



DEC acts to protect Salmon River Fish Populations

Low Salmon River Water Levels Prompt Actions; New Great Lakes Regulations and Recommendations in Effect

DEC Encourages Anglers to Fish 'SMART' to Protect Resources and Other Anglers

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced actions underway to mitigate the impacts of low water flows along the Salmon River during the upcoming salmon run that draws thousands of anglers each year. In addition, new angling regulations and recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 remain in effect to ensure the health and safety of both natural resources and the public.

"The Salmon River supports the largest fall runs of salmon and trout in New York, and is one of the state's most heavily fished waters," said Commissioner Seggos. "The actions are necessary to ensure continued water flows to sustain the

salmon run and fishery, and to enable spawning salmon to reach DEC's Salmon River Hatchery and support ongoing stocking efforts. Additionally, DEC wants to ensure that visiting anglers are aware of new angling regulations and recommended practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as they plan their trips to enjoy New York's premier angling opportunities. We encourage anglers to enjoy New York's renowned fisheries, but we ask that you please do so safely and responsibly to protect fellow anglers and local communities."

This summer, below-average precipitation has resulted in low and declining water levels in the Salmon

River Reservoir. The Executive Committee of the Salmon River Flow Management Team, comprised of natural resource agencies and Brookfield Renewable hydroelectric facility that regulates reservoir water levels, canceled scheduled whitewater releases over the Labor Day weekend and delayed the annual September 1 increase in baseflow. These actions will conserve reservoir water to maintain suitable flows throughout the salmon spawning run. Additionally, the popular Lower Fly Fishing Section, situated just below the hatchery and typically where large numbers of salmon and anglers congregate, did not open on September 15, and will remain closed until further notice.

Protect Salmon River Fish

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Calling All Steelhead Addicts!!!

Michigan River Steelhead Project Kickoff Meeting

Thursday, **September 24**, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting, Registration

Curious to find out how stocked and wild steelhead contribute to the run in your favorite river?

This meeting will give you a chance to network with biologists and other anglers in your area along with providing training on how to participate in collecting data on steelhead catches.

We hope to build volunteer teams for:

- Betsie River
- Manistee River

- Pere Marquette River
- Muskegon River
- Grand River
- St. Joseph River
- Lake Huron Tributaries
- Lake Superior Tributaries

Volunteers will commit to recording length and fin clip data on every steelhead caught October-May.

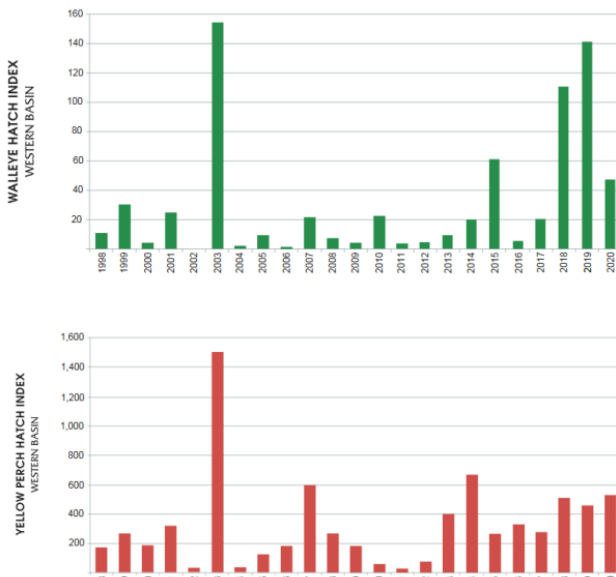
Additional online meetings will provide the opportunity to share results while keeping data confidential ✧

More great news for Lake Erie walleye and perch anglers

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Preliminary results from surveys in the western basin of Lake Erie indicate more great news for Ohio anglers, according to the Ohio DNR. The 2020 walleye and yellow perch hatches are both above average and continue an exceptional era of fish production in the western basin of Lake Erie.



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE



“Each August, Ohio contributes to lake-wide efforts to survey the hatches of walleye and yellow perch,” said DOW Chief Kendra Wecker. “Our fisheries biologists survey nearly 40 locations between Toledo and Huron. The information collected is compared to the results from previous years to gauge the success of the walleye and yellow perch hatches.”

The 2020 August walleye hatch index was 48 per hectare, a standard measure of catch per area. This is the eighth-highest value on record for Ohio’s waters of the western basin and well above the rapidly increasing prior 20-year index average of 32 per hectare.

“This year’s hatch combined with the exceptional 2015, 2018, and 2019 year-classes ensures an abundance of young walleye will complement the older and larger fish that make up the

current Lake Erie walleye population, which is projected to hit a historic high in 2021,” said Travis Hartman, Lake Erie fisheries program administrator.

The 2019 hatch also impressed with 47 walleye per hectare. This was the highest catch of 1-year-old walleye ever observed in Ohio’s 2020 August western basin trawl survey, nearly double the previous high from 2015. Walleye from the 1-year-old 2019 class currently range from 7-12 inches and most will hit the harvestable size of 15 inches in 2021.

The August survey found the 2020 yellow perch hatch index to be very good at 536 per hectare. This is well above Ohio’s west basin prior 20-year average of 326 per hectare and ranks sixth in the 34-year survey. This above-average yellow perch hatch will help bolster the population in 2022, along with the strong 2014 and 2018 hatches that are supporting recently improved yellow perch angling success in the western basin.

During the upcoming months, Ohio’s results will be combined with Ontario’s to characterize the basin-wide abundance of young-of-year walleye and yellow perch. This information allows biologists to calculate an initial projection of how many young fish will enter the catchable population two years later, which is one component to determine safe harvest levels in the future.

For more information on Lake Erie research and management programs and to find fishing reports, maps, and more fishing resources, visit wildohio.gov. Download the HuntFish OH mobile app for fishing information on the go. ✧



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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.

Inland Seas Angler

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Publisher

Dan Thomas, 630/941-1351

Editor

Jeanette Thomas

Webmaster

Chad Lapa

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Women, Minorities closing the gap among America's Fishing Participants

Recreational fishing has reached new diversity milestones, according to a new industry study from the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF). The 2020 Special Report on Fishing found that:

- 3.7 million African Americans participate in fishing, an increase of nearly 1 million over the last 10 years.
- Hispanic Americans are participating at a new record of 4.4 million participants.
- Women are also participating at an all-time high of 17.9 million participants.
- Overall, more than 50 million Americans participate in fishing, the highest number in 12 years.
- The activity gained more than 3 million new participants last year, the highest in five years.

"The outdoors belongs to all of us — not just those who fit a certain image," said Stephanie Vatalaro, Senior Vice President of Marketing and Communications for RBFF. "Fishing is about enjoying nature, making memories and bonding with the people you love. It's an experience that everyone should get a chance to have, which is why our work is grounded in the belief that the water is open to everyone."

The new participation data comes as Americans overall take increased interest in fishing as a remedy for COVID-19-related stress and anxiety. According to a separate study, 1 in 5 Americans are more likely now to try fishing than they were prior to the pandemic. Among parents, the statistic is 1 in 4.

"Social distancing has taken a sizable toll on our collective mental health," said Vatalaro. "But being on the water has been shown in studies to have a calming effect that can help treat stress and anxiety naturally. Fishing — and by extension, boating — are excellent ways to practice self-care and recreate responsibly."

To help further increase diversity in fishing and boating, RBFF has launched a new public service

initiative called Get On Board in partnership with Discover Boating. The campaign aims to raise awareness about the ways people from all walks of life can support their mental health and wellness on the water. Outside Get On Board, RBFF's ongoing commitment to underrepresented audiences on the water has made the organization an industry leader in diversity and inclusion.

Launched in 2014, Vamos A Pescar is the organization's Hispanic outreach initiative, the first of its kind in the fishing and boating industry. The campaign helps Hispanic families break through perceived barriers to the sport through the George H. W. Bush Vamos A Pescar™ Education Fund.

In 2018, RBFF launched its Women Making Waves social media movement to increase female visibility in fishing. While 43 percent of new participants are female, only 18 percent see themselves represented in the activity. Together with influencer partners and an online community, Women Making Waves aims to represent all women on the water.

Additional diversity initiatives from RBFF include the Stories of Mentors and I Am an Angler campaigns. Through spotlighting the personal experiences of diverse fishing participants, RBFF is committed to challenging stereotypes and empowering the next generation in fishing and boating.

The Special Report on Fishing is created in partnership with the Outdoor Foundation and provides one of the most comprehensive looks at the state of U.S. fishing and boating participation. The full report, along with an accompanying infographic, is available at

www.TakeMeFishing.org/SpecialReport. The website also features beginner resources including how-to guides for getting started fishing and boating, an interactive map of places to fish and boat, as well as links to COVID-19 safety guidelines. ✧

Hook and Line Sturgeon Season opened **Sept. 5**

The inland hook and line season for lake sturgeon is now open through September 30. Anglers will have the opportunity to catch these prehistoric fish while on [waterways](#) throughout Wisconsin.

To harvest lake sturgeon, anglers must have a valid hook and line lake sturgeon tag. Licenses and tags may be purchased online through the [GoWild](#) system, or at one of our licensed sales agents. Please visit the [Fishing License Webpage](#) for more information on licenses and tags. Anglers should also consult [2020-2021 Hook and Line Fishing Regulations](#) as all regulation requirements apply.

If an angler catches a lake sturgeon that he wishes to harvest, he must immediately validate his tag. Any harvested sturgeon must be registered at a [designated registration station](#) before 6 p.m. on the day it was harvested.

It's important to note that when fishing on Yellow Lake, anglers should be on the lookout for dangler tags on the dorsal fin of lake sturgeon. These tags are yellow with a five-digit number. Anglers may need to scratch off the algae in order to see the tag number. Please leave the tag on the fish and report the tag number to Craig Roberts at 715-416-0351 or craig.roberts@wisconsin.gov.

DNR creel survey clerks will be stationed at various landings during the lake sturgeon season. Clerks will be gathering info on angler catch and the amount of time spent fishing. Anglers who encounter these clerks are encouraged to partake in the survey. ✧

Fishing Chicago's Navy Pier

Fishing access is currently available on the northwest wall of Navy Pier, just adjacent to the CTA bus depot. Access to Navy Pier parking is strictly for Offshore/Hotel parking, so fishermen will need to seek parking elsewhere during our closure. ✧

Angler opinion survey on the Oneida Lake walleye daily limit

The Oneida Lake walleye fishery has been managed with a possession limit of 3/day since 2000 in response to a decline in the population from a high of over 1,000,000 adult fish in the mid-1980s to fewer than 300,000 in the late 1990s. For the last two decades the adult population has been stable at a moderate level (300,000 – 500,000), but a 2019 mark-recapture population abundance assessment conducted by Cornell U. documented a rebound in the adult walleye population to over 1,000,000 fish, the highest since 1986.

Large year classes in 2010, 2013, 2014 and 2015 contributed to the population increase. Indications are that there were additional strong year classes produced in 2016 and 2018, which should help maintain or even increase the abundance of the adult population as they enter the fishery at age-4 in 2020 and 2022. DEC and Cornell scientists are concerned that the abundant walleye population could have negative impacts on the forage fish populations in the lake, particularly yellow perch. Thus, a moderate decrease in the adult walleye

population is desirable for sustaining the health of both the walleye and yellow perch fisheries. To achieve this, a return to the statewide walleye daily limit of 5 fish/day was under consideration to increase potential harvest. There was, however, a need to inform anglers of this management challenge and also better understand how they might view this approach.

To obtain angler opinions regarding the potential change in the walleye daily limit, a simple web-based survey was developed using SurveyGizmo® and delivered via a DEC Delivers Fishing and Boating newsletter email announcement to nearly 140,000 subscribers. The survey was active from June 26 – July 8 and included a brief background statement on the Oneida Lake walleye abundance increase with a rationale for potentially increasing the daily limit to 5/day.

The survey instrument included the following three questions:

1. How do you feel about increasing the daily limit of walleye from 3 fish per day to 5 fish per day in Oneida

Lake? • Strongly support • Support • No opinion • Oppose • Strongly oppose

2. Have you fished Oneida Lake? • Yes • No and, if yes:

3. How recently have you fished Oneida Lake? • Within the last year • Within 5 years • 5 years ago or more

A total of 2,256 surveys were completed. Most respondents (85%) had fished Oneida Lake, and a majority of them (80%) had fished it within the last year. Among all respondents, the majority (62.2%) either supported or strongly supported increasing the limit to 5/day, while 33.1% either opposed or strongly opposed the proposed change. All respondent groups, whether they fished the lake or not, generally supported the proposed change. Those who had fished the lake in the last year had the highest amount of opposition (41%) among all groups, but this group of anglers was generally in support (57.7%) of the proposed change. Those who had fished the lake more than a year ago were overwhelmingly in favor of the change. ✧

Delaware R. anglers asked to report invasive snakehead sightings

New York DEC asked anglers in the Delaware River to be on the lookout for northern snakehead, an invasive fish native to Southeast Asia. A northern snakehead was recently caught in the Callicoon area of the Delaware River. Given the right environmental conditions, this invasive species can prey on and compete with other fish, upsetting the natural balance of local ecosystems.

Northern snakeheads are long, thin fish with a single fin running the length of the back. These invasive fish are brown with large, dark blotches along their sides and can grow up to 3' long. Northern snakeheads have a flattened head and a large mouth with many teeth. Juveniles feed on a wide variety of microscopic organisms, insect larvae, and crustaceans that native fish rely on for food. As adults, snakeheads feed mostly on other fish, but also crustaceans, reptiles, and

small birds. A fact sheet on snakehead is [available at DEC's website](#).

The best method for dealing with snakeheads is preventing their spread and establishment. Removal methods, such as netting, electrofishing, or piscicides can also be used, but these approaches would most likely prove futile given the size and flow associated with the Delaware River.

In New York State, snakeheads have been found in two ponds in Queens in 2005, and were eradicated from Ridgebury Lake in Orange County in 2008. DEC is currently sampling the location where the fish was located to determine if the population is widespread. Northern snakehead prefer warm slack water for summer spawning and flows and colder temperatures may serve as a natural barrier against expansion. DEC is also collaborating with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat

Commission and National Park Service to monitor these invasive fish.

In the event an angler catches a northern snakehead, DEC advises anglers to:

- Not release it back to the water;
- Kill the fish immediately;
- If possible, take pictures of the fish, including close-ups of its mouth, fins, and tail;
- Freeze it whole in case DEC needs to verify identification or collect tissue samples. Carcasses missing filets can still be used;
- Note where it was caught (waterbody, landmarks or GPS coordinates); and
- Report the catch to the regional NYS DEC fisheries office, DEC's Invasive Species Bureau at isinfo@dec.ny.gov or (518) 402-9425, or submit a report through [iMapinvasives](#). ✧

Army Corps decides Pebble Mine can't be permitted as proposed

Alexandria, VA – August 25, 2020 - The [American Sportfishing Association](#) (ASA) supports [the announcement](#) by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that the proposed Pebble Mine, a massive mineral extraction mining development in Alaska's Bristol Bay area, cannot be permitted as proposed. The Pebble Mine threatens one of the world's most productive wild salmon strongholds.

Pebble Limited Partnership, the mine's developer, must now outline how it will address the proposed mine's damage to nearby wetlands and waterways. Within 90 days, the company must show how it will compensate for harming more than 2,800 acres of wetlands, 130 miles of streams and more than 130 acres of open water within Alaska's Kookutli River Watershed.

"As the voice of the sportfishing industry, ASA has been opposed to the Pebble Mine since it was first proposed over a decade ago," said Mike Leonard, ASA's vice president of Government Affairs. "The devastation the proposed mine would have on the ecosystem and the region's economy, which is heavily dependent on Bristol Bay's fisheries, is simply too great and we are happy to see the Army Corps take this action."

"The Army Corps' decision is a pivotal moment in the fight against the Pebble Mine," said Chad Tokowicz, ASA's Inland Fisheries Policy manager. "By denying the current proposal, the Army Corp has acknowledged what ASA and many other outdoor recreation groups have been saying for years: Pebble Mine is simply the wrong mine in the wrong

place. While the fight isn't completely over, we're glad that the Army Corps has brought to light the insurmountable risks the mine poses, creating a significant barrier to the project moving forward."

Tokowicz further noted that although this decision is a step in the right direction, it does not guarantee Bristol Bay's future. "We must not lose sight of our end goal which is putting an end to the Pebble Mine once and for all. Only a veto from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can stop the Pebble Mine."

Tokowicz concluded, "We would not be where we are today if it weren't for our industry members' lending their voices to this issue. I encourage everyone to [send a message](#) to the EPA telling them to veto the Pebble Mine." ◇

Coast Guard halts illegal charter in Chicago

CHICAGO – The Coast Guard terminated the voyage of a 44-foot pleasure craft, named Liquid Asset, with eight passengers aboard Sunday, September 13, near Burnham Harbor.

A joint team composed of CG Marine Safety Unit Chicago, CG Investigative Service, CG Sector Lake Michigan, CG Station Chicago and City of Chicago Marine Unit identified the vessel as a possible illegal charter near Burnham Harbor on September 13. CG Station Chicago and a CG Sector Lake Michigan enforcement team boarded the vessel and discovered the following violations:

- Violation of 46 C.F.R. 176.100A for not having a valid Certificate of Inspection.
- Violation of 46 C.F.R. 170.120 for failure to have a valid stability letter.
- Violation of 46 C.F.R. 67.7 for a vessel of greater than 5 gross tons not having a certificate of documentation with appropriate endorsement.

"The Coast Guard will continue to pursue vessel operators who place lives at risk through illegal operations in the Chicagoland area," said CG Cmdr. Randy Preston, Commanding

Officer for MSU Chicago. "I want to remind all our vessel operators to reach out to our office if they have any questions regarding federal safety regulations or how to operate legally as a small passenger vessel or bareboat charterer."

Owners and operators of illegal charter vessels can face maximum penalties of more than \$80,000 for illegal passenger-for-hire operations. Some potential fines for illegally operating a charter vessel are:

- Up to \$40,640 for failure to operate a passenger vessel without a Coast Guard license.
- Up to \$7,846 for failure of operators to be enrolled in a chemical testing program.
- Up to \$4,591 for failure to provide a Coast Guard Certificate of Inspection for vessels carrying more than six passengers.
- Up to \$16,687 for failure to produce a valid Certificate of Documentation for vessels over five gross tons.
- Up to \$12,219 for failure to have been issued a valid Stability Letter prior to placing vessel in service with more than six passengers. ◇

Lake Michigan Whitefish Virtual Meeting **Sept 22**

MADISON, Wis. – The second meeting to engage stakeholders who have an interest in lake whitefish has been set. This virtual meeting will be held on Tuesday, **September 22**, at 6 p.m. and conclude at 8 p.m. Members of the public can access the meeting beginning at 5:45 p.m. via [Zoom](#) or by calling 312-626-6799 and using meeting ID: 961 9714 5544. The department will be developing new regulations for lake whitefish for the commercial industry and would like stakeholder participation from a wide variety sources. It's important to note that information will be shared using a PowerPoint presentation. To better understand the information and see the presentation, the DNR recommends the public attend using a computer via the [Zoom](#) link. Info, meeting notes and presentations for the first meeting can be found on [Lake Michigan Whitefish Management](#) page. More info on fisheries can be found on the DNR's [fisheries webpage](#). ◇

Feds approve killing protected sea lions to save endangered salmon

At the behest of in wildlife managers in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington state, a federal task force granted those states' fish and game agencies the authority to kill hundreds of sea lions across the a large portion of the Columbia River basin to save the region's struggling steelhead and salmon populations from extinction.

Marine mammals, including sea lions, are protected under the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), developed to help whales, polar bears, sea lions, seals, walruses, and various other marine-dependent mammals recover from decades of virtually unregulated hunting and exploitation at a time when their populations were dwindling. Since its enactment, populations of sea lions, as with other protected marine mammal species, have dramatically increased. That has resulted in their enormous consumption of various endangered and threatened salmon species which migrate from the sea each year along the Northwestern Pacific coast to spawn in the region's rivers.

Beginning a couple of decades ago, sea lions—the largest of which, the Stellar sea lion, can top 2,200 pounds—discovered they could feast on the migrating fish where they bottleneck at dams' fish ladders or swim up tributaries to spawn. State and federal wildlife managers have struggled to balance protecting salmon populations without harming protected sea lions ever since.

Early attempts to save salmon by sedating some of the sea lions, tagging them, transporting them hundreds of miles down the coast, and releasing them failed because the relocated sea lions returned to their previous feeding grounds. Additional efforts such as the use of explosives, fake mechanical killer whales, and rubber bullets also failed to prevent sea lion predation on migrating fish populations more than temporarily.

Faced with a continued decline in salmon and steelhead populations

caused in part by the growing sea lion population, federal authorities began allow state wildlife managers to kill limited numbers of California sea lions at the Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River around 2007. However, before any sea lion could be killed, wildlife authorities were required to document each specific animal they proposed to take in the area five times, observe it eating salmon, and wait for it to enter a trap. These restrictions resulted in just 238 California sea lions being killed over 13 years, a number so small it failed to limit the growth of the sea lion population in the area.

Changes made to the MMPA in 2018 allowed authorities to take a sea lion without first complying with the previous conditions requiring documentation of particular sea lions repeatedly eating fish.

Under the modified rules, Oregon officials killed 33 sea lions decimating steelhead populations on the Willamette River in 2019. Before the cull, scientists tracking sea lion predation in the area estimated the animals ate approximately one-quarter of the returning steelhead. Steelhead populations have already begun rebounding since the sea lions were culled.

The permit issued on August 14 allows wildlife authorities and several Native American tribes in the region to tranquilize, capture, or trap any sea lion along a 180-mile stretch of the Columbia River, as well as in several tributaries, transport it to another location, and give it a lethal injection.

The modified rules still bar wildlife authorities and tribes from shooting sea lions, and the permit sets a limit on the number of sea lions that can be taken over the next five years to 540 California sea lions and 176 Stellar sea lions. The permit marks the first time the federal government has allowed the killing of the large Steller sea lion. ✧

DEC seeking striped bass recreational anglers



Fall weather has begun to set in and striped bass have set off on their annual fall migration, stretching from Maine to North Carolina. DEC encourages striped bass anglers to collect and provide data about their fishing trips that help us better understand New York's dynamic striped bass population.

Get involved to help improve understanding and future management of striped bass in our local waters by joining the [Striped Bass Cooperative Angler \(SBCA\) Program](#). Volunteers assist by providing fishing data, which include date/time, fishing duration, environmental conditions, and quantity of all fish caught (incidental catch, too) to help understand fishing success and effort. Anglers may also submit scale samples of striped bass caught. Scale samples help DEC biologists determine the age of fish and do not harm the fish when removed.

For more information about the program or to sign-up, email sbcaprogram@dec.ny.gov or call (631) 380-3308. Remember, when striped bass fishing, the daily possession limit is one fish per angler, and the recreational slot size is 28"-35" (fish not less than 28" nor greater than 35" may be kept) in marine waters. In the Hudson River, the recreational slot size is 18"-28," and the daily bag limit remains set at one fish per angler. Visit [Recreational Saltwater Fishing Regulations](#) for a complete summary of New York's fishing limits in marine waters. ✧

New regulations for Benzie County salmon fishing

Changes near Homestead Dam on Betsie River in effect for 2020 fall salmon run

The Michigan Natural Resources Commission adopted regulation changes to [Fisheries Order 204](#) – in effect starting Friday, [Sept. 11](#), and for the remainder of the 2020 fall salmon run – that closes the Betsie River Homestead Dam in Benzie County to fishing within 300 feet of the lamprey barrier and fish passage facility from [August 1 to November 15](#).

In recent years, Betsie River salmon fishing has been immensely popular, attracting thousands of anglers to the area annually. Some high-use access sites, including the Homestead Dam site, have been severely degraded by bank erosion, littering and unlawful activities. Department of Natural Resources conservation officers have responded to hundreds of complaints from the area, including illegal snagging, exceeding daily fish limits, cutting trees, illegal fires, trespassing and angler conflicts.

The new fishing regulations came in response to these reports, with recommendations by DNR staff. “These new regulations will reduce the degrading land use practices currently happening, reduce the amount of illegal fishing activity, and provide protection for the current population of wild run Chinook salmon in the Betsie River and to ensure that population continues to provide a world-class fishery into the future,” said Scott Heintzelman, Fisheries Division’s Central Lake Michigan Unit manager.

Recent [changes to the DNR land-use order](#) for the Homestead Dam access site also prohibits, between 1 and 4 a.m., the use or occupancy of certain state forest lands in the area to prevent camping and tending fires, which have caused extensive resource damage at these locations.

More information about fishing and camping rules and regulations is available at [Michigan.gov/DNRLaws](#).



Lake Erie reaffirms its walleye wonderland status

Courtesy: Toledo Blade

When you are sitting on top and the numbers look amazing and the trend line keeps pushing upward on the graph, it is OK to call the boss, bang the drum a bit, and maybe even break into a modest touchdown dance. On Lake Erie, for the shepherds of that precious walleye flock, this is definitely that moment.

Travis Hartman, the Lake Erie Program Administrator for the Ohio Division of Wildlife, has spent portions of the past 15 years on the back deck of the boat that conducts the crucial trawls in the lake’s Western Basin. These surveys give fisheries biologists a pretty accurate picture of the strength of the most recent walleye hatch, and from that, a look at the prospects for the future of walleye fishing on Erie.

After last week’s trawl, where he hosted Division of Wildlife chief Kendra Wecker and Ohio DNR director Mary Mertz, Hartman is enthusiastically optimistic that Lake Erie is continuing its unprecedented run of walleye production. What he and his bosses saw in that net was pure gold. “It looks like this could be another good one in terms of the walleye hatch,” Hartman said.

While discussing the state of the union on Lake Erie, Hartman even invoked the enormous 2003 walleye hatch that loaded the system with fish, and is credited with producing countless wall-hangers over the past decade or so. “This is really unique and I am as excited as I’ve ever been about seeing what those trawls show us,” Hartman said. “We are now in a run where these very strong hatch classes are the new normal, and not that long ago I couldn’t have imagined saying that.”

Lake Erie gets a lot of credit, too, Hartman said, as nature’s ideal incubator and daycare center for young walleye. With its shallow, warm water, abundant zooplankton for the critical first stages of a walleye’s life, and a wealth of forage including almost biblical insect hatches, Lake

Erie’s Western Basin allows walleye born this spring to grow as if they are on steroids.

The recent trawl provided Hartman and his colleagues the opportunity to demonstrate this explosive growth pattern, with a young-of-the-year walleye that had already reached three or four inches laying side-by-side with a fish hatched in the spring of 2019 that was closing in on 10 or 12 inches in length.

“This is an example of what happens with optimal growth conditions and nearly optimal food availability,” Hartman said. “The biggest fish from the 2019 class will be pushing the 15-inch range by October, and by sometime next year, many of those fish will hit the 15-inch keeper size as two-year-olds. You are not going to find walleye growing any better than they do here.”

Hartman said yet another factor working in Erie’s favor when it comes to producing walleye in numbers is the ecosystem’s landscape. In smaller, natural lakes, young walleye are at the top of the menu for predators looking for a quick meal, but in Lake Erie, those predators have a wide selection of entrees, including the invasive goby and many native baitfish.

“While those little walleye might be right in the line of fire on other lakes, here these younger fish don’t have a ton of predators to avoid. In Lake Erie, they have a great growth advantage and grow fast, and they don’t have a high predatory demand.”

With walleye living 15 to 25 years and possibly longer, Hartman said that since a series of recent strong hatches have added millions more walleye to Lake Erie’s already deep cache of the prized gamefish, he expects a lengthy run of bountiful fishing in the Western Basin, and a parade of trophy fish.

“For walleye fishing, this is like looking at 10 to 15 years of spiking the football,” he said. “And with so many fish in the system, we will go into a period where the trophy fishing is going to be unreal.” ✧

More about the Great American Outdoors Act

The various sectors of the outdoor, hunting and fishing market are celebrating after President Trump signed the 'Great American Outdoors Act' into law. This historic conservation bill will provide \$900 million in annual funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and address the nearly \$20 billion deferred maintenance backlog on federal public lands.

"Making the 'Great American Outdoors Act' law accomplishes what the outdoor industry has always endeavored to do—support thousands of jobs, open up access to outdoor areas for more people and give local communities more tools to thrive economically," said Lise Aangeenbrug, executive director of Outdoor Industry Association (OIA). "This achievement is all the more important in today's environment as it will bring much-needed hope back to communities and businesses reliant on outdoor recreation."

NSSF, the trade association for the firearms industry, said they were honored to be present at the White House as President Trump signed the bipartisan legislation, H.R. 1957 law. NSSF said, "This historic federal law is among the most meaningful legislative measures for sportsmen conservationists ever."

"This is a proud moment for the firearm industry which supported this legislation to see it passed into law by the Trump administration which has kept the promise that public lands and waters belong to all of America's sportsmen and women," said Joe Bartozzi, NSSF President and CEO. "Outdoorsmen and women are the greatest stewards of our natural resources of wildlife, natural habitats and conservation-minded traditions that pass along the benefit of the preservation of public lands access for all. This law enables current and future generations of Americans to enjoy and preserve our national outdoor heritage."

NSSF said the Great American Outdoors Act delivers on the promise of sustained wildlife conservation,

public land hunting and recreational shooting for current and future generations of outdoorsmen and women. The law was conceived with bipartisan support and ensures full, dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). It addresses the maintenance backlog of public lands and water projects across the United States. Those projects include wildlife habitat conservation, road and trail repairs and increased recreational access to our public lands and waters.

American Sportfishing Association (ASA) President Glenn Hughes attended a ceremony at the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) headquarters, hosted by Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt celebrating the bill's enactment. The ceremony also included the signing of a new proclamation establishing August 5, as Great American Outdoors Day, when all DOI fees will be waived.

The Great American Outdoors Act permanently funds the highly successful Land and Water Conservation Fund which, for the past five decades, has helped provide access to recreational areas, trails and waterways throughout the nation. Importantly for the sportfishing industry, the Great American Outdoors Act ensures that \$15 million annually is dedicated to expanding public access for fishing and other forms of outdoor recreation.

It also creates the "National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund" to address the crumbling infrastructure on America's public lands and waters. This program will provide \$9.5 billion over five years to the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to improve trails, campgrounds, roads, visitor centers and other infrastructure.

In addition to receiving bipartisan support from members of both the House and Senate, several former U.S. secretaries of the Interior also expressed their support. ✧

Bluegill improvement central to proposed special fishing regs

Anglers should consider weighing in on proposed special fishing regulations that, if adopted, would become effective next year. Most of the proposed changes are aimed at protecting and improving bluegill sizes by lowering bag limits on lakes in 26 counties.

"The DNR's bluegill initiative is a way to address concerns by some anglers about bluegill sizes by lowering the number of them people can keep on some lakes," said Jon Hansen, fisheries program consultant for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. "We know there are a large number of lakes involved in this initiative, so we want to make sure we provide a variety of input opportunities, including offering online options to the traditional in-person meetings."

The DNR launched an [online presentation and comment opportunity](#) for the bluegill initiative in May. Thus far, the DNR has received 2,500 comments through the online survey. Hoping to invite conversation and reach a broad audience, the DNR will hold the first of five virtual town halls focusing on the bluegill initiative on Monday, **Oct. 5**.

"We are excited to offer these town halls and encourage people to use these and our online comment option as an alternative to the more traditional in-person meetings in each county," said Hansen. Each town hall will focus on a particular geographic area and will include a presentation and an opportunity for questions and comments. The schedule for the virtual town hall events is as follows:

- Region 1 – Mon, **Oct. 5**, 12-1 p.m.
- Region 2 – Wed, **Oct. 7**, 12-1 p.m.
- Region 3 – Mon, **Oct. 12**, 12-1 p.m.
- Region 4 – Wed, **Oct. 14**, 12-1 p.m.
- Statewide – Thurs, **Oct. 13**, 6-7 p.m.

Information on how Minnesotans can connect with these virtual town hall meetings will be available at mndnr.gov/sunfish. ✧

Protect Salmon River Fish

Continued from page 1

Under a federal license, Salmon River seasonal baseflows are typically increased from 185 cubic feet/second (cfs) to 335 cfs on September 1, providing that water levels in the Salmon River Reservoir (SRR) are above a critical threshold. The SRR level is currently below that threshold, which required cancelation of a scheduled white-water release over Labor Day weekend. In addition, significant rainfall is not forecasted for the near term, prompting DEC to recommend a delay in the scheduled baseflow increase. DEC's recommendation is based on abnormally high water temperatures coupled with low water flow in Salmon River tributaries, including Beaverdam Brook where migrating Chinook salmon access the DEC Salmon River Hatchery for egg collections that support the State's successful stocking program. Increasing baseflows prematurely would likely entice Chinook salmon currently "staging" in Lake Ontario to enter the Salmon River on their spawning migration, which could strand and/or kill fish if temperatures remain high. These fish cannot reach DEC's hatchery until rainfall sufficiently raises Beaverdam Brook water levels.

To increase the probability that sufficient numbers of salmon reach the hatchery to sustain the salmon stocking program, DEC closed the Lower Fly Fishing Section to fishing on September 15. This section will remain closed until DEC collects sufficient numbers of salmon eggs at the hatchery.

Anglers are encouraged to experience New York's other exceptional Great Lakes tributary angling opportunities. These waters are often less crowded and offer anglers the chance to play a bigger fish in a smaller river. More information, including the I Fish NY Great Lakes Fishing Brochure, is available at [DEC's website](#).

DEC reminds anglers that several new Great Lakes tributary angling regulations became effective on April

1, 2020. The minimum size limit for rainbow trout/steelhead caught in Lake Ontario tributaries was increased from 21" to 25" (still 21" in the lake). In addition, only one brown trout can now be kept as part of a Lake Ontario tributary angler's daily creel limit of three salmon/trout in combination.

For Lake Erie, fishing is no longer prohibited from January 1 through March 31 on Spooner Creek and its tributaries, and North Branch Clear Creek and its tributaries from Taylor Hollow Road upstream to the outflow of Clear Lake. For more information and exceptions, please consult the DEC Freshwater Fishing Digest or visit DEC's [Great Lakes and Tributary Regulations website](#).

Anglers are also encouraged to be respectful of the resource and other anglers by using ethical angling techniques. [Additional information can be found at DEC's website](#).

This fall, Great Lakes tributary anglers should be mindful in taking precautions to stop the spread of COVID-19 while enjoying the outstanding salmon and trout fishing on Lake Erie and Lake Ontario tributaries, including the Niagara River. At popular angling destinations, especially the Salmon River in Oswego County, angler density can become high enough to make social distancing difficult. DEC is placing signage at popular locations reminding anglers to be SMART when fishing this year:

- Socially distance at least six feet apart;
- **Mask** – Wear one when you cannot maintain social distancing, especially in parking lots and along footpaths;
- Avoid sharing gear when possible;
- **Respect** your fellow anglers and the resource by providing space and practicing ethical angling; and
- **Take out** what you bring in or place trash in receptacles.

For more information about how to [PLAY SMART * PLAY SAFE * PLAY LOCAL](#), visit DEC's website.

In response to increased rates of COVID-19 transmission in certain states and to protect New York's

successful containment of COVID-19, the State has joined with New Jersey and Connecticut in jointly issuing a travel advisory for anyone traveling from states that have a significant degree of community-wide spread of COVID-19. For more information, go to the [COVID-19 Travel Advisory website](#).

DEC's Salmon River Fish Hatchery is instrumental to maintaining healthy runs of salmon and trout and, normally, is a very popular destination for anglers, school groups, and other visitors. To help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to protect hatchery staff and effective hatchery operations, the Salmon River Hatchery and its grounds remains closed to visitors until further notice. ✧

Famous last words

"Look-out if you supported him (Trump)... because we are coming for you next! You will feel the vengeance of a nation"

VP candidate Kamala Harris

"Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy, its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery."

Winston Churchill

Free fishing on National Hunting & Fishing Day, **Sept. 26**

National Hunting & Fishing Day celebrates the sportsmen and women whose recreational activities have impacted fish and wildlife conservation. To align with National Hunting & Fishing Day, the last [Free Fishing Day](#) of the year is September 26. Anglers are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to bring someone new along to enjoy the pastime they love. This also marks the start of [Youth Deer Season](#), September 26-27, a chance for hunters to pass on their passion to the next generation. Recreational shooters are encouraged to enjoy the 12 public shooting ranges and 10 archery ranges that DNR has to offer: on.IN.gov/dnrshootingranges. ✧

Historic cleanup of lower Fox River completed after 17 Years

Millions of Yards of Contamination Cleaned from Riverbed

MADISON, Wis. – A successful 17 year-long cleanup in the Lower Fox River is complete through collaboration between Wisconsin DNR, the U.S. EPA, the USFWS, tribal groups and many private organizations.

“This legendary accomplishment will fundamentally improve the way Wisconsinites live, work and play on the Lower Fox River,” said DNR Secretary Preston D. Cole. “Outdoor recreation contributes \$7.8 billion to Wisconsin’s GDP. Thanks to this cleanup work, people recreating on the Fox River will contribute to that bottom line this Labor Day weekend in a way that was simply unthinkable twenty years ago.”

In 2004, the DNR began oversight of the project in partnership with EPA when the cleanup started along 39 miles of the Lower Fox River to address massive amounts of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contaminated sediment. The project removed 6.5 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment through hydraulic dredging, installing engineered caps spanning over 275 acres of riverbed to contain PCBs. Sand was also installed to cover 780 acres. Approximately 10 billion gallons of river water was restored in what is one of the largest sediment cleanups worldwide.

“We commend our partners at the WIDNR and EPA for completing the Fox River PCB cleanup project,” said Charlie Wooley, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Midwest Regional Director. “This is a major milestone towards restoring this important landscape.”

PCBs are toxic chemicals that were produced during the production and recycling of carbonless copy paper in the 1950s through 1970s. Three companies, NCR, Georgia Pacific and PH Glatfelter, remain active on the river to cover all current and future costs and ensure success of the cleanup for years to come.

“Completing the PCB clean-up

moves us one step closer in fulfilling our given responsibility by the Creator, to care for our waters,” said Tehassi Hill, Oneida Nation of Wisconsin Chairman. “Soon, we will be able to catch and eat clean, safe fish from the Lower Fox River and the waters within the Oneida Reservation.”

During the initial stages of the project, the DNR stepped up to be the lead technical agency, and the EPA served as the lead enforcement agency. The collaborative effort between the two government agencies and the private sector is a hallmark of the project’s success. The DNR has a new [webpage to provide updates on the project](#). The EPA issues a formal report to the public every five years, with the next one due in 2024.

“Today’s Fox River announcement has been decades in the making,” said EPA Region 5 Administrator Kurt Thiede. “The progress that has been made is a perfect example of what can be accomplished when partners are committed to working together toward a common goal.”

The main goal of the cleanup is to reduce the risk to human health and the environment. Long-term testing is underway to check for PCBs in fish tissue, sediment and water. Current results are promising with PCB reductions of approximately 90% in river water and sediment compared to concentrations in 2006. PCBs in walleye are down by an average of 65% in upstream areas and are approaching the “unlimited consumption” advisory level. Testing will continue until cleanup goals are met.

The [Natural Resource Damage Trustee Council](#) is equally vital in the effort to restore this area. The Fox River Trustee Council includes the DNR, USFWS, the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin.

Trustees manage and allocate multi-million-dollar settlement funds

to support natural resource restoration projects in the greater Green Bay area. Their work has led to strong partnerships and sweeping successes with everything from working to recover endangered species, to improving waterfowl habitat, restoring Great Lakes spotted musky, investing in fish and wildlife habitat throughout the watershed, to helping the iconic lake sturgeon in Green Bay waters.

“The Fox River Trustees will continue their important restoration work for fish and wildlife recovery to compliment this significant achievement and to uphold our promise to provide a healthier environment for all to interact with and appreciate,” said Gary Besaw, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin Legislator and Department of Agriculture and Food Systems Director. Restoration projects create more opportunities for fishing, hunting, wildlife watching, recreation and enjoyment of natural resources in Wisconsin. ✧

Fish barrier dam facelift in St. Regis Canoe Area

Fish barrier dams are an essential tool for the protection of native and restored fish communities from non-native species that could devastate the current native fish populations. The Little Fish Pond barrier dam is the lowermost fish barrier dam protecting the waters of the Saint Regis Canoe Area from invasion by non-native species. It was built prior to one of the biggest reclamation projects in NYS history. In 1952-1954, 14 ponds and 21 miles of inlets, outlets, river and tributaries were treated to restore wild trout populations. The main part of this dam was rehabilitated in 2015 and 2016 by Region 5 fisheries staff and the Student Conservation Association (SCA). In 2020, fisheries staff built a new splash deck to prevent scour in the river channel below the dam. ✧

DNR urges people to take precautions to keep bears away

A shortage of natural foods is causing more bear-human conflicts in northeastern and north-central Minnesota as bears gravitate toward food sources at homes, cabins and campsites.

“We’re asking people to remove food sources that could attract bears from their properties or campsites,” said Andrew Tri, a bear biologist for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. “It’s important that folks be extra vigilant in keeping trash and birdseed away from bears to ensure



they don’t get an easy meal from what people leave out.”

Dry conditions in the northeast and north-central part of the state have caused the natural food shortage. Human-bear conflicts are amplified in these areas when attractants (such as garbage, birdseed or coolers of food) are abundant and not protected from bears.

Dumpsters should be fitted with locking steel lids. Trash containers should be put in a locked shed or garage. Property owners also may erect an energized fence around a trash can to keep bears from getting into it. The DNR has [information online about these fences](#).

Bird feeders in northeastern and north-central Minnesota should be removed until mid-November and spilled seed should be cleaned up. If one person in a neighborhood feeds birds, a bear will remain in the area.

Campers, especially those who use remote campsites, should follow “[Leave No Trace](#)” principles. Plan ahead. Pack out trash and dispose of it properly. Store coolers out of sight in a locked vehicle or in [bear-resistant containers](#). Carry bear spray and learn to use it properly.

“If bears are in the area, let your neighbors, homeowners association or lake-owners association and fellow campers know about it so everybody keeps potential attractants away from bears,” Tri said. “Together, we can reduce conflicts with bears and avoid teaching them bad habits.”

Black bears are the only bear species that live in Minnesota. Bears are more common in the forested region of northern Minnesota but can live anywhere in the state if they find suitable habitat. They usually are shy and flee when encountered but become bolder when their natural foods are in short supply.

Don’t approach or try to pet a bear. Injury to people is rare but as with all wild animals, people need to be cautious and give bears plenty of space.

Avoid bear conflicts by following these tips

- Store garbage in bear-resistant garbage cans or dumpsters. Keep garbage inside a secure building (not a screened porch) until the morning of pickup.
- If there is not a secure building to put bear attractants in, erect an [energized fence](#) around trash or any other item attractive to bears (e.g., fruit trees, animal feed, gardens and compost piles).
- When camping, pack out trash, dispose of it properly, and store food in bear-resistant containers or in a locked vehicle or camper.
- Avoid feeding birds from April 1 to November 15.
- If you still wish to feed birds, hang birdfeeders 10 feet up and 4 feet out from the nearest trees. Use a rope and pulley system to refill birdfeeders, and clean up spilled seeds daily.
- Do not leave food from barbecues and picnics outdoors, especially overnight. Standard coolers are not bear-proof, but there are lockable, bear-resistant models available.

- Pick fruit from your trees and collect any fallen fruit promptly. If not feasible to pick all the fruit, protect trees from damage by using an energized fence.

More bear information

If bear problems persist after cleaning up food sources, contact a DNR area wildlife office for advice. For the name of the local wildlife manager, contact the DNR Information Center at 651-296-6157 or 888-646-6367, or find [wildlife area office contact information](#) on the DNR website.

The DNR does not relocate problem bears because it does not resolve the underlying issue, which is often unsecured attractants provided by people. Relocated bears may return or become a problem somewhere else.

For more about living and recreating in bear habitat, visit the [DNR website](#). Additionally, the [bearwise.org](#) website offers excellent information. ✧

Salmon River water temperature study

DEC staff from the Lake Ontario Fisheries Unit and Region 7 Fisheries assisted the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in conducting a thermal imaging study of the Salmon River in Oswego County. Known and suspected areas of the river that have groundwater seeps or colder tributary input were surveyed for their effects on the water temperatures in the main river. Earlier in the summer, temperature recording devices were installed at these sites and others to track temperature fluctuations during the hottest periods.

These efforts were conducted to identify areas of thermal refuge that might be utilized by Atlantic salmon and other salmon species seeking colder water. If shown to be significant, these sites would be candidates for additional protection and habitat improvement projects. ✧

Invasive European frog-bit found in Mid-Michigan

Boaters, waterfowl hunters and anglers can help prevent further spread

The Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) recently confirmed the presence of European frog-bit, an aquatic invasive plant, in four lakes within the Waterloo Recreation Area in Jackson and Washtenaw counties and one impoundment in the Dansville State Game Area in Ingham County.

Aquatic invasive species have the potential to harm Michigan's environment, economy and human health. European frog-bit, which resembles a miniature water lily with leaves about the size of a quarter, can form dense mats on the surface of slow-moving waters like bayous, backwaters and wetlands. These mats can impede boat traffic and alter food and habitat for ducks and fish.



Spreading across Michigan

European frog-bit was first detected in SE Michigan in 1996 and has since spread along the coastal areas of lakes Erie and Huron up to the eastern U.P.

In 2016, the plant was discovered in Reeds and Fisk lakes in East Grand Rapids. It was found in several small bodies of water in Oakland County in 2018 and in the Lower Grand River in Ottawa County and Pentwater Lake in Oceana County in 2019.

While waterfowl, currents and stream flow can spread the plant and its seeds, European frog-bit, like most invasive species, travels farther and faster by human movement. Plant parts and seeds can become attached to boat motors, trailers, decoys and other recreational gear in an infested body of water and be transferred unintentionally to another location.

What is being done

To date, EGLE staff has completed surveys of bodies of water in the Dansville State Game Area and Waterloo and Pinkney state recreations areas, as well as most lakes with public access in the area, finding no additional infestations.

All visible frog-bit plants were successfully removed by hand from Mills Lake, but due to heavy infestations, Mud, Green and Winnewanna lakes and the Dansville State Game Area waterway require more intensive response options that cannot be completed in 2020.

Survey and removal efforts are ongoing in West Michigan, where crews from the West Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) and the Gun Lake Tribe are working with EGLE to remove or treat infestations around heavily used boating access sites and to protect culturally and ecologically significant sites like wild rice beds in the Lower Grand River.

The Oakland County CISMA is continuing its survey of lakes and wetlands and has begun controlling the invasive plant in some infested areas.

What you can do

To prevent further spread of European frog-bit, boaters, waterfowl hunters and anglers should "[Clean, Drain and Dry](#)" boats, trailers and gear before moving them to a new location.

State law now requires boaters to do the following before transporting any watercraft over land:

- Remove all drain plugs from bilges, ballast tanks and live wells.
- Drain all water from live wells and bilges.
- Ensure the watercraft, trailer and all conveyances are free of aquatic organisms, including plants.

If you spend time on or around the water, learn how to identify European frog-bit and report any sightings using the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network website at MISIN.MSU.edu or the MISIN

downloadable app. When reporting, be sure to note the date, time and location of the sighting and take photos if possible.

Reports also can be made to EGLE's Aquatic Invasive Species Program by email to EGLE-WRD-ANC@michigan.gov or by calling 517-284-5593.

To find out more about [European frog-bit](#) and other aquatic invasive species, visit Michigan.gov/Invasives ◇

Interpreting steelhead fin clips

Since 2018, yearling steelhead stocked into Great Lakes waters have been marked with an adipose fin clip and coded wire tag (CWT) by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's [Great Lakes Mass Marking Program](#). This means that anglers are beginning to see more fin-clipped steelhead showing up in catches around the Great Lakes and in tributary streams. However, steelhead marks are not as easy to interpret as Chinook salmon marks have been since 2014. With Chinook salmon, anglers could be almost certain that the fish was wild if it did not have an adipose fin clip. This is not true for steelhead because fall fingerling steelhead are stocked without fin clips and many steelhead stocked before 2018 had no marks.

A variety of steelhead and rainbow trout strains are stocked into the Great Lakes system as well, and some state and provincial agencies use other marks in addition to the adipose fin clip for certain strains stocked in certain locations. All of this will make interpretation of steelhead fin clips somewhat challenging for the upcoming fall steelhead run, but the resources below may be able to help you to figure out what strain you caught and where it was stocked.

- [Learn more](#) about how to interpret steelhead fin clips
- Consult Michigan DNR's [Fish Stocking Database](#) ◇

Michigan Fishery Advisory Committees updates

Jim Dexter, DNR Fisheries Chief, provided an update to the Fishery Advisory Committee chairs and others on Covid restrictions impacting the Fisheries Division policies. In addition, other important items impacting the Division were discussed. The highlights are below.

Covid Related Issues

Field Work: Approval was obtained to get workers in the field in late June for individual work only. Since that time there is approval for family unit work. A family consists of workers from one office only. The Great Lakes crews were on the water after July 4. The crews began with attempting to catch up on the spring surveys but that did not work out well so they switched to the summer and fall survey work. The staff is adjusting to the Covid guidelines and they are able to stay in motels. Inland surveys are being done. Jim Dexter is pursuing having the staff from more than one office work together. This would be helpful for larger inland surveys such as the Au Sable River and egg take operations at the Swan River and Little Manistee Weirs.

Office and Shop Work: Staff still are not permitted to work in the office. They can go into the office to get things and then return home to work. Lab staff can work occasionally in the Lab but only one at a time. Technicians cannot work in the shops which is a major challenge since this is where a tremendous amount of work is normally done to maintain the field equipment. Currently, the workers can only go to the shops to obtain items and then take them home to work on them. Jim continues to attempt to relax these restrictions, but it depends on the Governor's directives.

It appears that the staff will be working at home for many more months and possibly they may not return to the office full time until an effective vaccine is available.

Travel is only permitted for critical work. Surveys are considered critical. Out of state travel is not approved.

Hiring: Currently, there is a hiring freeze that will probably continue into next year. There are many vacancies and others will be added moving into next year.

Hatcheries: The hatcheries are fully staffed but the public is not permitted to visit them. There are plans to collect coho and Chinook salmon eggs this fall.

Work began at Thompson State Fish Hatchery last year to increase steelhead, musky and walleye production capacity. After delays last year because of the weather, the project is moving along very well. The chances are good that walleye will be raised next year but it does not appear that raising musky will happen until 2022.

Loss of Atlantic Salmon at the Platte River State Fish Hatchery was caused by testing the electrical system that needed upgrading. When the contractors were checking the system all the alarms sounded. The Atlantic Salmon are raised in the dark so the hatchery staff, with the use of flashlights, checked the fish but it was not noticed that the flow stopped in four of six raceways. Within 45 minutes, the fish in the tanks without the flow were dead. About 100,000 Atlantic salmon out of 140,000 did not survive. The defect in the alarm system was identified and changes have been made to ensure this problem does not occur again. The good news is there are about 100,000 Atlantic salmon that are doing well at the Harrietta State Hatchery and added to the number that survived at the Platte River Hatchery there should still be a good amount of Atlantic salmon planted at the stocking sites next spring. This loss was a rare occurrence and it was the first major loss in 16 years.

Fishery Orders before the Natural Resources Commission are FO-200 Trout and Salmon, and FO 206 Special Regulations for Warmwater Species and Inland Lakes. These orders have many issues that are being considered but because there

was concern that these orders could not be adequately vetted with the public because of Covid-19, they will not be acted upon until next year. The staff continues to work on additional regulation proposals that will be brought before the Commission next year. It is anticipated that there will be no interruption in the regulation change process next year.

Cormorant Program update:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposes to establish a new permit system for State and federally recognized Tribal wildlife agencies for the management of double-crested cormorants. The new permit would authorize specific take activities that are intended to relieve or prevent impacts from cormorants on lands within State or Tribal jurisdictions to address conflicts with:

- Wild and publicly stocked fish stocked by State or Tribal agencies
 - Tribal and State-owned or operated aquaculture facilities including hatcheries
 - Human health and safety
 - State or Tribal-owned property and assets
 - Threatened and endangered species
- The Service would retain ultimate authority for regulating the take of cormorants. The States and Tribes would have the discretion to determine whether, when, where, and for which of the above purposes they would conduct the lethal take within limits and allocations set by the Service.

The Fisheries Division and the Wildlife Division have been reviewing this new proposal and there are some concerns that they commented on. The current proposal is very strong on cormorant protections, but it does not clearly demonstrate how the fishery impacts will be comprehensively addressed in Michigan. In addition, under the proposal there would be no control implemented on federal properties including Sugar, and Scarecrow Islands located in Thunder Bay near Alpena, and Big and Little Charity

Michigan Committee updates – continued

Islands located in Saginaw Bay. The goal is to be able to at least double the number of cormorants that can be taken each year.

Budget Update:

Fiscal Year 2020: Fisheries Division came through this budget year rather well. The DNR reduction overall in funds was 5.3% but the Fisheries Division reduction was minimal. A \$500,000 supplemental general fund grant was provided a couple of years ago to be used for a restoration project but some of that money was diverted to balance the Division's budget for 2020.

Fiscal Year 2021: It is likely that there will be reductions but possibly not as much as originally estimated.

Salmon Weir Contract:

A new weir contract was completed since the old contract expired last year. The previous contract cost \$175,000 per year. Only one bid for the new contract was received at \$265,000 annually. To reduce costs the Medusa Weir was removed from the contract which will save \$20,000 dollars. A blocking weir will be placed at the mouth of Medusa Creek to keep the fish in the lake. The contract is for 2 years and it is renewable on an annual basis. The company does pay the DNR a penny per pound of the fish harvested but that only amounts to about \$10,000 annually. So for 2020, it is estimated that it will cost about \$235,000 to harvest the salmon at the weirs.

Potential Legislative Actions:

Legislative action may still be taken on the **Commercial Fishing Bills** this fall when the legislature is back in session. Senator McBroom has been meeting with representatives on all sides of the issue.

Fisheries Division is interested in **updating the current Emergency Rule law**. Currently, the minimum time needed to implement an emergency rule is 21 days and a notification must be placed in newspapers in all the counties where the waterbody exists. Wildlife and Fisheries Division would like to have

the capability of implementing an emergency rule within 24 hours. Instead of having the authority to have the emergency rule be implemented for an unlimited time period, a renewal of the emergency rule every 30 to 90 days is being considered for incorporating into a new updated law. Also, it is more practical to allow the use of digital media instead of just newspapers to notify the public of an emergency rule change.

The law only recognizes the printed version of the **Fishing Guide**. More and more people are using the internet to obtain information and as a result the number of printed Guides has been reduced from 1.25 million to 500,000. Anytime there is a rule change between the time the new Guides are printed, the change is immediately placed in the updated internet version. The goal is to amend the law and have the internet version of the Guide recognize as a legal version. This would allow even fewer Guides to be printed resulting in savings to Fisheries Division.

License Sales:

License revenue for the year so far is up about 10% and 40% of that increase is coming from anglers 17 to 45 years of age which is encouraging for the future.

Salmon and Sturgeon in the Classroom

Both the DNR and volunteers are interested in developing a protocol for a virtual version of Salmon, and Sturgeon in the Classroom. Because of Covid, it is a difficult year for the schools, teachers, and students but the hope is to make some progress.

Fishing Reports:

Fishing in **Southern Lake Michigan** has been good with many large fish taken. The fish appear healthy.

From an ongoing survey conducted by the Lake Michigan Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee, fishing **throughout Lake Michigan** has been average or so for coho and Chinook salmon, steelhead has been average, and lake trout fishing has been

excellent. The salmon are moving around so the fishing at various ports has been sporadic at times. Also, there is a lot of baitfish that are competing with the fishing lures making fishing more of a challenge. Boating of all kinds is up this season.

There is an increase in juvenile walleyes in **Little Bay de Noc** which may be reflecting recent stocking efforts. Currently, there are several assessment nets in both Little and Big **Bays de Noc** so anyone fishing in the area should be alert for net markers. Baitfish abundance is up significantly in Little Bay de Noc down into Wisconsin.

Lake Huron: Fishing for walleye in Saginaw Bay and lake trout at most deep water ports has been very good. It has been an exceptional year for steelhead at most ports. Coho Salmon fishing has been good this year in the southern waters and this may reflect the experimental stocking of a total 100,000 coho salmon at two ports. More will be known when the coho salmon return to those stocking sites during late summer and the fall. Chinook salmon are beginning to show up in good numbers in the north.

Lake Erie: Fishing has been excellent with lots of anglers getting out and many fish being caught.

Charter Fishing Activity: A survey through July 1 of this year showed that Charter Fishing was down by 56% but since that time there has been a surge in the number of Charter Fishing trips. It is too early to know but the recent interest in Charter Fishing should provide for a much better season than first anticipated this spring. ✧

Money to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes

This month, the U.S. Senate approved funding to appropriate \$8 million to the Department of Natural Resources for Michigan's contribution to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plan to rebuild the Brandon Road Lock and Dam in Illinois.

Other Breaking News Items: **(Click on title or URL to read full article)**

Judge Oks oil flow through second Great Lakes pipeline

Enbridge said Wednesday it will fully resume operation of a Michigan Great Lakes oil pipeline after a partial shutdown this summer because of damage to a support structure. [Read the full story by The Associated Press](#)

Sturgeon stocking: COVID-19 puts pause on popular sturgeon release program

In Ohio, The Toledo Zoo's popular lake sturgeon stocking event won't happen this year, though a pause in the program – thanks to the international COVID-19 pandemic – won't hurt the project.

Apostle Islands' Shaw Point added to National Historic Register

The Shaw Point Historic District on Sand Island in Lake Superior has been added to the National Register of Historic Places. The historic district on Wisconsin's Apostle Islands National Lakeshore holds a unique collection of three neighboring properties at

Big problems for smallest Great Lake: More precipitation, warmer temperatures and controversial regulation plan upend life along Lake Ontario

Drenching rains, wet winters, warmer air and water, less ice cover and more runoff have formed a meteorological cocktail that has contributed to unprecedented Great Lakes water levels, flood-producing storms and the degradation of the shoreline, scientists say.

Michigan company awarded \$7M contract to replace WWII-era valves at Soo Locks

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District, has awarded a \$7 million contract to replace World War II-era valves at the Soo Locks.

Isle Royale moose skeleton gives researchers unusual discovery

There's not much that stumps researchers involved in the world's longest-running predator/prey study on Michigan's remote Isle Royale, but scientists made a first-time find recently when they examined a moose skeleton

New funding announced to help protect St. Marys River

The Canadian federal government is helping to restore and protect the St. Marys River with \$95,000 from the Great Lakes Sustainability Fund, Sault Ste. Marie MP Terry Sheehan announced

World waterspout record set over Great Lakes, researchers say

At least 88 waterspouts or funnels were spotted across the Great Lakes this week, setting a new world record, according to the International Centre for Waterspout Research

Evanston plans for temporary shoreline fixes; federal sand replacement pilot project could benefit Glencoe, Evanston

Evanston, Illinois, aldermen agreed to spend about \$750,000 earlier this month in stop-gap measures to help protect the city's eroding shoreline. The \$750,000 to be spent in Evanston aims to address damage caused by record high Lake Michigan water

DNR seeks data from anglers to help manage muskie, lake sturgeon

The St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair, Detroit River corridor is known for its muskie fishing, but the Michigan Department of Natural Resources is looking to learn more about these well-traveled waterways and how they are fished. They need some help from anglers

La Niña odds increased again, could impact Michigan and Great Lakes winter

The chance of a La Niña developing this fall has been increased to 60 percent. When La Niña is strong enough and lasts into winter, the weather pattern can be altered to a more harsh-winter situation.

Complete Eradication: Researchers look at removing sea lamprey from the Great Lakes

Sea lamprey control efforts have been so successful that some researchers now suggest a more permanent solution: complete eradication of the pest from the Great Lakes.

Judge grants Bay Mills Indian community permission to intervene in Michigan pipeline fight

An administrative law judge granted Bay Mills Indian Community the right to intervene in the ongoing pipeline fight uniting Tribes, environmental groups and community members against oil giant Enbridge. The decision will allow Bay Mills to be a party

Seawalls, other barriers could have lasting impact on Great Lakes after water recedes

Desperate measures to protect homes from erosion and high water could have lasting impacts on Great Lakes' once-natural coastlines that have been hardened with rock and steel.

Behind the effort to stop a grass carp invasion

Scientists are trying to understand and limit the spread of invasive grass carp in order to prevent a large-scale established population of the fish in Lake Erie and the Great Lakes

Reef construction provides a man-made assist for Lake Michigan fish and wildlife

Engineers and biologists with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Lake County Forest Preserve District are building an artificial reef in Lake Michigan near the Illinois shoreline. The reef is designed to restore biodiversity to Lake Michigan by providing habitat

Groups want to revamp Michigan's can, bottle deposit law: What it means

Michigan's 10-cent deposit law on beer, pop and other bottles and cans, enacted in 1976, has been wildly successful in getting those receptacles recycled, though the state still lags in overall recycling. But those involved in making, distributing and collecting

End