



Steelhead bag limits reduced in some Michigan waters amid fish declines

State wildlife officials are looking to limit steelhead catches in parts of Michigan while experts try to learn more about some of the reasons for their declining population.

LANSING – The state Natural Resource Commission has reduced the steelhead daily bag limit from three to one during the spring spawning season in some Michigan tributaries with decreasing fish populations.

The commission unanimously approved NRC Commissioner David Nyberg’s amendment to a fishery order on bag limits to be proactive in addressing declining steelhead populations in Bear Creek, Manistee River, Pere Marquette, Muskegon River, Manistique River, and Carp

River. The bag limit for prized game fish, which applies between March 15 and May 15, went into effect January 9.

The steelhead population in Lake Michigan has steadily declined from 3.5 million in 2011 to just under 3 million in 2018, according to the Department of Natural Resources. Steelhead populations at Little Manistee Weir dropped significantly from just over 6,000 in 2002 to just under 2,000 in 2020.

But limiting anglers’ catch opportunities may not be enough to support the state’s struggling steelhead populations in some areas, according to biologists with the state’s Fisheries Division. Fisheries biologists say the decrease in fish correlates with increasing water clarity, a sign that the lakes lack the plankton and other small

organisms that feed fish, and harsh spawning conditions.

The commissioners noted Nyberg’s amendment received ample feedback from the public, which influenced their decision to align with public support for tightening catch limits for the time being. Nyberg said he introduced the amendment to address the declining steelhead population while maintaining angler harvesting opportunities.

“This is a do-no-harm approach; something that can be done today,” Nyberg said. “While we don’t have a firm grasp as to why the steelhead population is declining, this is a proactive thing the commission can do.”

Steelhead bag limits

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Ken Merckel 1938 - 2022

Kenneth E. Merckel DDS, 83 of Mayville, MI passed away on Friday, January 7, 2022 after a battle with congested heart failure, at home with his family by his side.



Ken had a passion for the Great Lakes, was an ardent advocate of the Great Lakes fisheries,

and an Advisor to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. He often would attend Lake Michigan Citizen Advisory meetings and served as president of the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen’s Association.

Dr. Merckel was a voting member of Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee, former member of Mayville Rotary, Lapeer Dental Study Club and American Dental Association and USS Power Squadron. He was a current member of Thumb Charterboat Captain Association and the MSSFA both Thumb and State Chapter where he was a past president and chapter representative.

Dr. Merckel will be missed greatly by all of us that have been fortunate enough to know him. Sport Fishing has lost one of its greatest advocates with his passing. Our condolences to Lenore his wife of 59 years; children, grandchildren, and the entire Merckel family. ♡

Snowmobilers: Think Smart Before You Start This Season

MADISON, Wis. — The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is reminding snowmobilers that safety is an important part of the ride. Whether you were gifted a snowmobile over the holidays or are a veteran of the ride, the department asks all riders to be in the know and review Wisconsin's [snowmobile safety rules and regulations](#) before heading out this winter.

Wisconsin is a long-time snowmobile destination offering some of the best riding opportunities in the country, especially in the northern part of the state. With more than 200,000 registered snowmobiles hitting the state's 25,000 miles of groomed trails across the state each winter, safety is critical.

Between January and March 2021, there were [13 snowmobile fatalities](#) in Wisconsin, with alcohol, excess speed, driver inexperience and operator error as the leading causes.

"It's important to think smart before you start," said Lt. Martin Stone, DNR Off-Highway Vehicle Administrator. "Winter's fluctuating temperatures, snowfalls and snowmelts can cause unsafe conditions on snowmobile trails. The DNR does not monitor conditions and we suggest snowmobilers contact local fishing clubs, snowmobile clubs or outfitters to ask about the ice conditions in your area. Remember – no ice is safe ice."

There is no such thing as 100% safe ice. Snowmobilers cannot judge ice strength by factors like appearance, age, thickness or temperature, especially when the ice is snow-covered.

There is a 55 mph speed limit when traveling at night. Do not overdrive what headlights can illuminate, such as trail markers or hazards.

Any person who is at least 12 years old born on or after January 1, 1985 is required to have a [valid Snowmobile Safety Certificate](#) in order to operate a snowmobile in most areas. Operators must carry the certificate while riding and display it to a law enforcement officer when

requested. Visit the [DNR Safety Education webpage](#) for details and to locate a class or take an online course.

Think smart before you start this season by following these tips:

ON THE TRAILS

- Don't drink and ride.
- Stay on marked trails—riding off-trail or cutting corners is trespassing.
- Always wear your helmet and safety gear.
- Slow down and use extra caution at night.
- Travel with a friend, carry a cell phone and let people know where you are going and when you'll return home.
- Dress appropriately, carry a first aid kit and navigation tools.
- Take a [snowmobile safety course](#).
- Check trail conditions using the [Travel Wisconsin Snowmobile Snow Report](#).

ICE SAFETY

- Remember that ice is never completely safe under any conditions.
- Contact local sport shops to ask about ice conditions locally on the lake or river you want to traverse.
- Wear proper clothing and equipment, including a life jacket or float coat should you fall through the ice and to help retain body heat.
- Do not travel in unfamiliar areas.
- Slow down when traveling at night.
- Know if the lake has inlets, outlets or narrows that have currents that can thin the ice.
- Watch for pressure ridges or ice buckling. These can be dangerous due to thin ice and open water.

For additional information on snowmobile safety classes, regulations, safety tips or to register your snowmobile, click [here](#). ✧



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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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Management Plan for Walleye in Michigan's Inland Waters

Introduction

Walleye (*Sander vitreus*) is a high priority species for management in Michigan because of its ecological, social, and cultural significance. Walleye play a significant ecological role as a top predator and provide fishing opportunities for anglers. There are many emerging threats to walleye populations in Michigan, and there will be increasing management challenges related to the protection and conservation of this native species.

To formalize management and prepare for emerging threats to walleye populations in Michigan, the Michigan DNR – Fisheries Division, hereafter Fisheries Division, has developed this plan to guide management efforts. The overarching goal of this plan is to protect, conserve, and adaptively manage walleye populations to maximize ecological benefits and angler satisfaction derived from healthy walleye populations and fisheries. Management actions to achieve this high-level goal will be implemented in a manner that considers the potential limitations associated with operational costs, available funding, fisheries management priorities, and the best available science.

The focus of this plan are walleye populations in inland waters, primarily inland lakes, because Great Lakes populations are mainly addressed in other existing management or rehabilitation plans (e.g., Lake Erie Walleye Management Plan 2015-2019); Strategy and options for completing the recovery of walleye in Saginaw Bay, Michigan; walleye management strategy for Little Bay de Noc, Lake Michigan and robust resident riverine populations that are not directly connected to Great Lakes waters are fairly limited. Management strategies for inland walleye have also been previously published and still contain relevant information (e.g., Walleye management guidelines for the Northern Lake Michigan Management Unit 2011-2016;

Ecology, management, and status of Walleye, Sauger, and Yellow Perch in Michigan), but Fisheries Division 3 believes it is prudent to update goals, objectives, and strategies to guide statewide walleye management in future years.

The State of Michigan recognizes several treaties between the United States government and tribes residing in Michigan. Tribal governments' signatory to the 1836 and 1842 treaties retained hunting, fishing, and gathering rights for tribal members. Tribal governments and the State often co-manage walleye fisheries and populations in inland waters. State management of waters within these treaty areas may deviate from concepts described within this plan as differences in treaty waters may reflect special needs, unique sources of information, or different strategies and objectives stemming from the co-management process.

Status of Inland Walleye

Populations

Distribution

Walleye have a wide distribution throughout the state, but their prevalence is higher in lakes in northern latitudes because those lakes typically have habitat characteristics that are more suitable for walleye. Walleye are also distributed in southern portions of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, despite marginal habitat suitability, because of previous extensive stocking efforts to create fishing opportunities for this recreationally popular species. In 2002, the Fisheries Division compiled a list of waters where walleye occur using stocking records (1995-1999), Fisheries Division biological survey records (1980-2002), and a questionnaire sent to biologists in each Fisheries Management Unit. The previously compiled list is documented in Schneider et al.

As part of the development of this plan, Fisheries Division created an

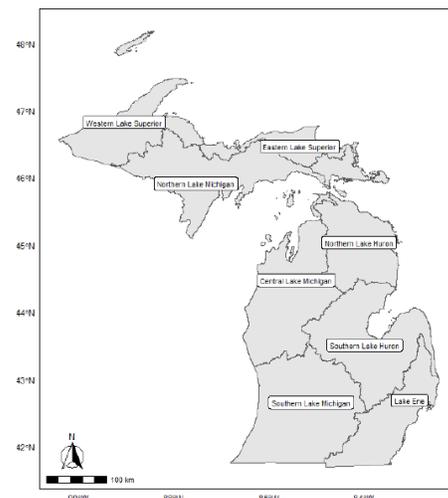


Fig 1. Map with names and boundaries of Fisheries Management Units (FMUs) that are used by the DNR to manage Michigan's fish populations. The boundaries are based on major watersheds that drain to each of the Great Lakes.

updated list of inland lakes where walleye occur that is based on stocking records and biological survey records from 2000 to 2019, and a questionnaire sent to biologists in each FMU in 2019 to assess the 4 walleye populations based on reproductive characteristics. Appendix A contains the updated list of inland lakes managed for walleye and is categorized by FMU because Fisheries Division manages fisheries resources based on those units, which are geographic units delineated by the watersheds that drain to each of the Great Lakes (Fig 1). That information was used to create a nearly complete list of inland lakes where walleye are likely present, regardless of the lake's predicted habitat suitability for walleye. The list contains approximately 375 inland lakes where strategic actions described throughout this plan are most likely to achieve the desired goals in a cost-effective manner.

Here is the full 71 page document: [Management Plan for Walleye in Michigan's Inland Waters](#) ✧

2022 Black Lake sturgeon season begins Feb. 5

Michigan's 2022 lake sturgeon fishing season on Black Lake in Cheboygan County will begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, **Feb. 5**. All anglers must **register online by Feb. 4** to participate in the fishing season.

The harvest limit for the 2022 season on Black Lake is six lake sturgeon. To prevent overfishing, Department of Natural Resources officials will close the season when one of two scenarios occurs:

1. The sixth fish is harvested.
2. Five fish have been harvested at the end of any fishing day.

Fishing hours are 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day of the season. The season will end either at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 9, or when one of the above scenarios is met, at which point anglers will be notified via text message and on the ice by DNR personnel that they must immediately stop fishing for lake sturgeon.

Anglers must register for the season, and those 17 or older must have a valid Michigan fishing license. This year, anglers must register online by Feb. 4 to participate. Get more registration information at Michigan.gov/Sturgeon.

Participating anglers must bring their own 1-foot-diameter or larger bright red flag to hang on their fishing shanty to help DNR personnel identify those who are sturgeon fishing. Anglers are asked to hang one or more of these in highly visible locations on their shanty.

Anyone harvesting a lake sturgeon must immediately contact DNR personnel on the ice to register the fish. Official registration of harvested fish will be at the Onaway DNR Field Office 1 mile south of Onaway State Park. Harvest registration may include an examination of internal organs and removal of a piece of fin tissue for DNA analysis or aging.

Lake sturgeon rehabilitation efforts in Black Lake over the last two

Larger walleye expected to improve survival

For the first time, Indiana DNR's hatchery system was successful in producing advanced walleye fingerlings (measuring 5-7 inches) in large numbers for annual fall stockings. Hatchery biologists at Fawn River State Fish Hatchery finished stocking these larger fish alongside walleye stock (measuring 6-8 inches) purchased from a private commercial fish supplier.

Predation is a huge factor limiting walleye stocking success. Smaller fingerlings (measuring 1-2 inches) were traditionally stocked in the spring and were often eaten before they could attain a mature 14 inches. Biologists adjusted their stocking schedule to allow more time for the fish to grow in the protected hatchery system, giving them time to outgrow predators prior to stocking.

Due to a lack of suitable spawning habitat, walleye are unable to maintain their numbers naturally in many of Indiana's lakes. Stockings are required to maintain many of the fisheries Indiana's anglers enjoy.

Find out how many and where fish were stocked [online](#). ✧

decades have been a successful collaborative effort between the Michigan DNR, Sturgeon for Tomorrow, tribal agencies, Michigan State University and Tower-Kleber Limited Partnership. This population has increased in the past 20 years due to rearing and stocking efforts, research, and protection of spawning adults, and this trend is expected to continue.

Anglers should be aware of marginal ice conditions on regional lakes so far this year and use extreme caution if fishing. Visit Michigan.gov/IceSafety for tips to stay safe on the ice. ✧

Public hearing and comment deadline rescheduled

The Indiana Natural Resources Commission (NRC) has given preliminary adoption to the rule changes governing fishing tournament licenses/permits, trapping wild animals, and registering to be an organ donor through the DNR's license system. The deadline for submitting comments has been rescheduled to **Friday, Jan. 21**. For more information about the proposed changes, visit [our website](#).

Public comments can be [submitted online](#) to the NRC. Click on "Comment on this Rule" next to the "Fish & Wildlife and Law Enforcement Miscellaneous Rule Amendments."

The rescheduled virtual public hearing will occur on **Thursday, Jan. 20 at 7 p.m. ET**. Individuals may join the hearing in two ways:

- To join by phone using only audio, please dial 1-240-454-0887. When prompted, enter access code 23034329797##.
- To join using video, go to [this website address](#), enter the meeting number (2303 432 9797), and password (5RPF753W4Zp). **Please note:** If you have never used WebEx, we suggest that you begin the process at least 10 minutes early because you will be prompted to download WebEx before joining the meeting. ✧

Anglers can catch and release trout in south-eastern Minnesota

Winter trout fishing is a great way to enjoy the outdoors along streams that meander through the scenic bluffs and hills of southeastern Minnesota. Trout fishing is catch-and-release only from January 1 through Friday, April 15, at streams in Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Wabasha and Winona counties (Dakota County and the Vermillion River are not included in this season). ✧

DEC Announces New Opportunities for Recreation in St. Lawrence County RMPs open lands to Hunting, Hiking, and Wildlife Observation

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recently announced the amendment of the Kildare Conservation Easement and the Five Mile Conservation Easement Recreation Management Plans (RMPs) to include new opportunities for public access to recreation in the Adirondack Park. The Kildare and Five Mile conservation easements are located in the towns of Hopkinton and Parishville, St. Lawrence County.

"DEC is excited to announce that planning is underway to provide the recreating public with access to the 12,200-acre Kildare Tract Conservation Easement," Region 6 Director Randall Young said. "The amended Recreation Management Plans will provide new opportunities for recreation in the Adirondack Park while supporting the local economy and continuing to protect natural resources."

The amended RMPs will open the Kildare Conservation Easement to seasonal public motor vehicle and overland access for the first time since the easement was acquired in 1989. The easement will become accessible after the construction of a new half-mile connector road between the Kildare and Five Mile properties, which will open 16.1 miles of existing roads for public motor vehicle use and make the entire Kildare tract more accessible for non-motorized access and activities such as hunting, hiking, and wildlife observation. Planning for the road's construction is underway. Road design and construction are anticipated to take several field seasons to complete. Additional updates will be shared after the road is complete.

The Kildare Conservation Easement includes more than 12,000 acres of working forest owned and managed by Molpus Woodlands

Michigan NRC updates

In case you are not aware, the Natural Resources Commission voted on the Cozad Amendment and the Nyberg Amendment at their December 9, 2021 meeting in Lansing. The Nyberg Amendment would reduce the daily bag limit of steelhead to one fish during the spring spawning season on several rivers flowing into Lake Michigan and on one stream flowing into Lake Superior. The Cozad Amendment would open the Lower Saginaw River year-round from Center Street in Saginaw to the mouth in Bay City.

The Commission adopted the Nyberg Amendment and added a five-year sunset to the regulations. The commission also voted to make this new order effective 30 days after it was passed.

The Cozad Amendment was approved but opening the river year-round will be delayed for one year and it will not be effective until January 1, 2023. The Commission requested that Fisheries staff conduct public outreach and education throughout 2022 in preparation for implementation of the new open season beginning in 2023.

Randy Claramunt along with others from Sea Grant, will be organizing a virtual Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee meeting to be held on February 1, 2022. The agenda will include an update on all the Saginaw Bay Fishery survey data and other information that has been compiled since the August 11, 2021 Advisors meeting along with a discussion of the results of the Walleye and Yellow Perch Workgroup. In addition, we will discuss moving forward this coming spring on sharing information and seeking input from the public at the workshops. ² ✧

Group (MWF Adirondacks, LLC). The Five Mile Conservation Easement is more than 18,000 acres of working forest owned and managed by WoodWise Forestland, LLC. Visit the DEC website for information about the [2021 Amendments to the Kildare and Five Mile Conservation Easement Tracts](#). ✧

Join webinars on ice fishing and spearing

Ice fishing and a darkhouse spearing webinar is at noon Wednesday, **Jan. 19**. James Burnham, R3 coordinator, and Amanda Johnson, with the Minnesota Darkhouse and Angling Association, will discuss the practice of using decoys lowered through a large hole in the ice to lure a northern pike close enough to harvest the pike using a spear. The webinars are part of the Outdoor Skills and Stewardship Series, which aims to give participants quick, relevant information on upcoming seasons and events, and skills to help enjoy these opportunities. Registration is required and free. More details: [Register for the webinars](#) ✧

Ice fishing basics: safety

Here are a few tips to keep you [safe on the ice](#) so your winter excursion ends in delight rather than disaster.

- **Before** heading out, watch the weather. Warm weather can cause ice to thaw and refreeze, leading to thinner ice. Check with your local bait shop on conditions and wear many layers, including a life jacket for additional warmth and safety. Consider keeping ice picks on you, which are helpful if you fall through. Always let someone know where you'll be and when you expect to return. When you can, use the buddy system.
- **During** this activity, it's important to keep an eye on the ice and test it before stepping onto it. Drill a hole with your auger and measure the thickness – **at least four inches of ice is recommended for walking**. Water visibly flowing below the ice can be a sign of a weak spot, and wind, waterfowl and beavers can also keep areas of ice thin. Wear a life jacket on the ice for extra warmth and safety. Avoid large cracks and depressions. If you're with a buddy, walk in a single file line. Larger groups should spread out while walking and fishing.
- **After** you're finished fishing, inform the person who knew your itinerary that you're done. Get dry and stay warm! ✧

DEC proposes changes to Superfund and Brownfield Site cleanup regulations

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos recently announced proposed changes to the State's regulations for the clean-up of contaminated sites that will advance efforts to revitalize communities and protect public health and the environment statewide. The proposals are available for public comment until April 21, 2022, and would create new cleanup standards for the oversight of the emerging contaminants perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanoic sulfonate (PFOS), strengthen the implementation of the State's successful Brownfield Cleanup Program, and enhance State Superfund and other cleanup programs.

"New York is a national leader in our commitment to address the threat of emerging contaminants and our sustained efforts to clean up legacy contaminants in communities statewide," Commissioner Seggos said. "The proposed changes to New York's regulations are instrumental in advancing DEC's efforts with the latest science and data about public health and the environment while supporting the revitalization of former industrial sites to create economic opportunities and stronger communities."

The proposed changes to the 6 NYCRR Part 375 regulations that pertain to the State's Environmental Remediation Programs would increase consistency across programs administered by DEC's Division of Environmental Remediation and provide DEC with the tools to effectively implement these changes, including:

- Enhanced requirements for the Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Site Remedial Program (State Superfund Program);
- Updates to the State's Soil Cleanup Objectives (SCOs) to reflect the latest scientific input of experts at DEC and the New York State Department of Health. Revisions include the creation of SCOs for PFOA, PFOS, aniline, and nitrobenzene to reflect the designation of these chemicals as hazardous substances and codify existing guidance in regulation to provide the State with a greater ability to conduct enforcement against polluters; and
- Proposed changes, clarifications, and modifications to the regulations based on DEC's experience during the first decade of implementing the Brownfield Cleanup Program.

DEC encourages the public to participate in and submit comments during two virtual hearings on the revised rulemaking. The hearings will be held at 2 p.m. on April 5, 2022, and 5:30 p.m. on April 7, 2022. [To participate in the hearings, visit DEC's website.](#) Persons who wish to receive the instructions by mail or telephone should call DEC at (518) 402-9764 and leave a message for Jenn Dawson. Participants should provide their first and last name, address, and telephone number and reference the Part 375 public comment hearing.

The public is invited to submit written comments on the revised proposed regulations through April 21, 2022, at 8 p.m. Written comments can be submitted by email to derweb@dec.ny.gov, noting "Comments on Proposed Part 375" in the subject line of the email, or by mail to the NYS DEC - Division of Environmental Remediation, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-7012, attention: Jenn Dawson.

All documents and related [information pertaining to the revised proposed rulemaking](#) are available on DEC's website. Members of the public without internet access are advised to contact NYS at the address above or call (518) 402-9764. ✧

DNR urges ice anglers to protect waterways from aquatic invasive species

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and UW-Extension are asking anglers to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species when ice fishing this winter.

While aquatic invasive species have made their way into Wisconsin's waterways, anglers can reduce transmission by checking for and removing any mud or plant material clinging to their gear, including sleds used to haul supplies, before leaving fishing spots.

Invasive species are non-native plants, animals and diseases that cause great ecological, environmental or economic harm. Aquatic invasive species can crowd out native plants and animals and threaten the quality of

boating and fishing in Wisconsin waters.

Two common non-native aquatic plants in Wisconsin include the curly-leaf pondweed and Eurasian watermilfoil which remain hardy in winter giving them an advantage over native aquatic plants. Although the plant-like algae starry stonewort, a relative newcomer aquatic invasive species in Wisconsin, dies back for winter, its tiny, star-shaped bulbils may be present in the mud drawn up from augers. The larvae of invasive snails and mussels can also be found in the water and mud during winter.

[For more information about aquatic invasive species, including where they are prohibited and](#)

[restricted in Wisconsin, visit this DNR webpage.](#)

A few minutes of preventative action can help preserve and protect waterways for generations to come. Before stepping onto the ice to fish and when leaving, ice anglers should:

- **Inspect** boats, trailers and equipment for attached aquatic plant, animals or mud
- **Remove** all attached plants or animals
- **Drain** all water from boats, motors, livewells, buckets and other equipment
- **Never move** live fish away from a waterbody
- **Dispose** of unwanted bait in the trash ✧

DNR hiring for 2022 conservation officer academy

The Michigan DNR is accepting candidates for the positions of conservation officer recruits and probationary conservation officers.

Stationed in nearly every county of the state, these fully licensed law enforcement officers enforce laws and regulations related to fish and wildlife, state parks, trails and forests, and outdoor recreation activities such as off-road vehicle use, snowmobiling and boating. They also are first responders during natural disasters and life-threatening situations.

An in-service training program is being offered to anyone who:

- Currently holds a Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards license, or
- Is eligible to immediately be licensed upon employment and meets the DNR's hiring requirements.

"This probationary training program will allow eligible recruits to participate in a seven-week, in-service training program focusing on conservation officer-specific laws and functions," said F/Lt. Jason Wicklund, DNR Law Enforcement Division. Nine officers completed the 2021 in-service training program in August.

"Before becoming a conservation officer, I was a trooper with the Michigan State Police," said Conservation Officer Alex Van Wagner, one of the August graduates. "I grew up seeing the local conservation officer in my hometown and I thought he had a cool job. I learned more about what conservation officers do and was interested in the fact that the job would take me out of a traditional work setting and allow me to experience so many different opportunities."

All other applicants will be eligible for enrollment in an MCOLES basic

training academy to meet the training standards. After successfully completing the MCOLES academy, recruits will receive specialized training specific to natural resource laws and regulations, and marine, off-road vehicle and snowmobile operation.

Candidates must be at least 21 years of age upon activation of an MCOLES license. You do not need to have previous law enforcement, fishing and hunting experience or a college education to become a conservation officer. "Prior to the academy I worked as a teacher and in experiential education for 10 years, and then I worked with entrepreneurs to help start or grow their small businesses," said Marc Mankowski, who graduated from the 2021 academy. "I wanted to become more involved protecting the natural resources that our state has to offer, as well as work closer with people who share the same passion for the outdoors."

During the academy, recruits will become State of Michigan employees and receive biweekly paychecks while collecting benefits and retirement. "Our instructors are the best at what they do," Wicklund said. "We want to see applicants succeed and will provide recruits everything they need to be successful."

The Michigan DNR Law Enforcement Division is a veteran-friendly employer and is committed to protecting Michigan's natural resources and the environment, and the health and safety of the public through effective law enforcement and education.

Learn more about the conservation officer hiring process and requirements by visiting Michigan.gov/ConservationOfficers or [contacting a local recruiter](#). ✧

DNR partners with USGS to study endangered cisco

One of the lesser-known Hoosier fish is cisco (*Coregonus artedii*), the only cold-water fish species native to Indiana's inland glacial lakes. As early as 1900, cisco could be found in 45 different glacial lakes in the northern portion of the state, but decades of cold-water habitat loss have reduced that to seven lakes. These slender, silver-colored fish spend much of the year 75 feet below the surface but in December, cooling water temperatures signal cisco migration to traditional spawning areas in shallower water.

This year, DNR fisheries biologists collected cisco from Crooked Lake's frigid waters in partnership with researchers from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The collaborative project will gather data about cisco's tolerance to water temperature changes compared to the tolerance of more northern populations elsewhere in the Midwest. This project will provide a better understanding of possible variations in thermal tolerance between cisco populations, which will help managers select appropriate populations to collect cisco from for future restoration efforts ✧

DNR internships available for college students

College students: We have more than 200 summer internships available across the state! The DNR has many internship areas to choose from including in fisheries management. Some of the work these internships will cover includes fisheries assessment work on lakes and rivers, habitat surveys, invasive carp monitoring, river monitoring, rearing trout, research projects, Lake Superior fisheries management, fish pathology and aquatic plant management. You'll get hands-on experience in natural resources. **Apply now through January 31.** More details: [Get more information and apply](#) ✧

Study: Fish can recover from mercury pollution faster than thought

Mercury pollution remains a problem in many parts of the Great Lakes, but new research from Canada's Experimental Lakes Area in northern Ontario shows that efforts to reduce the amount of mercury going into a lake can have quick and dramatic effects on the levels of the pollutant in fish populations.

Paul Blanchfield, an aquatic ecologist with Fisheries and Oceans Canada – and his colleagues – spent 15 years studying how mercury added to a lake affected the ecosystem. For seven years, they added tiny amounts of traceable mercury to the lake, and tracked how it moved it through the water, sediments and animals from tiny plankton up to large fish like northern pike. Once the mercury additions stopped, they spent the next eight years examining how mercury levels declined throughout the lake.

The results, [published this week in the journal *Nature*](#), showed that mercury levels in plankton and fish fell more quickly than expected once new sources of mercury were cut off. Within the first three years, the amount of mercury declined by 81% in water, 35% in sediments and 66% in plankton – leading to an 85-91% drop in fish by the end of the study.

“When we saw this rapid decline in mercury in the fish populations, we were surprised,” said Blanchfield. Earlier studies that tracked individual fish had found that they held on to mercury in their tissues for a long time. But now they saw that the rate of change in the population allowed overall mercury levels to fall fast.

“New, young fish that had access to a diet lower in mercury led to the drop,” he said, though older, larger fish still had high levels that could pose a risk to human health if they were eaten.

Many fish species in the Great Lakes have consumption advisories that suggest people should limit the amount they eat due to contaminants like mercury, though the state of [New York recently increased](#) the amount that is safe for women and children to eat due to the success of policies designed to reduce this kind of pollution.

Linda Campbell, an environmental scientist at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, has been following this work with interest for years. She said it demonstrates the need to reduce sources of mercury in lakes, though we should not expect to see as immediate a response in a more

dynamic and complex system such as the Great Lakes. “The Great Lakes have multiple sources of mercury, including legacy sources like the Areas of Concern,” she said. “If we reduce one source we may not see immediate results, but it does help.”

That's the advantage of the simplified, single-lake system in this experiment, said Blanchfield. The direct link between reductions in mercury pollution and levels in fish are difficult to demonstrate in more complicated lake systems like the Great Lakes, where multiple different factors like [invasive species and altered food webs](#) can affect how mercury moves through the ecosystem.

“It's hard to understand mercury when so many other things are going on at the same time,” he said. “With our study it's just one thing at a time.”

After recent moves to weaken the regulations around mercury pollution in the U.S., this work is a timely reminder of how important these rules are. “Any policies that reduce mercury emitted and pollution in lakes will decrease the mercury concentration in fish,” said Blanchfield. “This is a good demonstration that these policies do work.” ✧

DEC launches second year of Ice Fishing Creel Surveys on Lake Champlain Surveys conducted January through March 2022

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos announced ice fishing creel surveys will be conducted for a second year on the New York waters of Lake Champlain from January through March 2022.

"Last year's ice fishing creel surveys provided valuable data that will help DEC continue to manage Lake Champlain as one of New York's top fishing destinations," said Commissioner Seggos. "Continuing that work this year will help us better understand what anglers are targeting and catching so we can evaluate and adjust our management practices as needed."

The ice fishing survey is part of a larger, two-year effort to survey both ice and open water anglers. Data gathered during these surveys will serve as a baseline to help DEC Fisheries biologists better understand angler use and expectations, while also informing management actions on Lake Champlain.

The 2022 ice fishing survey will take place at four access points: Plattsburgh Boat Launch on Cumberland Bay; Willsboro Bay Boat Launch; Bulwagga Bay Campground; and South Bay Boat Launch. Anglers coming off the ice will be asked to participate by sharing information about their day of fishing and providing DEC creel clerks the

opportunity to collect biological data on their catch. Data to be collected includes target species, number caught, and size.

Participation in the program is voluntary but encouraged, as the data collected will help DEC develop Lake Champlain management practices that benefit anglers and the fishery. As an incentive to participate, anglers will be entered into a drawing for several ice fishing gear prizes, including a jet sled, jigging rod, rechargeable aerator, and an insulated bait bucket.

A copy of the [Lake Champlain Ice Fishing Creel Survey plan](#) can be found on DEC's website. A summary of 2021 survey results will be available in early 2022. ✧

US Army Corps proposing to place Sandusky Harbor dredged material at a wetland site in Sandusky Bay

Public Notice, Expires: 7 FEB 2022

This Public Notice has been prepared pursuant to Section 404(a) of the Clean Water Act (CWA). It has been prepared in conformance with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regulation, "Practice and Procedure: Final Rule for Operation and Maintenance of Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Projects involving the Discharge of Dredged Materials into Waters of the United States or Ocean Waters," 33 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 337.1. The purpose of this Public Notice is to specify what dredged/fill materials would be discharged into waters of the United States by implementation of the proposed action, and advise all interested parties of the proposed project and to provide an opportunity to submit comments, or request a public hearing.

The USACE - Buffalo District anticipates the need to dredge and place sediment excavated from the federal navigation channels of Sandusky Harbor to maintain sufficient depth for commercial navigation in 2022. To ensure that the minimum authorized depth is maintained and to account for dredging tolerance, up to an additional one foot of sediment may be dredged.

Proposed Federal Discharge: The proposed federal discharge associated with this maintenance dredging project will occur in support of a City of Sandusky wetland restoration project in Sandusky Bay. Approximately 260,000 cubic yards of dredged sediment would be placed into containment cells in order to create emergent and submerged wetland habitat at the restoration site. The USACE is not responsible for the design, construction, operation or maintenance of the wetland restoration project in Sandusky Bay. This ecosystem restoration project is being coordinated closely by the City of Sandusky with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Project Details

Sandusky Bay and the ecosystem restoration site are located in Erie County along the southern shore of Lake Erie. The Sandusky Bay is approximately 55 miles west of Cleveland, OH and 50 miles east of Toledo, OH. The wetland restoration site (location of sediment placement) is located along Cedar Point Drive at the eastern edge of Sandusky Bay. The bay is approximately 18 miles long and five miles wide and is protected from Lake Erie by the Marblehead peninsula on the northwest and the Cedar Point peninsula on the southeast.

The City of Sandusky, with support from the State of Ohio, is designing and constructing 28 acres of coastal wetland habitat within Sandusky Bay. This is being done to restore wetland habitat to the coastal Lake Erie region and provide another mechanism for dredged sediment management at Sandusky Harbor. The objective of the city's project is to beneficially use sediment dredged from the federal navigation channels of Sandusky Harbor to create wetland habitat for the benefit of native flora and fauna. The USACE would provide federal support to the project by placing sediment it dredges from the Sandusky Harbor federal navigation channels into the city's new coastal wetland in order to raise existing substrate elevations to where they would support a diverse aquatic vegetative community.

The USACE would place approximately 260,000 cubic yards of dredged sediment within two containment cells to be constructed by the City of Sandusky. Approximately 182,000 cubic yards of dredged sediment would be placed within the west containment cell, while approximately 78,000 cubic yards would be placed within the east containment cell. The dredged sediment would be hydraulically or mechanically offloaded from scows into containment cells constructed by the city.

The 2022 dredging operation at Sandusky Harbor is tentatively scheduled to be performed during the period between July 1 and March 15. A contractor of the federal government would accomplish the placement of the dredged sediment into the two cells constructed by the city. The exact method for unloading the dredged sediment into the placement cells will be determined by the contractor completing the work. If the sediment is to be mechanically offloaded, excavators would likely be used to remove the dredged sediment from scows and into chutes which would then distribute the sediment within the required deposition locations. If the sediment is to be hydraulically offloaded, then scow loads of dredged sediment would be brought to a hydraulic unloader positioned at the mooring structure fronting the cells.

A hydraulic unloader utilizes water jets on the end of a pump inlet to slurry (20-30 percent solids) the sediment so that the pump can remove it from the scow and transport it through a piping system into the containment cells. The scow would be repositioned as necessary so that the pump inlet could reach the entire barge to remove all the dredge sediment. Water used to slurry the dredged sediment and transport it to the containment cells would be sourced from the Sandusky Bay.

Read the full 6 page notice here: [Microsoft Word - FY 2021 Sandusky Harbor Public Notice \(Final\).docx \(army.mil\)](#)

Interested parties are encouraged to contact the USACE - Buffalo District with their comments and/or requests for additional information regarding the proposed discharge of dredged sediment. Review this Public Notice and send your comments and/or info requests in writing within 30 days to the following e-mail address: SanduskyDredging@usace.army.mil ✧

Artificial Reef Expansion builds on efforts to Enhance Marine Ecosystems and continues to bolster Long Island's economy through increased Tourism and Recreation

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos announced the deployment of two steel vessels, the "Chickadee" on the McAllister Grounds Reef and "Barge 226" on Smithtown Reef, as part of the State's ongoing efforts to expand New York's network of artificial reefs. These final deployments for 2021 continue to build on DEC's efforts to develop a stronger, more diverse marine ecosystem and provide shelter for fish and other marine life off New York's shores.

"Adding these two vessels, the *Chickadee* and *Barge 226*, to New York's artificial reef network demonstrates the Department of Environmental Conservation's sustained commitment to expanding and enhancing artificial reefs that benefit marine life and offer new opportunities for anglers and divers," said Commissioner Seggos. "These two vessels now have renewed purpose on the sea floor by establishing structural habitat, enhancing the marine ecosystem, and supporting recreationally and commercially important marine fisheries."

DEC manages the State's 12 artificial reefs, which include two reefs in Long Island Sound, two in the Great South Bay, and eight in the Atlantic Ocean. All 12 reef sites received new materials since 2018, and these two deployments continue to enhance the artificial reef network.

Now part of the McAllister Grounds Reef, the vessel *Chickadee* is a 45-foot steel tugboat built by the U.S. Navy in 1948. Prior to being deployed, the *Chickadee* assisted with towing Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO) coal and oil

barges in Port Jefferson, New York. The vessel was formerly berthed in Staten Island and owned by Admiral Towing and Salvage LLC. *Barge 226* is an 80-foot steel deck barge used for commercial marine construction before being repurposed as part of Smithtown Reef to help create new marine habitat. The New York Power Authority supported preparation, cleaning, and deployment of the two vessels, which were donated by Admiral Towing and Salvage LLC.

The benefits of constructing New York's artificial reefs include improving existing habitats to increase local marine biodiversity, stimulating more productive and diverse aquatic ecosystems, and promoting environmental sustainability. Steel surplus materials are stable and durable reef-building material that provide shelter and forage opportunities for finfish and crustaceans that inhabit these underwater structures, such as tautog, fluke, black sea bass, scup, and lobsters. Sunken vessels also attract Scuba divers that explore and photograph the underwater structures.

Additional artificial reef deployments in 2021 include the [Shannon C a 60-foot steel barge](#) to Shinnecock Reef, and a [55-foot steel luxury vessel Big Time](#) to Fire Island Reef.

DEC's Artificial Reef Program is popular with local fishermen and divers and helps support the local Long Island economy. Additional patch reef creation through material deployments will increase the use and enjoyment of these valuable New York State resources. Anglers and divers who access the artificial reefs support local businesses

through the purchase of fuel, bait and tackle, marine equipment, scuba equipment and by using for hire party/charter and dive vessels. New York's marine resources are critical to the state's economy, supporting nearly 350,000 jobs and generating billions of dollars through tourism, fishing and other industries. More than 500,000 anglers in the region will reap the benefits of this new initiative, supporting the region's growing marine economy which accounts for approximately 9.7 percent of Long Island's total GDP.

Anglers in New York State marine waters are required to enroll in the New York Recreational Marine Fishing Registry. The Registry provides important information for setting quotas, size and bag limits, and fishing seasons each year. [More information on the Registry](#) can be found on the DEC website or by contacting DEC's Marine Fishing Access Unit at (631) 444-0438.

Reef construction is part of the NY is Open for Fishing and Hunting Initiative, an effort to improve recreational activities for in-state and out-of-state sportsmen and sportswomen and to boost tourism opportunities throughout the state. For more information about [DEC's Artificial Reef Program](#) visit DEC's website. ✧

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Submitted by Johnathan Powell

Steelhead bag limits

Continued from page 1

The public at a recent meeting included anglers and guides who said they were all in favor of reducing the steelhead bag limit during spawning season. Jay Allen owns the Muskegon River Inn, a hotel and coffee shop, in Newaygo that depends on the steelhead population. Allen expressed concern that without a reduced bag limit, the steelhead population could decline to dangerous levels and impact his economic well-being.

“Local businesses supported by steelhead is huge; not killing as many fish will help in the short term,” Allen

said. “If we wait until there is an emergency, it will be too late, and the economy could crash. Steve Pels, a guide at the Gates Au Sable Lodge, said reducing harvest is not the silver bullet that will fix the problem but gives the DNR time to figure out what is causing it.

“(Bag) limit reductions will not increase steelhead populations; however, it will have a net zero impact and would show the NRC’s commitment to addressing the problem,” Pels said. Some guides want even stricter regulations surrounding steelhead harvest after observing the population’s decline in recent years.

“A lot of the rivers in the Pacific

Northwest are closing because they are not having steelhead return to their systems,” Hubbard said. “I have a lot of clients that are spending more time fishing with me because the rivers in British Columbia were shut down.”

Even as a modest step, Commissioner Tom Baird said the steelhead bag limit during its spawning season moves the NRC toward a longer-term solution that will increase its population. “This is a small step,” Baird said. “If I had a magic wand, I would do a lot of things in addition to what we are proposing today, but I see this as an opportunity to take some pressure off (the fish), especially wild fish.” ✧

Apply now for Pere Marquette youth wingshooting clinic, pheasant hunt

GRAFTON – Young hunters between the ages of 10 and 17 can apply now for the Pere Marquette Youth Wingshooting Clinic and Pheasant Hunt scheduled for Saturday, **March 5** at Pere Marquette State Park.

Young hunters will participate in a wingshooting clinic during the morning taught by instructors certified by the National Sporting Clays Association and IDNR. Young hunters will advance their wingshooting skills while practicing safe shotgun handling and operation.

The pheasant hunt will take place during the afternoon. Participants must

have successfully completed an approved hunter safety course and have a valid hunting license. Participants are required to observe current guidance from the CDC and Illinois Department of Public Health regarding face coverings and social distancing.

Permits for the Pere Marquette Youth Pheasant Hunt are available through IDNR’s Controlled Pheasant Hunting Internet Reservation System. Hunters should review Illinois Youth Pheasant Hunt Information and Illinois Youth Pheasant Hunt Regulations on the website prior to applying.

To navigate to the controlled pheasant hunting website from <https://dnr.illinois.gov>:

- Click on “Controlled Pheasant Hunting” from the drop-down menu under the “Hunt/Trap” button the homepage toolbar.
- Select the box labeled “Click Here for Applications,” then choose “Illinois Youth Pheasant Hunts.”
- Complete the online form. Choose “TYPH – Pere Marquette (Mar 5)” when prompted to “Select Area” in Part 2 of the form. ✧

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

[Province enforcing new bait management rules for anglers](#)

In July 2020, province of Ontario released a Sustainable Bait Management Strategy, which describes the new approach to managing baitfish and leeches to reduce the ecological risks associated with the use and movement of bait.

[Walleye love perch too much. So Michigan is expanding walleye fishing.](#)

The Natural Resources Commission will open the Saginaw River to walleye fishing during spawning season, beginning in 2023. The state hopes expanded walleye fishing will lift populations of yellow perch in Saginaw Bay.

[Study: Fish can recover from mercury pollution faster than thought](#)

Mercury pollution remains a problem in many parts of the Great Lakes, but new research from Canada’s Experimental Lakes Area in northern Ontario shows that efforts to reduce the amount of mercury going into a lake can have quick and dramatic

[Coast Guard: Weak ice on Lake Erie, Lake Ontario & St. Lawrence River; public should avoid going onto ice](#)

The ice on Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River is weak for this time of year, according to the U.S. Coast Guard, and the public is advised not to go onto the ice. [Read the full story by WJET-TV – Erie, PA.](#)

End