Charges filed in fish kill case

By Mark Scarborough
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In a Jefferson County circuit courtroom on Jan. 27, 2011, two Wisconsin commercial fisherman were accused of netting and discarding as many as 640 game fish they caught along with 120,000 pounds of rough fish in Lake Koshkonong in early September 2010.

John W. Bruring, 47, La Crosse, Wis., and Steven M. Kallenbach, 54, Stoddard, Wis., have been charged with possessing less than $1,000 of illegal game fish.

The two men – who were engaged in the harvesting of carp, buffalo, red horse, sucker, sheapshead and white carp in Olson's Bay on Lake Koshkonong nearby the shoreline at Oaklawn Academy – are accused of the Class I felony of taking an excess of the legal bag limit of game fish.

Illegally taken by net on Sept. 2 and allegedly buried on the shore, these fish include 308 walleyes, 333 white bass, two catfish, one northern pike, and one crappie, according to the criminal complaint filed in the Jefferson County case.

Forty-eight rough fish were also found at the scene by investigators, who responded to confidential informants and searched the area at the end of September.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the walleyes alone were valued at more than $2,650.

Bruring provided a statement to DNR investigators, indicating that an estimated 25 percent of the roughly 2,000-pound take of fish caught Sept. 2-3 were game fish. He told investigators these game fish, totaling about 400, were buried ashore without landowners' permission.

"I filled out the catch report during the following Monday," Bruring wrote in his statement. "I decided to fill out the report indicating fewer game fish caught and killed. I did this because it wouldn't look good in the public's eye."

If convicted of the charges, the defendants could be imprisoned as long as three years, six months, and fined as much as $10,000, the criminal complaint indicates.

According to the Wisconsin Circuit Court Access System, the defendants are set to next appear in Branch 1 of the Jefferson County Circuit Court before Judge Jennifer Weston at 10 a.m. Feb. 21.