



Trump administration promises Illinois it will pay to keep carp out of the Great Lakes

A stalemate between President Donald Trump and Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker that threatened a \$1.2 billion plan to keep invasive carp from reaching the Great Lakes appears to have been settled after the Trump administration offered assurances it [will cover its share of the costs](#).

After a delay that has stretched on since February, Illinois officials are set to resume closing on property they need to continue work on a project that will generate vast bubble curtains to deter the carp, stun them with electrical fields and play sound frequencies to disorient them.

Here's what to know:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers along with state officials in Illinois and

Michigan have been planning since 2020 to install a gantlet of technologies in the Des Plaines River near Joliet, Illinois, to deter invasive carp from entering Lake Michigan.

The Corps and the states signed a deal in 2024 to work together on the project using \$226 million [allocated through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#). And elements of the Water Resources Development Act adopted last year call for the federal government to cover 90% of operating and maintenance costs.

Construction on the project began in January. Pritzker's administration was set to close in February on a parcel of property for the project and transfer it to

the Corps. Everything appeared on track until late January, when the Trump administration froze federal grants and loans as it reviewed whether spending aligned with Trump's priorities on issues such as climate change and diversity. The administration rescinded the freeze less than two days later but questions persist about the federal government's spending commitments.

Pritzker, a billionaire heir to the Hyatt hotel empire and a potential 2028 Democratic presidential contender, is [one of Trump's fiercest critics](#). He has described the early months of the Trump administration as "true villainous cruelty by a few idiots."

Trump Administration Promises

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As recreational off, make safety

"Everyone who uses the water has a role in keeping Minnesota's lakes and rivers safe," said Conservation Officer Matt Miller, who's stationed in Duluth as part of the Department of Natural Resources Enforcement Division's marine unit.

"Water is synonymous with Minnesota, and it's great that summer means spending time on the lake for so many people," Miller said. "We just want to make sure everyone who's out there prioritizes safety—for themselves and everyone else. Our goal is to ensure everyone who heads to the water comes back with nothing but positive memories and a desire to get out there again."

The following are safety tips for all boaters to keep in mind to ensure a fun, memorable, safe and successful boating season:

• **Wear a life jacket, don't just bring it.** The law requires children under 10 to wear a life jacket when the boat is

boating season kicks the top priority

underway, but wearing one is the best way for people of all ages to survive an accidental fall into the water.

• **Leave alcohol on shore.** Operating a boat under the influence is illegal and the single greatest factor in fatal boating accidents.

• **Check safety equipment.** Ensure life jackets are in good condition and fit the wearer. On motorboats, ensure carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers, navigation lights, and sound-producing devices are in good condition. Wear the engine cut-off lanyard anytime the boat is underway.

• **Own your wake.** Large wakes can negatively affect the shoreline and be hazardous to other people on the water.

• **Take a boater education course.** New requirements mean all boaters must complete the course. See the [DNR website for more information](#). ✧

State gladly accepts federal funds to curb carp

There was nothing fishy about President Donald Trump unleashing federal money recently to combat the threat of invasive carp entering Lake Michigan.

After fears the administration would withhold the funding to punish Illinois, the president showed his bark is maybe worse than his bite. At least when it comes to this ecosystem issue. Illinois DNR officials had expected to begin the Brandon Road Interbasin Project on the Des Plaines River in Joliet in Will County back in February. That date was delayed after officials were afraid funding might be postponed since the president and Gov. Pritzker have been sniping at each other.

First phase of the work, pegged at about \$340 million, is proposed to stop the so-called Asian carp—silver, bighead, grass and black carp—from entering the Big Lake fishery, where they could spread to the other four Great Lakes. Two more phases of the project, in the planning stage for more than five years, including an electric-shock barrier, are proposed in the coming years. The overall price tag is an estimated \$1.2 billion. That's a hefty cost, yet at stake is the future of the Great Lakes recreational fishing, boating and tourism industry, estimated at \$16 billion, as well as the lakes' \$7 billion commercial fishing industry.

The Brandon Road Lock and Dam barrier plans offered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are considered the last stand in stemming the expected push by the invasive species into the Great Lakes, which are the largest freshwater system in the world. Downstream from the lake along the Illinois River, the voracious fish have taken over waterways.

Indeed, one study has determined that up to 50 million pounds of carp a year could be taken in the river, and even more from waterways south to the Gulf Coast. The state has attempted to "rebrand" the fish as the affordable "seafood" they now call copi.

Nobody has swallowed that despite some Chicago chefs crafting dishes using the plentiful copi, a nod to how "copious" the fish are. Apparently, the fish is tasty, but still carp is carp.

Other uses for the fish are exporting them to Asian markets and for fertilizer. Like other invasives, the carp were introduced in the 1960s to help aquaculture in the South, but have since spread to 31 states.

There's no guarantee the barrier plans will keep the carp from lakes, which already have some freshwater common European carp, also an invasive species, swimming free. As in the case of other invasives—lamprey eels, zebra mussels or gobies—they have a way of getting where they want to go.

Perhaps Trump sees the financial damage the invasives could wreak on Midwestern states, as he's promised the feds will write a check for their fair share. Or he's repaying the sportsmen in Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin who helped him to victory last fall in battleground states. Whatever the reason, Illinois officials and others are pleased to see the money forthcoming. Unlike another \$2 billion in federal funds for some 70 other projects across the state, destined for Illinois but hanging fire.

Pritzker said Trump "heard our calls about the importance of delivering federal funds," according to Olander's story. He added that the administration "decided to finally meet their obligations to the state of Illinois and the Great Lakes region."

If the fish make their way to Lake Michigan, from what we've seen on the Illinois River, it will be near-impossible to get rid of their presence. The Brandon Road barrier may keep them out of our precious resource. When that happens, the Trump administration will receive an overdue "thank you" from environmentalists and fishers across the region. ✧



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Position Statement

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

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Trump's invasive carp action a 'huge win' for Michigan, Great Lakes

President Donald Trump told the federal government to move forward on a project to prevent invasive carp from entering the Great Lakes. The project, backed by Michigan but based in Illinois, had been stalled after that state's governor demanded federal funding guarantees. Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and House Speaker Matt Hall met with Trump to urge action on the issue in April.

President Donald Trump signed a memorandum aimed at kick-starting the Brandon Road Interbasin Project in Illinois, a long-awaited series of barriers designed to prevent invasive carp from entering the Great Lakes. Trump's memo directed his administration to streamline permitting and environmental reviews for the project, and "to expeditiously implement the most effective mechanisms, barriers, and other measures to prevent the migration and expansion of invasive carp" in the Great Lakes Basin and surrounding region, according to [a White House fact sheet](#).

The memo also pressured Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, setting a deadline of July 1 for his state to acquire land required for construction, along with 30-day deadlines for local permits to be granted to facilitate Army Corps construction, the White House said. The project is supported by Michigan, and Friday's action by Trump follows a recent White House visit by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and state House Speaker Matt Hall, who raised the issue with the president.

In a statement, Whitmer called Trump's invasive carp barrier memo a "huge win" and said she was "grateful to the president for his commitment." "I am grateful that, in the midst of a lot of change at the federal level, he is confirming that our federal partners are as committed as ever to getting this done," she added. Michigan and Illinois signed an agreement to build the barrier in 2021, and funding has

been promised by the federal government and both states.

But [Pritzker put the project on hold](#) earlier this year, citing uncertainty over federal funding amid other budget cuts by the administration. Friday, Pritzker's office said Trump's memorandum gave Illinois "[the necessary assurances](#) ... to move toward completion of the Brandon Road Interbasin Project." The Brandon Road project in Joliet, Illinois, is designed to keep invasive carp out of the Great Lakes through a series of barriers, including bubble curtains, electricity, acoustics and flushing as barges are let through the lock and dam at the site.

Four species of invasive carp have spread throughout the Mississippi river basin and threaten to devastate the ecosystem of the Great Lakes if they enter the bodies of water, scientists say. Two of the species, bighead and silver carp, have been located within 47 miles of Lake Michigan in the Des Plaines River.

The Brandon Road project has been [stalled](#) since February, when Illinois delayed acquiring land rights to the river at the site of the project. Pritzker has argued the state can no longer count on the federal government to hold up its end of the agreement for the project's funding. "We cannot move forward until the Trump Administration provides more certainty and clarity on whether they will follow the law and deliver infrastructure funds we were promised," Pritzker said at the time.

The project is expected to cost \$1.15 billion, with \$274 million in federal funding and \$114 million in state funding from Michigan and Illinois to be used for construction of the first of three portions. Whitmer and Hall discussed the project with Trump when they visited the White House in April—along with the importance of a new fighter mission for Selfridge Air

National Guard Base, which [Trump announced plans for](#) last week.

"We have to save Lake Michigan, because these fish, they eat everything in the way, including the other fish," Trump said at the time, noting Whitmer had raised the Asian carp issue with him, and he had already spoken to the US Army Corps of Engineers about it.

Asian carp are seen as a [major threat to walleye, yellow perch and whitefish](#) if they invade Lake Michigan and spread.

After first escaping from fish farms in the Mississippi River basin decades ago, the fish have spread aggressively and now may comprise more than 90 percent of the fish in some waterways in and around the Mississippi River.

The Michigan House passed [a bipartisan resolution](#) Wednesday urging Illinois to move forward with the project.

"Michigan continues to win because we show up, talk to anyone, and work together to get things done," Whitmer said Friday, calling the planned carp barrier a "game-changing" project to protect the Great Lakes. "These fish, if allowed to enter the lakes, would destroy the ecosystem below the water and devastate our economy above it," she said. "The Great Lakes are home to 3,500 plant and animal species and they support 1.5 million jobs that generate (more) than \$60 billion in wages a year across the entire region."

Hall, in a statement, called Friday's presidential memo a "big, important victory" for Michigan. "Protecting our Great Lakes from invasive Asian carp requires exactly this kind of aggressive, effective action," Hall said. "Commercial and sport fishing is a \$7 billion industry in Michigan, and enjoying our Great Lakes is a way of life for everyone here." ✧

Find Fish Ohio success at Lake Erie

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Ohio DNR is touting great numbers of trophy fish caught in Lake Erie in 2024, showcasing the tremendous fishing opportunities in Ohio's Great Lake. Fish Ohio records from Lake Erie, known as the Walleye Capital of the World, show 3,710 catches of trophy fish from 17 different species were submitted in 2024.

The Fish Ohio program celebrates amazing catches of 25 species of fish. Those who reel in a qualifying catch, fish that meet specific length requirements based on species, receive the commemorative Fish Ohio pin for their first entry and a Master Angler pin for catching qualifiers of four different species in the same year. Applications for a Fish Ohio pin and minimum length requirements are found at fishohio.gov.

Ohio has 124,000 acres of inland water, 7,000 miles of streams, 2.25 million acres of Lake Erie water, and

481 miles of the Ohio River. Fishing is a cost-effective and accessible outdoor recreational activity, with resident one-year licenses costing \$25. Youth under the age of 16 can fish for free, and all Ohio residents can fish without purchasing a license during Free Fishing Days on Saturday, June 14 and Sunday, June 15.

Lake Erie received the most Fish Ohio submissions of all the state's waters in 2024. Angler-submitted Fish Ohio records from 2024 specific to Lake Erie are shown below:

- Walleye: 980 Fish Ohio entries in 2024 (qualifying length 28 inches)
- Yellow Perch: 398 Fish Ohio entries in 2024 (qualifying length 13 inches)
- Smallmouth Bass: 127 Fish Ohio entries in 2024 (qualifying length 20 inches)
- Freshwater Drum: 774 Fish Ohio entries in 2024 (qualifying length 24 inches)

- White Bass: 275 Fish Ohio entries in 2024 (qualifying length 15 inches)
- Steelhead: 107 Fish Ohio entries in 2024 (qualifying length 28 inches)
- Channel Catfish: 617 Fish Ohio entries in 2024 (qualifying length 26 inches)
- Largemouth Bass: 41 Fish Ohio entries in 2024 (qualifying length 20 inches)

The Division of Wildlife has many resources available to assist anglers. Find Lake Erie fishing resources at wildohio.gov. Many additional resources are available at your fingertips with the [HuntFish OH mobile app](#). Fishing regulations and an [interactive fishing map](#) can be located with ease from any mobile device. Get started fishing with [Wild Ohio Harvest](#), which provides online learning modules, in-person classes, recipes, and more. ♦

Midwest Walleye Challenge: Fish, win prizes and help the walleye fishery

Ever wish you could get paid to fish? Well, don't quit your day job, but do get out on the water this summer for the Midwest Walleye Challenge—you'll have the chance to win cash prizes and provide useful information to fisheries biologists.

The Michigan DNR is partnering with MyCatch by Angler's Atlas on a [statewide walleye fishing challenge](#) that includes all inland waters in the state. The challenge runs from May 15 through June 29.

As part of the challenge, anglers report their catches of walleye and their fishing trips in the MyCatch mobile app. The app uses anonymous location data, so your best fishing spots stay secret, while Michigan DNR fisheries biologists get valuable information—generalized lake and river catch data entered via the app—to better assess and manage walleye populations.

"We're excited to continue to work with our anglers to learn more about our walleye populations during the second year of the Midwest Walleye Challenge participation," said Seth Herbst, manager of the DNR Fisheries Division's Research Section. "We have hundreds of waters in the state that we manage for walleye, but the combination of those vast waters and limited staffing resources results in an inability to monitor walleye populations status as intensively as we would like.

Herbst said that the challenge provides a unique opportunity for anglers to assist with walleye conservation efforts in Michigan.

"We are particularly excited to learn whether our walleye stocking efforts are resulting in successful trips for anglers.

The challenge
This year's challenge includes several

states across the Midwest as part of a larger fisheries research project. States participating in and promoting the challenge include Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska and South Dakota.

Michigan anglers compete only against Michigan anglers for biweekly prizes, as well as grand prize drawings at the end of the event.

Participants must pay a \$25 fee to register, which qualifies them for prizes, including cash payouts. New for this year, registrants will receive a unique referral code to share with others, and prizes will be awarded for referrals.

[Register today ►](#)

All Michigan fishing rules and regulations still apply, and anglers are required to have a valid fishing license (or valid exemption) to participate in the challenge. ♦

ODNR adds life jacket loaner stations at 32 Ohio state parks

Safety initiative aims to keep Ohioans afloat and fatalities down on the water

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Ohio DNR is making it easier than ever to stay safe on the water. In a major boost to boating safety, ODNR has installed life jacket loaner stations at 32 Ohio state parks across the state. Each station offers free access to life jackets in a wide range of sizes—from infant to adult—making it simple for visitors to gear up before heading out on the water.

“Wearing a life jacket can make the difference between life and death,” said ODNR Director Mary Mertz. “We want every Ohioan and every visitor to have a safe and fun day on the water, and these loaner stations remove one more barrier to making that happen.” Life jacket loaner stations are now available at the following Ohio State Parks:

Northeast Ohio:

- Findley
- Geneva (multiple stations)
- Headlands Beach
- Portage Lakes
- Punderson
- Mosquito Lake

Southeast Ohio:

- Barkcamp
- Blue Rock
- Burr Oak (multiple stations)
- Dillon
- Forked Run
- Jesse Owens
- Lake Logan (multiple stations)
- Lake White
- Muskingum River Parkway
- Strouds Run
- Wolf Run

Central & Southwest Ohio:

- Buckeye Lake (multiple stations)
- Caesar Creek
- Cowan Lake (multiple stations)
- Deer Creek
- Hueston Woods

Don't take a break from fighting the spread of invasive species

Wherever summer plans take you, do your part to make sure that invasive plants (like purple loosestrife), animals and pests don't go along for the ride. A number of invasive species currently threaten Michigan's woods and water, but there are some easy ways everyone can help to stop their spread.

Sometimes it's just about knowing how to take action. Fortunately, Michigan's Invasive Species Program has excellent, clear-cut guidance for [boaters and anglers](#), [campers](#), [hunters and trail users](#), and [land owners, gardeners and pond owners](#).

Before ever leaving the house, though, it's good to know exactly what you're looking for and what to do when you find it! Check out the [invasive species identify and report page](#) for profiles on different species and guidance on how best to report them. Invasive species of greatest concern in Michigan are on the Watch List, and several species are prohibited or restricted in Michigan. Questions? [Joanne Foreman](#), DNR invasives species coordinator, at 517-243-6450. ✧

Continued from column 1

- Indian Lake
- Kiser Lake
- Rocky Fork

Northwest Ohio & Islands:

- Catawba Island
- Grand Lake St. Marys (multiple stations)
- Harrison Lake
- Kelleys Island
- Lake Milton
- Mary Jane Thurston
- South Bass Island

Whether you're planning a day trip or just passing through, ODNR invites you to grab a jacket, enjoy Ohio's natural beauty, and return the jacket when you're done. It's simple, it's smart, and it could save a life. ✧

Indiana Gov. Braun dedicates new Fish & Wildlife Area in Sullivan County

A dedication event took place April 16 to celebrate the official opening of Busseron Creek Fish & Wildlife Area (FWA), 3,950 acres of permanently protected land in Sullivan County comprising forests, woodlands, marshes, swamps, lakes, and grasslands. This is Indiana DNR's largest conservation project in 20 years.

The Busseron Creek Fish & Wildlife Area is a permanently conserved land, once part of the former Minnehaha FWA; it was protected through a collaboration with the Conservation Law Center, leader of the Southern Indiana Sentinel Landscape; The Conservation Fund; National Fish and Wildlife Foundation through Walmart's Acres for America Program; The Nature Conservancy; and The U.S. Navy, the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Crane Division, and Naval Support Activity Crane. ✧

Eugenio Piñero Soler appointed to lead NOAA Fisheries

NOAA Fisheries welcomes Mr. Piñero Soler to his new role. He will work with NOAA Fisheries' various partners, industries, and constituencies to promote the economic benefits of U.S. fisheries and ensure smart management of our nation's fisheries and trust resources. As Assistant Administrator, Mr. Piñero Soler will oversee the federal agency responsible for managing our nation's marine fisheries and conserving protected marine species.

Mr. Piñero Soler has enjoyed a long and illustrious life in fisheries management. In a career that has spanned over 30 years, he has been a successful commercial fisherman, fisheries captain, and entrepreneur in his home island of Puerto Rico and throughout the Caribbean. ✧

Minn DNR invites public comment on muskie plan update through June 12

Online webinar planned and online comment will be available

The Minnesota DNR is inviting people to share their thoughts on a draft update of the state's long-range plan for muskellunge.

"Public input, stakeholder discussions and conversations with our Tribal partners have been critical in shaping the draft plan," said Leslie George, northeast region fisheries manager. "Before finalizing the plan for muskie management moving forward, we want to ensure that we consider the perspectives and opportunities desired by our constituents."

The draft plan will be used to guide muskie management in Minnesota for the next 15 years. It includes management goals, objectives and strategies centered on improving existing muskie populations, shifting approaches in the production of muskies to be stocked, continuing hybrid (tiger) muskellunge management in the metro area, and

broadening research and education efforts. Although there was interest in adding new waters to the statewide muskie stocking program, public input focused on first improving existing lakes, especially the key muskie fisheries of Mille Lacs Lake, Lake Vermilion and Lake Minnetonka.

Public review and comment opportunities

Anyone can obtain a digital copy of the draft plan on the Minnesota DNR's [muskie page](https://mndnr.gov/muskie) (mndnr.gov/muskie). Minnesota DNR staff hosted an evening online webinar to provide an overview of the plan and its purpose, answer questions, and collect public input. The online webinar was held May 28.

Comments may also be submitted by:

- Emailing mnmuskieplan2025@state.mn.us
- Using the online survey available on

the Minnesota DNR's [muskie page](https://mndnr.gov/muskie) (mndnr.gov/muskie)

- Writing to Kelly Wilder, Minnesota DNR – FAW, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155

The DNR is accepting comments on the draft plan update through Thursday, June 12.

Minnesota has 101 waters managed for muskies, comprising 2% of the state's fishable lakes and rivers and 22% of the total surface area that is fishable. Muskies have been introduced in 48 lakes and are maintained in these lakes through stocking. The state record muskie for catch-and-release length is 58.25 inches, caught on Mille Lacs Lake in 2022.

More information is available on the Minnesota DNR's [muskie page](https://mndnr.gov/muskie) (mndnr.gov/muskie). ✧

First run of saugeye stocked into Grand Lake St. Marys

CELINA, Ohio – The Ohio DNR released around 217,000 saugeye into Grand Lake St. Marys for the first time on Wednesday, May 21. Saugeye are fast-growing and popular sport fish that are well suited for Ohio's reservoirs, because they are tolerant of warm and shallow waters.

The fish released on Wednesday were saugeye fingerlings, which are about 1-2 inches long. Many of these saugeye will grow quickly to catchable 13- to 15-inch sizes by the fall of 2026. Saugeye primarily feed on small fish, like young gizzard shad, that are abundant in Grand Lake St. Marys.

Saugeye are a hybrid cross between a female walleye and a male sauger, both native Ohio fish. Larger saugeye may grow to 30". Saugeye are a popular choice for anglers because they chase numerous baits and make an excellent meal. The DNR plans to annually release saugeye in the lake to support continued recreational fishing opportunities. Saugeye growth and survival rates will be evaluated in the

coming years.

Saugeye longer than 21" qualify for Fish Ohio recognition. Anglers who catch a qualifying fish, fish that meet specific length requirements based on species, can receive a Fish Ohio pin. This year's pin features a largemouth bass, at fishohio.gov.

On occasion, stocked saugeye can breed with wild walleye. Because of this, the Division of Wildlife has previously not stocked saugeye in the Lake Erie drainage, which includes Grand Lake St. Marys, to protect Ohio's Lake Erie walleye fishery. The saugeye recently stocked into Grand Lake St. Marys are sterile and unable to reproduce because they are triploid, meaning they have an extra set of chromosomes. The eggs of these saugeye were exposed to high pressure after fertilization to create infertile saugeye.

The daily limit for saugeye in Grand Lake St. Marys is six fish, with no minimum length requirement. Remember to purchase an Ohio license before fishing in public waters.

An Ohio resident license is \$25. It is valid for one year from its purchase date and is required of all anglers ages 16 and older. Licenses can be purchased at wildohio.gov, on the [HuntFish OH mobile app](#), and from any license vendor. Check the [2025-26 Ohio Fishing Regulations](#) before your next outing.

The triploid saugeye stocking project was funded by the Sport Fish Restoration program. Since 1950, the [Sport Fish Restoration](#) program has dedicated permanent funding to fishery conservation through federal excise taxes on sport fishing equipment, import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure boats, and the portion of the gasoline fuel tax attributable to small engines and motorboats. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service annually apportions these funds that the Division of Wildlife uses to produce and stock fish, acquire habitat, conduct research and assessment surveys, provide aquatic education, and secure fishing access. ✧

Catching Post Spawn Largemouths

The tough part is over. They're rested up, and now it's chow time. That's the basic script for posts-spawn bass and the reason topwaters play such a prominent role this time of year.

Sure, other baits will tempt big female bass when they're looking to regain the weight they lost during the spawn. However, as Alabama pro Jimmy Mason explains, seasonal patterns make these fish—along with the males tasked with nursery duty—suckers for topwater baits.

"One of the things we associate with the post-spawn is a shad spawn, so you have a lot of fish that go to that heavy feeding opportunity," Mason said. "In addition, you'll have a lot of fry-guarding males. Also, in a lot of areas, almost immediately following the post-spawn, you'll have a bream bed bite."

It's important to note that Southern waters can see such a gradual spawn that stages occur with significant overlap. Mason's patient with the progression because he knows the building momentum can deliver a show worth the wait.

"On a lot of lakes, you have a fairly long spawn, so you're gonna have some post-spawn fish while you still have fish on the bed and some pre-spawn fish," Mason said. "It'll take a few days for those (recent spawners) to recover, and there are also fish that have been done for a while, and they're more in that feeding stage."

"It's not all happening at the same time on every lake, so you get a lot of that mix. Once you get past about the 50-percent point in the fish that have spawned, you start getting a lot of that topwater bite." Strategically, Mason wants to find areas with good post-spawn bass feeding areas that also hold bream beds. Giving himself options, Mason can make the most of the seasonal complexion.

"With the bream beds and shad spawns, that's two different scenarios

where post-spawn bass can get lot of calories," Mason said. "The neat thing about topwater this time of year, you're catching above-average size fish." Shad spawns start in the overnight hours and spill into the following mornings. Targeting docks, seawalls, riprap, grass lines and any other hard edges, Mason approaches this spring fling with what he described as pure elation.

"As the water continues to warm, the shad spawn is my absolute fave topwater time of the year," he said. "You catch a lot of big ones because that's when the largest fish start feeding up, and every morning, you can enjoy some of the best topwater action of your life."

Mason noted that in the lakes that have blueback herring, the baitfish spawn lasts a little longer than a shad spawn, and that with cloudy conditions, that shad spawn can continue until around noon. Mason's primary tools for the shad spawn are a Heddon Super Spook Jr and a One Knocker Spook. The latter, being a little bigger, offers a definite distance advantage.

"That Super Spook Jr. is going to get a lot of bites because it's a slightly smaller size, but if they'll bite that One Knocker Spook, I'm gonna throw it because it's a little bit heavier and I can throw it farther," Mason said. "A lot of times, casting distance is a big deal, and that One Knocker allows me to get a longer cast and cover water efficiently."

Mason's favorite colors are bone silver and shad patterns. In particularly clear water, he'll go with a translucent pattern like Pearl Shad, but if the water has some stain, he goes with solids like Foxy Shad. Feathered trebles often help, so Mason keeps Spooks rigged with and without this option handy.

When he's fishing bream beds, Mason trusts the unquestionable drawing power of a BOOYAH Boss Pop. Favoring the ghost shiner and

Arkansas Shiner colors, he goes with the 3-inch size, as it affords greater casting distance. Mason also uses this bait for fry guarders, but he stresses careful release so the fish can return to their important duty. With both scenarios, Mason has a specific way of fishing this commotion-centered bait. "I fish a two-pop-pause and a three-pop-pause cadence," he said. "I alternate between the two, and with both, I'm doing more short, sharp snaps than pops."

One key is knot position. After tying on his bait, Mason moves his knot to the bottom of the line tie. This ensures the correct lure angle on every snap to create that water-spitting snap. When all goes as planned, the surface presentation convinces a hungry post-spawner, the strike gets converted, and life is good. However, topwater fishing is not the highest percentage technique, and misses happen. Sometimes, that's angler execution; other times, the fish forgot to clean its glasses.

However, a missed opportunity is not necessarily a lost opportunity. To this point, Mason employs a couple of different tactics aimed at reconnecting with the recent attacker. One way to do this is to toss a subsurface follow-up bait to the point of attack. The idea: A fish that may not have enough moxie for another topside run might prefer something swimming a little deeper into the water column.

No question, follow-up baits convert a lot of opportunities, but this actually is Mason's secondary move. In many cases, he'll simply give his original bait another shot at closing the deal. Fish mood varies, but the ones that maintain their initial boldness will put on quite a show.

"I think for some fish, it makes them madder when you don't slow it down. If you speed up the retrieve and get them to bite a second time, it's a much more aggressive bite." ♦

Crappie Fishing Tips – Soft Plastic Bait Tail Action

Top techniques and what to look for on the water to get the most out of your soft plastic crappie bait

Bait profile is probably the most important factor in crappie fishing through much of the year. Finding the right profile, or “patterning,” can be the difference between a limit and a few random bites or worse, no fish at all. The environment in which you’re fishing can tell you a lot about what profile and action to look for. Open water crappie are often more aggressive because they’re having to hunt food down as opposed to ambushing from cover, shade or structure.

Here are some quick tips to dial in your bait setup on your next crappie fishing excursion

Open water crappie tend to be on the hunt. These fish aggressively track down baitfish.

Moving tail action baits excel in open water environments. Look for baits with a curly, paddle or prop style tail. These style tails mimic fleeing bait fish when retrieved or trolled. When crappie are in ambush environments like brush, trees, docks, bluffs and shade they are looking to feed on unsuspecting prey. This means a natural relaxed profile is key.

DNR campground to close after private land ownership change

Forest Lake State Forest Campground, located about 10 miles south of AuTrain in the Upper Peninsula and managed by Indian Lake State Park, closed Monday, June 9. The closure was a result of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources-leased property becoming bank-owned due to foreclosure and no longer being available for public recreation use. Prior to becoming bank-owned, the state forest campground property was owned by a hydro power company that was required to provide recreation as part of its federal energy license for the operation of a dam. The property was leased and managed by the DNR as a campground to achieve that (*cont.*)

Subtle tail action baits tend to work best as the presentation is very slow and methodical. Gentle rod tip shakes, lifts and sweeps make for an irresistible presentation using baits that have straight, spear or split tails.

Vertical – Look for subtle tail action baits like 2.25” Mayfly, 2.25” Minnow Mind’R, 2.25” Slab Hunt’R, 2.25” Baby Shad Swim’R, 2” Split Tail, 2” Slab Slay’R, 2” Original Baby Shad and Itty Bit Series. Gently shake the rod tip for a few seconds when bait is at desired depth, hold and slowly lift or reel to explore the next depth range. Less is more when vertically jigging soft plastic crappie baits. Vertical jiggers tend to over-work the bait, which either spooks the fish or diminishes its interest.

Trolling – Look for moving tail action baits like 2.5” Stroll’R and 2” Hyper Grub. Add the new [Head Turn’R Jighead](#) for extra flash and action. Keep your trolling speed between 1-1.5 MPH for best results. Troll parallel with main channel edges using multiple rods at different depths to pattern quicker.

New Pulse on Science: Project Spotlight

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission has announced a new Pulse on Science: Project Spotlight titled “*New Study Concludes Invasive Sea Lampreys Can Be Controlled by the Release of Sterilized Males.*” The article highlights that the sterilization of male sea lampreys just before spawning is a viable supplemental method to the current control methods, which are lampricides and barriers. To read the full article, visit <https://www.glfc.org/pulse-on-science.php>. ✧

(continued from column 1)
requirement, said Eric Cowing, district supervisor for the DNR Parks and Recreation Division. ✧

Bobber – Hard to beat a 2” Original Baby Shad paired with a balanced head like [Mo’ Glo Jighead](#) or [Overbite Sickle Jighead](#) and a [Thill pencil bobber](#). Point the rod tip directly at the bobber and slowly retrieve with occasional rod tip shakes. A pencil bobber helps detect upward bites. When you see the bobber fall flat or tilt toward the water, set the hook

Casting – It’s a great time of year to cast from the bank in creeks, coves and marinas. Baits like 2.25” Baby Shad Swim’R, 2” Swimming Minnow, 2” Hyper Grub and 2” Original Baby Shad are popular choices. Stick to a slow, steady retrieve and move around often to locate a hot spot.

Dock Shooting – Look for docks near primary and secondary creek channels, especially those that offer rapid depth change. The shoot, fall, pendulum and retrieve cadence is quite effective with baits like 2.25” Minnow Mind’R, 2.25” Baby Shad Swim’R, 2” Slab Slay and 2” Original Baby Shad. ✧

DNR research seeks to improve panfishing across Wisconsin

Did you know that bluegill, pumpkinseed, black crappie and yellow perch comprised 75% of the fish harvested from Wisconsin lakes in the past decade? To better manage these species, scientists at the WI DNR’s Office of Applied Science are studying how panfish respond to a host of variables, including things like regulation changes, predator-prey relationships, angler catch and harvest rates and environmental factors such as lake temperature and water clarity.

Learn more about this ongoing research by visiting [the project's homepage](#). ✧

Trump Administration Promises *Continued from page 1*

Days before Illinois was to finalize a property deal for the carp project, Pritzker hit pause and demanded assurances that the federal government would honor its spending commitment. Site preparation has continued since then, but substantial work to install technology has been on hold.

The White House issued a memo late Friday saying the Trump administration recognized the threat invasive carp pose to Great Lakes recreation and fishing and that it's committed to protecting the lakes. The federal government is prepared to do its part so long as states cooperate, according to the memo, which calls on Illinois to complete the property deal by July 1 and promises the federal government will streamline permitting and environmental reviews.

"My Administration fully supports preventing the spread of invasive carp," the memo said. "The State of Illinois, where the (project) is located, must cease further delay in cooperating with this effort, for the sake of its own citizens and economy and for the sake of all of the Great Lake States."

Pritzker's office issued a news release late Friday evening saying the governor was satisfied.

Government agencies, advocacy groups and others have long debated how to prevent the fish from reaching the Great Lakes, where scientists say they could out-compete native species for food and habitat in waterways where the fishing industry is valued at \$7 billion. A shipping canal that forms part of the link between the Mississippi and Lake Michigan has a network of fish-repelling barriers, which the Corps says is effective, but critics consider inadequate.

The new project at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam on the Des Plaines River near Joliet will provide another layer of protection at a downstream choke point between the Illinois River, infested with invasive carp, and Lake Michigan. ✧

PFBC alerts boaters, visitors to ongoing maintenance projects at Walnut Creek Marina

FAIRVIEW, Pa. – With the busy spring boating season underway, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) is alerting boaters and other visitors to Walnut Creek Marina, Erie County, that several maintenance projects remain underway at the facility.

While sand removal operations and dredging within the marina basin have been completed, additional dredging will continue within the marina channel over the next two weeks. During this time, heavy equipment will remain present within portions of the marina, and visitors should continue to use caution around construction equipment and avoid active work areas.

Boaters operating during nighttime hours within the marina basin, which includes the public boat launch and privately leased slips, will notice temporary lighting systems around the perimeter of the basin while a lighting replacement project is underway. Lighting around the marina administration building and parking lot are unaffected by this project which is expected to continue through summer 2025.

A sidewalk improvement project conducted on the east side of the marina basin was completed this week and a previously restricted walking area is now open. The PFBC thanks the public for their patience and understanding as all projects are completed. ✧



2025 Spring Hearing statewide results now available

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin DNR recently announced that the 2025 Spring Hearing questions and results are now available.

Just over 9,000 people responded to the 2025 Spring Hearing questionnaire either in person on April 14 or online from April 14 to 16. Questions included topics ranging from fishing bag limit changes on individual waterbodies to building accessible cabins at state-managed properties and extending the fall turkey season in specific zones. The full list of questions and results is [available on the DNR website](#).

"We had very good participation again for this year's spring hearings. I'm happy with the input and public discussions we had in person and online," said Wisconsin Conservation Congress Chair Rob Bohmann. "It tells me the public is still interested and engaged in resource management in Wisconsin, and it is important to them."

The annual Spring Hearing is an opportunity for the public to provide input on a wide array of natural resources-related proposed rule change questions presented by the DNR and advisory questions presented by the [Conservation Congress](#). The public also has the opportunity to provide input on resolutions the public previously submitted.

Public input received through this process is advisory to Natural Resources Board members, DNR staff and anyone working on these issues.

Results from the public input were considered by the Conservation Congress at their annual convention earlier this month and will be forwarded to the DNR and Natural Resources Board in June.

Contact: Scott Loomans, DNR Wis Conservation Congress Liaison Scott.Loomans@wisconsin.gov or 608-225-9440

•[Results by County \[PDF\]](#)

•[Statewide Results \[PDF\]](#)

•[Find a WCC Position \[PDF\]](#) ✧

2024 Lake Superior Fisheries Management Reports available online

The DNR Lake Superior Fisheries Team has finalized the 2024 Lake Superior survey reports, which are available online on the Lake Superior Management Reports webpage. On that page, you can view harvest summaries from creel surveys of the recreational fishery and mandatory reporting for the commercial fishery in 2024. You can also find updated reports from five surveys conducted on the lake proper aboard the [DNR Research Vessel \(R/V\) Hack Noyes](#) and from the South Shore tributaries.

A couple highlights of the 2024 recreational fishing season were the highest open-water coho salmon harvest in the Apostle Islands region and the highest open-water walleye harvest out of ports in Superior, Wisconsin, in recent decades.

Harvest of species traditionally caught through the ice, such as lake whitefish, splake and yellow perch, were notably low due to the overall poor ice conditions and short ice season. However, we also observed great recruitment of smaller brown trout in 2024, so anglers should anticipate good numbers of 22-inch and larger brown trout in 2025. Lake trout harvest was lower than in previous years, and we observed fewer small, juvenile lake trout in the harvest and our surveys on the R/V *Hack Noyes*.

Harvest by the Lake Superior state-licensed commercial fishery remained bountiful in 2024, including good yields of lake whitefish, cisco, siscowet, deepwater chubs, lake trout and rainbow smelt. Fisheries surveys on the R/V *Hack Noyes* indicated overall stable populations of most species but potential threats to some species, like lake trout, from elevated sea lamprey predation.

Results from all these surveys are used to monitor fish populations, track fisheries harvest and inform future management of the Lake Superior fisheries resources. Questions about the survey results, contact Dray Carl, Lake Superior fisheries biologist, at Dray.Carl@wisconsin.gov or 715-331-9036.

Lake Superior Management Reports

Fishery assessments are a critical component for guiding fisheries management decisions on Lake Superior and its many tributaries. Fishery-independent assessments are one strategy employed by the Lake Superior Fisheries Management Team to gather unbiased data on a fish population. Types of gears used in these assessments vary from gill nets and hydroacoustics sonar on the [R/V Hack Noyes](#) to small fyke nets and backpack electrofishing systems in Lake Superior's tributaries and nearshore areas. The foundation behind these assessments is standardization. For example, in a gill net assessment, we set nets with the same dimensions, at the same time of year, for the same amount of time, and in the same locations each time we do the assessment. In doing this, we can assume that any changes we see are likely due to changes in the fish population we are assessing. During these assessments, we also collect biological data from individual fish such as lengths, weights,

fin clips, scars, tag information, etc. Often, we also collect aging structures, such as a dorsal spine or otolith, which allows us to estimate the age of individual fish in our lab. This information is critical for our ability to evaluate things such as fish growth rates and mortality rates. Fishery-dependent surveys are also used to monitor sport and commercial harvest.

The management reports contained on this page are updated regularly and contain information from our Lake Superior program on a variety of topics.

Wisconsin's Lake Superior Plan Reports

- [Lake Superior fisheries management plan \[PDF\]](#)
- [Wisconsin Lake Superior Basin brook trout plan \[PDF\]](#)

South Shore Tributary Assessments

Understanding the early life history of trout and salmon and their contributions to Lake Superior go hand-in-hand when providing sound management decisions for all anglers throughout the watershed. Most south shore tributaries up to the first impassable barrier are regularly surveyed on a 1, 6 and 12-year rotation. This schedule contains over 120 stations across 55 cold-water streams, with eight stations surveyed annually. These 'Trend' stations are multi-purpose: 1.) they provide a representative sample size to gauge annual reproductive success of lake-migrating fish species across Bayfield County, 2.) monitor long-term trends in stream resident fish and 3.) locate and prioritize future collaborative habitat restoration projects. Both Trend and Rotation stations estimate the relative abundance of fish using a standard sampling design and active electrofishing gear types (i.e., backpack or stream barge), depending on stream width. A common measure of relative abundance is catch per unit effort, which describes the number of fish caught over a unit of effort expended (length of stream sampled) to estimate density (number of fish in each stream mile).

- [Trend and Rotation Report 2024 \[PDF\]](#)

Brule River Fishery

At the [Brule River Fishery](#), Wisconsin DNR monitors spring and fall runs of migratory salmonids at the Brule River sea lamprey barrier.

- [2024 Brule River fall fishway update \[PDF\]](#)
- [Lower Bois Brule River Creel Survey 2018 \[PDF\]](#)

St. Louis River Assessments

Wisconsin DNR collaboratively manages St. Louis River fisheries with Minnesota DNR through netting and electrofishing surveys, angler creel surveys, fishing regulations, and public outreach. The nearly 12,000-acre river and estuary are home to many fish species, including Walleye, Muskellunge, Lake Sturgeon, Northern Pike, Black Crappie and Smallmouth Bass. Numerous minnow and shiner species, suckers and redbreast, and non-native goby and ruffe are also common. Some species such as American Eel, Freshwater

Drum and Quillback inhabit the river and estuary, though are infrequently encountered. Walleye and Muskellunge are two of the most popular recreational species and are regularly monitored with various surveys. One of the most common surveys is a mark-recapture population estimate that typically takes three to four weeks of capturing, counting, and measuring the fish, as well as determining their sex. We give each fish a tag with a unique number, which allows the fish to be tracked during the survey to determine the number of times it is recaptured. The data is then imported into computer programs that calculate an estimate of the number of fish in the population.

- [St. Louis River Walleye Population Estimate Report \[PDF\]](#)
- [Access Based Creel Survey of the Open Water and Winter Fishery 2015-2016 \[PDF\]](#)
- [Population Dynamics, Sport/Commercial Harvest and Management of St. Louis River Walleye \(1981-2015\) \[PDF\]](#)

Hack Noyes Assessments

Onboard the [Research Vessel Hack Noyes](#), we collect ample amounts of data that help piece together the puzzle of the status of various fish populations. Principally, all fish are counted, measured, weighed, and checked for lamprey scars and tags. Most fish that are released alive receive a uniquely numbered tag which enables the team to identify that individual fish if we encounter it again. A subsample of fish is also sacrificed to gather even more data. Otoliths are extracted from all sacrificed fish to obtain age estimates. Later in the lab cross-sections of otoliths are aged under microscopes. Sacrificed fish also have their gonads checked for gender, stomachs removed for diet identification later in the lab, and muscle samples collected for stable isotope analyses (food web placement). Some fish are even sent to a toxicology lab to examine contaminant levels (e.g., mercury, PCBs) to maintain fish consumption advisories. In addition to this standard data collection, DNR collects extra data or samples for external research partners (e.g., US Geological Survey, US Fish and Wildlife Service, tribal departments, various universities, etc.) for collaboration with various projects in Lake Superior.

Near Shore Assessments

The Lake Superior Fisheries Management Team has historically focused much of its monitoring efforts on cold-water, multi-use fisheries (Lake Trout, Lake Whitefish, and Cisco) and recreationally important potamodromous (lake-run) species in Lake Superior tributaries (e.g., Brook Trout, Brown Trout, Coho Salmon, Steelhead). These priorities were necessary due to both staff and budgetary constraints but left the team with minimal time to collect data from the nearshore, cool-water fish community of Lake Superior. However, in

2018 the team was able to dedicate new staff and money to adequately sample and monitor these nearshore fisheries. The objective of this project is to collect as much data as possible from recreationally important, cool-water species, primarily Walleye, Smallmouth Bass, Yellow Perch, and Northern Pike. To begin, staff used information from historical sampling efforts and exploratory sampling in the 2018 field season to piece together a sampling strategy that effectively surveys the unique nearshore habitat in Wisconsin waters of Lake Superior (primarily Chequamegon Bay).

- [DNR Lake Superior Nearshore Comprehensive Report 2019 \[PDF\]](#)
- [DNR Chequamegon Bay Fall Assessment Report 2024 \[PDF\]](#)
- [DNR Chequamegon Bay Smallmouth Bass Report 2019 \[PDF\]](#)

Lake Superior Sport Harvest

Recreational (sport) harvest in Wisconsin waters of Lake Superior and some popular tributaries is monitored each year through a series of creel surveys and mandatory reporting. The Western Arm (WI-1) and Apostle Islands regions (WI-2), Chequamegon Bay, St. Louis River, Bois Brule River, and numerous tributaries represent some of the most popular sport fisheries in the entire Lake Superior Basin. Lake Trout is the primary target species in the lake proper, particularly during the summer as anglers fish deeper water using downriggers and during the winter as ice thickens into the Apostle Islands. Chequamegon Bay and surrounding areas provide popular spring, fall, and winter (ice) fisheries for Brown Trout, Lake Whitefish, Coho Salmon, Splake, Walleye, Yellow Perch, and Smallmouth Bass. The St. Louis River supports the largest Walleye population in all of Lake Superior and is a popular Muskellunge fishery. In addition, the Bois Brule River is a destination Steelhead fishery, and many other tributaries support abundant potamodromous (lake-run) and resident salmonid populations of Coho Salmon, Brown Trout, and Brook Trout. This section includes detailed reports and harvest numbers from creel surveys of the Lake Superior sport fishery.

Lake Superior Commercial Monitoring

Commercial fishing activity in Wisconsin waters of Lake Superior currently operates chiefly out of ports in Bayfield, Cornucopia, and Port Wing, Wisconsin. Commercial fishers report all harvest and fishing efforts to our team in a biweekly reporting system, and in addition, team members collect fish biological data onboard commercial fishing vessels and dockside at commercial fishing facilities. Wisconsin commercial fishing management is built on three principles: limited entry, annual harvest and gear limitations, and individual transferable quotas. ✧

Other Breaking News Items:

(Click on title or URL to read full article)

Illinois wants to protect the Great Lakes from invasive carp, but a toxic mess stands in the way

Illinois officials took possession last week of a 50-acre stretch of riverbed in the Des Plaines River near Joliet to build a \$1.15 billion barricade to keep invasive carp from entering the Great Lakes. While the state still needs to acquire more land along the

Glass-bottom boat tours offer shipwreck views without getting wet

Glass-bottom boat *Lady Michigan* cruises over the famous wrecks of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary in Alpena, Michigan. The 4,300 miles of federally protected crystal-clear waters offer a unique peek into Great Lakes maritime history.

Everything to know about microplastics in the Great Lakes

From clothes to food packaging, microplastics are entering the Great Lakes. Effective monitoring and policy solutions will likely be the key to tackling this issue

Illinois acquires land for project to keep invasive carp from Lake Michigan

The State of Illinois said it acquired a 50-acre piece of land in southwest suburban Will County needed for a massive infrastructure project aimed at keeping the invasive carp fish from entering Lake Michigan

Annual sea lamprey assessment to begin in UP next month

The annual work to cull sea lamprey populations in the Great Lakes will begin in Michigan's Upper Peninsula in just under two weeks

Is Lake Erie very deep? What to know about the shallowest Great Lake

Lake Erie, the smallest of the Great Lakes, borders only a small strip of southeast Michigan's coast, but contains rich opportunities for waterfront recreation and exploration

COMMENTARY: 'Chainsaw' approach to cuts could impact Great Lakes

There is always room to improve program effectiveness and efficiency in government, as well as business, NGOs and other institutions. However, the "chainsaw" approach of recent months to downsizing, defunding and dismantling federal

EPA outlines new PFAS strategy amid expert concerns

On May 14, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced their plan to roll back significant portions of the Biden administration's first nationwide drinking water standard for PFAS. While limits for PFOA and PFOS will remain,

Will the money come to finish the Soo Lock expansion in Michigan?

Construction of a new Soo Lock on the St. Marys River in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, is facing an upcoming financial deadline. Under the current budget in Washington, the money for the new lock needs to be allocated before September 25

Minnesota Sea Grant again offers free steelhead identification decal

As spring fishing ramps up on Lake Superior anglers are hitting the water in pursuit of salmonid species. Minnesota Sea Grant is distributing free identification decals for a second year to help anglers distinguish between steelhead, a species

Delay in renewing Ontario water testing program leaves participants on edge

A volunteer-led program that helps monitor the health of hundreds of lakes across Ontario has been on hold because agreement with the province has not yet been renewed. For 30 years the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Assoc has

Keeping the \$5.5 billion Great Lakes fishery afloat as Trump administration considers cuts

There has been great collaboration between the states and both federal governments to do what's best for the \$5.5 billion Great Lakes fishery and lakes they share. But much of that research and the collaborations with Canada have not been a

An \$80 million cleanup made Muskegon Lake trendy. Will "eco-gentrification" follow?

An \$80 million cleanup of Muskegon Lake, which connects the city of Muskegon, Michigan, to Lake Michigan, has prompted a wave of redevelopment and a debate about who benefits from publicly funded cleanups.

EPA, Enbridge say data doesn't support tribe's claims that Line 5 project will harm water

Federal environmental regulators and a Canadian energy firm say data doesn't support a northern Wisconsin Indigenous Nation's claim's that rerouting an oil and gas pipeline will violate water quality standards on its reservation

End