

RED FLAG: Pine County is under burning restrictions . P3

Preventing wildfires with burning restrictions

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The Pine County Sheriff's Department reported responding to three fires in the past week, these responses were only a few of the calls received about fires in Pine County.

Dry conditions have caused increased danger of fire. "Even if grass is green it can still burn," said Finlayson Fire and Rescue volunteer Mike Drahosh. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is warning that these conditions are predicted to continue through May.

High winds, dry conditions and COVID-19 have all come together to make the DNR enact restrictions on burning for much of Minnesota at this time. "Year after year, escaped debris burning is the number one cause of Minnesota's wildfires," said Greg Snyder, DNR Forestry northwest region assistant manager. "When conditions are this dry, any spark can quickly turn into an escaped wildfire."

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MIKE DRAHOSH | PINE COUNTY COURIER

A barn on Groningen Road in Sandstone was fully engulfed in flames when Finlayson Fire and Rescue, Sandstone Fire Department, Hinckley Fire Department and the Pine County Sheriff's Department responded. The call came in at 12:41 a.m., the barn was a total loss with no injuries reported. The cause of the fire is unknown. Fire and rescue was at the site until about 5:30 a.m.

Fishing opener 2020 is here!

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The 2020 fishing opener is here! Thousands of anglers will be hitting the waters this weekend in search of the big one...or at least a big story to tell. Statewide resident individual angling license sales are up this year. In comparison to the Friday one week prior to the opener, this year's numbers are up 63%. Also, license sales for kids ages 16 and 17 have doubled compared to last year's numbers.

On Saturday, May 9, the season opens for walleye, sauger, northern pike and trout in lakes. This weekend is also Mother's Day and what better way to celebrate mom than to take her fishing? All moms fish for free during "Take a Mom Fishing Weekend."

All other anglers from ages 16 to 89

are required to have a valid fishing license. Anglers can purchase licenses at any DNR license agent, online with a mobile or desktop device at mndnr.gov/buyalicense or by phone at 888-665-4236. Mobile buyers will receive a text or email that serves as proof of a valid fish or game license to state conservation officers. Anglers must be in possession of their license when fishing or traveling from an area where they were fishing. According to the DNR, the top two fishing-related regulation violations are for not having a license in possession and not having a valid license.

WHERE TO GO

The DNR is urging Minnesota anglers to stay close to home this year. "We are very fortunate to have a multitude of quality lakes in our area that

do not require much travel to get to," said DNR Area Fisheries Supervisor Leslie George. The DNR website offers the following information on a few area lakes covered by the Hinckley fisheries management:

The southern part of the four county Hinckley fisheries management area offers plenty of opportunities for anglers just outside of the north Twin Cities metro area. The Chisago City area lakes (Green, Chisago, South Lindstrom, North Center and South Center) have a total of nearly 4,800 acres of water with ample parking at access sites. All of the lakes have plenty of action for crappies, sunfish and bass. North and South Center lakes have a special regulation for northern pike: protected slot of 24-36 inches, and a bag limit of three with one over 36 inches allowed. Northern pike are more

abundant in North Center than South Center, but both lakes should have plenty of action for northerns within the 24-36 inch slot, plus a chance at a trophy sized pike. Walleye abundance is good in both lakes thanks to a large 2014 year class. Chisago and South Lindstrom lakes have good numbers of walleye and northern pike; these lakes fall under the statewide North Central zone regulation for northern pike (bag limit 10, protected slot 22-26 inches, no more than 2 over 26"). Green Lake has a seventeen-inch minimum length regulation for walleye; even with that regulation there are plenty of fish that exceed that size. Green also has abundant northern pike, with opportunities for harvest under the North Central zone regulation.

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KRISTIZEMKE | EAST CENTRAL SCHOOL

East Central High School Graduation 2020

East Central High School Senior Class of 2020 will be doing a drive thru cap/gown pick up at the high school Thursday, May 14, 2020 from 6-6:30 pm. A parade through the town of Askov and Sandstone will follow. The seniors will be escorted by Fire/Police through the respective town's usual parade routes. Community members are invited to stand and cheer them on along the route, using social distancing practices. A Facebook video shared on all East Central School pages had Secondary Principal Stef Youngberg announce that graduation ceremonies for East Central will take place on Bruce Harding Field on May 29, 2020. This date was the previously planned date of graduation for East Central. Seniors are encouraged to continue to check their email for more information on details of the ceremony.



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