



## Expectations High for another Great Year of Lake Erie Walleye Fishing

### Lake-wide yellow perch fishing will still be below par

**COLUMBUS, Ohio** – Lake Erie anglers can expect world-class walleye fishing opportunities to continue during the 2022 fishing season following years of strong hatches, according to the Ohio DNR. Lake Erie maintains its title as The Walleye Capital of the World thanks to science-based management guiding regulations that conserve and ensure long-term angling opportunities across Ohio’s waters.

Additionally, a strong yellow perch population in Lake Erie’s west zone will provide good fishing in 2022, while low catch rates are expected to continue in the central and east zones.

Lake Erie walleye and yellow perch fisheries are managed through

an interagency quota system. Each jurisdiction regulates its catches to comply with annually determined safe harvest levels that ensure sustainability. The most recent quotas were announced [on Friday, March 25](#).



*The walleye daily limit on Ohio’s portion of Lake Erie is 6 fish per angler with a 15” minimum length limit.*

#### Walleye

The walleye daily limit on Lake Erie is six fish per angler with a 15-inch minimum length limit. Walleye hatch success has been exceptional for six of the past eight years. Anglers will mostly catch abundant 2- to 4-year-old-fish ranging from 15 to 22 inches. Larger fish from 2015 and earlier hatches will provide chances to reel in a [Fish Ohio qualifying walleye](#) (minimum 28 inches).

Abundant young fish will show up in the catch and range from 9 to 14 inches, with an increasing number of 2-year-olds reaching 15 inches as the season progresses. Anglers are

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## DEC April 26 Angler Outreach Meeting Presentation on Status of Lake Erie and Niagara River Fisheries

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is inviting the public to learn more about the status of Lake Erie and Upper Niagara River fisheries at a public meeting on Tuesday, **April 26**, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at Woodlawn Beach State Park's lodge.

"DEC is committed to sound management of the Lake Erie and Upper Niagara River fisheries to maintain high-quality angling opportunities and associated economic benefits," said DEC Acting Regional Director Chad Staniszewski. "This event provides an excellent opportunity for anglers to interact with the biologists who study and manage Great Lakes fisheries."

This annual meeting is held by DEC's Lake Erie Fisheries Unit and Region 9 Fisheries offices to provide a

series of presentations on Lake Erie and the Upper Niagara River fisheries topics, and includes opportunities for informal discussion. The meeting will feature information on Lake Erie fisheries management, assessment activities, and research for prominent sport and restoration fisheries. The event is free of charge and registration is not required.

Lake Erie and the upper Niagara River rank among New York's top fishing destinations, especially for walleye, smallmouth bass, and steelhead. The 2017 statewide angler survey estimated more than 900,000 angler days spent on these waters and the estimated economic value of these fisheries exceeded \$17 million. For [information about fishing Lake Erie and Western New York](#), go to DEC's website. ✧

## One-fish walleye limit set on Mille Lacs Lake for spring, fall fishing

Mille Lacs Lake walleye anglers will have two potential opportunities for harvest during the 2022 open water season. A one-fish limit will allow Mille Lacs anglers to harvest one walleye 21-23 inches or one longer than 28 inches from Saturday, May 14 through Monday, May 30. After a summer of catch-and-release fishing with an early July closure to reduce hooking mortality, the one-fish limit is expected to return on Thursday, September 1.

“We must continue to manage state harvest very carefully on Mille Lacs so we can provide as much angling opportunity as prudent while protecting the opportunities for the future,” said Brad Parsons, fisheries section manager for the DNR. “Two recent year classes show below average numbers of walleye, which means we need to factor in that fewer fish than normal will mature into spawning adults during the next few years.”

After opening weekend (when fishing is allowed 24 hours a day) fishing hours on Mille Lacs Lake will be 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. for all species. Beginning Saturday, June 4, muskie and pike anglers using artificial lures or sucker minnows longer than 8 inches can fish after 10 p.m.

Walleye fishing will be catch-and-release from Wednesday, June 1 through Thursday, June 30. A two-week closure – implemented to reduce hooking mortality — will be in place from Friday, July 1 through Friday, July 15. Catch-and-release walleye fishing will resume on Saturday, July 16 and continue through Wednesday, August 31. The one-fish walleye limit is scheduled to resume Thursday, September 1 through Wednesday, November 30. During this period, anglers may fish from 6 a.m. to midnight.

The drop from last year’s levels of 87,800 pounds for state anglers and 62,200 pounds for tribal harvest was

necessary to account for below-average catches of the 2018 and 2019 year classes in the fall walleye population survey. “Factors can change so we’ll reassess the walleye population come fall,” Parsons said. “Fish in those year classes in question are important for replacing the current mature walleye that are lost to both fishing and natural mortality.”

This year’s winter walleye harvest was about 6,800 pounds, less than half of what was expected. Lower catch rates for anglers and poor ice conditions in the early season were responsible. That drop in winter walleye take gave the DNR more flexibility to implement less restrictive open water regulations for 2022. Even with the drop in winter harvest, a two-week closure during what’s normally one of the hottest times of the summer is needed to remain within the state’s harvest total. As water temperature increases, so does hooking mortality—the tendency for fish to die after being caught and released. Protecting walleye during this vulnerable period can allow for many weeks of harvest during cooler times of the year.

The northern pike population on Mille Lacs Lake is healthy and harvest of fish under 30” is encouraged for anglers looking for another option to bring home a meal of fish. To help avoid incidental catch of walleye during the two-week closure in July, fishing for any species with certain kinds of bait will be restricted. Anglers targeting northern pike and muskellunge can use sucker minnows longer than 8”. But anglers targeting other fish may not use live, dead, preserved or parts of minnows, night crawlers, worms, leeches or crayfish. More information about fishing regulations on Mille Lacs Lake, ongoing DNR management and research, and Mille Lacs area recreation opportunities is available on the [DNR website \(mndnr.gov/MilleLacsLake\)](http://mndnr.gov/MilleLacsLake). ✧



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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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## On first mission to Great Lakes, NOAA ship will sonar map Lake Erie

CLEVELAND, OH — What's underneath Lake Erie?

The answer isn't a total mystery to Great Lakes mariners, but parts of lakebed off Ohio and Pennsylvania haven't been surveyed since the 1940s and nautical charts that commercial ships rely on are long overdue for an update. Because of that, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is sending one of its four deep-water hydrographic survey ships, the [Thomas Jefferson](#), into the Great Lakes for several months this year to sonar-map the lakebed under heavily trafficked areas.

The mission marks the *Jefferson's* first visit to the Great Lakes, and the first visit from a NOAA survey ship since Lake Huron was mapped off Alpena in the early 1990s. [The 2022 mission](#) is part of a stepped-up effort to map the Great Lakes in recent years and will also involve surveying parts of the Detroit River and Lake Michigan off Wisconsin.

"It's been a long time," said Matthew Jaskoski, commanding officer of the *Thomas Jefferson*, which is embarking for the St. Lawrence Seaway in April following a drydock refit in its home port of Norfolk and some ocean mapping off Virginia.

The *Jefferson's* crew is excited for the voyage, he said. "The seaway is one of the more challenging bits of navigation a mariner can do," Jaskoski said. "The crew is very eager to get to a new place."

Once in Lake Erie, the *Jefferson* will use multi-beam sonar to create 3D images of the lakebed. The focus is around the Cleveland Harbor approaches, as well as around South Bass Island, which is home to the Put-In-Bay village, a tourist hotspot that gets visitors by ferry. In Pennsylvania, the ship will survey around Presque Isle State Park, a sandy spit peninsula that juts into the lake and creates Presque Isle Bay in Erie.

The *Jefferson* will also send a pair of smaller boats it carries on board and deploys with a winch system to the Detroit River, where they will survey around the Ambassador Bridge and the tunnel between the U.S. and Canada. In Lake Erie, the *Jefferson* will be docked in Cleveland when not working offshore. The 208-foot-long ship, launched in 1991 as the U.S. Navy ship *Littlehales*, carries a crew of 35 and can be deployed for weeks at a time.

The ship will remain in Lake Erie; although parts of this year's mission involve mapping Lake Michigan off the [Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast](#), a 962-square mile area that was designated as NOAA's newest National Marine Sanctuary in 2021.

That work will be done by private contractors. "We're getting back into surveying up in the Great Lakes," said Thomas Loeper, Great Lakes navigation manager for NOAA's Office of Coast Survey.

The last time NOAA sent a ship of the *Jefferson's* size and capability to the Great Lakes was the early 1990s, when the NOAA's *Whiting*, a 1960s era vessel with a storied career, mapped Lake Huron in what's become the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The 2022 mission follows \$17 million worth of contracted surveys in the Straits of Mackinac [in 2019](#), southern Lake Michigan around Chicago and the industrialized Indiana shoreline [in 2020](#) and parts of Lake Superior's Whitefish Bay and Lake Michigan's Green Bay [in 2021](#).

NOAA, which is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, surveys high vessel traffic areas. The primary purpose is to update navigational charts, but the data ends up being widely used among state and federal scientists and agencies. "It feeds fisheries, navigation safety, ice models, hydrodynamic models and geological work," Loeper said. "The whole idea of surveying is to do it one time to feed many different

products, not only within NOAA but other state and government agencies and tribal groups."

The mapping work employs a performing a scanning technique known commonly as "mowing the lawn," in which wide swaths of lakebed are surveyed in a grid pattern. The work often ends up locating undiscovered shipwrecks. "It's not uncommon at all," said Jaskoski. "We find new shipwrecks, new obstructions, things on the bottom and changes in the nature of the seabed."

"That's the main reason we're out there: To look for things not on the charts but should be." ✧

### Hudson River striped bass logbook program

Do you fish for striped bass in the Hudson River? Whether you catch-and-release or take home a keeper, you can be part of the [Cooperative Angler Program](#). Share your fishing trip information and help biologists understand and manage our striped bass fishery.

Here's how it works: Fill out a logbook we provide or record your trips on your smartphone using [DEC's Hudson River online logbook](#) whenever you fish on the tidal Hudson River (by boat or on the shore). Record general location, time, gear used, and what you caught (or if you didn't catch anything) and return the logbook when you are done fishing. You'll receive an annual newsletter summarizing the recreational fishery information, in addition to the latest news regarding the Hudson River and its regulations.

For more info: visit the [Hudson River Striped Bass Cooperative Angler Program](#) section of DEC's website or email [HUDSONANGLER@DEC.NY.GOV](mailto:HUDSONANGLER@DEC.NY.GOV). The striped bass fishing season began **April 1, 2022**. For information about fishing regulations, visit DEC's [Freshwater Fishing Regulations](#) webpage. ✧

## DNR asks anglers to report tagged walleye

The Michigan DNR will jaw tag 3,000 walleye across multiple Saginaw Bay tributary rivers. As the DNR adds more tagged walleye to Michigan waters, anglers are asked to report tagged fish to assist data collection efforts. Anyone catching a tagged fish is asked to report the following information using the tag return form at [Michigan.gov/EyesInTheField](http://Michigan.gov/EyesInTheField):

- Species.
- Length.
- Weight (if known).
- Tag location (where tag was attached).
- Identification number (the larger of the two sets of numbers).
- Tag return address (for example MICH DNR MM-1).
  - Capture date and location.

In the notes box of the form, please list time of capture and sex of fish (if known). Each tag is stamped with a unique identifying number. Once a fish has been successfully reported, the angler will receive a letter detailing the fish's history. "The

information reported is essential to measuring the health of the population and is critical data for planning the future management decisions needed to protect and enhance this important fishery," said David Fielder, PhD. research biologist out of the DNR's Alpena Fisheries Research Station. "Besides ensuring the walleye fishery remains sustainable, we also annually estimate the population size with the aid of these tag reports."

The DNR has tagged more than 100,000 walleye in the Saginaw Bay area since 1981. Jaw tagging is part of a long-term research project to monitor survival and harvest rates and to learn about walleye movement.

About 10% of the tags include a \$100 reward for reporting. To be eligible for a reward, photos are required of the flattened tag. Anglers can keep or release the fish. If anglers are not interested in a reward, please do not remove the tag before releasing the fish.

Tagging occurs each spring on the

Tittabawassee River and other Saginaw Bay tributaries during the walleye spawning run. Walleye are collected with electrofishing boats that temporarily stun the fish to allow fisheries biologists and technicians to collect vital statistics, tag the fish and release them back into the river after the fish have recovered. After spawning, walleye migrate back into Saginaw Bay and a large number migrate out of the bay into Lake Huron. The fish that migrate out of the bay have been found ranging to the Straits of Mackinac to the north and Lake Erie to the south.

A second study will take place in Saginaw Bay this year in which 150 walleye will be implanted with acoustic transmitters that allow researchers to track the fish and learn more about their movement. Those walleye will have belly tags and will also include a \$100 reward for the return of the transmitter. To learn more about marked and tagged fish, [visit Michigan.gov/TaggedFish](http://Michigan.gov/TaggedFish) ✧

## 2022 Ojibwe spring fishing season starting soon

**MADISON, Wis.** – The Wisconsin DNR reminds Wisconsinites of the protected tribal right to fish in certain Wisconsin waterways and the legal consequences they could face if found interfering with that right during the upcoming Ojibwe spring fishing season. "The department has zero-tolerance for harassment of tribal members who are exercising their treaty rights," said DNR Secretary Preston D. Cole. "We fully support Ojibwe sovereignty and treaty rights."

Each tribal fishing season, tribal members harvest using various high-efficiency methods, including spearing and netting. The DNR collaborates with the Ojibwe tribes to uphold these tribal rights. "Tribal members have the right to hunt, fish, and gather in the Ceded Territories," said Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul. "Any attempt to interfere with those rights is illegal and should be reported to local law enforcement and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and

Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC)."

Part of the collaboration between the DNR and the Ojibwe tribes includes working together to set a safe harvest limit for every Walleye and Musky lake in the Ceded Territory. These safe harvest limits ensure that the these harvests do not adversely affect each lake's fishery.

The spring tribal fish harvest usually begins in mid- to late-April and runs through May, or shortly after the ice melts. The season typically starts in the southern portion of the Ceded Territory and moves north as the season progresses. The tribal harvest is not a date-regulated activity, and as a result, there is neither an open nor closed season.

There are 2,300 lakes larger than 25 acres in the Ceded Territory, including 919 walleye lakes and 623 musky lakes. Each year, the Ojibwe tribal members fish a portion of these lakes outside of reservation boundaries during their spring harvest season.

Tribal members rely on these lakes to preserve their cultural heritage and also act as a vital food source.

By March 15 of every year, each tribe declares how many walleyes and muskellunge it intends to harvest from each lake based on the safe harvest limits. Harvest begins shortly after the ice melts, with nightly fishing permits issued by the tribes to their members to harvest a specific number of fish, including one walleye between 20 and 24 inches and one additional walleye of any size.

All fish taken are documented each night by a tribal clerk or warden present at boat landings. Once the declared harvest is reached in a given lake, no additional permits are issued for that lake, and the harvest ends. The Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) provides daily reports to the DNR for all fish harvested off-reservation by spearing or netting in the Ceded Territory. ✧

## Reduced Steelhead Limit Now in Effect for Select Waters

As of March 15, the harvest limit for steelhead has been reduced from three to one fish per day on portions of the Carp, Manistee, Little Manistee, Manistique, Muskegon, and Pere Marquette rivers along with Bear Creek and the Big South Branch of the PM. The reduced limit on these waters will be in effect from March 15 through May 15 for the next five years. During that time, the impact of the new regulations will be evaluated.

The changes were made in a Natural Resources Commission (NRC) amendment to Fisheries Order 200.22, which was passed on December 9 following public comment and a presentation of data on steelhead population trends from DNR. The NRC often passes amendments based on recommendations from DNR, but in this case DNR noted that current science does not demonstrate the need for a reduced steelhead harvest limit and recommended no change to the harvest limit.

Supporters of the limit reduction noted the need for additional data on steelhead harvest, abundance, and fishing effort in popular rivers. Many were concerned that fishing effort has been increasing in recent years while catch rates seem to be going down. However, there is no recent creel survey data available from the past few years to verify this. The NRC opted to act now with the understanding that improved science could lead to continuation, revision, or abandonment of the limit reduction in years to come.

Sea Grant has been involved in surveys that demonstrated support for a reduced harvest limit in streams. In particular, anglers and guides who are primarily catch-and-release anglers overwhelmingly supported a lower limit. However, those who prefer to keep some steelhead were more likely to prefer the three fish limit. Going back to the precedent set by Proposal G, fisheries management in Michigan operates under the principle that one group should not control how other

groups utilize a resource unless there is a sound scientific reason for restricting use.

The situation highlights the difficulty of making decisions in the absence of complete information. In my role with Sea Grant, I look for opportunities to engage anglers and decision-makers. Information flow always goes both ways, and the [Michigan River Steelhead Project](#) is a prime example of this.

If you fish for steelhead, please consider participating. Over the next few years we will continue to collect data on angler-caught steelhead, conduct surveys on management issues including the limit reduction, and provide regular opportunities to meet with biologists, other steelhead anglers, and decision-makers around the state.

- [Full details](#) on new regulations from NRC amendment
- [Article](#) with Sea Grant comment to NRC and details on survey results ✧

### Lake Erie Walleye Fishing

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encouraged to release these sub-legal fish with as little handling as possible so they can contribute to the future fishery.

### Yellow perch

Yellow perch abundance in the west zone from Toledo to Huron was above average in 2021 and is expected to remain strong in 2022, supported by consistent hatch success. The 2021 season occasionally provided good fishing in the west zone and should again in 2022. The best success is anticipated during July through mid-August during warm-water periods, and again during mid-October through November as adult perch move to shallow water to feed.

Lake Erie's central zone from Huron to Fairport Harbor continues to experience low yellow perch abundance, primarily driven by poor to moderate hatches during the past decade. Conservative quotas continue to be set each year. In the east zone from Fairport Harbor to Conneaut, catches have been similar to the central zone with a slightly larger adult

population. Catch rates are expected to remain low during the 2022 season, except for times such as late fall when adult perch congregate in larger schools near harbors.

Yellow perch daily limits for each zone remain as described in the [2022-23 fishing regulations](#) until May 1, 2022. Any adjustments in daily limits will be announced at [wildohio.gov](#) and on an insert printed for Ohio's fishing regulations brochure before May 1.

### Bass

Smallmouth bass and largemouth bass fishing in 2022 will provide good fishing with the opportunity for trophy catches. The daily limit is five bass per day, with a 14-inch minimum size limit through Saturday, April 30, and again from June 25 to April 30, 2023. During the spawning season from May 1 to June 24, 2022, anglers may harvest one bass per day with a minimum size limit of 18 inches.

Lake Erie fishing reports, information on Lake Erie research and management programs, fisheries resources, maps, and links to other Lake Erie web resources are available at [wildohio.gov](#). The current fishing regulations can be found on the [HuntFish OH app](#), at [wildohio.gov](#), or locations where fishing licenses are sold. ✧

## After 30 years of cleanup, Waukegan Harbor will soon be off EPA's 'concern' list

Thanks to decades of work, Waukegan Harbor is poised to be taken off a federal list of environmentally polluted sites. "We will be advertising it everywhere that we succeeded and that the mark can come off our name," said Max Pekcan, general manager of Waukegan Harbor and Marina. More than \$150 million in federal funding has been spent since 1992 to remove harmful chemicals from Illinois' Waukegan Harbor, and now officials say the harbor finally is poised to be taken off the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes Areas of Concern list. ✧

## Lake Michigan's thaw marks an end to subpar ice coverage

As ice coverage across the Great Lakes falls from winter highs with spring and summer warming ahead, Lake Michigan is likely to end up with a just-below-average season. Lake Michigan reached an ice coverage high of 37% in February, according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, which records and models ice coverage.

The long-term average maximum cover for Lake Michigan, going back to 1973, is about 41%. Early projections for the season estimated near-record low ice coverage for the Great Lakes but were adjusted as a string of freezing temperatures chilled much of the region. Tracking ice cover is important so that long-term trends can be identified despite occasional years of high or low ice coverage.

Ice cover is highly variable, but overall there are now fewer days with ice and coverage is decreasing at a rate of about 5% per decade. The

disappearance is less pronounced in Lake Michigan, and more so in Lake Superior, which is among the planet's fastest-warming lakes.

The overall decline doesn't mean that we're not going to continue to have high ice years. Overall, Great Lakes coverage peaked in late February at about 56%, just above the long-term average. Lake Michigan, along with Lake Ontario, was an outlier. The other Great Lakes, particularly Lake Superior and Lake Erie, experienced above-average maximum coverage.

Lake Superior, which generally hits maximum coverage later in the season, reached a peak of about 79% coverage in mid-March, up from an average 62%. The lake has continued to see above-average cover in recent days. "Despite the fact that at this time of the year, it's usually decreasing," he said. "This particular year seems to be peaking even later than typical for Superior."

Lake Michigan's ice coverage in

the last week has been as low as 15% and as high as 22%. The lake's surface temperatures are sticking close to the average going back to 1995 and are likely to begin the climb toward seasonal highs reached around August. Disappearing ice coverage was among the effects of climate change spotlighted in the latest United Nations report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It's one of many shifts to which people and ecosystems will need to adapt as the world continues to warm, largely as a result of heat-trapping greenhouse gases produced from the burning of fossil fuels.

"Some of the most dramatic changes are happening in the winter," said project organizer Ted Ozersky, an associate professor at the University of Minnesota at Duluth. "If we don't understand how the Great Lakes work for a big chunk of the year, I think we're not in a good position to predict how they will change." ✧

## Wash your hands: Highly contagious bird flu reaches Michigan wild flocks

Government officials say the highly-contagious H5N1 Avian flu has appeared in wild Canada geese and tundra swans in St. Clair County, snowy owls in Macomb County and a mute swan in Monroe County. A highly contagious, potentially deadly bird flu that is spreading around the world and across the nation has reached Michigan's wild flocks.

The Michigan DNR announced that the H5N1 subtype of Avian influenza, or "bird flu" has been detected in wild birds in three southeast counties. State officials said the risk to humans is low, but they are concerned about future spread and are taking steps to contain the disease.

"It is important to remember that it's a zoonotic disease, so it can be spread between wild animals and people," said Dr. Megan Moriarty, a wildlife veterinary specialist, in an interview with Bridge. "So it's still good for people to take precautions."

Avoid handling sick or dead birds,

wash your hands, and keep your distance, Moriarty said. The positive cases came from Canada geese and tundra swans in St. Clair County, snowy owls in Macomb County and a mute swan in Monroe County.

Officials first detected the virus in a Kalamazoo County domestic poultry flock in February. Domesticated flocks typically contract the disease from wild birds that can more easily move from place to place.

State agriculture regulators are urging poultry owners to protect their flocks by isolating their birds from humans and wild birds, and disinfecting their hands and clothing after interacting with their flocks. The virus has infected wild birds in at least 25 states so far this year. Officials expect those numbers to rise as testing continues. Since 2003, the World Health Organization has taken in reports of more than 860 human H5N1 infections, with a 53% percent death rate among them. But experts note that

many cases are asymptomatic, and the current wave poses a low risk to humans.

Still, "it's a pretty dangerous disease," Moriarty said. "People need to remain vigilant." Only one person—a poultry owner in the United Kingdom—has recently contracted a documented infection, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The patient had no symptoms. The U.S. remains free of documented human cases. The CDC notes that properly handled and cooked poultry remains safe to eat.

Birds shed the virus through their saliva and waste, and humans can contract it through their eyes, nose, mouth or inhalation. Typical patients are people who have been in close unprotected contact with infected birds.

The DNR is asking residents to report groups of dead wild birds, and call MDARD at 800-292-3939 to report sick or dying poultry. ✧

## Lake Erie Committee sets yellow perch and walleye allowable catches for 2022

**Ann Arbor, MI** – Lake Erie fishery managers from Michigan, New York, Ohio, Ontario and Pennsylvania—meeting as the binational Lake Erie Committee (LEC)—agreed to a total allowable catch (TAC) for 2022 of 14.533 million walleye and 7.185 million pounds of yellow perch. Walleye are allocated by number of fish and yellow perch are allocated in pounds. These TACs represent an increase in walleye from 12.284 million fish last year and an increase for yellow perch from 6.238 million pounds of fish. Specific allocations of both species are presented below by jurisdiction.

The LEC makes TAC decisions by consensus of the members. The LEC's TAC recommendations are produced after extensive, lakewide biological assessments, analyses, discussions, and consultations with stakeholders. The recommendations are consistent with the status of Lake Erie's fish populations, taking into the account the goal of stable harvest. The individual state and provincial governments implement the TACs in their jurisdiction in accordance with their respective regulations and management objectives.

**WALLEYE:** Guided by the Walleye Management Plan, which was developed in consultation with the Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group (LEPMAG), the LEC set a 2022 lakewide walleye TAC of 14.533 million fish, an 18% increase over the 2021 TAC of 12.284 million fish. The increased TAC reflects continued strong recruitment and high population levels over the last several years. The Province of Ontario and the states of Ohio and Michigan share the TAC based on a formula of walleye habitat within each jurisdiction in the western and central basins of the lake. Under the 2022 TAC, Ohio will be entitled to 7.428 million fish, Ontario 6.258 million fish, and Michigan 0.847 million fish. Jurisdictions in eastern Lake Erie are outside of the TAC area, but harvest limits are set consistent with lakewide objectives.

**YELLOW PERCH:** The yellow perch fishery is divided into four management units (MU), which generally correspond to the western, west-central, east-central, and eastern basins of Lake Erie. The LEC has strived to maintain sustainable harvest while responding to changing abundance. The proposed TAC represents differences among the management units in abundance and biomass.

Guided by the Yellow Perch Management Plan (YPMP), the LEC has finalized TAC decisions for each management unit as follows:

The TAC in MU 1 will increase to 3.038 million pounds.  
The TAC in MU 2 will decrease to 0.537 million pounds.  
The TAC in MU 3 will increase to 3.082 million pounds.  
The TAC in MU 4 will increase to 0.528 million pounds.

In making these recommendations, the LEC relied on the YPMP, which was also developed in consultation with the LEPMAG, and provided the technical foundation for the LEC's decisions. The plan established harvest policies aimed at maintaining population and fishery sustainability for each MU using a stakeholder driven process. Each harvest policy was extensively evaluated using simulation modeling with data inputs from fishery-dependent and fishery-independent sources. The YPMP was designed to ensure fishery sustainability and quality to satisfy conservation and maintain socio-economic benefits.

The LEC acknowledges the significance of the cut in the MU 2 TAC in 2021. Ongoing declines in abundance have indicated that an additional cut in 2022 was required. Poor recruitment in 7 of the past 9 years has reduced the population and triggered harvest policy actions leading to a reduction in the fishing rate and low TAC. Reducing harvest in accordance with the LEC's YPMP helps ensure sustainable spawning stock levels that will allow the best opportunity for recovery. The LEC also acknowledges stakeholder concerns surrounding the mixed signals of recruitment and relatively poor fisheries performance in MU 3 in recent years. However, adult biomass in MU 3 remains above the threshold for sustainability and increased slightly in 2022, resulting in an increase in TAC in accordance the YPMP harvest policy.

The following table reflects the distribution of the 2022 yellow perch TAC within each management unit for each agency. Units are expressed in millions of pounds.

Management Unit	Agency	2022 TAC
1	Ontario	1.233
	Michigan	0.276
	Ohio	<u>1.528</u>
	<b>Total</b>	3.038
2	Ontario	0.245
	Ohio	<u>0.292</u>
	<b>Total</b>	0.537
3	Ontario	1.612
	Ohio	0.999
	Pennsylvania	<u>0.472</u>
	<b>Total</b>	3.082
4	Ontario	0.306
	Pennsylvania	0.058
	New York	<u>0.164</u>
	<b>Total</b>	0.528
LAKEWIDE		7.185

**THE LAKE ERIE PERCID MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP (LEPMAG):** The LEPMAG was first convened in 2010 and serves as the primary method to incorporate stakeholder needs and objectives into the Lake Erie yellow perch and walleye decision-making process. The LEPMAG consists of senior agency representatives from all provincial and state jurisdictions on the lake, recreational fishers, commercial fishers, and other interested organizations. Through the LEPMAG, fishery managers and stakeholders work together to identify the harvest policies for Lake Erie percid that meet the needs of all stakeholders while maintaining stability in the percid fishery. Michigan State University's Quantitative Fisheries Center facilitates the LEPMAG process. Both walleye and yellow perch are managed through management plans, which were adopted by the Lake Erie Committee in 2015 and 2020, respectively. The

LEPMAG played a major role providing advice to the LEC about the plans.

**THE LAKE ERIE COMMITTEE (LEC) AND TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH (TAC):** The Lake Erie Committee comprises fishery managers from Michigan, New York, Ohio, Ontario and Pennsylvania. The committee's work is facilitated by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, a Canadian and U.S. treaty-based agency on the Great Lakes. The TAC represents what the committee considers to be a sustainable level of harvest, as guided by recommendations from the Yellow Perch and Walleye Task groups. The individual agencies allocate the TAC through setting commercial fishing quotas and recreational fishing daily limits intended to maintain annual harvest levels within the TAC.

## More than 1.8 million trout being stocked statewide

New York announced the upcoming start of the spring trout fishing season, which provides excellent angling opportunities statewide thanks to the State's extensive stocking program and considerable number of wild trout fisheries. DEC's spring trout stocking began in March and runs through early June, and includes more than 1.8 million trout stocked in waters statewide.

DEC stocking trucks have already begun hitting the roadways and trout stocking is in full swing with 1,872,105 catchable brown, rainbow, and brook trout stocked in ponds and streams across the State this spring. Stocked-Extended streams (listed in the Trout Streams section of the regulations guide) will receive fish every other week for two months to enhance season-long opportunities for angler success. Most streams will also receive a seeding of larger stocked trout. [Spring trout stocking lists, including the week of stocking for trout streams](#), can be found at DEC's website. Additionally, DEC recognizes some fisheries rely on stocked fish to reach a certain size before they can be harvested. Visit DEC's website to [find locations where these put-grow-and-take stockings of brook trout, lake trout, and Atlantic salmon take place](#). ✧

## Michigan puts PFAS advisory on Lake Superior smelt

Citing new data showing PFAS contamination in Lake Superior rainbow smelt is more widespread than previously known, state regulators are again warning anglers and diners to limit their meals of the popular sportfish. People eating smelt from the northernmost Great Lake should eat no more than one serving per month, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services announced recently. A serving is eight ounces (about two to three of the sardine-sized fish) for adults and two or four ounces for children. ✧

## NY releases plan to prevent goby in Lake Champlain

New York officials' new plan to limit the spread of a devastating invasive fish moving toward Lake Champlain may not be enough. After taking over the Great Lakes, the round goby has made its way through the Erie Canal and into the Hudson River. Environmentalists say it's only a matter of time before it reaches the lake—and they want to stop it in its path. Environmentalists and the lake's advocates [have been sounding the alarm](#) about the potential impact from the fish's arrival and urging immediate action from New York officials. ✧

## Interpreting steelhead clips for 2022 season

Since 2018, all steelhead stocked in Michigan have been marked with an adipose fin clip. This means that anglers can easily identify most, but not all, stocked fish returning to rivers this spring. Based on the proportion of older mature steelhead in Lake Michigan, you can expect to catch between 2 and 5 unclipped stocked fish for every twenty clipped steelhead caught during the spring 2022 season.

The vast majority of marked steelhead returning to Michigan streams were marked with only the adipose fin clip. However skamania stocked in the Manistee River since 2018 were marked with both an adipose fin clip and a right ventral fin clip. Skamania stocked in the Manistee River prior to 2018 were marked with only the right ventral fin clipped.

In addition to fin clips, be on the lookout for steelhead with a clipped maxilla (upper jaw bone). Wisconsin has used maxilla clips on steelhead in certain Lake Michigan tributaries including the Root River, Keweenaw River, and Chambers Creek. Volunteers reporting to [Great Lakes Angler Diary](#) have not seen any evidence of these fish in Michigan streams, but straying is possible.

- [More details](#) on prevalence of unclipped steelhead
- [Diagram and explanation](#) of other marks found on steelhead ✧

# Asian Carp Monitoring and Response Workgroup (MRWG)

## Monthly Activities: 2021 December Summary

**Bottom Line:** A set of safety protocols developed during the COVID pandemic to ensure safe operations were carried over into the start of the 2021 field sampling. A large number of small (<6") Grass Carp, and Silver Carp were collected in the Peoria Reach on down. **NO LIVE BIGHEAD CARP, BLACK CARP, GRASS CARP, or SILVER CARP were found or observed in any new locations immediately downstream or upstream of the Electric Dispersal Barrier.**

### Overall Summary

**Pool specific results through December 2021 from all effort within the Upper Illinois Waterway. The same time period in 2019 and 2020 for comparison.** Additional effort may not be reported due to data processing and true effort and catch could be higher. Check 2021 interim summary, published at the end of the year, for complete results

### Lockport Pool

	2019	2020	2021
Yards of Net Fished	59,400	47,800	88,900
Miles of Net Fished	33.7	27.2	50.5
Hoop Net Nights	163.8	156.2	164.4
Mini Fyke Net Nights	22.2	20.8	22.9
Electrofishing Runs	69	77	93
Electrofishing (hrs)	17.3	19.3	23.3
Dozer Trawl Runs	0	0	87
Dozer Trawl (hrs)	0.0	0.0	7.3
Total Asian Carp	0	0	0
Tons of AC Harvested	0	0	0

### Brandon Road Pool

	2019	2020	2021
Yards of Net Fished	54,000	52,000	95,200
Miles Net Fished	30.7	29.5	54.1
Hoop Net Nights	158.9	160.4	162.4
Fyke Net Nights	33.1	20.6	22.6
Electrofishing runs	61	69	80
Electrofishing (hrs)	15.3	17.3	20.0
Dozer Trawl Runs	0.0	0.0	82
Dozer Trawl (hrs)	0	0	6.8
Total Asian Carp	0	0	0
Tons AC Harvested	0	0	0

### Marseilles Pool

	2019	2020	2021
Yards of Net Fished	220,010	203,370	220,050
Miles of Nets Fished	125.0	115.6	125.0
Hoop Net nights	153.6	157.9	168
Mini Fyke Net Nights	65.1	68.2	69.0
Electrofishing Runs	93	93	93
Electrofishing (hrs)	23.3	23.3	23.3
Pound Net nights	26	0	0
Bighead Carp	1,556	1,356	2,035
Grass Carp	86	33	52
Silver Carp	44,027	34,057	27,536
Total Asian Carp	45,669	35,446	29,623
Tons AC Harvested	257.3	195.7	178.4

### Contracted Fishing Below the Electric Dispersal Barrier

- Contracted fishing took place in Lockport, Brandon Road, and Dresden Island Pools of the Illinois River Waterway
- Contracted fishers set and pulled 67,400 yards of gill/trammel net
- 34,138 fish representing 20 species were captured during contracted commercial netting
- 43 Bighead Carp, 256 Grass Carp, and 27,793 Silver Carp were removed
- 175,089 pounds of Bighead, Grass and Silver Carp were removed

Below is a summary of all Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) contracted fishing activities through December 2021. For comparison purposes, data from the same time period in 2019 and 2020 are included.

	2019	2020	2021
Number of Days Fished	153	108	119
Number Net Crew Days	732	597	731
Yards of Net Fished	886,075	688,850	909,700
Miles of Nets Fished	503.5	391.4	516.9
Number Pound Net Nights	29	0	3
Number Hoop Net Nights	0.0	0	0.0
Number of Bighead Carp	3,758	3,646	2,807
Number of Grass Carp	2,921	1,088	1,012
Number of Silver Carp	207,262	160,900	169,266
Number of Carp	213,941	165,634	173,085
Tons of AC Harvested	831.3	620.4	566.8

### Enhanced Contract Fishing

In September 2019, the Enhanced Contract Fishing Program was initiated in the Peoria Pool. The program offers Illinois-licensed commercial fishermen \$.10 per pound for invasive carp caught in the Peoria Pool and sold to fish processors or other buyers for at least \$.07 per pound. To date, 30 fishermen have entered into contracts to catch invasive carp from this pool. From inception through the remainder of calendar year 2019, 518,132 pounds of invasive carp were caught in the Peoria Pool, throughout the year 2020 a total of 2,882,725 pound were caught, and to date in 2021 an additional 3,324,938 pounds have been caught for a total of 6,725,795 pounds. Of these total catches, 6.10% are Bighead, 71.15% are Silver and 22.75% are Grass carp. **No Black carp have been reported.**

Table 3-Table of Enhanced Contract Fishing – Peoria Pool from inception, September 2019 through December 2021.

By receipt date, not catch date

YEAR	Total Lbs.**	Bighead	Silver	Grass
2019 *	518,132	24,813	310,297	183,022
2020	2,882,725	176,195	1,978,501	728,029
2021 (Jan-Dec)	3,324,938	209,526	2,496,381	619,031
<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>6,725,795</b>	<b>410,534</b>	<b>4,785,179</b>	<b>1,530,082</b>

\* September 2019 program inception.

\*\* No Black carp reported.

### Monitoring Bigheaded Carp Movement and Density in the Illinois River

Hydroacoustic data was being processed from fall standardized sampling that took place in October from Dresden Island to Alton pools. Telemetry detection data were also being analyzed to determine movement rates of bigheaded carp among pools.

### Hydroacoustic Fish Surveys at the Electric Fish Dispersal Barrier System, Romeoville, IL

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted one mobile hydroacoustic fish survey in December 2021 at the Electric Dispersal Barrier System (EDBS) on December 14. The survey was conducted to monitor for the presence and distribution of fishes greater than 12" (30.5 cm) total length in the vicinity of the EDBS to aide in assessing the risk of large fish—and potentially Bighead or Silver Carp—passing through the EDBS during barrier operational changes and/or maintenance. However, it is important to note that hydroacoustic technology does not distinguish or identify fish species, and therefore fish detected should not be assumed to be a particular species. Hydroacoustic surveys consisted of three replicate passes along an upstream and downstream transect with paired, side-facing 200-kHz transducers. Each replicate covered the area between Hanson Material Services Corporation (HMSC) docking slip, approximately 1.3 km below the Romeo Road Bridge, to the upstream side of the Demonstration Barrier (0.6 km above Romeo Road Bridge). For reporting purposes, Romeo Road Bridge is treated as the dividing line between the areas referred to as “within the EDBS” and “downstream of the EDBS”. Results are reported as a sum of all fish tracks detected across replicate surveys; therefore, some may represent the same fish.

#### *Preliminary Results:*

Dec 14, 2021: Zero large fish tracks  $\geq -28.7$  dB were detected within the EDBS on December 14, 2021. Three large fish tracks  $\geq -28.7$  dB were detected downstream of the EDBS, one each during Replicate Surveys #1, 2, and 3. All three fish tracks were detected in fairly close proximity; thus, some may have represented the same fish target.

### Hydroacoustic Fish Surveys of the upper Illinois Waterway: Dresden Island, Brandon Road, and Lockport Pools

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducted mobile hydroacoustic fish surveys in Dresden Island, Brandon Road, and Lockport pools on December 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021. These pool surveys were designed to monitor for the abundance of large fishes—potentially Bighead or Silver Carp—with target strength (TS) greater than  $-28.7$  dB (theoretical side-aspect TS of a 12" (30.5 cm) total length fish) within the upper Illinois Waterway. The hydroacoustic survey in Lockport Pool covered the area between the Hanson Material Services Corporation docking slip and Lockport Lock & Dam (6.5 km). The hydroacoustic survey in Brandon Road Pool covered the area between Lockport Lock & Dam and Brandon Road Lock & Dam (7.2 km). Lastly, the hydroacoustic survey in Dresden Island Pool covered the area between Brandon Road Lock & Dam and Dresden Island Lock & Dam (23 km). In all pools, surveys were conducted with paired 200-kHz, side-facing transducers and consisted of one continuous transect along each shoreline with the boat following the contour of the main channel edge and the transducers pointed outwards towards the navigation channel.

#### *Preliminary Results:*

##### Lockport Pool:

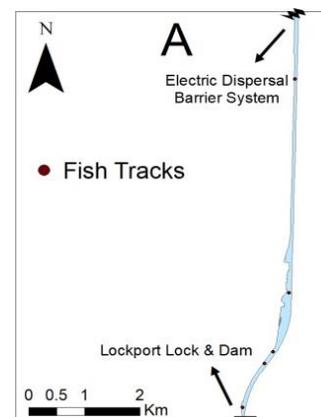
Five (5) fish tracks corresponding to fish  $> 12$ " were detected in Lockport Pool in 1,386,953 m<sup>3</sup> of water on December 17, 2021. Mean target strength (TS) of fish tracks was  $-24.4$  dB (SE = 1.08). Fish tracks were primarily located in the lower portion of the pool (Figure 1A).

##### Brandon Road Pool:

Three (3) fish tracks corresponding to fish  $> 12$ " were detected in Brandon Road Pool in 895,564 m<sup>3</sup> of water on December 17, 2021 (Figure 1B). Mean TS of fish tracks was  $-23.5$  dB (SE = 3.43).

##### Dresden Island Pool:

Twenty-four (24) fish tracks corresponding to fish  $> 12$ " were detected in Dresden Island Pool in 3,252,428 m<sup>3</sup> of water on December 13, 2021. Mean TS of fish tracks was  $-26.1$  dB (SE = 0.47). Fish tracks were primarily located upstream of the confluence of the Des Plaines and Kankakee Rivers and upstream of I-55 bridge adjacent to Rock Run Rookery (Figure 1C).



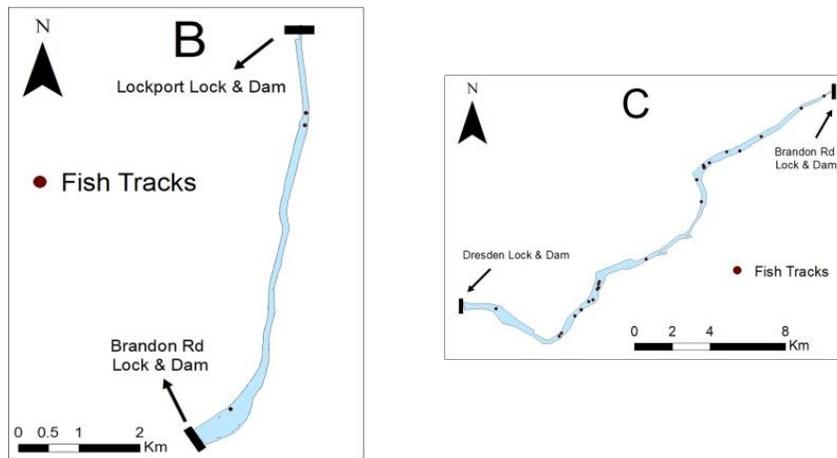


Figure 1: Locations of fish tracks detected from hydroacoustic surveys in Lockport (A), Brandon Road (B), and Dresden Island (C) pools of the Upper Illinois Waterway during December 2021.

### **Telemetry Support for the Spatially Explicit Invasive Carp Population Model (SEICarP)**

During December 2021, a Wilmington Fish and Wildlife Service crew conducted a total of three days of effort, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup>, for the SEICarP telemetry project. Efforts focused on removing and downloading data from stationary telemetry equipment. All receivers were recovered, downloaded, and removed for winter.

*Table 1. Detections of fish at each receiver location in the Peoria Pool. Receiver = serial number, Station name = combination of river mile (RM) and geographic/visual location information, # Fish = number of unique tagged individuals, # Detections = number of recorded detections by a receiver.*

Receiver	Station Name	# Fish	# Detections	Receiver
VR2W-129785	RM166.6 Peoria Lake Narrows	5	193	VR2W-129785
VR2W-129781	RM182.4 US Chilli Bridge Peninsula	2	210	VR2W-129781
VR2W-129779	RM188.1 DS Lacon_MC Sawyer Slough	8	2374	VR2W-129779
VR2W-129787	RM194.8 US Upper Henry Island	12	14810	VR2W-129787
VR2W-137063	RM202.7 Lower Twin Sisters Island	0	0	VR2W-137063
VR2W-137065	RM216 US of Clark Island	3	2258	VR2W-137065

*Traditional Monitoring* – During the month of November, USACE biologists conducted eight fixed 15-minute electrofishing runs downstream of the barrier. Four sites were in Lockport Pool and four sites were in Brandon Road Pool. Within the Lockport Pool, 556 individuals were captured across 11 species. The five most abundant species captured were gizzard shad under 6 inches (43%), emerald shiner (34.2%), gizzard shad over 6 inches (17.8%), threadfin shad (2.3%), and golden shiner (0.9%). Within the Brandon Road Pool, 94 individuals were captured across eight species. The five most abundant species found were common carp (50%), emerald shiner (19.1%), smallmouth bass (14.9%), gizzard shad over 6 inches (5.3%), and a tie between brook silverside, largemouth bass, and channel catfish all at 3.2% of the catch. No invasive carp were captured or observed during the month of November.

### **Alternate Pathway Surveillance in Illinois - Law Enforcement**

ISU identified and cited the individuals responsible for releasing \$4,458.12 of live frogs, Asian swamp eels, American eels, goldfish, and soft-shelled turtles into the Chicago River in July of 2021. District 4 Conservation Officers obtained videotaped footage of the release and were

ultimately able to identify the vehicle used to transport the individuals and aquatic life. Garbage left on the riverbank helped identify the Asian market where the aquatic life was purchased. The store manager provided a copy of the purchase receipt which listed all the species purchased and contained enough information to ultimately identify one of the four individuals involved. ISU and a District 4 CPO interviewed one of the suspects in Chicago's Chinatown who stated she was the manager of a Buddhist shrine. She explained the release was part of a life or merit release ceremony. The manager said people come to the shrine from all over the country and donate money which eventually is used to purchase and release aquatic life into the waterways approximately 4-5 times per year. ISU provided the shrine manager relevant IDNR regulations and emphasized the potential damage caused by such activities. The shrine manager was open to alternative options and willing to spread the word to others within her religious community. ISU relayed information gathered during the investigation to appropriate AIS outreach personnel. Fortunately, none of the aquatic life released was identified as Asian carps. The market where the aquatic life was purchased was cited for operating without a non-resident aquatic life dealer's license. ✧

