



New lake trout harvest opportunities to produce economic benefits

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is moving quickly to develop an emergency rule to increase fishing opportunities for lake trout in Lake Michigan. A scoping statement for the emergency rule and a possible permanent rule were approved by the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board in December.

The rule development effort follows a series of stakeholder meetings in 2016 during which anglers expressed interest in harvesting more lake trout. Comments received also favored changing the season length and other regulations for lake trout.

Brad Eggold, DNR Great Lakes District fisheries supervisor, said successful management efforts have improved lake trout populations in Lake Michigan. Currently, anglers are harvesting an average of 29,500 fish

each year. The lake trout season is now closed from November 1 to the end of February.

"Changing our lake trout regulations would certainly increase interest in targeting lake trout and would have a positive economic impact with benefits for guides, charter fishing businesses and many lakeshore communities," Eggold said. "We've listened to feedback from anglers and are moving as quickly as possible to put an emergency rule in place. We look forward to discussing this further with anglers at the January 26 meeting to learn more about their preferences for the rule." Lake trout populations plummeted following the arrival of the invasive sea lamprey in 1936 and its rapid proliferation in the mid-1940s. Coordinated efforts among federal and state agencies aimed at

lamprey control along with lake trout stocking and protective regulations have helped lake trout rebound. In recent years, natural reproduction also has improved in some Wisconsin waters.

DNR will use angler feedback gathered at the January meeting to develop specific language for an emergency rule to be presented to the Natural Resources Board at the March 1 meeting. In addition, stakeholders can comment until **February 8** via phone, mail or email at DNRLAKEMICHIGANPLAN@wisconsin.gov. If the proposal moves forward, the regulation changes could be in place as early as April 1 pending approval by the Natural Resources Board, legislators and the Governor's office.

Trout harvest opportunities

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Lake Erie Steelhead Management Plan

The 10-year draft Lake Erie steelhead management plan is out for public review.

The draft plan describes the goals, objectives and strategies that will guide DEC's actions and decisions related to management of the steelhead fishery in New York's portion of Lake Erie over the next 10 years (2016-2026). The plan advances the primary goal of managing New York's Lake Erie steelhead as maintaining a high quality fishery that provides diverse angling experiences and broad angler satisfaction.

The plan summarizes existing data on steelhead populations and fisheries, and defines six specific objectives that would meet the goal of maintaining high-quality steelhead fisheries. It also plans to maintain average catch rates of 0.33 fish/hour, foster production of wild steelhead in

areas with suitable water quality and habitat, increase stream access, protect and enhance stream habitat, maintain simple and effective regulations and promote responsible stewardship of the resource.

Some prominent strategies to achieve these objectives will include: developing more effective stocking strategies, simplifying angling regulations, improving steelhead access to high quality spawning areas, protecting and improving habitat, expanding angler access and increasing public outreach.

Surveys will be employed to evaluate the progress towards achieving plan objectives, and knowledge gained from ongoing scientific investigations will guide future management actions. For more info: [Mgmt plan for Lake Erie Steelhead 2016-2025](#). ✧

2017 Asian carp action plan released

The committee that oversees efforts to control and reduce invasive Asian carp in the Midwest has released their annual action plan. The plan explains how the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee, which includes 27 agencies, plans to manage the threat of four species of Asian carp in the Great Lakes, an effort that receives \$17 million of special federal funds this year.

That plan, which can be found [here](#), includes continuing many efforts already underway, including the use of an electric barrier in the upper Illinois River, use of commercial fishermen to remove carp from the Illinois River and other bodies of water, monitoring of carp and education efforts.

It also calls for continued research on new methods to control the spread of carp into problem areas, methods that include the use of gases like carbon dioxide as well as complex sounds.

Federal officials say they'll continue efforts to prevent Asian carp from reaching the Great Lakes, despite uncertainty about what Donald Trump might propose. The Obama administration has spent over \$388 million since 2010 to shield the lakes from the invasive fish, which could disrupt food chains and compete with valuable native species.

Officials say they've budgeted \$42 million this year for Asian carp projects. They include further study of ways to fortify defenses at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam complex on a carp-infested Illinois waterway leading to Lake Michigan.

Michigan Senators Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters urged the Army Corps of Engineers to finish the study this month, instead of in 2019 as planned. Agencies also plan more work on potential carp detection and control technologies. ✧

Additional angling opportunities created by successful fall fish stocking season

The Michigan DNR announced totals from its fall fish stocking efforts. The DNR's Fisheries Division stocked 10 different species totaling more than 300,000 fish that weighed nearly 8 tons. Fish were stocked at 99 locations throughout the state.

"It was another outstanding fall fish stocking season that will provide enhanced opportunities throughout Michigan," said DNR Fish Production Manager Ed Eisch. "When added to our successful spring and summer stocking efforts, that brings the total for 2016 to more than 34 million fish put into Michigan's waters."

The number and type of fish stocked vary by hatchery, as each facility's ability to rear fish differs because of water supplies and temperature. In Michigan, there are six state and three cooperative hatcheries that work together to produce the species, strain and size of fish needed by fisheries managers. These fish then must be delivered at specific times and locations for stocking to ensure their success. Most fish in Michigan are stocked in the spring.

Fall fish stocking in 2016 consisted of 10 species including brook trout, brown trout, lake trout, rainbow trout, steelhead, Atlantic salmon, lake sturgeon, channel catfish, walleye and muskellunge.

In general, fish are reared in Michigan's state fish hatcheries anywhere from one month to one and a half years before they are stocked.

The DNR welcomes visitors to its state fish hatcheries and interpretative centers to witness firsthand the fish rearing process and to learn about Michigan's waters. For more information, visit Michigan.gov/hatcheries.

To find out if any fish were stocked in a favorite fishing spot, visit the DNR's fish stocking database at MichiganDNR.com/fishstock/. ✧



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Position Statement

Representing a major interest in the aquatic resources of the Great Lakes states and the province of Ontario, the Great Lakes Sport Fishing Council is a confederation of organizations and individuals with a concern for the present and future of sport fishing, our natural resources and the ecosystem in which we live. We encourage the wise use of our resources and a search for the truth about the issues confronting us.

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Sportsmen Angered by Last-Minute USFWS Director's Order New policy on lead fishing tackle blindsides recreational fishing community

On the day before President Obama left office, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued an edict to phase out the use of traditional fishing tackle on the hundreds of thousands of square miles of public lands under its management.

Director's Order No. 219 will "require the use of nontoxic ammunition and fishing tackle to the fullest extent practicable for all activities on Service lands, waters and facilities by January 2022, except as needed for law enforcement or health and safety uses, as provided for in policy."

The National Shooting Sports Foundation® (NSSF®), the trade association for the firearms, ammunition, hunting and shooting sports industries, condemned the

decision by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe banning the use of traditional ammunition on Service lands in just five years.

Scott Gudes, vice president of Government Affairs for the American Sportfishing Association (ASA), the trade association that represents the recreational fishing industry, issued a statement of behalf of the industry.

"The sportfishing industry views this unilateral policy to ban lead fishing tackle, which was developed without any input from the industry, other angling organizations and state fish and wildlife agencies, as a complete disregard for the economic and social impact it will have on anglers and the recreational fishing industry," said Gudes.

Gudes further said, "In the limited instances where lead fishing

tackle is demonstrated to harm local wildlife populations, the sportfishing industry supports actions to minimize or eliminate these impacts. However, unnecessary and sweeping bans such as this Director's Order will do nothing to benefit wildlife populations and instead will penalize the nation's 46 million anglers and hurt recreational fishing-dependent jobs."

Gudes concluded, "A sound, science-driven and durable policy could've been crafted with input from industry and the broader recreational fishing community. We are hopeful that new leadership at the USFWS will repeal this Director's Order and develop public policy in a way that is open, inclusive and based on science." ✧

Tawas Point Lighthouse Keepers Program offers opportunities in 2017

Lighthouse enthusiasts are invited to serve this summer as volunteer lighthouse keepers at the [Tawas Point Lighthouse](#), located in Tawas Point State Park in East Tawas, Michigan. Keepers will receive lodging on site in exchange for conducting guided tours of the lighthouse. In 2017, the program will run from May 17 through October 17.

The 1876 Tawas Point Lighthouse is a well-known landmark in Tawas Point State Park, attracting visitors from all over the world. Keeper tasks include greeting visitors, giving tours, providing information about the lighthouse and the Tawas area, and light maintenance duties. Participating keepers provide roughly 35 hours of service per week.

The light keeper lodging is located in the second story of the dwelling attached to the lighthouse. Accommodations include two comfortable bedrooms that can sleep up to three adults, as well as a modern kitchen, shower and bath. The minimum commitment for staying at the lighthouse is two consecutive weeks.

At least two keepers are needed for each two-week period. Those with knowledge of lighthouse lore or Great Lakes maritime history are especially encouraged to apply. Those selected will receive historical information packets and on-site orientation to help prepare them for their tour duties.

Interested parties should complete and submit the Tawas Point Lighthouse Keeper application at www.michigan.gov/tawaslighthouse. Click on [Lightkeeper Program](#) under Explore. For more information about the Tawas Point Lighthouse Keeper Program, contact Hillary Pine at pineh@michigan.gov. Review of applications will begin February 1, 2017, and continue until all slots are filled.



Tawas Point Lighthouse is one of 11 nationally-accredited museums administered by the Michigan History Center in cooperation with the DNR Parks and Recreation Division. Located in Tawas Point State Park off U.S. 23, 2.5 miles southeast of East Tawas, the lighthouse is open for tours Thursday through Monday from Memorial Day to Labor Day. From mid-May to Memorial Day and Labor Day to mid-October, tours are offered Friday through Sunday.

The Michigan History Center is part of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Its museum and archival programs foster curiosity, enjoyment and inspiration rooted in Michigan stories. It includes the Michigan Historical Museum, 10 regional museums, Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve, and the Archives of Michigan. Learn more at www.michigan.gov/michiganhistory. ✧

Experience #MiFreeFishingWeekend Feb. 18-19 and enjoy the outdoors

Grab a fishing rod and enjoy some of the finest fishing Michigan has to offer during the 2017 Winter Free Fishing Weekend, set for Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 18-19. On those two days, everyone—residents and non-residents alike—can fish without a license, though all other fishing regulations still apply.

During #MiFreeFishingWeekend, the DNR also will waive the regular Recreation Passport entry fee that grants vehicle access to Michigan's 103 state parks and recreation areas. Several of these locations will host official 2017 Winter Free Fishing Weekend events perfect for the whole family.

Michigan has celebrated winter's #MiFreeFishingWeekend every year since 1994 as a way to promote awareness of the state's vast aquatic resources. With more than 3,000 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, tens of thousands of miles of rivers and streams, and 11,000 inland lakes—Michigan and fishing are a perfect match.

“There’s nothing better than bundling up and heading out on the ice for Michigan’s annual Winter Free Fishing Weekend,” said Jim Dexter, DNR Fisheries Division chief. “For those avid anglers, we encourage you to take someone out who has never experienced winter fishing to show them how simple and fun it can be.

Official winter #MiFreeFishingWeekend activities are being scheduled in communities across the state to assist with public participation. These activities are coordinated by a variety of organizations including constituent groups, schools, local and state parks, businesses and others. A full list of these events can be found online at michigan.gov/freefishing. ✧

Final Asian Carp 2016 monitoring summary

Bottom Line: Monitoring occurred in the CAWS and upper Illinois Waterway downstream of the Electric Dispersal Barrier in March. **NO LIVE BIGHEAD CARP OR SILVER CARP were found in any new locations either upstream of, or immediately downstream of the Electric Dispersal Barrier.**

Electrofishing:

- Crews from IDNR, USACE and USFWS completed 74 electrofishing runs at fixed and random sites (18.5 hours total) in the Lockport, Brandon Road, Dresden Island, and Marseilles Pools in November.
- Crews collected 4,911 fish of 52 species.
- **No Bighead Carp or Silver Carp were reported captured or observed in the Lockport, Brandon Road or Dresden Island Pools.**
- Five adult Silver Carp were collected in the Marseilles Pool.

Commercial Netting:

- Thirteen Bighead Carp and six Silver Carp (all adults) were collected in Rock Run Rookery.
- Five Bighead Carp and six Silver Carp (all adults) were collected in the Dresden Island Pool downstream of the I-55 Bridge.

Hoop and Mini Fyke Netting:

- Crews from IDNR set and pulled 16 hoop.

QUICK SUMMARY:	2015	2016
No. of Days Fished	69	101
No. of Net Crew Days	310	488
Yds. of Net Fished	390,270	531,965
Mi. of Net Fished	221.74	302.25
No. of Pound Net nights	24	64
No. of Hoop Net nights	163.7	768.7
No. Bighead Carp	8,206	7,972
No. of Silver Carp	137,485	145,873
No. of Grass Carp	857	681
No. of Asian Carp	146,548	154,526
Tons of Bighead/Silver Carp harvested	486.3	539.8

✧

2017 lake sturgeon season on Black Lake to begin Feb. 4 at 8 AM

Michigan DNR has announced that the 2017 lake sturgeon fishing season on Black Lake (Cheboygan County) will begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 4. All anglers must register to participate in the lake sturgeon season.

The 2017 total recreational harvest limit for Black Lake is seven lake sturgeon. However, to reduce the chance of exceeding the harvest limit, officials will close the season when one of two scenarios occurs:

1. Once the sixth fish is harvested, or
2. If five fish have been harvested at the end of any fishing day.

Fishing hours are 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily. The season will end either at 2 p.m. Feb. 8, or when one of the above scenarios is met, at which point anglers will be notified on the ice by DNR that they must immediately stop fishing for lake sturgeon.

Anglers 17 years of age or older must possess a valid Michigan fishing license. In addition, all anglers must possess a lake sturgeon tag, available for free from all license vendors. Anglers must have both of these prior to registering for the Black Lake sturgeon season.

Anglers unable to participate in the Friday registration may register Saturday only at the registration trailer located at Zolner Road ending on Black Lake. Morning registration begins at 7 a.m. Anglers are strongly encouraged to register Friday, Feb. 3.

At registration, anglers will be issued a disposable flag that must be displayed each day at the entrance of their shanty.

Anglers who harvest a lake sturgeon must immediately tag the fish, contact an on-ice DNR employee, and register the fish at the Zolner Road trailer. Registration may include an examination of internal organs and removal of a piece of fin tissue for DNA analysis and aging.

For more details, call the DNR Customer Service Center in Gaylord at 989-732-3541 or visit Michigan.gov/fishing. ✧

Wolf Lake Fish Hatchery Visitor Center offers snowshoe and bird walks, fly-tying class and more

The Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery Visitor Center in Mattawan, Michigan, will offer a variety of opportunities to enjoy Michigan's great outdoors this winter including:

Just Add Snow! Snowshoe Walks

Feb. 11 at 3 p.m.

Lantern-lit: Feb. 11 at 6 p.m.

In these programs, lasting approximately 90 minutes, participants will learn how to use snowshoes and then take a walk to test their new skills, all while discovering the fascinating world of winter ecology. Visitors can borrow snowshoes from the Visitor Center or bring their own. Programs are dependent upon snow conditions and are subject to cancellation. This program is for those age 5 and older.

Fly-Tying 101

Jan. 28 at 3 p.m. and Feb. 11 at 11 a.m.

Learn the basics of tying flies with avid fly fisherman Mr. Mike in these

two-hour sessions. All practice materials will be provided. Class size is limited for each session, and pre-registration is required. This program is recommended for those 8 years of age and older.

Wild About Winter Activity Day

Feb. 18 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Ice fishing programs at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Borrow some snowshoes to hit the trails, warm up with some hot cocoa by the fire, learn about ice fishing and check out a variety of fun family activities – including a winter scavenger hunt, jig-making and more. All ages are welcome.

Winter Bird Walk and Great Backyard Bird Count

Feb. 18 at 10 a.m.

The Audubon Society of Kalamazoo will lead this winter bird walk, where participants will discover the many birds that stay in Michigan throughout the winter season. Part of the Great

Backyard Bird Count, this program will last approximately 90 minutes. All ages are welcome.

Hatchery Tours

Feb. 18 at 10 a.m., noon and 2 p.m.

Discover how the DNR raises millions of fish every year to stock in Michigan's lakes, rivers and streams. Tours are 30 minutes. All ages are welcome.

The visitor center is closed in January, February and March, with the exception of these programs. It will reopen to the public on a regular basis for the spring season in early April 2017.

For more information, contact the Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery Visitor Center at 269-668-2876 or ramseys2@michigan.gov.

The visitor center is located on the grounds of the Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery at 34270 County Road 652 in Mattawan. Learn more at www.michigan.gov/wolflakevc. ✧

More than 30 candlelight events scheduled this winter at Wisconsin parks, forests and trails

MADISON – Early snowfall that has covered all of Wisconsin, combined with cold temperatures in the forecast to keep the snow around, should create good conditions for the 30 candlelight events planned this winter at Wisconsin state parks, forests, recreation areas and trails.

Most properties are reporting that they are already packing ski trails, and with a bit more snow most will also be able to set tracks for cross-country skiing," said Paul Holtan, communications specialist for the state parks program. This winter's candlelight events kicked off January 7 at Blue Mound State Park west of Madison, Mirror Lake State Park southeast of Lake Delton and Wildcat Mountain State Park near Ontario, and run on weekends through February 18.

Skiing, snowshoeing and hiking by candlelight have become some of

the most popular winter events at Department of Natural Resources properties, with some events attracting more than a thousand visitors. Last year a candlelight event at the Lapham Peak Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest attracted so many visitors that all of the available parking at the property filled and entrance gates to the property had to be closed, causing backups and traffic problems.

A candlelight event at Horicon Marsh has become so popular that the Friends of Horicon Marsh Visitor and Education Center has set up shuttle busses running from Mayville and Horicon between 4:30-9:30 p.m. and is encouraging visitors to use them as parking at the facility is limited.

"We encourage people to plan ahead and to consider attending a candlelight event at a property they may not have visited in the past. Also

this year we plan to use the [DNR Twitter](#) social media platform to provide current information about specific events," Holtan said.

Many of the events include additional activities such as bonfires, and hot chocolate and other refreshments may be available for sale. Some events offer grills for cooking food or roasting marshmallows. Some properties have warming shelters that are open for the events.

People can check on the details of each event by going to the Department of Natural Resources website, dnr.wi.gov, and searching keyword "[candlelight](#)." For more information on park or forest properties and locations, search for keywords "[find a park](#)." Regular park and trail fees apply for the events unless otherwise noted. ✧

NY BOW upcoming classes

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) instructors and licensed outdoor guides, Sheila and Sonny Young, are offering the following outdoor adventures and skills workshops this year. Contact Sheila and Sonny directly (contact information is below) if you have any questions or want to register.

Snowshoe Round Pond Esker and Fens

Saturday, February 11, 2017 \$30*
(plus optional snowshoe rental)
Weather permitting

Stalking the Adirondack Ostrich: Ferns, Flowers & Trees of the Adirondacks

Saturday, May 20, 2017 \$50*

Become Skilled with Map & Compass

Saturday, June 24, 2017 \$50*
Saturday, October 21, 2017 \$50*

The Complete Hiker – Fun and Safety in the Wildlands

Saturday, July 15, 2017 \$50*

Adirondack Byway: A Raquette River Paddle

Saturday, August 19, 2017 \$65* (plus option of canoe/kayak rental)

Wilderness First Aid, 9-hour certification program

Sunday, September 17, 2017 \$120

High Peak Jaunt: Views from the Summit

Friday, September 29, 2017 \$50*

**Special BOW group event pricing*

Individuals are encouraged to register for group events

Registration does not include meals or lodging

For more info or to register, contact:

Adirondack Foothills Guide Service, LLC

SHEILA & SONNY YOUNG,
Licensed NYS Outdoor Guides

214 Old Wawbeek Road

Tupper Lake, NY 12986

518-359-8194

www.adkfoothills.com

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Obama signs National Park Service Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The historic National Park Service Centennial Act, which [passed the Senate](#) last month, was signed into law by President Obama on December 16. The bill celebrates the National Park Service's 100th year of existence and ensures that it has the resources necessary to protect America's national parks into its second century. In 2006, then-Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget Portman helped President and First Lady Bush draft the original National Park Service Centennial Challenge Initiative, which provided new public and private investment to prepare for the Centennial in 2016.

Specifically, Portman's legislation:

- Establishes the **National Park Centennial Challenge Fund** within the Treasury to be used for signature projects identified as ones that will help prepare the National Parks for another century of conservation, preservation and enjoyment.
- Establishes the **Second Century Endowment for the National Park System** to help attract private donations to help support and enrich the National Park System into its second century and pay for the more than \$12 billion backlog in National Park Service projects.

NOTE: Some 2.6 million people visit the eight Ohio National Park Service sites every year.

Senator Portman's legislation is supported by the National Park Foundation, the National Parks Conservation Association, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Civil War Trust.

For his work to protect our national parks, Portman has received the [2012 NPCA Centennial Award](#) and the [2015 Bruce F. Vento Public Service Award](#). Most recently, he received the [National Parks Service Centennial Champion Award](#) from Cuyahoga Valley National Park in July. ✧

American Outdoor Brands Corp creates New Outdoor Recreation Division

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. – American Outdoor Brands Corporation announced the creation of its new Outdoor Recreation Division to expand the Company's portfolio of consumer brands and products further into the rugged outdoor recreation market. Brian D. Murphy has been hired to serve as President of the newly created division. Murphy joins American Outdoor Brands from Vista Outdoor Inc.

In leading the Outdoor Recreation Division, Murphy will focus on markets related to rugged outdoor pursuits, such as camping, hiking and fishing—all of which already strongly resonate with many of our core firearms consumers and retailers. This focus is perfectly aligned with our vision at American Outdoor Brands to be the leading provider of quality products for the shooting, hunting, and rugged outdoor enthusiast.

About American Outdoor Brands Corporation

American Outdoor Brands Corporation is a provider of quality products for shooting, hunting, and rugged outdoor enthusiasts in the global consumer and professional markets. The Company reports two segments: Firearms and Outdoor Products & Accessories. Brands in Outdoor Products & Accessories include Smith & Wesson®, M&P®, Thompson/Center Arms™, Crimson Trace®, Caldwell® Shooting Supplies, Wheeler® Engineering, Tipton® Gun Cleaning Supplies, Frankford Arsenal® Reloading Tools, Lockdown® Vault Accessories, Hooyman® Premium Tree Saws, BOG POD®, Golden Rod® Moisture Control, Schrade®, Old Timer®, Uncle Henry®, UST®, and Imperial™. For more information on American Outdoor Brands Corporation, call (844) 363-5386 or log on to www.aob.com. ✧

Repeal of Federal Switchblade Act Introduced in Congress Knife Rights' Knife Owners' Protection Act protects knife owners

Originally conceived and authored by Knife Rights in 2010 and first introduced in 2014, the Knife Owners' Protection Act of 2017 (KOPA) **now includes repeal of the archaic 1958 Federal Switchblade Act** and has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Andy Biggs (AZ-05). KOPA will remove the restrictions on interstate trade in automatic knives that are legal to one degree or another in 40 states, while also protecting the right of knife owners to travel throughout the U.S. without fear of prosecution under the myriad patchwork of state knife laws.

Knife Rights Chairman Doug Ritter said, "The Federal Switchblade Act was an asinine idea when it was passed in 1958 in a wave of Hollywood-inspired politically motivated hysteria and has only become more irrelevant as time has passed. The majority of states have always allowed switchblade possession and with Knife Rights' repeal of switchblade bans in 11 states in the past seven years, fully

four-fifths of the states now allow switchblade possession to one degree or another. With a Congress and Administration that may be inclined to finally rid the country of this abomination, it is way past time to repeal this law that only serves to interfere with lawful commerce."

Ritter continued, "From the start Knife Rights has fought successfully to defend the right to carry a knife, an essential tool, in the individual states, cities and towns. The Act represents a key step to protect law-abiding knife owners simply passing through areas like New York City where possessing many commonly owned knives that are legal elsewhere may result in arrest and prosecution."

Besides legalizing interstate trade in automatic knives, the measure allows for the safe transportation of knives through jurisdictions where the mere ownership of a certain type of knife is enough to bring arrest and prosecution.

"KOPA will simply provide safe harbor to someone traveling with

knives where they can legally be possessed at the points of origin and ultimate destination." Ritter emphasized, "The bill requires they be locked up during travel in states where they would be illegal. It eliminates the constant jeopardy of criminal prosecution for simply passing through an area. It offers no protection to anyone engaged in criminal activity."

KOPA has teeth to defend those who travel under its protection because it also provides penalties for law enforcement, prosecutors and others who ignore the protections provided. Similar to the protections and penalties generally provided in USC 1993 to those whose civil rights are violated, a falsely arrested citizen can be compensated for the expense of defending themselves from an unwarranted violation of the rights Congress has protected in KOPA.

Read the Knife Owners' Protection Act at: www.KnifeRights.org/KOPA2017.pdf ✧

National Concealed Carry Reciprocity Bill introduced

U.S. Representative Richard Hudson (R-NC) has introduced the [Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017](#).

With 58 cosponsors, bipartisan support and the backing of many pro-gun organizations, the bill seeks to ensure that law-abiding citizens who are licensed or permitted to carry in their home state, can also carry when traveling around the country.

"Our Second Amendment right doesn't disappear when we cross state lines, and this legislation guarantees that," said Hudson in a [press release](#).

"The current patchwork of state and local laws is confusing for even the most conscientious and well-informed concealed carry permit holders. This confusion often leads to law-abiding gun owners running afoul of the law when they exercise their right to self-protection while traveling or temporarily living away from

home," said Chris W. Cox, executive director of the NRA-ILA. "Hudson's legislation provides a much needed solution to a real problem for law-abiding gun owners."

"The Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017 is a common sense solution to a problem too many Americans face," he continued. "It will provide law-abiding citizens the right to conceal carry and travel freely between states without worrying about conflicting state codes."

The bill, if passed, will do all of the following:

- Ensure that valid concealed carry permits issued in one state are valid for carrying concealed handguns in other states that recognize their own resident's right to concealed carry;
- Allow those from constitutional carry states the ability to carry in other states that recognize their own

resident's right to concealed carry;

- Put the burden of proof clearly on the state to show that an individual carrying concealed did not comply with the law, thus protecting law-abiding gun owners;
- Provide legal protections against states that violate the intent of this bill, making attorney's fees and damages available to victorious plaintiffs in civil suits, as well as to defendants who prevail in criminal cases; and
- Allow individuals who are carrying concealed to do so in the National Park System, National Wildlife Refuge System, and on lands administered by the BLM, Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation.

In 2015, Rep. Hudson sponsored similar legislation with 216 cosponsors. ✧

DEC summer camp registration open

Registration for the 2017 summer camp program opened January 25, 2017 at 10 AM. Applications can only be submitted through the [online registration program](#).

Never been to a DEC summer camp before? That's OK! There are four DEC summer camps around New York for youth 11-17 years old. Campers participate in many different outdoor activities—not just hiking and camping! Campers can participate in optional activities like fishing, bird watching, fly-tying, archery, canoeing, and orienteering. There are environmental lessons and games about the forest, field, and stream ecosystems around camp. And, of course, there are campfires and sing-a-longs!

Child needs a Sportsman Education Certificate?

Get it at DEC Summer Camp!

Each week includes a different Sportsman education program (Hunter Safety, Bow Education, or Trapper Education). Parents and guardians can sign up their child up for these hunters' safety programs as an option, but space is limited.

Special Adventure Week @ Pack

Highlighting conservation career paths is Adventure Week at Camp Pack Forest during Week 3 (July 9-14). It features conservation professionals from the DEC and colleges speaking about career choices and majors. Plus, campers participate in advanced activities and lessons with these special guest instructors.

Weeks run Sunday afternoon through Friday evening; Cost: \$350 per week. Note: Youth can attend more than one week but parents MUST pick youth up Friday evening; there are no accommodations Friday to Sunday.

For more information and instructions for registering please visit the [DEC Summer Camps web page](#). Keep up to date on Camps information by visiting the Camps Facebook page. Registration can fill up fast, so visit the site quickly. ✧

DNR Walk-In Access sign-ups for land-owners began Jan. 23

Minnesota landowners can generate revenue by allowing public hunting on their private land in 46 Minnesota counties through the Department of Natural Resources' Walk-In Access program. Sign-ups are open now through April 28.

"This has been a great program for both landowners and hunters," said Scott Roemhildt, DNR Walk-In Access coordinator. "It provides extra income to landowners and allows hunters to access quality private land open to public hunting."

Eligible parcels must be at least 40 acres and covered by high quality natural vegetation. Landowners are paid by the acre to allow hunting access from September 1 to May 31. Bonuses are paid on parcels that enroll in a three-year contract, are more than 140 acres and are located near a state wildlife management area or federal waterfowl production area.

Walk-In Access parcels are for public hunting only; no motorized vehicles are allowed on conservation land. Bright yellow-green signs identify area boundaries and parking is along roads or in designated parking areas. Recreational use laws provide extra liability protection for acres enrolled in the Walk-In Access program.

Landowners should contact their local soil and water conservation district office for enrollment information. Additional details can also be found at www.mndnr.gov/walkin.

Walk-In Access began in 2011 and has grown to more than 23,000 acres in 2016. The program is currently funded through 2018 with a three-year grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under number 69-3A75-16-509. Other funding sources come through a surcharge on non-resident hunting licenses, a one-time appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature in 2012, and donations from hunters. ✧

DEC to combat Southern Pine Beetle on Long Island

Long Island research project is part of DEC's efforts to combat spread of Southern Pine Beetle

As part of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) aggressive efforts to combat the spread of the invasive Southern Pine Beetle, DEC will soon begin conducting ecological forest operations on Rocky Point Pine Barrens State Forest, DEC announced.

"The Southern Pine Beetle poses a threat to Long Island's Pine Barrens and DEC is actively fighting to protect the area from these destructive pests," DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos said. "By thinning a portion of this forest, which represents one of DEC's largest land holdings in the Pine Barrens region, we are potentially saving thousands of trees from this invasive insect."

This is intended to give the remaining trees more access to sunlight and nutrients, allowing them to gain strength and better fight off the invading beetle. Each block will be analyzed to determine which block was the most effective in resisting Southern Pine Beetle attacks.

Ecological forest operations are regularly conducted on DEC-managed forests throughout the state by private contractors to achieve different resource objectives, including invasive species management.

Currently, DEC is searching for an eligible timber management company to implement the selective management of trees on the approximately 18-acre parcel in need of thinning. All work by private contractors will be conducted under DEC supervision to ensure that only trees previously marked for harvesting will be taken down.

Work on the project is expected to start in early January 2017. A [Southern Pine Beetle fact sheet](#) with photos and information related to the recent areas of discovery are available on DEC's website ✧

DNR completes milestone in protecting Mississippi River Corridor

The Minnesota DNR recently published development rules for the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA), an important milestone toward protecting the river's 72-mile stretch through the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

This 54,000-acre land corridor on both sides of the Mississippi River extends through the seven county metro area from Ramsey in the north to Hastings in the south.

The land along this stretch was designated a state critical area in 1976 to protect its scenic, environmental, and economic values. The Minnesota Legislature directed the DNR to conduct rulemaking to create new, updated districts and standards to replace those in the nearly 40-year old executive order that currently regulates development in the MRCCA.

The new rules contain setback provisions intended to keep buildings and development activity away from

shoreline areas and areas prone to soil erosion and slope failure. Building height provisions are designed to preserve natural views within the corridor. And new vegetation and land alteration standards aim to retain and restore deep-rooted vegetation along the river's edge and on steep slopes and to prevent erosion during development.

The river is home to a full range of residential neighborhoods and parks, as well as river-related commerce, industry, and transportation. Though the river corridor has been extensively developed, many intact and remnant natural areas remain, including bluffs, islands, floodplains, wetlands, riparian zones, and native aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna. The executive order designating the MRCCA contains development standards and criteria that have been implemented via local plans and zoning ordinances for nearly 40 years.

The rules became effective January 4, five working days after their publication.

Existing local government MRCCA plans and ordinances will remain in effect until local governments update them to comply with the rules. The DNR anticipates a minimum five-year process to implement the rules. The first step will be to work with local governments to update their MRCCA plans, which the DNR hopes to align with the Metropolitan Council's December 2018 deadline for comprehensive plan updates.

Following MRCCA plan updates, work will begin on revisions to local MRCCA ordinances. This effort will be implemented over an estimated three-year period likely beginning in 2019 and extending through 2021 or beyond.

The rules and other information are available on the DNR's [project website](#). ✧

Southeast trout streams offer alternative to ice fishing

If sitting around and staring at a hole in the ice doesn't fit with your idea of fishing, take heart – there's an open-water alternative even in the coldest part of the year.

Winter trout fishing opened on January 1, and continues through April 7, on about 750 miles of trout water in southeastern Minnesota.

"Fed by groundwater, many streams there remain relatively ice-free all winter, and the trout living in these streams more often than not cooperate with anglers to provide excellent winter fishing opportunities," said Vaughn Snook, Lanesboro area assistant fisheries supervisor with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

The winter southeast stream season is catch-and-release only, and it applies to all designated trout streams in Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Wabasha and Winona counties. Dakota County and the Vermillion River are not

included in the southeast catch-and-release winter stream trout season.

"Winter trout fishing may require the angler to experiment with different tactics," Snook said. "As water temperatures drop, so does fish activity. Anglers may want to carry a thermometer with them. Fish are most active at temperatures of 38 degrees and above."

Other tips that could increase an angler's success:

- Fish slow and deep; trout are most often out of the main current flow.
- When fly fishing, effective patterns include scuds, midge pupa/larva, and small pheasant tail nymphs. Fly anglers should watch for midge hatches that can increase trout feeding activity.
- For spinning and spincasting equipment, keep your reel cranking by using a Teflon lubricant that's not affected by cold. Single hooks on spinners

help keep fish handling to a minimum. Clipping one hook off of a treble also helps.

- With winter trout waters often crystal clear, trout grow wary, so keep a low profile. It's often best to stay out of the water.
- Look for springs flowing into streams, where the water often is warmer. Ground water is typically around 48 degrees Fahrenheit.

While the trout are willing to bite, the weather can bite as well this time of the year, so Snook advises people to make safety a priority when fishing open water in the winter. Don't take any chances with shelf ice that may form along stream banks. If you stay dry, you'll stay warm. Let someone know what you're up to and where you are going.

More information on trout fishing is available at www.mndnr.gov/fishmn/trout. ✧

Meetings planned to discuss deer management goals

People interested in deer will have a chance to discuss goals and values that could define Minnesota's first-ever deer management plan in a series of [12 public engagement meetings](#) the DNR will host throughout the state between Tuesday, Jan. 31, and Thursday, March 2.

During the next year, committee members will review technical information and public input collected through this and other processes. The committee will make recommendations to the DNR for the [deer plan](#), which is expected to be finished by the spring of 2018.

Meetings will be from 6:30-9 p.m. and are scheduled in:

- Alexandria on Thursday, Feb. 2, at Broadway Ballroom, 115 30th Ave. E.
- Andover on Thursday, Feb. 9, at Bunker Hills Activities Center, 550 Bunker Lake Boulevard NW.
- Bemidji on Wednesday, Feb. 1, at Hampton Inn, 1019 Paul Bunyan Drive SE.
- Brainerd on Tuesday, Feb. 21, at Central Lakes College cafeteria, 501 W. College Drive.
- Cambridge on Thursday, Feb. 16, at Cambridge High School, 430 8th Ave NW.
- Duluth on Wednesday, Feb. 22, in Room W2630 at Lake Superior College, 2101 Trinity Road.
- Mankato on Thursday, March 2, at County Inn & Suites, 1900 Premier Drive.
- Montevideo on Monday, Feb. 27, T.A.C.C. Minnesota Army National Guard, 711 S. 17th St.
- Mountain Iron on Thursday, Feb. 23, in the Iroquois Room at Mountain Iron Community Center, 8586 Enterprise Drive S.
- Rochester on Monday, Feb. 6, at Century High School, 2525 Viola Road NE.
- Windom on Tuesday, Feb. 28, at Windom Community Center, 1750 Cottonwood Lake Drive. ✧

DEC asks for hunter input on fall 2017 waterfowl seasons

Hunters are invited to submit recommendations to regional Waterfowl Hunter Task Forces to help set the dates of the fall 2017 duck hunting seasons for each of the state's waterfowl hunting zones by [February 19](#), the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced.

Each task force includes representatives from the NY State Conservation Council, established waterfowl hunting organizations, and individuals who provide input representing diverse points of view.

The recommended season dates must be within federal guidelines established by the USFWS. For fall 2017, DEC expects the USFWS to allow a 60-day duck season, split into no more than two segments per zone, opening no earlier than September 23, and closing by January 28, 2018.

In an effort to encourage input, DEC developed an on-line input tool for hunters to provide opinions on waterfowl seasons. The feedback received will be shared with the task forces in March.

There are three ways for interested hunters to provide their opinions on future waterfowl seasons:

- Via the on-line hunter input tool (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/42364.html>).
- Directly contacting one of the Task Force members in the hunter's zone. The list of members can be found at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/42364.html.
- Sending an e-mail to the Waterfowl Season Input mailbox (seasonwaterfowl@dec.ny.gov).

Suggestions sent to this mailbox will be forwarded to all of the task force members in the zone.

Descriptions of NY's waterfowl hunting zones can be found on the DEC website (www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/28497.html) and are listed in the annual [New York Hunting and Trapping Guide](#). The final waterfowl hunting season dates will be posted on DEC's website and announced by news release in mid-summer. ✧

Apply now for Pere Marquette Youth Wingshooting Clinic and Pheasant Hunt

Hunters between 10-17 can apply now for the Pere Marquette Youth Wingshooting Clinic and Pheasant Hunt scheduled for March 4, 2017 at Pere Marquette State Park.

The Clinic and Hunt have been popular additions to the IDNR Wingshooting and Youth Pheasant Hunting Programs.

On March 4, young hunters will participate in a wingshooting clinic during the morning. Young hunters will advance their wingshooting skills while practicing safe shotgun handling and operation during the clinic. The pheasant hunt will take place during the afternoon. Young hunters must have successfully completed an approved Hunter Safety Course and have a hunting license.

Permits for the Pere Marquette Youth Pheasant Hunt are available through the IDNR's Controlled Pheasant Hunting Internet Reservation System. Hunters need to review the "Illinois Youth Pheasant Hunt Information" and the "Illinois Youth Pheasant Hunt Regulations" on the controlled pheasant hunting website prior to submitting an application. To navigate to the controlled pheasant hunting website once the IDNR website www.dnr.illinois.gov has been accessed, hunters should follow these directions:

- Click on "Upland Game" from the drop-down menu under the "Hunt/Trap" button on the Homepage toolbar
- Then click on "Controlled Pheasant Areas" under the "Licenses and permits" heading
- After clicking on the "Click Here For Applications" button on the Controlled Pheasant Hunting Welcome Page, young hunters should click on the button next to "Illinois Youth Pheasant Hunts" to access the appropriate on-line application form.

For complete details, check the controlled pheasant hunting website at www.dnr.illinois.gov. ✧

Trout harvest opportunities

Continued from page 1

Feedback sought for 2017 brown trout stocking plans

As part of efforts to address lakewide changes in the food web, DNR and natural resources managers in surrounding states have worked cooperatively to develop stocking strategies that support a balance in the ratio of predators to prey. Following numerous stakeholder meetings and input opportunities in 2016, DNR will pursue an approach that maintains a diverse fishery and maximizes opportunities for anglers while adjusting stocking to account for lower levels of available prey species such as alewives.

Based on DNR surveys, harvest rates for brown trout are the lowest of any salmon or trout species the department stocks and to meet lakewide management objectives, Wisconsin brown trout stocking will be reduced for 2017. Although some anglers are very successful with brown trout, the overall harvest rate per hour of angler effort targeted toward brown trout is 40.8 hours. By comparison, the harvest rate per hour totals for other species are:

- 9.75 hours for Chinook;
- 15.7 hours for coho; and
- 23.2 hours for steelhead.

Todd Kalish, DNR deputy fisheries bureau director, said in particular the Wild Rose strain of fish have not adequately contributed to the sport fishery and will no longer be stocked into Lake Michigan. However, the department recognizes the importance of brown trout to anglers in a number of locations and brown trout stocking will remain a critical component of the Lake Michigan management strategy.

"We appreciate the interest in brown trout and the near shore fishing opportunities brown trout provide in many locations," Kalish said. "As a result, we will continue to stock seeforellen strain brown trout, which appear to survive better, live longer and grow larger than the Wild Rose strain. The current world record

brown trout that was caught in Wisconsin was reportedly a seeforellen strain brown trout. We will continue to work with stakeholders in early 2017 to assess stocking priorities and locations."

DNR also intends to continue the offshore brown trout stocking initiative in Green Bay. The Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum meeting will be used to gauge angler preferences and maximize the benefits of the continued stocking. Scenarios for consideration may include allocations based on harvest success, proportional distributions by county, or other factors.

DNR intends to finalize the stocking strategy by February.

Stakeholders who are not able to attend the brown trout and lake trout sessions in person or join via the Mediasite links also may submit written comments. The deadline is **February 8**. Send an email to: DNRLAKEMICHIGANPLAN@wisconsin.gov, or send a letter to: Bradley T. Eggold, Department of Natural Resources, UWM - GLRF - SFS, 600 E. Greenfield Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53204.

For more on Lake Michigan fisheries management, visit dnr.wi.gov and search "[Fishing Lake Michigan](#)." Background information including a copy of the presentation to stakeholders from earlier this summer can be found by visiting the DNR website and searching "[Lake Michigan salmon and trout meetings](#)."

The [Lake Michigan Fisheries Forum](#) offers opportunities for citizens and stakeholders to hear the latest research findings, management news and trends affecting the lake. The forum is facilitated by the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute with support from DNR. Representatives from major sport fishing clubs on Lake Michigan and Green Bay, commercial fishers, the Conservation Congress and the University of Wisconsin System are formal members of the forum. ✧

IDNR reminds anglers of the importance of safety when ice fishing

SPRINGFIELD, IL – The Illinois DNR is reminding anglers that heading to their favorite frozen fishing holes does come with risks this time of year. As the temperatures drop in Illinois, those who enjoy year-round fishing may start heading to their favorite location to participate in ice fishing.

Those planning to ice fish should stay off of ice that is less than 4 inches thick. It is recommended anglers carry a rope or floatation device with them to help assist if someone falls through the ice. Wearing a life jacket/personal floatation device (PFD) is always recommended when fishing offshore, including when ice fishing.

For additional information on ways to make your next ice fishing trip a fun and safe one, visit the "I Fish Illinois" website at www.ifishillinois.org/programs/ice.php ✧

NOTICE: Lake George Boat Launch

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Lake George Boat Launch remains open to use by boaters at this time. DEC does not plow the main parking area to protect the porous pavement. When snow depths increase or ice forms on the lake the gate will be shut and the launch will be closed.

Ice anglers and others will be able to access the ice on the lake by parking in the auxiliary parking area on the south side of Beach Road. DEC will put up temporary fencing to create a path with packed snow from the parking area to the lake. Snowmobiles are prohibited in the main parking area outside of the fenced path as they will damage the porous pavement.

Boaters, anglers, and others seeking to access the lake should call the DEC Warrensburg office at 518-623-1200 before traveling to boat launch to learn whether the gate is open or closed. ✧

Minnesota new special angling regs

Trout anglers have all the more reason to visit Chatfield, Lanesboro, Preston and Spring Valley in southeastern Minnesota thanks to a change that effectively allows trout fishing all year long in these cities.

“We’re pleased to offer this new opportunity for catch-and-release stream trout fishing during the fall, when the trout season is traditionally closed,” said Ronald Benjamin, Lanesboro area fisheries supervisor. “This fills the gap between open trout seasons and makes these special regulations match the popular year-round season established in three nearby state parks.”

The change is one among several to fishing regulations that are specific to individual waters and go into effect March 1. Following public review that wrapped up this past fall, fishing regulations will change on six lakes and three streams starting in March, while existing regulations on three lakes will become permanent and a regulation on one lake will be extended.

These changes include new regulations that have not yet been in effect; regulations that have been in effect but will be modified or dropped; and regulations turning permanent that were reviewed and will now be in effect indefinitely.

Regulations that are specific to individual waters take precedence over statewide regulations. Special regulations can be found in their own section of the Minnesota Fishing Regulations booklet, at www.mndnr.gov/fishmn using LakeFinder, and posted at public accesses.

MODIFIED REGULATIONS

Lake Vermilion (St. Louis County): Anglers on Lake Vermilion will be able to keep walleye up to 20 inches long, with one allowed over 26 inches, starting with the May fishing opener. The new regulation will require release of all fish from 20 to 26 inches with only one allowed over 26 inches. The four-fish bag limit will remain the same.

NEW REGULATIONS

Little Webb Lake, Moccasin Lake and Lake Thirteen (Cass County): Five-fish bag limits on sunfish and on black crappie on Little Webb and Moccasin lakes, and a bag limit of five on sunfish for Lake Thirteen, are being adopted and will be reviewed after 10 years to evaluate how well they maintain quality sunfish and crappie for anglers.

Sections of the South Branch Root River in Preston and Lanesboro; Mill Creek in Chatfield; and Spring Valley Creek in Spring Valley (Fillmore and Olmsted counties): Catch-and-release fishing allowed roughly within these city limits from October 15 through December 31. Although the boundaries of where anglers can fish through this change roughly encompass the length of the streams in these four cities, the boundaries are not the actual city limits. Specific boundaries will be listed in the Minnesota Fishing Regulations booklet, available in March.

REGULATIONS TURNING PERMANENT

Carnelian Lake and Pleasant Lake (Stearns County): Experimental regulations on sunfish that have been in effect since 2007 will become permanent. A reduced bag limit of five sunfish was shown to have effectively maintained quality populations of sunfish.

Sugar Lake (Wright County): Northern pike and black crappie experimental regulations that have been in effect since 2007 have shown to improve the sizes of northern pike and crappie and will become permanent.

DROPPED REGULATIONS

Bowstring and Round lakes and connected waters (Itasca County): Experimental regulations on northern pike will be dropped and return to the statewide regulation. The regulation objective to encourage harvest of abundant small pike will likely be achieved by the new northern pike

zone regulation set to be adopted in the spring.

CONTINUING EXPERIMENTAL REGULATIONS

Sand Lake and connected waters (Itasca County): Implemented with regulations on Bowstring and Round lakes, the experimental regulations on northern pike will be continued for one year, allowing additional time to collect survey data in 2017 before making a final decision on retaining or dropping next fall.

VERMILION WALLEYE REGULATION TO CHANGE

Lake Vermilion anglers in NE Minn. will be able to keep walleye up to 20” long, with one allowed over 26”, starting with the May fishing opener.

The new regulation will require release of walleye from 20 to 26 inches, a change that is less restrictive compared to the current regulation that requires release of walleye from 18 to 26 inches. The four fish bag limit will remain the same.

“Lake Vermilion has abundant walleye with good numbers of large females,” said Edie Evarts, Tower area fisheries supervisor. “The regulation change allows slightly more harvest while still protecting plenty of mature female walleye that produce future year classes.”

The DNR considered and modeled several options for the regulation change, and sought opinions from the public, as well as from the Lake Vermilion Fisheries Input Group that represents lake and statewide interests.

The group generally was in favor of a regulation change although had no majority opinion on a specific regulation. The broader public also had a range of preferences, with two-thirds supporting a regulation change and one third preferring no change.

The DNR chose the 20-to-26 inch protected slot because it has a lower risk of harvesting too many fish and is in line with public input indicating a preference for less risk.

✧

Cold, windy December day yields important data for Lake Michigan fisheries management

At a time of year when most Lake Michigan anglers are content to count their blessings, Wisconsin DNR fisheries staff are out counting fish.

With a cold northwesterly wind blowing across 5 miles of open water on this winter day, it's not an easy job. Lifting two gangs of graded mesh gill net stretching some 1,600 feet, the four fisheries team members aboard the DNR Research Vessel *Coregonus* are collecting data that will help inform management decisions on yellow perch and round whitefish.

The team is led by Dave Schindelholz, a DNR fisheries technician with more than 15 years of experience who is serving as biologist-in-charge. Working in an enclosed lab and processing space behind the boat's pilot house, Schindelholz alternates between freeing fish from the incoming net and recording data from the entire team so that surviving fish can be quickly released.

Joining him are Brandon Bastar, the research vessel's captain; Tim Kroeff, a fisheries technician based with Bastar in Sturgeon Bay; and Tom Burzynski, a fisheries technician with Schindelholz out of Milwaukee. As the men wait for the hydraulic winch to reel in the next round of fish, they talk casually about how cold air moving over warm water creates bigger waves—seemingly oblivious to the effects of the unpredictable swells as the 60 foot boat pitches forward, backward and side to side.

"The *Coregonus* is a critical part of our research effort and really allows to us work safely and efficiently in all kinds of weather," Schindelholz says. Commissioned in 2011, the vessel's name derives from the genus of nine species of fish native to Lake Michigan including the commercially important lake whitefish, lake herring and bloater chub.

With safety equipment including a 10-person life raft, emergency positioning beacon, cold water survival suits and watertight

compartments to keep the boat afloat if the hull is punctured, the *Coregonus* represents a major advance over the 74-year-old RV Barney Devine that was retired after the 2010 season. A key feature of the *Coregonus* is the large winch system used for hauling in weighted gill nets that are hung in established locations and strung together in gangs of up to 2,000 feet.

The boat also supports the use of trawl nets and diving survey work. The size and scope of its capabilities keep the *Coregonus* busy almost continuously from early April through December as fisheries staff conduct assessments of whitefish, lake trout, burbot, forage fish such as alewife, bloater chubs and yellow perch as well as Green Bay offshore stocking activities. From its home port in Sturgeon Bay, the [Coregonus travels](#) from northern Lake Michigan and Green Bay south to Algoma, Port Washington and Milwaukee.

The yellow perch work that takes place in early December is conducted over known spawning habitat in 65 to 80 feet of water. To maximize the benefits of the time on the water, Schindelholz and the crew are also collecting data on round whitefish populations and alewife numbers as well as information about the yellow perch.

"Our focus at this time of year is on the yellow perch because we do have ongoing concerns about the survival rates given the changing Lake Michigan ecosystem," Schindelholz says. The spread of filter feeding aquatic invasive species such as quagga and zebra mussels reduce the volume of phytoplankton and ultimately zooplankton available to young perch, which also face competition for habitat from invasive round gobies. The December perch surveys follow spawning assessments conducted in early June with both gill nets and dive team members.

The invasive mussels and gobies make their presence known as the gill net rolls up from the depths, streaming in through a sliding

window and onto the stainless steel table inside the processing area of the *Coregonus*. Hung the previous day, the net yields a remarkable diversity of aquatic species—including invasive mussels that are caught in the plastic mesh and clatter around on the table as the fisheries team members pull them off. Round gobies meet a fitting end as they are tossed back outside the window to a flock of waiting seagulls.

The net also pulls in both stocked and naturally reproduced lake trout. While open water swimming species such as Chinook and coho salmon generally avoid the gill nets, alewives, brown trout, burbot and round whitefish fill out the catch of the day. The round whitefish are kept for further data collection back on shore while the other fish are quickly released.

Back on shore, inside UW-Milwaukee's School of Freshwater Sciences, Schindelholz and Burzynski set to work on the whitefish, measuring, weighing and dissecting them with surgical skill to check on the overall health of the fish and remove the delicate otoliths or ear bones needed to ascertain age. With precision that can only be achieved through years of practice, they take turns with knife and pen, processing and preparing samples for 28 fish in about 30 minutes.

Brad Eggold, DNR Great Lakes fisheries supervisor, said the success of DNR's Lake Michigan management efforts depends on the abilities of the team members as well as the research infrastructure required to support their work in the harshest of conditions.

To learn more, visit dnr.wi.gov and search "[Research Vessel Coregonus](#)." For more information about Lake Michigan management efforts and news of upcoming opportunities for stakeholder engagement, visit "[Fishing Lake Michigan](#)." ✧

Other Breaking News Items:

(Click on title or URL to read full article)

[Fishermen help DNR form whitefish plan](#)

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is consulting anglers and commercial fishermen to gather information for a possible quota shift to better redistribute the whitefish population in Green Bay

[Wild-born salmon support lake's fishery](#)

Chinook salmon are reproducing naturally in Lake Michigan. Wild fish now constitute more than 70 percent of the Chinook salmon caught each summer in the lake by anglers

[Leland Harbor to stay closed unless funds found for dredging](#)

Michigan's Leland Harbor could eventually close for good unless officials scrape together enough money to dredge its sand-choked entrance.

[Great Lakes Area of Concern makes progress in ecological recovery](#)

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality officials are reporting "significant progress" regarding the ecological recovery of the St. Marys River.

[Study: Tons of plastic getting into Great Lakes](#)

A new study from Rochester Institute of Technology in New York tracks how much plastic is getting into the Great Lakes, and where it's going

["Steelhead Alley" boosts Great Lakes economy](#)

Anglers visiting "Steelhead Alley," a strip of rivers and tributaries along Lake Erie, spanning Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York, bring economic activity that impacts everything from hotels, restaurants, and gas stations.

[Remnant fish species discovered in Antrim County](#)

Researchers have discovered a very special population of fish lurking in the depths of Elk Lake in Antrim County Michigan. These fish share a unique heritage, linking them to the native lake trout that disappeared from Lake Michigan over 50 years ago.

[Why Nestle pays next to nothing for Michigan groundwater](#)

Nestle Waters North America, the world's largest bottled water company, shipped the first bottle from its Ice Mountain plant in Stanwood in May 2002. Since then, the company has extracted billions of gallons of groundwater from underneath Michigan and has paid next to nothing for it.

[Great Lakes' first wind farm moving ahead](#)

The nation's first offshore wind energy project just started operating in the waters off Rhode Island. Now developers are pushing ahead in another vast body of water: the Great Lakes.

[Invasive Asian carp less than 50 miles from Lake Michigan](#)

The news is mixed as Great Lake states and the federal government continue to devote money and brainpower to stopping a potential Great Lakes ecological disaster — invasive Asian carp species making their way from the Mississippi River into Lake Michigan

[Coalition sues U.S. EPA over Lake Erie](#)

A coalition of environmental, fishing, and conservation groups filed a notice of intent to sue the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for failing to take enough action on Lake Erie.

End