



For Immediate Release

BRIAN SOPKO WINS FOCUS ON FISH HEALTH PHOTO CONTEST

Ties to Win Most Impressive Catch Category

For as long as Brian Sopko, 35, can remember, he has been a sports fisherman. “My dad has a photo of me as a baby in a car seat in his boat watching him fish,” he notes. Weather is never an issue for this avid angler.

It is no real surprise, then, that the photo that tied to win *Most Impressive Catch* in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS) Focus On Fish Health photo contest was taken in freezing February on Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. “Great ice fishing there,” he says, crisply. Sopko was pictured holding up at 38-inch lake trout that he had caught with a white plastic tube jig. “The fish seem to be very attracted to that lure,” he pointed out.

Of course, he let the fish go. That’s part of the deal on Lake Geneva, he notes. Hailing from St. Anne, Illinois, Sopko most frequently fishes in the Kankakee River near his home.

Sopko was interested in the USDA-sponsored Focus On Fish Health campaign, which targets recreational boaters and fishermen with information about preventing the spread of fish diseases and invasive species, because, he says, “protection of our environment is important to me.”

“I fish in Lake Michigan and other lakes in the region and every time I take my boat out I make sure that it’s clean and free of weeds and zebra mussels,” he says. “I also take note of the bait regulations and make sure I toss minnows away in the receptacles provided.”

Contestants can submit photos at www.FocusonFishHealth.org to enter the contest. New winners are announced every month.

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