

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Game on! Summer fishing season is here!**

In addition to great lakes, the Brainerd area is home to rich fishing history

BRAINERD, Minn. – There's a good reason why the Brainerd Lakes Area is inundated with anglers this time of year: The 465 hard-bottom crystal-clear lakes here, as well as several rivers and streams and 10 mine pit lakes, are home to the most diverse and healthy fish population anywhere in Minnesota, and possibly the United States.

Fishing in the Brainerd Lakes Area has always been phenomenal. In fact, fishing was partly responsible for Brainerd developing into a major tourism area. More than 100 years ago, hunting and fishing camps, many of which eventually became family resorts, started springing up around area lakes as word got out about the excellent fishing, hunting and trapping opportunities here.

The fishing opportunities also attracted individuals who wanted to improve the sport of fishing and help others catch more fish. Combining their passion for fishing with their entrepreneurial spirit, many started teaming up in the 1960s and were instrumental in creating the angling industry that continues to rapidly grow to this day.

Half a century later, many of those individuals are household names in an industry that's exploding with new tackle, equipment, methods and educational outlets. And many still call Brainerd home, mainly because they haven't found anywhere else in the country that has fishing and outdoor opportunities like those found here. They created a rich fishing history in Brainerd and developed a unique outdoor-related business climate.

**Al and Ron Lindner** may be the most recognizable angling personalities that launched their careers here. They moved to Brainerd in 1960 from Chicago after searching throughout the country for the best fishing area. Nothing, in their mind, could beat Brainerd for the diversity of fish populations. They joined the Nisswa Guides League and started perfecting their approach to fishing. They developed the Lindy Rig and started Lindy Manufacturing (now Lindy-Little Joe) in 1968 to manufacture and sell it. They also started In-Fisherman magazine (now owned by Primedia) in 1975 and were one of the first to produce a fishing show for TV. They now own Angling Edge and still develop tackle and equipment, and produce fishing shows and commercials.

**The Nisswa Guides League**, started by Marv Koep in 1961, wrote the book on guide services. It's storied past is legendary for having launched the angling careers of some of the biggest names in the industry: Al and Ron Lindner, Jeff Zernov, Gary Roach, Harry VanDorn, Max Slocum and Cully Swenson, for example. Koep still heads up the league, which currently has 12 guides with 150+ years of guiding experience and logged 3,000 hours on the water last year.

**Jeff Zernov** was another guide who used his fishing experience to start an internationally recognized business. He started Nature Vision, which was one of the first to manufacture and sell underwater cameras – the Aqua-Vu Underwater Viewing System. Nature Vision now manufactures some of the

most innovative outdoor products on the market, including Buzz Stix ice fishing rods that vibrate, Woodland Whisper hearing aids for hunters, and Quick-Sit Chair Blinds for hunting.

**In-Fisherman magazine**, after 35 years, is still one of the most respected fishing magazines in the country. It spawned a number of other magazines and nationally syndicated radio and TV shows.

**Babe Winkelman** has been a fishing and hunting TV personality for 30 years. Babe Winkelman Productions now produces “Good Fishing” and “Outdoor Secrets” from its Brainerd offices, airing in markets across the country.

**Lindy-Little Joe** is still a major tackle manufacturer in Brainerd, marketing brands such as Lindy, Little Joe, Thill, Old Bayside, Munchies and Drift Control. Ted Takasaki, a professional walleye angler, is president of the company.

**Crestliner, Lund and Glastron** fishing boats are all manufactured within an hour of Brainerd.

The state Department of Natural Resources agrees with Lindner, saying that the Brainerd Lakes Area has the most diverse and healthy game fish population of anywhere in the state. Lindner takes it further: “In a 60-mile radius of Brainerd, you have the best fishing of anywhere in the world, as far as a mix of species goes,” he said recently. “And we’ve fished everywhere in this country.”

“When you fish the Brainerd lakes, it’s really hard to get skunked,” said Tourism Director Gretchen Ennis. “Something’s always biting. The populations are so strong that if the walleye aren’t biting, the bass will be, or the northern pike, or panfish. That’s great news for families taking kids out fishing or for anglers who may be a little impatient.”

- **Bass** – The Brainerd Lakes Area has bass fishing that rivals anywhere in the country, especially largemouth and smallmouth bass, Lindner says.
- **Pike and Musky** – Area lakes and rivers consistently produce trophy pike and musky, with 50-plus inch muskies caught on a regular basis.
- **Panfish** – Crappies have strong numbers, and the sunfish and blue gill populations are healthy as well.
- **Trout** – Trout Lake is the southernmost Minnesota lake that is stocked with lake trout. Rainbow, brook and brown trout are stocked each year in six area lakes and 10 abandoned mine pits. Area trout streams are naturally populated with brook and brown trout.
- **Channel Catfish** – The Mississippi River produces channel cats that consistently run 5-15 pounds.

### **Join us to learn more about other outdoor opportunities**

The Brainerd Lakes Area has a wealth of sporting and outdoor opportunities, and local guides who will help you enjoy the experience. Contact Gretchen Ennis at 1-800-450-2838 if you’d like to visit the area and experience it for yourself. We’ll customize a Fam Tour for you, so you can get a taste of what we have to offer here. We can arrange for lodging and meals as well. More information on the Brainerd Lakes Area is available by visiting the Brainerd Lakes Chamber Web site at [www.explorebrainerdlakes.com](http://www.explorebrainerdlakes.com).

**For more information or photos, contact PR Coordinator Geoff Gorvin at 218-821-9513.**