

Friends and fellow Muskie and Pike anglers.

For many of us, muskies and northern pike have been more than just fish. They've been part of our lives for decades—early mornings, long casts, missed strikes, the stories, the frustration, and the moments that kept us coming back.

What we've always valued wasn't just catching them—it was earning them.

That's what makes this conversation difficult.

We are at a point where technology—specifically live imaging sonar—is changing not just how we fish, but what fishing for these species actually means. This isn't about resisting progress. We've all adopted better boats, better electronics, better tools over the years.

But this is different.

For the first time, we are no longer searching for fish—we are targeting individual fish in real time. We can see them, follow them, adjust to them, and in many cases, stay on them. What used to take time, intuition, and patience can now be done with a level of precision we've never had before.

And whether we want to admit it or not—the results are showing it.

WHAT THE DATA IS TELLING US

Walleye Minnesota Tournament Trail (MTT)

Same format. Same fishery type. Different era.

2015 (Pre-Live Imaging)

Day 1: ~13 lbs

Day 2: ~17 lbs

→ Modest improvement, natural limits still in play

2025 (Live Imaging Era)

Day 1: ~49.6 lbs

Day 2: ~54.0 lbs

→ Already high—and still increasing

CHANGE OVER TIME

~300%+ increase in catch output

WITHIN EVENT (2025)

+10.95% improvement from Day 1 to Day 2

KEY POINT

Catch rates are increasing under continued pressure, not declining.

That's the part that should give us pause.

Because for decades, one of the built-in protections for muskies and pike was difficulty. They were hard to find, hard to trigger, and hard to stay on. That difficulty spread pressure out naturally.

We're now removing that barrier.

This isn't about whether the technology works—it clearly does. The question is what happens when a growing number of skilled anglers use highly efficient tools on fish that:

- Grow slowly
- Exist at low densities
- Can be repeatedly located and targeted

At some point, efficiency stops being neutral. It starts to matter.

This isn't about blaming anyone. In fact, it's the opposite.

The anglers most drawn to this technology are often the most passionate, the most committed, and the most invested in these fisheries. The same people who have supported stocking, habitat work, and conservation for years.

That's exactly why this matters now.

Because if we don't step back and ask where the line is, no one else will do it for us.

We've always taken pride in being stewards of these fish.

Not just catching them—but protecting what makes them special:

- The challenge
- The unpredictability
- The earned moment

The proposal to restrict live imaging on natural muskie and pike waters isn't about taking something away.

It's about holding onto something we've had all along.

This is one of those moments where the easy path and the right path might not be the same.

And if we're honest with ourselves, we know which one aligns with everything this community has stood for over the last 30–60 years.

Respectfully, this is about protecting the future of a fishery we all love—and making sure it still feels like muskie fishing when the next generation gets their turn.

Sincerely,

John Underhill
Co-Chair MMPA