

# INTERNATIONAL MUSKIE NEWS

## Bearing Muskie-Fruit in the Garden State

By: Bruce Ruppel, Regional Field Editor

On September 12, 1995, the New Jersey Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife (DFGW) netted 180 fingerling true-strain muskellunge from a rearing pond at the Hackettstown Hatchery. This milestone event represents the first successful attempt by the DFGW to culture true-strain muskellunge from broodstock collected in the state. The parentage for this group of future freshwater giants came from Monksville Reservoir. The origin of which is apparently via immigration of fish that Chapter 22 stocked in Greenwood Lake. A full 120 of the fingerlings, measuring 10-12 inches, were released into Greenwood Lake. These fish are a welcomed addition in the chapters effort to make Greenwood Lake the state's premier muskie hotspot. The remainder were released into Mountain Lake in Warren County and a portion were retained at the hatchery to be raised for future broodstock.

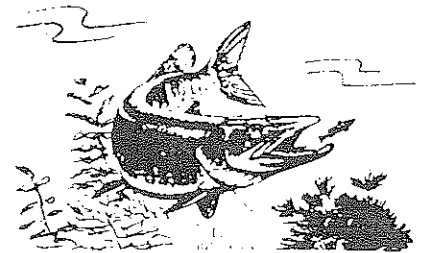
Following their initial efforts, the DFGW is looking forward to 1996 to continuing their muskellunge propagation activity. If broodstock can again be obtained from either Monksville or Echo Lake Reservoirs, hatchery personnel are planning to improve their culturing and rearing pond techniques to raise even more true-strain muskies. No target amounts are currently set, but the personnel at the Hackettstown Hatchery are willing to follow through with a commitment to raise as many as possible.

The willingness by DFGW to become involved in true-strain muskie propagation is a direct "fruit" of the hard work that Chapter 22 has put into generating interest in muskies and muskie fishing in this state. And the seeds that the chapter planted way back in 1985 continue to yield a good crop. For example the chapter's success in establishing a muskie population at Greenwood Lake has stimulated both New York and New Jersey to stock true-strain and tiger muskies there. Muskie immigration downstream from Greenwood Lake into Monksville Reservoir has increased anglers awareness and produced fish in excess of 30

pounds. The success at Greenwood Lake has also lead to the expansion of a chapter muskie stocking into Echo Lake Reservoir, where the class of 1991 (first stocking) has already reached the 40 inch mark. The chapters effort to enhance and protect these fledgling muskie fisheries has prompted the DFGW to increase the size limit to 36 inches in both Greenwood Lake and Echo Lake Reservoir. In addition the success of these programs has encouraged the state to modify their muskie rearing protocol and increase the size of hatchery raised tiger muskies to large fingerling (greater than 6 inches). And finally, the chapter's muskie stocking efforts have provided the opportunity for the state to initiate their own hatchery propagation of true-strain muskellunge. These are reasons enough to be proud of what Chapter #22 has done to date.

Only a few short years ago the opportunity to fish for muskellunge in New Jersey was extremely limited, but through the vigilant effort of Chapter #22 there are more muskies being caught today than ever before. And as long as we are willing to put forth the effort, the future of muskie fishing in the Garden State will continue to improve and the seeds will continue to bear fruit.

(Note: For more information on muskie stocking, you can contact Bruce at (908) 821-1905.)



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