



TOP TACKLE CHOICES FOR SPRING WALLEYE

Across the upper Midwest, many of the prominent walleye fishing opportunities occur on river systems. Some states like North Dakota and South Dakota don't have a closed walleye season in the spring but across the board, many of the earliest locations that fire up are river systems like the Missouri River or bottlenecks, culverts and causeways that focus current on natural lakes. In states like Minnesota and Wisconsin, many of the inland lakes are closed during the month of April but border water rivers like the Rainy River and Mississippi River are open to fishing. In Wisconsin, the tributaries that feed Green Bay provide some major walleye fishing opportunities and are available in April.

Because April walleye fishing is so river centric, **our list of top walleye tackle options will lean towards the technical river fishing that typically involves current.** Also note that this list takes a ten- thousand-foot view and details our favorite tackle options and why... a *Mount Rushmore* so to speak of April walleye lures. Of course there are many lures left off this list and we won't dive deep into trolling lures that work behind a three way rig in this specific list in part because some of these other lures listed seem more versatile. Another consideration for the omission is that we are trolling less and less on rivers each season it seems in large part because so many anglers are using spot lock and we often find that trolling around anglers anchored in one spot has made some trolling tactics less effective. If we were to pick a handful of our all time favorite hard baits for flat line trolling and trolling behind three way rigs, our list would have to include:

- [Rapala Original Floater 11](#)
 - [Rapala Husky Jerk](#)
 - [Rapala Scatter Rap Minnow](#)
 - [Smithwick Rattlin' Rogue](#)
 - [Northland Tackle Rumble Shiner](#)
 - [Berkley Hit Stick](#)
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Without further ado, here is our “Mount Rushmore” of April walleye tackle options if we had to get by with much less tackle and were forced to pick.



1 **NORTHLAND MVP JIG & EYE CANDY PADDLE SHAD**

The jig and plastic combination would top our list for simply catching spring river walleye across the board. This would be our number one pick of all time every time across the board. The MVP Jig has an oversized wide gap hook that is extremely sharp and perfect for the bulk of soft plastic flukes and paddle tails. The head design tracks plastics straight and cuts current. The Eye Candy Paddle Shad has a smaller thumper tail that requires little water friction to move. This elastic plastic material is extremely soft and durable and really seems to shine in cold water at slow speeds.

[Shop the Northland MVP Jig](#)

[Shop the Eye Candy Paddle Shad](#)

2

RAPALA RIPPIN' RAP

The Rippin' Rap is somewhat regional where it really shines on Green Bay but more walleye anglers are using this rattle bait across the Midwest in April. This lure excels when casting and pulling across sand. The retrieve is a two foot to three foot pull and stop cadence. Situations that make this lure less effective include a lot of floating or loose debris on the bottom. Rippin' Raps are easy to cast and are very versatile where they can be fished through a variety of depths and can be fished through moderate current. Classic locations include rolling sand or rock structure on Green Bay outside of the tributaries and some of the bottle neck areas where there is current on inland lakes like South Dakota's Bitter Lake or North Dakota's Devils Lake.



[Shop the Rapala Rippin' Rap](#)

3

B FISH N B3 BLADE BAIT

A handful of years ago, the options for blade baits were much more limited. We would consider the Heddon Sonar, Reef Runner Cicada and the B Fish N B3 as the old guard classics. Today there are way more options in this category but would still consider the B3 as the greatest all-time blade bait for April walleye. Blade baits shine in moderate to strong current and are exceptional for picking apart structure like wing dams or tight current seams. You can cast blade baits perpendicular to current and let them swing back behind the boat or slowly work them upstream. Blade baits do need a touch where they don't work as well falling on slack line on either the cast or the retrieve. The cadence is enough to pull in one to three foot increments where you can feel the lure vibrate. On the bottom of the pull where the lure stalls, keep the line tight enough where the lure remains upright. Blade baits can be prone to snagging in bad rock and can also pick up debris bad but do offer some of the most pinpoint control with finding bottom in current.



[Shop the B Fish N B3 Blade Bait](#)

4

NORTHLAND TACKLE DEEP-VEE HAIR JIG

Any spring walleye tackle list has to include hair jigs and the Deep-Vee Hair Jig is one of the very best. This aspirin pill head cuts current and remains upright while the hair is tied thin and long which is perfect. If there is a mistake many companies make when tying hair jigs for walleye... that mistake would be tying the hair too thick and with too much bulk. Thin shines in cold water and current. If there is a limitation to the Deep-Vee Jig, that limitation would be size. The jigs come in sizes as heavy as 3/8th ounce but there are some situations in deeper water and strong current where one ounce or heavier are sometimes needed. In still water and up to moderate current out to about twenty feet however, the Deep-Vee is a proven work horse. When and why to use hair jigs? Hair jigs especially shine in cold water when water temps are still hanging below forty-five degrees. In fact, I would argue that the hair jig is the deadliest pick of all time for cold water. Again, keep the hair thin so it pulsates at slow speeds.



We typically seldom tip hair jigs with live bait but something to definitely experiment with early during ice out is the use of stinger hooks. In fact, we would argue that stinger hooks are often a necessity early in the year on many jigs especially when you need to use jigs that are heavier than a ¼ ounce. We often find that when fishing in cold water, fish don't always move a lot of water when they suck in the jig and this metabolism gets magnified when you increase the weight of the jig. Stinger hooks end up inside the mouth of a fish when you see this decreased metabolism. There are many days where eighty percent of the fish we catch come on the back stinger hook.

[Shop the Deep-Vee Hair Jig](#)

5

NORTHLAND TACKLE TUNGSTEN STAND UP JIG AND LIVE MINNOW

Any list featuring tackle for April walleye has to include the jig and minnow. Over the past five decades, a classic jig and minnow combination has easily accounted for more April walleyes than all the other options on this list combined. Over the past handful of years, we have really gravitated towards some specific tungsten for performance. We mention “specific” because not all tungsten jigs are the same. Jigs made of pure grade tungsten do cut current much better and are much more sensitive. There are also many tackle manufacturers, however, that are hopping on the tungsten band wagon with tungsten alloys that have properties not much different from lead but with a higher price tag. The perfect tungsten walleye jig in our eyes is the Northland Tackle Stand Up Tungsten particularly when using minnows or live bait. The hook has a great gap for skull hooking and double hooking minnows and the point will readily take a file which is important around rock. The size profile difference with these specific jigs is striking compared to traditional lead. These tungsten jigs are also much harder than traditional lead and fish with a lot more sensitivity. This added sensitivity is a big advantage when using six-pound monofilament.

If we had to build a perfect minnow jig, this would be it but when, where and why minnows? We still find jigs and minnows to be the answer when fishing slack water or slow current at extremely slow speeds when the fish are just off. Tungsten is more expensive however so we are highlighting this jig for situations where you might be retying a half dozen times or less over the course of a day. When dealing with a lot of snags where you are retying twenty or more times a day, we still fall back on the old school unpainted lead jigs in bulk with the classic Mustad hook.



[Shop the Northland Tackle
Tungsten Stand Up Jig](#)

ADD TO CART

Shop The List:

- [Northland MVP Jig](#)
 - [Eye Candy Paddle Shad](#)
 - [Rapala Rippin' Rap](#)
 - [B Fish N B3 Blade Bait](#)
 - [Northland Tackle Deep-Vee Hair Jig](#)
 - [Northland Tackle Tungsten Stand Up Jig](#)
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Of course, there are still a lot of rocks left to turn over, but this is our short list if you are looking to simply stock up on some great confident baits that have the proven track record. This prespawn time period in particular offers some of the very best walleye fishing of the season where fish are often becoming more active and can be highly concentrated.

