

## **State needs to step up on tourism-killing limits**

The combination of ice-covered lakes and severely reduced walleye bag limits for opening weekend means a devastating blow for the tourism industry, but the state is not powerless on both issues.

While there is nothing that can be done to change whatever Mother Nature throws our way, it's time state government gets serious about urging the Chippewa tribes to provide sport anglers with more than two-walleye and one-walleye bag limits.

If the tribes aren't going to be good business neighbors, those actions should compel state leaders to get involved. With negotiated payments for a guaranteed three-fish bag limit falling apart this year, it could be time to think about providing nontribal tourism businesses with some measure of legal gaming. It may be necessary to allow them to compete with tribal casinos.

To be clear, a two-fish daily bag limit for walleye anglers has been labeled as a tourism killer by chamber officials and sport shop owners. That being the case, the new one-walleye daily bag limit left in the wake of spearing declarations from the Mole Lake Band is even more harmful to the tourism industry.

A columnist for the Capital Times in Madison suggested recently that the flap about reduced bag limits may be overblown considering that creel census information shows the average angler catches only one walleye per trip. We beg to differ.

The decision to book a fishing trip isn't made on what the average catch has been, but what the maximum catch could be. Anglers dream of trophy fish and big catches every time they hit the water, even if reality dictates otherwise. It's all about opportunity and a perception about how great the outing might be. Plain and simple, one-walleye and two-walleye bag limits kill the dream.

At the very least, it is important that the Department of Natural Resources updates the daily walleye bag limits the moment that spearing success diminishes at the end of the spawning season. Adjustments are likely on hundreds of lakes the tribes don't even spear. Every day that anglers get the opportunity for a bigger catch is good for tourism.

### **Historical society needs help with new location**

The Eagle River Historical Society has purchased the former Knights of Columbus building on Highway 45 South, a move that will provide a permanent home for its impressive collection of historic artifacts.

But the nonprofit organization needs the help of a civic- and history-minded community to raise the necessary donations — both cash and in-kind work — that is needed to properly renovate the building to accommodate the various exhibits.

Officials said Monday that they've already received more than \$30,000 worth of in-kind donations, but are still looking for a plumber and an electrician.

Eagle River has a rich history and the people working hard to protect those stories and artifacts deserve the community's support.

### **Behind the editorial 'we'**

Members of the Vilas County News-Review editorial board include Publisher Kurt Krueger, Editor Gary Ridderbusch and Assistant Editor Anthony Drew.\_\_PUBLIC\_\_