 39,000 opportunities for anglers to catch and keep a controlled number of walleye at Wolf Lake, Pigeon Lake and Newell Lake, which are all catch-and-release walleye fisheries.

"The Special Walleye Licence pilot was a big hit with anglers and stakeholders, who said they wanted to see it available every year," said Ted Morton, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. "I'm delighted that my department is able to provide this opportunity for anglers to catch and keep some tasty walleye."

In 1996, Alberta introduced major restrictions on walleye fisheries to allow populations to recover after major declines due to angling pressure. Some walleye populations have recovered to the point where a limited harvest can be permitted, but the populations cannot support a general open-harvest fishing season. Recognizing the impact of a high number of anglers and the need to preserve fisheries where fishing pressure is significant, the Special Walleye Licence was developed and has successfully provided this limited harvesting option.

For the 2008 fishing season, the Special Walleye Licence will again be available for Wolf Lake (near Bonnyville), Pigeon Lake and Newell Lake (near Brooks).

Further details on the Special Walleye Licence, including the total number of tags available, will be released with the 2008 Alberta fishing regulations in March and will be posted on the Sustainable Resource Development website at <http://srd.alberta.ca>.

Providing recreational opportunities and promoting responsible stewardship are part of Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to secure Alberta's future by building communities, greening our growth and creating opportunity.

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