



Funding agreement will kick start project to keep invasive carp out of Great Lakes

CHICAGO (CN) – The governors of Illinois and Michigan announced July 1, that their states had reached an agreement to cosponsor the Brandon Road Interbasin Project, an engineering effort to protect the Great Lakes ecosystem from Asian carp and other invasive aquatic animals.

The project aims to install a number of deterrents to invasive species at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam, located on the Des Plaines River near Joliet, Illinois. Though the river flows south toward the Mississippi River, carp and other species use it to enter Lake Michigan. The Army Corps of Engineers identified the area as a key chokepoint between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes Basins in 2014,

and subsequently determined the dam could be used for deterring invasive species.

The Corps' plan for the Brandon Road Lock and Dam, which has been in the works since late December 2020, calls for the use of a number of structural and non-structural control measures. The structural components include a flushing lock, an electric barrier, "underwater acoustic deterrent," and air bubble fences, among other proposed options. As for the non-structural elements, the Corps called for increased public education on invasive species, better monitoring, the use of pesticides and the manual removal of non-native animals.

The entire project is expected to take several years to complete, with objectives spread over three distinct

proposed "increments." The first increment alone will extend beyond 2025, and involves constructing some portions of the bubble fence and acoustic deterrents. The Corps has said it hopes to continue designing the second increment of the project even while construction is underway on the first.

The agreement reached between Illinois and Michigan allocates a combined \$114 million in state funding to begin the project, in addition to \$274 million from the federal government. "Complex agreements like this don't happen in a vacuum, nor do they happen quickly. A tremendous amount of effort over many months went into hammering out the details of this agreement,"

Funding Agreement

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Lake Superior Fisheries Management Outreach update

The DNR's Lake Superior Fisheries Management Team recently hosted a public meeting concerning walleye management in the St. Louis River and western Lake Superior. A recording of the presentation is now available on the [Lake Superior Fisheries Outreach](#) webpage. Find out the latest status of the St. Louis River walleye spawning stock, patterns in how these fish utilize Lake Superior and what they eat.

The management team is also currently evaluating the walleye regulations in western Lake Superior and the St. Louis River Estuary, and we provide some background on that process in the recorded meeting. Contact any of the team members with your input on the goals of the walleye fishery and potential regulation changes.

Additionally, the 2023 Lake Superior survey reports have been updated and are available online on the Lake Superior [Management Reports](#) webpage. These reports included harvest results of creel surveys from recreational anglers and mandatory reporting data from charter and commercial anglers in 2023. Highlights include big coho salmon and abundant lake whitefish.

Finally, view results from four updated surveys from the [Hack Noyes](#), a DNR research vessel, that help assess the status of important recreational and commercial species in Lake Superior. Results from these surveys will help inform fisheries management decisions in the future.

Questions? Dray Carl, Lake Superior biologist: Dray.Carl@wisconsin.gov or 715-331-9036. ✧

ODNR to host 10th annual Ohio Women's Outdoor Weekend

COLUMBUS – The Ohio DNR is opening registration for the 10th annual Women's Outdoor Adventure weekend. The three-day event takes place at the breathtaking Mohican State Park Lodge & Conference Center September 20-22.

This exciting weekend is designed to introduce women to an array of outdoor skills, including boating, fishing, shooting sports, and nature programming. The program, which is open to women aged 16 and older (minors must be accompanied by a parent or guardian), is tailored for beginners while offering a welcoming, pressure-free environment to explore new outdoor activities.

"This event provides a fantastic opportunity for women to build their outdoor recreation skills, forge new friendships, and simply have fun," said ODNR Director Mary Mertz.

The event involves several of ODNR's divisions including, Parks & Watercraft, Forestry, Natural Areas & Preserves, Wildlife, and Geological Survey. This ensures a diverse range of activities and programs, as well as expert guidance.

Participants will have the opportunity to engage in a variety of sessions, such as kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding, fishing, hiking, shotgun and rifle basics, stream quality monitoring, wild edibles, sustainable living, and more.

Accommodations for the weekend will be at the Mohican State Park Lodge & Conference Center, located in Perrysville (Ashland County). Situated on thousands of wooded acres, Mohican State Park is a must-see for adventurers and nature lovers. Attendees will enjoy a fun weekend while staying in newly updated, comfortable lodge rooms.

The cost for the weekend is \$395 per person, with two participants sharing a room. This fee includes lodging, four activity sessions, five meals, a t-shirt, transportation between venues, and evening activities. With

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Sturgeon application deadline is **Aug. 1**

Oshkosh, Wis. – The Wisconsin DNR reminds sturgeon spearers that the deadline to apply for Upriver Lakes spearing tags is August 1, 2024.

Due to a higher success rate on the Upriver Lakes, only 500 license holders will be selected to spear a sturgeon from lakes Poygan, Winneconne or Butte des Morts during the 2025 sturgeon spearing season. These spearing tags will be issued through a drawing where priority is given to applications with the most preference points. Those applying as a group will have their point value based on the individual with the lowest points within the group. Spearers can also choose to purchase a preference point instead of applying for a tag.

Applicants selected to purchase an Upriver Lakes sturgeon spearing license will be notified by October 1, 2024. Any license holder not selected during this drawing will be awarded a preference point toward future drawings and can purchase a Lake Winnebago spearing license. Spearers can apply for an Upriver Lakes tag or purchase a preference point online through the [Go Wild system](#) or at [any license sales location](#).

The 2025 Winnebago System sturgeon spearing season will begin on February 8, 2025, on Lake Winnebago and the upriver lakes Poygan, Winneconne and Butte des Morts. The season is authorized for a maximum of 16 days or until any of the annual biologically based harvest caps are reached. Separate harvest caps are set for each system: Lake Winnebago and the Upriver Lakes. [Learn more about the Winnebago System spear fishery](#) ✧

Continued from column 1

only 100 spots available, early registration is encouraged.

Registration opened for first-time participants on Tuesday, July 9 at 10 a.m., and for past participants the following Tuesday, July 16 at 10 a.m.

For a complete listing of sessions and registration details, please visit ohiodnr.gov/owo. ✧



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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

GREAT LAKES BASIN REPORT

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Nearly 100 parcels of DNR land available via online auctions

The properties, ranging in size from under an acre to 160 acres, are available in more than two dozen counties.

Lake frontage, river frontage and vacant, forested acreage surrounded by private ownership—these describe some of the parcels available in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' next round of surplus land auctions set for later this summer.

The DNR is busy preparing 91 such properties for sale via online auctions in August and September.

Surplus land sales, a regular part of the [DNR's public land strategy](#), are key to how the department manages the land it oversees on behalf of the people of Michigan. Auction proceeds will be reinvested in acquiring critical land for the public to help provide future outdoor recreation opportunities in keeping with the DNR's mission to conserve, protect and manage the

state's natural and cultural resources for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations.

Land in more than two dozen counties throughout Lower Michigan and the Upper Peninsula will be available via 11 online auctions between **[August 2 and September 5](#)**:

- **Aug. 2** – Eaton and Livingston counties.
- **Aug. 6** – Chippewa, Luce and Mackinac counties.
- **Aug. 7** – Dickinson, Houghton, Marquette, Menominee and Ontonagon counties.
- **Aug. 8** – Crawford, Missaukee, Ogemaw, Otsego and Roscommon counties.
- **Aug. 9** – Antrim and Charlevoix counties.
- **Aug. 13** – Alpena, Cheboygan and Presque Isle counties.
- **Aug. 14** – Grand Traverse and Manistee counties.

- **Aug. 21** – Arenac and Midland counties.
- **Aug. 22** – Macomb and St. Clair counties.
- **Sept. 3** – Berrien County.
- **Sept. 5** – Genesee County.

How bidding works

Interested bidders may pre-register and get more information about the online auction schedule at www.tax-sale.info. If you would like to bid on a property, you must register before the property's auction date. Absentee bids can be made up to 30 days before an auction.

More information on the bidding process, available acreage, maps and location information of the properties offered can be found at Michigan.gov/LandForSale.

Interested bidders are encouraged to review [DNR Land Sales: Terms and Conditions](#) ✧

\$1,000,000 to Michigan to support Commission's FishPass project

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) will receive \$1,000,000 from Michigan in the fiscal year 2025 budget. Funds will support the construction of FishPass in Traverse City, MI.

“We are thrilled to receive this investment,” said Dr. Marc Gaden, Executive Secretary of the GLFC. “While FishPass is in Traverse City, it is a project for everyone—having a positive impact all over the Great Lakes and beyond—and we are honored to accept this support from the State of Michigan. The Commission is particularly grateful to State Senator John Damoose for his leadership in securing these funds, and for his commitment to the Great Lakes.”

FishPass is the capstone of a more than 20-year restoration project on the Boardman/Ottaway River to reconnect the river with the Great Lakes. The project broke ground in May, and it will replace the failing Union Street Dam with a new, complete barrier to all fish with the capability to sort and selectively pass desirable fishes

(lake sturgeon, lake trout) while blocking harmful invaders like sea lamprey.

State Senator John Damoose (MI-37) was the lead advocate for the inclusion of FishPass in the State budget. “I was happy to champion this exciting Great Lakes restoration and protection project,” said Senator Damoose. “FishPass will replace an aging piece of infrastructure, and put Northern Michigan at the center of leading edge freshwater research that will have positive impacts for generations.”

State funds will help to support the final phases of construction, which include most of the upland public amenities and universally accessible design features. “FishPass will be great for the health of the river,” said Traverse City Manager Liz Vogel, “but it will also be great for the people of our region. This investment will help make possible a safe, green, accessible public space in the heart of our downtown.”

Earlier this year, the City of Traverse City received an EGLE Dam Risk Reduction Grant for FishPass. Construction of critical in-stream, or “wet” project elements, including dam replacement and the fish passage channel, is underway and expected to finish in 2026. Simultaneously, efforts to finalize costs and funding for “dry” elements such as an educational facility, landscaping enhancements and naturalized river channel elements are underway. This phased approach ensures that all project elements will be completed effectively and on schedule—with the total project targeted for completion in 2027.

FishPass addresses public safety as the Union Street Dam was rated in fair-to-poor condition according to a 2021 MDEQ Dam Safety Unit inspection. The new, robust barrier, will reduce the risk of dam failure and enhance flood control, ensuring the safety of residents and infrastructure. <https://www.glfc.org/fishpass.php> ✧

Striped and hybrid striped bass stocked in Indiana lake

The Indiana DNR East Fork State Fish Hatchery recently completed annual striped bass and hybrid striped bass stockings. More than 78,000 striped bass fingerlings and 146,000 hybrid striped bass fingerlings were added to 12 lakes around the state. The stocked fish averaged 1–2 inches in length.

The breakdown of stockings of striped and hybrid striped bass by lake, with the respective counties listed in parentheses, was as follows:

- Worster Lake (St. Joseph) – 3,270 hybrids
- Cedar Lake (Lake) – 7,810 hybrids
- Lake Shafer (White) – 12,910 hybrids
- Nyona Lake (Fulton) – 1,040 hybrids
- Lake Freeman (Carroll and White) – 15,470 hybrids
- Clare Lake (Huntington) – 420 hybrids
- Shadyside Park Lake (Madison) – 1,000 hybrids
- Cecil M. Harden Lake (Parke) – 20,600 striped bass
- Brookville Lake (Union and Franklin) – 46,667 striped bass
- Monroe Lake (Monroe and Brown) – 53,750 hybrids
- Hardy Lake (Scott) – 1,000 striped bass and 7,000 hybrids
- Patoka Lake (Dubois, Crawford, and Orange) – 10,000 striped bass and 44,000 hybrids

Indiana anglers can look forward to continued quality striped and hybrid striped bass fishing opportunities in the coming years as a result of these stockings. To learn more about striped and hybrid striped bass fishing, visit bit.ly/striped-hybrid-bass-fishing.



Upcoming Fishing Clinics with the DNR's Fishmobile

Cast a line before summer slips away!

Meet up with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR)'s Fishmobile and take advantage of late summer and early fall fishing opportunities.

DNR staff, volunteers and the University of Wisconsin - Madison Fishing Team will get you started on a variety of fishing skills. Try fly fishing for feisty bluegills in Monona Bay on August 7, or practice your spincasting skills for the rest of the season.

Loaner fishing tackle and bait will be provided. All ages are welcome. Children under 10 should be accompanied by an adult.

All anglers ages 16 and up will need a fishing license. If you've never had a fishing license or haven't had one for more than 10 years, [you can get your license online](#) for only \$5 and you'll be ready to fish.

WHAT: Fishing clinics with the DNR's Fishmobile!

WHEN AND WHERE:

- Aug. 7 | 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. | Olin Park, 1156 Olin-Turville Ct., Madison
- Aug. 14 | 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. | Olin Park, 1156 Olin-Turville Ct., Madison
- Aug. 21 | 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. | Filene Park, 1610 N. Sherman Ave., Madison
- Aug. 28 | 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. | Vilas Park, 1602 Vilas Park Dr., Madison
- Sept. 11 | 5 – 7 p.m. | Wingra Park, 824 Knickerbocker St., Madison*
- Oct. 2 | 5 – 7 p.m. | Law Park, 410 S. Blair St., Madison*

WHO: Anyone who wants to learn how to fish or meet other anglers. All are welcome.

*Register with our partners at [City of Madison Parks](#) for events marked with an asterisk. ◇

Help stop the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species

The Wisconsin DNR reminds boaters to help stop the spread of invasive plants and animals in our waters as part of the Great Lakes Landing Blitz.

The effort is a collaboration of all Great Lakes states and provinces to educate boaters that simple clean-up steps and draining water from the boat and live wells can help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). We can all make a difference whether we are enjoying the water with a fishing or recreational boat, jet ski or paddle craft.

“It only takes a minute to remove plants, animals, mud or debris from boats, trailers and equipment and to drain all water from bilges, live wells and bait buckets,” said Erin McFarlane, the Statewide Clean Boats Clean Waters Educator with Extension Lakes. “These simple steps help keep invasive species from hitching a ride from one lake or river to another.”

Every boater and angler has a role to play in protecting Wisconsin's lakes and rivers. Everyone should follow these prevention steps, required by Wisconsin state law, to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in our waters:

- Inspect boats, trailers and equipment before and after use.
- Remove all mud and attached aquatic plants and animals.
- Drain all water from boats, vehicles and equipment, including live wells and fish buckets.
- Never move plants or live fish away from a waterbody.
- Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash.
- Buy minnows from a Wisconsin bait dealer.

Additionally, only use leftover minnows when fishing with them on the same body of water. They can be used on other waters only if no lake or river water or other fish have been added to their container.

To learn more about invasive species and their impacts, visit the DNR's [Invasive Species webpage](#). ◇

DNR proposes selling 80,000 acres of school trust lands in the Boundary Waters Canoe Wilderness to the U.S. Forest Service to benefit Minnesota's public schools

The Minnesota DNR, the Minnesota Office of School Trust Lands, and the U.S. Forest Service - Superior National Forest are working together on a strategy to transfer approximately 80,000 acres of school trust lands within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness to federal ownership. This decision will benefit Minnesota's public education system.

The state, U.S. Forest Service, and The Conservation Fund had been working for years on a proposal to exchange school trust lands inside the BWCAW for lands outside of the BWCAW. That process, despite being underway for many years, has yet to yield an outcome. Therefore, the DNR recently withdrew its land exchange proposal, originally submitted to the U.S. Forest Service on August 22, 2012, involving school trust lands within the BWCAW. Additionally, the U.S. Forest Service has announced the cancellation of the Environmental Impact Statement for the original exchange proposal. The cancellation notice was posted to the [Federal Register](https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/2024-15122/environmental-impact-statements-availability-etc-superior-national-forest-school-trust-land-exchange) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/2024-15122/environmental-impact-statements-availability-etc-superior-national-forest-school-trust-land-exchange>) at 8 a.m. on Friday, July 12.

In the new proposal, the DNR would remove the school trust designation from approximately 80,000 acres of state lands within the BWCAW. The federal government would then purchase those lands from the DNR using federal Land and Water Conservation Funds.

The agreement between state and federal partners would uphold Minnesota's fiduciary responsibility to generate income for the Permanent School Fund and help to provide a continual source of funding for Minnesota's K-12 schools. Upon completion, funds from the sale would

be deposited in the Permanent School Fund, which supports 850,000 students in K-12 public education by distributing revenue to every public and charter school in the state. The [DNR's website \(https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/school-lands/school-trust-lands-projects.html\)](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/school-lands/school-trust-lands-projects.html) provides more information about the project.

As a result of the cancellation of the original land exchange, TCF is also proposing to sell up to 15,000 acres within the Superior National Forest proclamation boundary, outside of the BWCAW, directly to the U.S. Forest Service. The DNR also is evaluating TCF lands in consultation with the U.S. Forest Service, counties, and Tribes to identify parcels suitable for state acquisition. Funding will be needed for the DNR to purchase TCF lands outside the BWCAW.

"The state's school trust lands are designated to maximize long-term economic return for the Permanent School Fund and provide a continual source of funding for every K-12 public school district in the state," said Sarah Strommen, commissioner of the Minnesota DNR. "This important land transaction ensures that the DNR can fulfill its fiduciary responsibility to the school trust. We are pleased to work with the U.S. Forest Service and The Conservation Fund to remove school trust lands from within the BWCAW and acquire forest lands outside the wilderness for the public."

"The purchase of these lands will help reduce administrative issues the state and the Forest Service have faced for a long time," said Tom Hall, forest supervisor, Superior National Forest.

The state's school trust lands have been a reliable source of revenue for the Permanent School Fund for over a century, from activities like mining and timber harvesting. However, the

1964 Wilderness Act and the 1978 Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act significantly limit the state's ability to use the 80,000 acres of school trust lands located within the BWCAW as required by the state constitution to generate revenue for Minnesota's public and charter schools.

"The resolution of this longstanding land management issue is a major win for Minnesota's public school students," said Aaron Vande Linde, Minnesota Office of School Trust Lands director. "The project's culmination will result in millions of dollars deposited into the Permanent School Fund. This investment will support the state's public education system in perpetuity, fulfilling our fiduciary duty to ensure that both current and future beneficiaries receive maximum economic returns from school trust assets."

The DNR will soon begin work with OSTL to remove the school trust land designation from state lands within the BWCAW, appraising approximately 80,000 acres for acquisition by the U.S. Forest Service. ✧

Upcoming Milwaukee-area DNR facility and property closures

The Wisconsin DNR announced that several Milwaukee-area facilities and properties will have full or partial closures over the next two months due to the Republican National Convention and the Wisconsin State Fair. These closures are to accommodate security and safety operations during the events. The State Fair closure will be in place August 1-11, 2024. For more info: [Upcoming Milwaukee-Area DNR Facility And Property Closures | Wisconsin DNR](#) ✧

Tournament Info System a valuable tool for fisheries managers and the public

Bass fishing tournaments are very popular in Michigan, and for the past nine years the state DNR has been collecting and tracking data from them in its online [Fishing Tournament Information System](#).

By law, fishing tournaments targeting bass and walleye—as well as any competitive fishing event, regardless of structure, that targets muskellunge—are required to register their events with the DNR and report results after the tournament has ended. The Michigan Natural Resources Commission put these requirements in place for bass tournaments in 2016, with walleye and muskie requirements added in 2019.



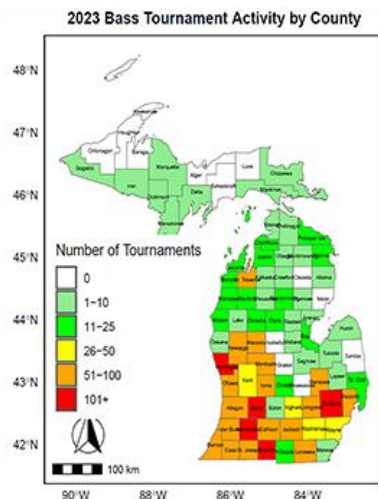
The idea was to gain a better understanding of how much fishing tournament activity occurs in Michigan annually. In particular, the commission sought to identify which bodies of water are used and how many anglers participate in tournament fishing, as well as collect catch and biological data on the fish that are caught to supplement the DNR's own fish survey capabilities.

These requirements and the development of the Fishing Tournament Information System have resulted in a successful program and an information-gathering tool that have helped the DNR better understand a valuable angler group while providing large quantities of social and biological data for use in future fisheries management discussions.

Most fishing tournaments in Michigan follow the same basic setup and must

comply with all state recreational fishing regulations, including licensing requirements, seasons, size limits and daily angler possession limits.

Generally speaking, tournament anglers meet at a lake on a predetermined day and time and then fish for the targeted species, placing legally caught fish into their boat's live well. At the conclusion of the event, anglers meet back at a centralized location, usually a boating access site, where the catch of each angler or team of anglers is weighed. The total fish weight for each angler or team is then compared against others in the event, with the heaviest catch declared the winner. After the weigh-in, the fish are released alive back into the body of water where they were caught.



“Annually, around 2,600 bass, 100 walleye and 15 muskie tournaments occur as registered in Michigan,” said DNR fisheries biologist and tournament specialist Tom Goniea.

These events are spread out over 300-plus bodies of water per year and average around 14 boats and 26 anglers per event. Annually, anglers spend around 350,000 hours fishing in these tournaments, handling and releasing more than 125,000 fish.

“This level of angler interest and participation rivals that of the

Michigan charter boat fishery on the Great Lakes, making tournament fishing and tournament anglers a substantial subset of Michigan's recreational angling community,” Goniea said. “Tournament activity is definitely a statewide draw, with tournaments occurring throughout Michigan, but we have found over the years that the highest concentration of events occurs in the southern half of the Lower Peninsula in counties close to the more established population centers.”

The most popular bodies of water for tournaments include Lake St. Clair (between the St. Clair River and Detroit River systems), Muskegon Lake (at the mouth of the Muskegon River) and Gull Lake, Gun Lake and Austin Lake, all in southwest Michigan in the greater Kalamazoo area. ✧

Saginaw Bay

Last year Jeff Jolley and others hosted a public workshop on fish habitat and coastal resilience in the near shore portion of Saginaw Bay in the areas of the Kawkawlin and Saginaw rivers. One of the goals of the project was to build a website to provide specific information to the public. The website is now in operation and can be reached by this link, <https://www.michiganseagrant.org/saginaw-bay-reef/>. ✧

Home on the range: Visit a DNR shooting range near you

Looking to practice your shooting or searching for a fun day on the range? Indiana DNR has the shooting ranges and facilities you need. Our ranges offer a variety of shooting types. [Watch our new shooting range video](#) to view our facilities and shooting opportunities across the state ✧

Where's the best bass fishing in U.S.? Lake Erie makes cut

Lake Erie keeps reeling in the accolades.

The shallowest of the Great Lakes—which was just named the top lake in the U.S. by USA Today's 10Best—is now being recognized as a top spot for bass fishermen. *Bassmaster* magazine released its rankings this week of the 100 best bass lakes across the nation. Lake Erie landed at No. 3 and No. 4 in the Northeast region, with the eastern most point and western areas being honored. The Lake Erie/Upper Niagara River area was third.

"The deep, clear, rocky eastern basin of this Great Lake continues to produce quality smallmouth, and plenty of them ...," the magazine said. As for the western area, the magazine cited the fishing around Sandusky. "The copious islands, reefs and rock piles in Erie's western basin provide an ideal habitat for smallmouth bass,"

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Illinois DNR Director Finnie, who signed the deal on behalf of the state, said in a prepared statement.

Invasive species like carp are considered major threats to the Great Lakes' ecosystem. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission lists four Asian carp species — bighead carp, silver carp, black carp and grass carp — as particularly destabilizing because they can grow over four feet long and approach or exceed a weight of 100 pounds. At this size they can outcompete native lake fishes who trend much smaller, and have an outsized negative impact on lake vegetation, plankton and mollusks.

All four of the species were deliberately introduced to North America over the last several decades as aquacultural pest control animals, but subsequently escaped into the wild. None of the four species are currently present in the Great Lakes, but they have become more common in river systems further inland. Since 2010, anglers have caught several invasive carp specimens within just a

the magazine said.

James Hall, the vice president of content at Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.), said the goal in making the list is always to give even the occasional angler the best chance at being successful.

"I am always amazed at how much the rankings change each year," he said in a prepared statement. "It's a tremendous reminder that fisheries are living entities that have good and bad years. According to the 2024 rankings based on months of research and data collection, our Top 100 fisheries are not just alive and well but thriving."

So where is the top bass fishing spot in the U.S.? According to *Bassmaster Magazine*, it's the St. Lawrence River, specifically around the Thousand Islands.

"This unrivaled smallmouth fishery appears to be getting even better," the magazine says.

few miles of Lake Michigan, including on the lake side of another electric barrier on the Des Plaines River.

"The consequences of an established bigheaded carp population are expected to include changes in planktonic communities, reduction in planktivore biomass, reduced recruitment of fishes with early pelagic life stages, and reduced stocks of piscivores," the Canadian government concluded in a 2011 risk assessment of bighead carp.

Numerous other non-native plant, fish and invertebrate species, like zebra mussels, also threaten the Great Lakes. A 1993 study published in the *Journal of Great Lakes Research* estimated that nearly 140 invasive species had become established in the Great Lakes since the early 1800s, mostly from Eurasia or the Atlantic coast. A 2022 report increased that count to over 185 species, with 85 having been introduced via the 1959 opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

The Seaway connects the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean, but dozens of species have also entered the lakes in ocean vessels' ballast discharge. Besides the damage to local

The river earned the title in 2022, but fell to second place the following year. Now, it's back on top with unrivaled production, having gathered more than 100 pounds of smallmouth bass in just one Bassmaster Elite Series tournament last August.

Here are Bassmaster's top 10 picks for the best lakes to reel in bass. (Four of them are in Great Lakes States)

1. St. Lawrence River (Thousand Islands), New York
2. O.H. Ivie Lake, Texas
3. Orange Lake, Florida
4. Lake St. Clair, Michigan
5. Lake Fork, Texas
6. Lake Murray, South Carolina
7. Lake Erie/Upper Niagara River, New York
8. Clear Lake, California
9. Bussey Brake Reservoir, Louisiana
10. Mille Lacs Lake, Minnesota ✧

ecosystems these creatures present, conservationists also estimate they cost U.S. and Canadian taxpayers and businesses \$200 million per year. The Brandon Road Lock and Dam can do little to prevent animals from entering the lakes via ballast discharge, though the Army Corps of Engineers said it was committed to preventing invasive species from entering the Great Lakes from inland waterways.

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been working diligently with our partners in Illinois and Michigan to move this critical project forward," said District Commander Colonel Aaron Williams. "We are excited to be entering this next phase of the project and are committed to preventing the movement of invasive carp and other aquatic nuisance species into the Great Lakes."

In addition to the announcement that Illinois would cosponsor the project with Michigan, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker's office announced that independent contractors could begin bidding for fabrication, design and bedrock removal contracts at the Brandon Road site. ✧

Canada's gun buyback costs ballooning

Canada's gun buyback program has already cost \$42 million, and not one gun has been bought back yet. The original cost estimate was \$8.8 million. *Hold your letters. We know it's not actually a gun "buyback."* But that's what our Federal government chose to call it.

The program has already cost \$42 million — and not one gun has been bought back yet. Conservative Senator Don Plett, Opposition Leader in the Senate, found information about the program through Order Paper questions he asked on September 19, 2023. The answers received in March, revealed in addition to the amount of money spent to date, 60 employees in [Public Safety Canada](#) are working on the program and 15 employees of an [RCMP](#) team are dedicated to it.

Plett hopes this information and his concerns will be brought up in the House of Commons. "Many Canadians are very concerned about the government's plan to confiscate their legally acquired firearms, so I definitely expect their MPs are watching the development of this story closely and will do what they can to raise the profile of the government's bungling of such a terrible program," he said.

The original cost estimate to start the buyback program was \$8.8 million. Asked if this is potentially a repeat of the gun registry fiasco, Plett answered, "It is already shaping up that way." ✧

Marbled Crayfish

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"A lot of retailers are not sure exactly what crayfish species they're even selling," Szklaruk said. "Once the consumer realizes it's a marbled crayfish that produces asexually, they have so many babies in their tank, they don't want to take care of tens to hundreds of marbled crayfish, so they think it's just okay to dump them in a local water body."

She said that cruel as it may seem, if people realize their pet is a marbled

Canadian firearm owner numbers rising

The rising number of Canadian firearm owners increased in 2023 to 2,352,504, continuing the trend. Ontario's numbers are also up. Firearms are again as hot a topic as here in the USA, as a result of the federal government banning additional "military grade" guns.

There were 2,352,504 Possession and Acquisition License (PAL) holders as of December 31. This is an increase from 2022's 2,264,755. Ontario residents held the most licenses with 667,726, of which 418,879 were non-restricted, 234,719 were restricted and 14,126 were prohibited.

Ontario also had a small increase in the number of firearm license holders. Only Newfoundland, Northwest Territories, and the Yukon Territory have more than 10% of the population with PALs. Although figures don't show it, there is a concern among many gun owners that the number of older shooters who are hanging up their guns or dying is not being offset by new gun owners.

Asked if there was a particular demographic where numbers increased, [RCMP](#) spokesperson Robin Percival said the Canadian Firearms Program has not observed a significant change relating to any particular demographic in recent years. "The number of PAL holders for particular sectors of the PAL holder population has remained largely constant from year to year." ✧

crayfish, the most ecologically responsible move is to euthanize it—and any young—by putting them in the freezer.

"The golden rule is to just never dump anything from an aquatic tank," said Szklaruk, including aquarium water, which could be laced with tiny baby crayfish. "You might think it's empty, but there are some little stragglers left behind." ✧

Gun buyback tough on industry

The [Canadian Sporting Arms and Ammunition Association \(CSAAA\)](#) is reaffirming skyrocketing costs. The group has been working with the government on a buyback for the prohibited inventory that dealers and manufacturers have had in their inventory since 2020. CSAAA is not involved in any consumer-level gun buyback program.

CSAAA President Wes Winkel said the prohibition has been tough on the industry and many retailers have closed since 2020 due to the prohibition of many centrefire, semi-automatic rifles, and handgun ban. One of the issues being raised is the buyback of components of AR-15-style guns.

He explained these guns are modular. Manufacturers have components that could be assembled into complete firearms, but so too did many gun shops. In addition, there were accessories for these guns. "Those accessories will be worth zero," Winkel said. Regarding the modular components, which aren't yet assembled into completed guns, Winkel said, "It seems pointless for them to assemble them just to be bought back."

Winkel said outside of the large companies — [Black Creek Labs](#), [Alberta Tactical](#), and [Savage Arms](#) — there are hundreds of smaller companies and gun shops with components that are not able to be sold. He said the CSAAA made the government aware of this issue after the ban, and although initially federal officials didn't want to include the components, this is now a possibility. ✧

Where to Fish

DNR's [Where to Fish](#) interactive map includes information on public access sites, fish consumption advisories and low-head dam locations in rivers and streams. ✧

"Weakness always promotes aggression"

Axiom of international diplomacy

Ontario protecting environment from harmful invasive species

The Ontario government is investing \$16 million over three years to protect the economy and environment from the threat of invasive species. The grant funding will help municipalities, conservation authorities and Indigenous communities help stop invasive species from establishing or spreading in the province.

“Invasive species are one of the main threats to biodiversity in Ontario and they also have a negative impact on our economy,” said Graydon Smith, Minister of Natural Resources. “This investment is the latest step our government is taking to protect Ontario’s critical industries as well as our natural environment to ensure we can continue to enjoy the natural beauty in our province.”

The funding will be administered by the Invasive Species Centre and Nature Conservancy of Canada to support a comprehensive, Ontario-wide plan to fight the invasive plant Phragmites, and for the Invasive Species Action Fund to provide grants to municipalities, conservation authorities and Indigenous communities to manage other harmful invasive species.

“Invasive species pose a serious threat to our environment and can have devastating impacts on community staples such as agriculture businesses and our parks and rivers,” said Dawn Gallagher, MPP, Newmarket-Aurora. “By funding organizations to manage and prevent the spread of these species, we are taking crucial steps to preserve the natural beauty and stability of Newmarket-Aurora for future generations.”

In 2019, the Invasive Species Centre estimated that the potential impacts of invasive species to agricultural, fisheries, forestry, health care, tourism and the recreation industry may be as high as \$3.6 billion per year in Ontario.

To further prevent the introduction and spread of invasive
Continued in column 2

DEC completes Long Eddy Fishing Access Site along Delaware River

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced the completion of a new fishing access site along the Delaware River in Sullivan County. The Long Eddy fishing access site features parking accommodations for up to seven trailered vehicles and six cars.

“DEC is committed to investing in projects like this one to continue to expand access to outdoor recreation and enhance the visitor experience,” DEC Regional Director Kelly Turturro said. “The new parking area at the Long Eddy fishing access site will ensure more anglers can enjoy outstanding fishing opportunities on the Delaware River.”

The Long Eddy fishing access site is located along Ferry Street in the town of Fremont’s hamlet of Long Eddy. A public boat launch for non-motorized boats is located at the end of Ferry Street just beyond the parking area.

The Delaware River is a diverse fishery with an array of opportunities for anglers, including trout, walleye, muskellunge, and certain migratory marine species.

The project was constructed through the efforts of DEC’s Region 3 Bureau of Fisheries, Region 3 Division of Operations, and a private contractor.

The New York State Department of Health (DOH) provides advice to anglers about what fish are safe to eat and how often. [Visit DOH’s website to search by waterbody location.](#) ✧



Continued from column 1

species in the province, Ontario recently [added 10 new non-native species and four genera \(groups of species\) under the Invasive Species Act, 2015](#) and is renewing the Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan to ensure we have the most robust plan possible in place. ✧

Marbled Crayfish

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Scientists are worried the crayfish from Burlington Park could make it several miles into Lake Ontario, carried by birds or in anglers’ bait buckets. Unlike most Great Lakes invasive species that spread through lakes by swimming or hitching a ride on boat hulls or in ship ballast, crayfish can also walk.

“That ability to spread over land makes them more difficult to control than fish, and the ability to burrow into the sediments and avoid poisons or toxins or other control mechanisms” complicates control, said Rochelle Sturtevant, program manager at NOAA’s [Great Lakes Aquatic Nonindigenous Species Information System](#) (GLANSIS) for Michigan Sea Grant. “If you try to poison them, they walk away.”

In Wisconsin, [thousands of gallons of bleach](#) and clay have been used to eradicate red swamp crayfish. [Carbon dioxide injected in water](#) can be used to flush crayfish out or suffocate them, and baited traps can catch them. Yet, efforts to control red swamp crayfish have shown just how hard it can be, especially since crayfish produce hundreds of eggs at a time, a “clutch” of tiny young that once hatched hang onto the mother’s underside for up to two weeks.

Sales of marbled crayfish are banned in multiple states. In 2022, an [Ohio woman pleaded guilty](#) to federal charges of knowingly selling marbled crayfish 96 times for \$2,812. Since Ohio bans possessing or selling the species, her business violated the federal Lacey Act which prohibits sales of illegally acquired plant and animals. “They’re restricted in most of the Great Lakes states,” Sturtevant said. “But backyard hobby breeders trading things on the internet are extremely difficult to regulate. When I think of things we can’t regulate sold on the internet, crayfish probably don’t even make the top ten.”

The marbled crayfish’s asexual reproduction means there is a high risk of pet owners releasing it in the wild.

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Marbled crayfish raises eyebrows, and concerns

Last winter, the ponds in the park where marbled crayfish—a Great Lakes invasive species—were first discovered in Ontario were drained in hopes that the crayfish would freeze to death. But that didn't happen, likely thanks to the unseasonably warm weather and their burrowing ability. Now the Invading Species Awareness Program of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters has launched a regional sweep from Ottawa to Windsor.

It all started with a mottled little crustacean crawling across a soccer field in Ontario's Burlington City Park in October 2021, a few miles from Lake Ontario.

The animal may have looked innocuous, but this was the first sign of a costly and grueling ongoing battle against a potentially devastating new invasive species in the Great Lakes. It was a marbled crayfish, a creature with no native land, whose ancestor mutated into existence in captivity.

Marbled crayfish are able to reproduce asexually and prolifically, meaning: "if it's introduced into a new water body, the population might grow exponentially," said Natalia Szklaruk, coordinator of the [Great Lakes Invasive Crayfish Collaborative](#). "It's really scary."

When local officials and scientists first heard about the crayfish that fall, they weren't overly concerned. They assumed it would be killed by the coming winter temperatures. Ontario had recently announced a ban on selling and possessing marbled crayfish.

"So I suspect someone found out about that, got afraid and released them," said Brook Schryer, assistant coordinator with the Invading Species Awareness Program of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. The stormwater ponds were already known as havens for dumped pets,

including goldfish and rosy-cheeked minnows.

In the spring of 2022, Schryer and colleagues returned to sample stormwater retention ponds in the park for eDNA, or environmental DNA, left in the water by species. The first sample yielded none, but a follow-up showed faint signs of eDNA, as did a third test. Canvassing with nets and other tools yielded no actual crayfish, however, and they felt the situation was under control.

But the following year, on July 5, 2023, Schryer was in the area hunting for invasive "mystery snails," and got a text from a groundskeeper who had a marbled crayfish in his hand. The next week, another one was found. The next day, two more, as Schryer recounted, and the sightings multiplied.

"It was like a floodgate opened," Schryer said. "Once we found the first one, it was absolutely crazy." By fall 2023, a marbled crayfish working group was formed, including Schryer's NGO, and federal and Ontario officials.

"We went out and expanded the search beyond the park," Schryer explained. "We know they're in the park, but where else could they be? These things are fairly cryptic in the way they act. They like to hide."

Last winter, ponds in the park were drained in hopes that the crayfish would freeze to death. But that didn't happen, likely thanks to the unseasonably warm weather and their burrowing ability. Now the group has launched a regional sweep from Ottawa in western Ontario to Windsor across the border from Detroit. "I really hope they're just here," in Burlington City Park, said Schryer. "That this is ground zero. At the same time, I'm not naïve. We need to really truly get an idea of the extent of this issue."

There are already at least two invasive crayfish species in the Great Lakes, the rusty crayfish and red swamp crayfish, which have wreaked havoc in part because they are "polytrophic omnivores, they'll eat insects, aquatic plants, mollusks, detritus—whatever they can get their claws on," said Szklaruk.

But the [marbled crayfish](#)'s asexuality presents a unique threat. "It truly only takes one, whereas with other species, the stars have to align so it can find a suitable mate," said Connor Shelly, GIS specialist at Michigan Sea Grant. Additionally, marbled crayfish reach sexual maturity at six months, "which is very young as far as crayfish go." The marbled crayfish is thought to have first appeared in 1995 in Germany's pet trade, possibly as the result of a mutation among reproducing slough crayfish transported on an international flight.

"Some think it got too hot in the plane and that led to mutation," said Shelly. "Or two slough crayfish from very different individual populations mated on the journey across, and the result was marbled crayfish."

In Burlington, last winter staff drained the stormwater repository where the marbled crayfish were found, hoping to expose them to lethal winter temperatures. This spring, more crayfish appeared.

"It's known to avoid adverse conditions by burrowing," said Shelley, noting that such burrowing can also destabilize riverbanks and could hurt wild rice paddies in the Great Lakes region. He said that marbled crayfish have also been reported in Poland and Sweden—despite their northern climates. "We were hopeful the Great Lakes were too cold for it to survive, but evidence of the last few years suggests otherwise."

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Other Breaking News Items:**(Click on title or URL to read full article)****[Dredging clears the way for commercial and recreational vessels](#)**

Dredging operations are underway in Michigan's Manistee Harbor to improve ship navigation through the channel.

[Bad River Band offers Enbridge a new idea to fix erosion near Line 5 oil pipeline](#)

The Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa has proposed a new project to mitigate the immediate risks of erosion along the Line 5 oil pipeline, a move that comes amid fraught conflict between the Band and the Canadian oil giant Enbridge.

[Sault Ste. Marie Tribe's fish program releases 1M walleye into Michigan waterways](#)

Since 1995, The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians' fish-rearing program has introduced 20 million walleye into the ecosystem. This year, over one million walleye and 45,421 whitefish were released into Northern Michigan waters

[2 Wisconsin tribes defend EPA rule on tribal water rights](#)

Two Wisconsin tribes are defending a new rule issued by the EPA that requires states to consider tribal treaty rights when setting water quality standards. The rule aims to help protect water quality where tribes hold rights outside their reservations under treaties with the federal government. A dozen red states have brought a lawsuit challenging the new regulation.

[Keeping invaders at bay: Battle to protect Lake Michigan and Great Lakes from invasive species paying off](#)

Since 2006, the number of new invasive species entering the Great Lakes has declined by 85%, but with climate change warming the lakes, the number of freshwater species that can ultimately survive in the interconnected body of water is only increasing

[Bill supporting Great Lakes advances](#)

The U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee advanced a bill reauthorizing the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative through 2031. The bill would increase annual funding levels from \$475 million in 2026 to \$500 million from 2027 through 2031

[Michigan is surrounded by the Great Lakes: Facts you may not know about them](#)

On the Great Lakes you can fish, go boating, swim, partake in water sports, all the while enjoying the spectacular views they provide. But here are some facts you may not know about our Great Lakes

[Lake Ontario designation protects underwater relics, including shipwrecks](#)

Lake Ontario has received a new designation as a National Marine Sanctuary and with it added protections and emphasis on its historic and cultural resources

[Scientists use mayflies and walleye as indicators of Lake Erie's health](#)

Mayflies and walleyes are species scientists use as an indicator of lake health; good populations of both normally indicate healthy Lake Erie water conditions.

[Hook & Hunting: Sault Tribe holds open house at walleye hatchery](#)

For the first time in its history, the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians opened its walleye fish hatchery to the public. People were invited to learn about walleye rearing efforts as the fishery's staff prepare to transport and release upwards of one million walleye fingerlings into nearby lakes and streams

End