



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

Pictured Rocks  
National Lakeshore

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## Pictured Rocks News Release

For Immediate Release

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### **Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Implements Emergency Restrictions to Protect Park Fishery Resources from Deadly Fish Virus**

(MUNISING, Mich.) Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore superintendent Jim Northup announced that several emergency restrictions have been issued to protect the park's fishery resources from viral hemorrhagic septicemia, effective April 1. These emergency restrictions will prohibit the exchange of ballast water by ships within Pictured Rocks boundary, will require the decontamination of all watercraft prior to launch within park waters, and will restrict the use of specific fishing baits that are known vectors for VHS.

Viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) is a deadly fish virus that has recently been detected in all of the lower Great Lakes and several inland lakes. It is spreading rapidly and is known to cause large scale fish kills in 32 species of freshwater fish, 28 of which occur in the Lake Superior Basin. The virus has not yet been detected in Lake Superior, but has significant potential to impact the ecological integrity of fish populations and recreational fishing opportunities throughout the basin. The virus, which is known to emerge and spread rapidly in the early spring, does not impact humans.

The four units of the National Park System on Lake Superior (Isle Royale National Park, Apostle Islands and Pictured Rocks National Lakeshores, and Grand Portage National Monument) and the Grand Portage Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa recently approved a plan to protect park and tribal fishery resources from VHS. The plan identifies six major categories of vectors that could cause the spread of VHS into and within these parks and reservation waters, analyzes the likelihood (relative risks) associated with each of these vectors, and includes recommendations on what must be done to mitigate the threat posed by that specific risk. The highest risk vectors include the use of VHS infected bait by anglers, the spread of VHS by infected water and/or fish in boats, agency and tribal operations, and untreated ballast water exchange. The full NPS VHS Prevention and Response Plan can be accessed at [www.nps.gov/piro](http://www.nps.gov/piro).

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“The plan developed by the National Park Service to protect critical fishery resources identifies 16 prevention actions. Five need to take immediately, prior to the spring emergence of this virus,” Northup explained. “Those five include initiating a public education and outreach program, making sure that all of our own agency operations are above reproach so that we are not contributing to the spread of VHS ourselves, prohibiting ballast water exchange within NPS boundaries, requiring effective decontamination of boats being launched into park waters, and restricting the use of fishing baits that are known vectors for VHS,” Northup added.

Under the new restrictions, the use of fish, fish parts (including roe), amphibians, and crayfish will be prohibited for possession or use as fishing bait on all NPS administered waters within the Lakeshore Zone (federally owned lands and waters, including the surface waters of Lake Superior within the National Lakeshore boundary), except that pending further monitoring of the spread of VHS the use of roe that is certified as VHS free will continue to be allowed for ice fishing on the surface of Lake Superior within the Lakeshore boundary.

Northup pointed out that other popular organic baits not specifically prohibited by the new restrictions such as worms, night crawlers, leeches, and mayfly larva will continue to be allowed in accordance with State regulations throughout the Lakeshore, as these baits are not currently known vectors for VHS.

“After careful consultation with many subject matter experts, the State of Michigan and local anglers, I have determined that the restrictions issued today are the minimum actions necessary to protect the fishery resources within Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore,” according to Northup. “These new restrictions will actually bring us into much closer alignment with the fishing regulations that exist in most units of the National Park System.”

“In fact, we have been one of only 13 parks in the nation that have allowed for such broad use of fishing baits, and we have paid for it with invasions of spiny water fleas and other exotics,” Northup said. “There are many parks, in both the U.S. and Canada that have banned the use of all baits except for artificial flies and lures.”

“We have not decided to go that far at this time, but we have to prohibit the use of baits that are known vectors for VHS. VHS is just too great a threat. We will continue to carefully monitor the spread of this virus, and to work very closely with the State and anglers to do everything we can to protect not only the park, but all local fishery resources,” Northup added. “Our goal is not only to protect the park from VHS, but to be good citizens by keeping the parks from becoming the source of VHS on Lake Superior.” Northup expects the other national parks on Lake Superior will issue similar restrictions in the coming weeks.

“We regret very much any inconvenience caused to park visitors by these new requirements,” Northup said. “We have a legal obligation of protect park resources, and it is unfortunate that we find ourselves under almost constant bombardment by some new invasive species. But after careful analysis, I have become convinced that VHS is a serious and urgent threat, and I ask all park visitors, boaters and anglers to help us prevent this virus from impacting our fishery resource and this part of our natural heritage. We will work closely with local anglers and other park visitors to research the best possible alternatives that will continue to provide for an outstanding recreational fishing experience in the park, without threatening the integrity of the fishery resource,” Northup concluded.

The full text of the restrictions is available at [www.nps.gov/piro/vhs-restrictions.htm](http://www.nps.gov/piro/vhs-restrictions.htm)

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March 31, 2008