Inland Seas Angler

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Trump's proposed Great Lakes science cuts would hurt region

Trump administration cuts to Great Lakes science would harm the quality of life, the multibillion-dollar economies built around the lakes, and emergency preparedness, a group of environmental advocacy officials, academics and local government representatives said Wednesday, September 24. In fact, the science cuts already made under Trump have already had negative impacts, they said.

The coalition of concerned groups and individuals gathered at Hines Park in Plymouth on Wilcox Lake, an impaired water body in the Rouge River watershed improved in recent years through millions in restoration funding for the watershed through the federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

"We've already seen impacts from budget cuts, from grant freezes to staff layoffs at critical federal agencies like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, and at the USEPA" said Bentley Johnson, federal government affairs director for the environmental nonprofit Michigan League of Conservation Voters.

"The Trump administration's federal budget for this coming year had drastic and massive cuts for these agencies, including things like zeroing out and eliminating climate change research and other critical research here in the Great Lakes—as well as basically slashing the Environmental Protection Agency's budget in half."

Nicole Rice, a former communications specialist with NOAA's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory (GLERL) in Ann Arbor, was fired earlier this year in the Trump administration cuts. She said the workforce at the laboratory has been reduced by 35%, and the proposed Trump budget for the next fiscal year would eliminate the laboratory altogether. "GLERL is NOAA's only dedicated freshwater research lab," she said.

Among the lab's functions cited by Rice:

- Tracking harmful algal blooms whose toxins can contaminate drinking water supplies, endanger swimmers and kill pets.
- Providing forecasts for winds, waves, currents and lake levels that support boating, fishing, shipping and search-and-rescue operations.
- Conducting ecological monitoring that informs the management of a $6 billion Great Lakes fishery.
- Improving flood, weather and lake-effect snow forecasts.

It's "protecting both lives and property," Rice said, adding the lab's data, models and other work "protects our economy and ensures decision-making is based on facts, not guesswork."

Mike Shriberg, director of the University of Michigan Water Center and a faculty member in the university's School for Environment and Sustainability, said multiple coalitions the university works with that rely upon federal Great Lakes science funding are in jeopardy.

"At the water center I direct, we were just made aware of further cuts in our funding because of recessions at NOAA," he said. "This is money that had already been appropriated by Congress that is no longer being given out by the agency."

Trump's proposed science cuts

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Motorists should use caution to avoid collisions with deer

Fall is the time of year when deer are more active. Crops are being harvested, and deer breeding season is in full swing. Deer are more active between dusk and dawn, but their movement peaks near dawn and dusk. It pays to be vigilant behind the wheel. According to a State Farm Insurance report, 1.7 million auto insurance claims involving animal collisions were filed across the nation from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, with deer accounting for more than 1.1 million of these claims. The report also says U.S. drivers, on average, have a 1 in 128 chance of colliding with an animal. ✧

Trump's proposed science cuts

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Among the agencies that would be zeroed out under the proposed Trump budget:

- The Cooperative Institute for Great Lakes Research, CIGLR, a research institute and consortium involving NOAA, regional universities, nonprofits and businesses working "to achieve environmental, economic, and social sustainability in the Great Lakes," with a focus on problems such as harmful algal blooms, invasive species and ecosystem restoration.
- Michigan Sea Grant, a collaboration started in 1969 between NOAA, the University of Michigan and Michigan State University that "funds research, education, and outreach projects designed to foster science-based decisions about the use and conservation of Great Lakes resources."
- Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments, GLISA, another collaboration between NOAA, Michigan and Michigan State to work with communities on climate adaptation.

"It adds up to a diminished ability to do what there is broad consensus should be done: protecting and restoring the Great Lakes and the biological and human communities that live in and around them," Shriberg said.

According to a late August report at Science.org, the digital arm of the peer-reviewed scientific journal Science, the Trump administration is set to spend nearly $100 million less on the research arm of NOAA this year, 14% less than the amount earmarked by Congress, in anticipation of eliminating it entirely in its fiscal year 2026 budget. Other reported cuts include a $53 million, or 25% reduction in climate research and related grants; a nearly 20% cut to weather labs and institutes, and a $3 million ocean institute. Science.org also reported that next-generation geostationary weather satellites approved during the Biden administration are also on the chopping block.

The Trump administration, in its fiscal year 2026 budget proposal released in May, stated that the cuts "save taxpayers $163 billion in wasteful spending," particularly targeting what it called "radical environmental justice work, woke climate research, and skewed, overly-precautionary modeling." Coalition members on Wednesday, September 24, noted that many of the items the Trump administration is looking to slash are retained in budget versions under consideration in both the U.S. House and Senate — but some previously cut funds are not restored.

Beth Gibbons, director of Washtenaw County's resiliency office, said her county updated its stormwater management plan in 2017 using NOAA's then-recently created Atlas 14 dataset, the agency's latest update on storm data to guide the intensity, duration and frequency of storms in given areas. "We should be going through another update right now," Gibbons said. "But the next version of storm data intensity, duration, and frequency curves, Atlas 15, has been put on pause. This critical data directly informs how we build infrastructure in our communities, and it's being held up due to budget cuts and constraints."

Wayne County Commissioner Melissa Daub, whose district includes Canton, the city of Plymouth and a portion of Plymouth Township, noted extensive flooding in Plymouth last April and tornadoes that touched down in Canton two summers ago.
"The proposed cuts to NOAA and the EPA would place a tremendous burden on county governments, leaving us without accurate information or recovery funding," she said. "I urge Congress to protect this vital funding, to protect Michigan businesses, homes and families." ✧

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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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DNR increases monitoring/response efforts for round goby in Winnebago System

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin DNR advises additional monitoring and response efforts will be taken to address increased reports of invasive round gobies in the Winnebago System. After an angler reported a sighting of round goby in June, the DNR has confirmed the presence of round goby in Lake Winnebago.

Round gobies can displace native fish populations and have the potential to impact Lake Winnebago's sport fish and panfish species through competition for prey and by eating their eggs. Though nearly impossible to eradicate once they have been introduced, DNR staff will conduct intensive, targeted monitoring efforts in Lake Winnebago and may begin containment actions. This may include using a naturally derived chemical fish killing agent (rotenone) within a specified contained area to prevent the establishment of round gobies in the Winnebago System.

The DNR continues to consider the Menasha Dam, Neenah Dam and the closed Menasha Lock essential barriers to preventing the spread of round goby in Lake Winnebago and beyond.

Anglers are asked to continue to be on the lookout for any round gobies in the Winnebago System. If a suspected round goby is caught, anglers should immediately kill it and take it to a DNR service center. If a round goby is spotted but not captured, please report it using the DNR's online Round Goby Reporting Tool.

Any round gobies captured below the Neenah or Menasha dams or in Little Lake Butte des Morts do not need to be reported, as it is not a part of the Winnebago System and these areas are known to have a verified and established population of round goby. Gobies captured in Green Bay or Lake Michigan don't need to be reported.

Preventing the Spread

Prevention remains the best way to help protect Wisconsin's waters. Under Wisconsin's invasive species law, chapter NR 40, Wis. Admin. Code, round goby is listed as a **restricted** species, meaning live specimens cannot legally be transported, transferred or introduced in the state of Wisconsin. Only a deceased round goby specimen can be legally transported to a DNR office or service center for identification.

Anglers are reminded to never use round gobies as bait, transport live fish, release fish from one waterbody into another or throw unwanted bait into the water. The DNR's Violation Hotline allows Wisconsin residents to confidentially report suspected violations. ✧

Slashing federal budget is big problem for state environment agencies

Every dollar that the feds direct to state environment departments enables the Great Lakes and every other region to steward natural resources, yielding many times the value of the federal contribution. State environment departments make the case daily that they merit more financial support, not less.

That is why anglers have been worried for months about the dangerous **consequences of President Trump's proposal to rip $5 billion** – 55% – out of the Environmental Protection Agency's $9.1 billion budget. We're encouraged (just a tiny bit, mind you) by the actions MAGA Republicans in both houses of Congress have taken to break with the president to reduce the size of the proposed EPA budget reduction.

The Republican-led House proposes a 26% cut for the EPA. The Senate wants to shave a more reasonable 6% out of the environmental agency's 2026 budget. Lawmakers from both chambers are meeting to reach a compromise in time to add the EPA provisions to a final federal budget bill by the end of the month to avoid a government shutdown.

Both proposals are a visible and aggressive rebuke of Trump at the federal level that attracted scant comment in the capital. That doesn't mean, though, that we're anywhere close to being relieved. Here's why. Most of the work – 90%, in fact – of meeting the goals of federal statutes to safely manage air, water, wildlife habitat, and toxic substances is carried out by state environment and DNR departments. And sizable portions of every state's environment budget are funded by the EPA.

For instance, the Illinois EPA receives $1 billion of its $1.3 billion budget from U.S. EPA funds. Similarly, Michigan's DOE, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) receives 52% of its $1.2 billion annual budget from federal revenue.

The Environmental Management Division of the Wisconsin DNR gains a quarter of the funding for its air quality program from the U.S. EPA. **Almost all of the $34.3 million Ohio EPA budget for protecting water quality** is funded by the U.S. EPA.

State environment departments also are responsible for administering their **portion of the more than $4 billion** from the EPA that is available to local governments for modernizing drinking water infrastructure and preventing water pollution. President Trump proposed to cut most of the funding for this low-interest loan and grant program. The House is eyeing a 24% cut, while the Senate wants to maintain current funding levels. ✧

PA Fish & Boat celebrates opening of new Lake Erie Research Unit Facility

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) Executive Director Tim Schaeffer, staff, and local partners celebrated the opening of a new facility which will house the Lake Erie Research Unit based in Fairview, Erie County.

The 2,800 square-foot building, located on the grounds of the Fairview State Fish Hatchery contains a research laboratory, library, conference room, and modern office space for three full-time biologists, seasonal biologist aides, and a Waterways Conservation Officer.

"This state-of-the-art facility is an incredible asset to the Lake Erie Research Unit, and we feel fortunate to have this space to work in and help us achieve our mission at an even higher level," said Mark Haffley, Biologist and Port Captain for the PFBC's Lake Erie Research Unit. "Thank you to the anglers who continue to support us and provide us with the tools we need to do our jobs on their behalf. As we settle into our new space, we'll continue to work with our local partners and stakeholders to ensure that there will be quality fishing on Lake Erie for years to come."

The $2.4 million-dollar facility funded through the PFBC's Fish Fund, replaces temporary leased office space that has been used by staff since 2020 when the Unit was relocated from the Thornton House, an 1870's-era historical residential home located on the hatchery grounds.

Staff who comprise the Lake Erie Research Unit play a key role in fisheries management for Pennsylvania's portion of Lake Erie, and collaborate with neighboring Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Ontario (Canada) to monitor fish health and determine annual harvest quotas for popular species within the lake, including Walleye and Yellow Perch. ✧

Researcher details rare sighting of jellyfish in Lake Erie

PUT-IN-BAY, Ohio – It's not something that most Ohioans know: Lake Erie is home to freshwater jellyfish. "We were taking water samples of the docks here, and my lab tech Kelly said, 'Hey there's a jellyfish out here,'" recalled Justin Chaffin, the Research Coordinator for Stone Lab on South Bass island, which is where the village of Put-in-Bay is located.

Researchers at the lab monitor the water quality of the lake and collect data on algae blooms. The Aquatic Visitor's Center, run by the Ohio DNR now has the jellyfish in one of its aquariums. Sightings of the jellyfish in the lake are extremely rare. "I've been out doing research on Lake Erie for 20 years and never seen one personally," Chaffin said. "They were first documented in Lake Erie in 1933."

They're not native to Lake Erie. "They originated from the Yangtze River basin in China. They likely came over via a plant trade," he said. "So plants were scooped up out of the Yangtze River basin, and the freshwater jellyfish eggs or the polyps might have been attached to those aquatic plants." Part of the reason they might be rare to see: the creatures spend most of their lives clinging to rocks at the bottom of the water.

"At a stage called a polyp," he said. "And they can be in that stage for a decade or more." The polyps will eventually go into the medusa stage where they become jellyfish, where they float and have tentacles sprouting out of them. "The medusa stage has a lifespan of about a month," Chaffin said. These freshwater jellyfish are only about the size of a penny or a quarter, so if you happen to see one while swimming, there's no need to worry

"Freshwater jellyfish do have stingers, but their stingers are too small to penetrate human skin," he said. "So if you are swimming and you happen to get all the water on your skin, or you swim up against one, it's harmless to you." ✧

A Lesson on Spinners

As long as lures have been used to catch fish, anglers have been developing ways to make their baits look attractive. One of the foremost ways to imitate live shad or fingerlings is with something flashy, like spinners.

Large willow leaf, Colorado and other spinners are primarily used on bass baits. Today, let's look at spinners on smaller baits. These smaller lures are used predominately for panfish.

Small jigs are the first choice for artificial lures for big bluegills. About half of seasoned panfishermen use jigs with spinners and half do not. All appear equally successful. Jigs come in two basic designs: soft plastic or tied like flies with thread and chenille. Some have lead heads while others do not. Some folks like slick plastic jigs and others prefer fuzzy ones. I personally like plastic just a tiny bit more than bug imitations. One of the most prevalent presentations for jigs is to suspend them with a bobber over structure. If there is any wind at all causing surface disturbance, it will transmit action to the jig.

Vertical jigging is another presentation. Cast-and-retrieve can be successful with spinnerless jigs as well. Cast-and-retrieve is where spinners on your jigs really come into play. Using spinners adds a huge degree of realism to your bait. Some jigs come with their spinners built in. The Road Runner comes to mind first. The underbelly spinner design of the Road Runner is extremely enticing to all panfish. The flash of the spinner often seems irresistible. But my favorite jigs are plastic. The variety of color and size make these jigs my perfect choice. And I can use them vertically or add a spinner for cast-and-retrieve. I prefer adding a spinner.

Later in the season when the post-spawn fish move back to a bit deeper water, cast-and-retrieve with spinners gets hungry, active fish excited. With or without spinners, plastic and tied jigs can be effective in the right hands. Experiment this year and find out what works best for you. ✧

How pervasive are microplastics in Lake Erie?

A recent sampling effort on Lake Erie found a big uptick in the presence of the tiny plastic particles—specifically, a nearly 22-times increase in abundance across five sites over the past 10 years. The project, which raises concerns about microplastics impacting ecosystems and human health in the Great Lakes, all took place aboard an immersive Sea Grant experience that connects researchers with educators—who ultimately bring the science back to the classroom.

In both 2014 and 2024, Dr. Sherri A. "Sam" Mason, director of Project NePTWNE at Gannon University, worked with teachers to sample microplastics at sites across Lake Erie. The week-long educational expedition, led by the Center for Great Lakes Literacy (CGLL) in partnership with the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network, helped teachers from across the region learn about Great Lakes science—including microplastics—hands-on. "The fact that every single sample was greater shows that, in my mind, we are definitely seeing an increase in microplastics in Lake Erie from 10 years ago to today," Mason said. "The question now is how much did it increase, did it double or more?"

Scientists know that microplastics—plastic waste that has broken down into small particles, less than 5 mm in length—are completely ubiquitous, or widespread, across the planet. However, most research on the subject focuses on the world's oceans. Mason was among the first to study the prevalence of plastic pollution in freshwater ecosystems and is now a leading researcher in the field. In 2012, she took her first samples of micro-plastics across three Great Lakes, finding evidence that micro-plastics are widespread in the region's waters.

"We were trying to establish 'is this even an area of concern?' and sadly discovered that it was," Mason said. In 2014, CGLL invited Mason to work with teachers in the immersive workshop on Lake Erie. The crew collected samples from eight sites around the lake by deploying a manta trawl, a net system that skims the water's surface, gathering microplastic particles. "In 2024, when they asked me to come back, I was like 'this is so cool! 10 years later!'" Mason said. "The idea was to try and hit as many common sampling sites as possible in 2024 compared to 2014." The team worked with the collected samples to determine whether particles were plastic or not, she said.

"You'd think it'd be easy, but when you're talking about particles that are so small, sometimes it can be a little difficult," Mason said. "That's what a lot of the teaching was about, how to kind of categorize the particles." For Ethan Jessing, a 7th grade science teacher at Maumee City Schools who participated in the experience, the project made a big impact. "Working alongside Dr. Mason was, in all ways, a transformative experience," Jessing said. "Dr. Mason bridged the gap between the professional duties of day-to-day classroom teaching and the rich world of genuine scientific research by bringing knowledge and experience."

"Endeavors like this are so important in helping to change the narrative," she said. "This program is so critical to us continuing to spread awareness and understanding of Great Lakes research, science and engineering. Every teacher is impacting dozens of students, so it's the drop in the water that ripples out." Jessing said the Sea Grant experience affected him both personally and professionally as an educator. Personally, it inspired him to start shifting purchases away from consumer-based plastics, also working to educate and encourage peers to follow the same path.

"And in my professional life, my motivation as a science teacher feels renewed after this trip," Jessing said. "Getting my hands back into the types of science research that pushed me into this career in the first place was entirely rejuvenating. As much of my curriculum as possible now revolves around the state of the lakes and building pride in our watershed."

"Dr. Mason's work within this field is imperative to our lakes and the surrounding communities," he continued. "I am grateful to have been even the smallest part of her research and am even more thankful to have had the chance to experience and be changed by her passion and love of our lakes." ✧

Can Lake Superior hold off invasive mussels?

Lake Superior is the lone holdout in a mussel invasion that has overtaken every other Great Lake, a salvation credited to low calcium levels that stymie mussels' efforts to build shells, cold water that hinders their reproduction and relative isolation, which limits the boat traffic that spreads invasive species. While Lake Superior hasn't yet succumbed to the bivalves that have killed off whitefish and disturbed local ecosystems, scientists now believe conditions may have changed enough to let them flourish.

That's why Lauren Isbell and Alex Egan, U.S. National Park Service scientists by training, recently found themselves diving more than six meters deep in Lake Superior, scouring rocks and dock pilings for any sign of fugitive mussels. After about a half hour underwater, the pair resurfaced and Isbell thrust a parmesan cheese canister into the air.

"We got three," she announced. "All adults."

Tiny and unmoving in their plastic prison cell, the thumbnail-sized shell-fish didn't look like much to fear. But knowing what Isbell and Egan do—that invasive quagga and zebra mussels have destroyed entire eco-systems and killed billions of baby fish in the lower Great Lakes—it would be foolish to underestimate them. ✧

Erie steelhead anglers asked to report fish they catch without a small fin.

There's a good chance steelhead anglers may catch a different strain of trout in Erie this year. The Pennsylvania Steelhead Association (PSA) is looking for anglers to report their catches including when they hook into a Shasta rainbow.

Chris Larson, president of the organization, is hopeful anglers this fall and winter find the Shasta rainbow trout that were stocked two years ago in some of the Lake Erie tributaries. "This is the year that we expect to see the Shasta rainbow trout to be returning that were put in two years ago," he said.

The trout swim into Lake Erie and then return to the small creeks in the fall to spawn. "The 3CU (cooperative nursery) stocked about 54,000 Shasta rainbows into Elk Creek, the (Pa.) Fish and Boat Commission, I believe, had another 20,000 and they put them in Racoon Creek, Four Mile Creek and Twenty Mile Creek. And we're waiting to see how well they return. Because if we get good returns, they could be a solution to filling the steelhead stocking void that was created by closing down the Tionesta hatchery raising steelhead," he said.

The Shasta rainbows were acquired through a partnership with the Castalia State Fish Hatchery in Ohio. The fish are a strain derived from Shasta Lake in California. Before the Shastas were released in Erie, their small adipose fin (between the tail and dorsal fin) was clipped off to help them be identified from steelhead in the future. The Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) is also curious about the Shasta rainbows return to spawn. Mark Haffley, the unit leader for the agency's Lake Erie Research Unit, said this is the time to see if those fish return to creek and make an impact on the fishery. "That's the hope this fall and, in the spring, we'll see those adipose clipped fish come back in the fishery," he said. If the Shastas return, they could become an additional resource for the PFBC.

The key is finding out if the fish stay in Lake Erie or return to the small tributaries for anglers to catch. "We don't want to just stock fish to stock fish. So, this next season, this fall and winter is going to be really important in assessing how good the Shasta strain is for us," Haffley said. "The stocking of steelhead is mostly for a tributary fishery. So, if these fish don't imprint on the streams they are stocked and therefore don't return to Pennsylvania, then we're not getting the bang for our buck that we wanted," he said.

His staff will be doing some low impact electrofishing in the area to study the fish that have returned to see which strains like the Shastas are returning. Haffley encourages anglers to look to see if the steelhead they catch have the adipose fin and participate in the Steelhead Association's creel survey.

Reporting your catch

The Steelhead Association has an annual online survey on its website and Facebook page for anglers to report their success or lack of success each day. Signs are placed along major steelhead creeks to remind people. The results of that survey are shared with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to help them manage the fishery. This year, the survey is streamlined from past years to make it easier for anglers to use on their smartphone or computer. There's also a paper version that's available in the region. "Several of the local bait and tackle created a paper survey. To me, it doesn't make any difference which survey people fill out. If they prefer to do it online, do ours. If they would prefer a paper survey because it's a little less technical, then please do theirs," Larson said. "The important thing is we need the information. We need the information about fish returning."

Steelhead research

Changes were made by the Fish and Boat Commission in 2023 to protect the fish and the commonwealth's waterways from viruses and diseases. In previous years, part of the process involved rearing some of the steelhead at the agency's Tionesta Hatchery along the Allegheny River. Now everything is being done in Erie's watershed at the Fairview State Fish Hatchery and efforts are underway to produce more steelhead.

Haffley is also studying to see if more Fairview fish return to Pennsylvania waters than the Tionesta fish did because they lived their entire lives in the Erie watershed. "There's really good potential that they imprint on the tributaries better than the Allegheny River Fish at Tionesta. So, we might not see a huge drop in catch rates because we may not see a huge drop in returns because those fish have a better honing ability and potentially the Tionesta fish stray more," he explained. The fish could end up in creeks in Ohio or New York. "It will be really interesting to see how the catch rates evolve," he said. "And that's why it's really important to fill out those surveys."

This year, the Fairview hatchery, with the help of its cooperative nurseries, stocked about 500,000 steelhead and 42,000 brown trout in Erie tributaries. In addition to the variety of trout, Haffley said this year should be a good year for pink salmon. "They are the only naturally reproducing salmon in the Great Lakes. There's nobody stocking them," he said.

He's aware of anglers catching other types of salmon on the open lake like coho and king. "It's nice to have those fish out there because you know variety is the spice of life," he said. With the agency stocking more steelhead than browns, anglers get excited when they catch something like a big brown. "They may have caught 20 steelhead that day, but they show you the picture of the brown trout they caught," he said. ✧

Muskies stocked in Ohio lakes provide excellent fishing

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Ohio DNR is stocking 20,000 muskies in nine inland lakes this fall for future fishing enjoyment. Muskies can grow to more than 50 inches in length and have long been a popular sport fish for anglers.

Ohio raises muskie at the Kincaid (Pike County) and London (Madison County) state fish hatcheries. The hatcheries stock 10- to 12-inch muskies in nine lakes each fall. Muskies are a predatory sport fish that grow quickly and create trophy fishing opportunities in places such as Alum Creek Lake, C.J. Brown Reservoir, Caesar Creek Lake, Clearfork Reservoir, Lake Milton, Leesville Lake, Piedmont Lake, Salt Fork Lake, and West Branch Reservoir. In addition to reservoirs where they are stocked, muskellunge are caught in many of Ohio's river systems.

The DNR created the Muskie Angler Log to gather public reports of muskie catches and use that information to better manage the fishery. Muskies longer than 40 inches have been recorded in each of the nine lakes to be stocked this year, and eight of those lakes have yielded muskies longer than 50 inches.

Anglers who catch a muskellunge measuring 40 inches or longer are eligible to receive a Fish Ohio award. The Fish Ohio program annually recognizes thousands of anglers who catch one of 25 species of sport fish of a qualifying length. Since 1976, the program has awarded a Fish Ohio pin to any angler who qualifies. There were 348 qualifying muskies reported in 2024, with the largest a 53-inch trophy from Alum Creek Lake.

The top 10 waters in which anglers caught Fish Ohio muskies in 2024 were:

- West Branch Reservoir (101 Fish Ohio entries)
- Leesville Lake (51)
- Alum Creek Lake (35)
- Piedmont Lake (28)
- Pymatuning Lake (28)
- Caesar Creek Lake (16)
- C.J. Brown Reservoir (14)
- Salt Fork Lake (14)
- Clearfork Reservoir (11)
- Mahoning River (9)

Ohio's state record muskie, weighing 55.1 pounds and measuring 50.25 inches long, was caught in Piedmont Lake in 1972. Ohio record fish, tracked by the Outdoor Writers of Ohio, are determined based on weight only.

The DNR operates six state fish hatcheries to manage fish populations and increase public fishing opportunities. Eleven fish species are stocked statewide, and the agency put more than 46 million fish into public waters in 2024. Learn more about fish stocking at wildohio.gov, or view complete fish stocking records at data.ohio.gov.

Sales of fishing licenses along with the federal Sport Fish Restoration program support the operation of Division of Wildlife fish hatcheries. 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 acquire habitat, produce and stock fish, conduct research and assessment surveys, provide aquatic education, and secure fishing access. ✧

Former DNR director honored for lifetime of conservation work

Some people talk about the importance of taking care of the natural world around us; others put that belief into action that yields tangible change and positively influences everyone around them. Dr. Howard Tanner—former director of the DNR and longtime fisheries champion and educator—is one such person.

Recently, he was honored by the Michigan Natural Resources Commission with the Thomas L. Washington Lifetime Conservation Award. Although Dr. Tanner was unable to travel to the September NRC meeting to accept the award, commission chair Tom Baird was honored to present it during a private birthday celebration at Dr. Tanner's home, with many friends and family there to make the recognition especially meaningful.

With seven decades of leadership in fisheries management and a career built on mentorship and dedication to Michigan's natural resources, Dr. Tanner's career includes:

—Time at Michigan State U as director of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, inspiring and training many young students to follow their passions in managing fish and wildlife around the world.

—A tenure at the DNR as Fish Chief and (from January 1975 to June 1983) as department director. His years at the DNR led to multiple high-profile clean-ups of contaminated sites; acquisition and development of unique public lands and waters; and such transformation of state fisheries that he earned the reputation of "father" of the Great Lakes recreational fisheries.

The award is named for Thomas L. Washington, past director of Michigan United Conservation Clubs and a giant in Michigan conservation. During his life, Washington helped build coalitions of conservationists and environmentalists to achieve landmark initiatives that benefit Michigan residents to this day. ✧

Fall and winter trout stocking began Oct 1

HARRISBURG, Pa. – As the fall season arrives across Pennsylvania, anglers should mark their calendars to take advantage of stocked trout fishing opportunities on dozens of popular waterways!

Beginning October 1, 2025, and continuing through mid-December, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) will stock approximately 116,500 hatchery-raised adult Rainbow, Brown, and Brook Trout in 118 stream sections and lakes. These stockings will immediately replenish some of the most popular fishing spots across the Commonwealth and provide ice fishing opportunities as conditions allow throughout the winter. Trout that are stocked during fall and winter can be fished for immediately.

"Anglers who take advantage of stocked trout opportunities during the fall are treated to beautiful scenery and some of the most comfortable temperatures of the year," said Brian Niewinski, Director of the PFBC Bureau of Hatcheries. "Be sure to check the stocking schedule so you know when and where we'll be stocking trout from our hatcheries. Many species of fish will remain active as waters get cooler, and the addition of stocked trout just adds something else to look forward to this fall and winter."

In October alone, the PFBC will stock approximately 89,000 adult trout into 93 waters, including 53 lakes and 40 stream sections, including 16 Keystone Select Trout Waters, which are managed under Delayed Harvest Artificial Lures Only regulations. An additional 25 lakes will be stocked with approximately 28,600 trout during November and December. Anglers and stocking volunteers should note that stocking schedules are subject to change due to a variety of factors, including water temperature fluctuations and hatchery logistics. Check the schedule often for postponements and rescheduled stockings. ✧

Multi-million-dollar Maumee River restoration project complete, largest in river's history

TOLEDO, Ohio – A multi-million-dollar restoration project in the Maumee River is complete. It involves the Clark and Delaware/Horseshoe Islands near Walbridge Park. The goal of the nearly two-year project is to significantly improve water quality and aquatic habitats in our region.

Years of restoration are now complete. Clark and Delaware/ Horseshoe Islands near Walbridge Park now have a portion of their original footprints restored thanks to a crucial project. These islands have lost over 60 acres since the 1940s.

This project is in addition to a number of restoration efforts in the Lake Erie Watershed. It's an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to making significant water quality improvements in our region. They're meant to function like kidneys function in your body. To filter out phosphorus and nutrients from the Maumee River before the water reaches Lake Erie.

This is the largest restoration project ever on the Maumee River. About $13.5 million has been invested to restore the islands close to their original footprint. These islands have been designed with a lot of advanced modeling. So that they're going to be very functional under all kinds of conditions year-round.

Not only will this project provide habitats for fish and wildlife, but it will also provide a new recreation experience for community members. Project leaders are also hoping this helps with the algal bloom in Lake Erie. "I don't think there is any one single silver bullet situation that is going to fix harmful algal blooms on Lake Erie," said Cappel. "But projects like this can make a difference and they're definitely part of the overall solution." If you are wanting to check this out, you can see it all at Walbridge Park. ✧

5 Top Locations

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These docks usually have good brush around them. Of course, modern electronics with side-scanning or live sonar technology can speed up the searching and patterning process.

Patterning also applies to where fish are positioned under docks. If you find them over six feet of water in the shade and on the down current side of a couple of docks, there's a good chance they'll be in the same zone around other docks. Refining that part of the pattern can allow you to fish far more efficiently, which typically equates with catching more fish.

Some docks provide good foot access to quality crappie fishing spots. Many parks have fishing docks or piers that provide good opportunities, and marinas will sometimes allow fishing access for a modest fee.

Bluff Bank Crappie

Bluff banks commonly exist where a creek or river channel swings against the bank, creating easy access to deeper water for the crappie. Bluffs also offer provide shade farther out and through more of the day than flatter banks, and they commonly have tree tops at their bases or laydowns stretching down them, as tress atop the ever-eroding bluffs occasionally topple and sweeten the spot.

Bluffs seldom are completely flat and uniform. Ledges, outcrops and indentations form eddies from river current and wind current, create more complex structure, and commonly hold collections of wood cover. The combined benefit from an angling standpoint is that irregularities enhance the crappie habitat and create likely fish concentration points that allow you to find fish and to target them more efficiency.

Pay extra careful attention to the ends of a bluff. The "swing banks," where the channel first meets the banks and then moves away from it, offer a broad range of habitat offerings in a small area and therefore tend to be concentration points for fish. These zones are easily recognizable by a noteworthy change in the shore slope and makeup. ✧

5 Top Locations for early fall crappie

The first step to enjoying great early-season crappie fishing is finding the fish. Working these key zones will put you ahead of the game.

Early autumn is a transition time for crappie, with some fish holding in summer patterns and others behaving more like it's fall. Top fishing locations capitalize on seasonal conditions. Five of the finest area types for early fall crappie fishing are bridges along causeways, channel edge cover and structure, inflow zones, docks, and bluff banks.

Causeway Bridges

Bridges along causeways that span a lake's creek and river arms hold crappie throughout the year, but these spots really stand out this time of year. Crappie tend to work their way up creek and river arms during fall. Causeway bridges provide pinch points that concentrate the fish, and an abundance of quality cover makes them likely stopping areas. Shad, which provide important forage for crappie through the fall, also tend to work their way up creek and river arms during fall.

Because bridges offer so much cover and structure, often with a broad range of bottom depths, finding the crappie around any given bridge sometimes takes searching. Often the bridge supports that are nearest the channel break are a key zone, but at times most fish will be near deeper or shallower bridge supports or against the riprap at either end. Wind direction, current and sun orientation can also play a role in positioning the fish.

One of the best things about causeway bridges is that they often provide easy access to good fishing for shoreline anglers. The riprap leading to a bridge and often beneath it at both ends and the first set of bridge supports – all key areas – are typically within easy casting range. A bit of homework, looking at a topo map and an online satellite view, can be very helpful for seeing where the channel runs and identifying other structure and cover that is within casting range.

Channel Edge Cover & Structure

As already noted, the crappie and their forage commonly work their way up creek arms through fall, and the channel edges serve as highways. The fish could be anywhere along a channel, so search strategies like long-line trolling or spider rigging can be effective for finding them. However, they tend to concentrate near cover and structural features, which work like highway exits.

Various cover and structure types commonly serve as concentration points. Cover includes flooded timber, stumps, brush piles and manmade fish attractors. Structural features that hold groups of fish include channel bends, creek or ditch confluences and the ends of points that extend all the way to the channel.

Best-of-both-worlds spots, which are common on reservoirs that are popular for crappie fishing or for bass fishing, are brush piles, stake beds or other fish attractors that have been strategically placed in key locations like channel bends or confluences. When fisheries agencies place "fish attractors" they intentionally place them in areas that favor high use by the fish. Unsurprisingly, anglers who add their own brush or other attractors do likewise.

Inflow Zones

Early autumn often brings more comfortable temperatures for anglers. That makes it easy to forget that lake temperatures change far more gradually than air temps. Often, even when it feels like fall outside, many crappie remain in summer mode, and areas that provide a bit of thermal refuge can be key concentration points.

The upper ends of a lake's river arms and the backs of any creeks that have water flowing into them provide some of the most dependable temperature breaks and frequently hold crappie this time of year. Creeks and rivers get more shade through the day, and the water doesn't stay in one place to bake. Therefore, they normally run cooler than the lakes they flow into. Depending on the creek temp and amount of water, the difference might be extremely localized, or it might spread down the creek arm. Watch temperature gauges. A difference of only a couple of degrees can make a major difference.

Crappie don't like a lot of current, but they'll hold near current for thermal relief. Significant eddies far up a flowing tributary can be goldmines. Lacking noteworthy current, look for laydowns, stumps or other traditional crappie cover and for schools of small shad anywhere in the zone where the water is cooler than the bulk of that creek or river arm.

Docks for Crappie

Docks provide all-day shade for crappie and minnows and cover for the fish to utilize. Many are also sweetened by brush planted beneath them or just off their edges, and some feature lights that stay on through the night and create crappie appeal around the clock.

Whatever your dock-fishing approach, an important thing to remember is that not all docks are created equal. A dock's location within a lake and relative to a channel edge, the water depth, the size of the dock, the amount of dock-support structure, and enhancements like brush and lights all make a difference. Docks that stretch close to the channel edge in the lower ends of creek arms tend to be extra productive during early fall.

Work quickly from dock to dock initially and pay careful attention to common denominators anytime you catch a fish. Patterning is critical. Also, give extra attention to obvious "fishing docks" that have enhancements like fishing chairs, rod holders and lights aimed at the water.

5 Top Locations

Continued on page 8, column 3

Canada and the U.S. complete the Review of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and identify improvements to Agreement operations

Under the Canada-U.S. Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the Parties to the Agreement – the U.S. and Canadian Governments – conduct a review of the operation and effectiveness of the Agreement every nine years.

During the summer of 2024, the Parties sought early **feedback on the review.** In the fall of 2024, taking into consideration public and other input received, they determined the **scope of the review** would focus on assessing the timeliness and successful completion of past priority goals, called Binational Priorities for Science and Action (or "BPSAs").

Binational priority-setting and domestic implementation occur on a three-year cycle under the Agreement. At the start of a cycle, the U.S. and Canadian governments formally establish BPSAs that address known water quality threats. These priorities are organized under 10 focus areas, which are the "Annexes" of the Agreement. This is followed by the implementation of domestic actions in support of those priorities. At the end of this cycle, a "Progress Report of the Parties" is published to document progress made over the past three years.

The review was completed over the winter and spring of 2025. The review found that the governments have been developing BPSAs consistent with the approach described in the Agreement, and that the vast majority of BPSAs from 2014 to 2025 were successfully completed in a timely manner. The review also noted that when challenges arose in implementing a BPSA, the countries continued to engage in discussions and share updates on policies and progress as a practical means of managing these situations. No significant impacts to Great Lakes water quality were identified as a result of these challenges.

The review also identified two binational efforts that require additional attention to improve the operation and effectiveness of the Agreement: the publication of Lakewide Action and Management Plans, as described in Annex 2, and the identification and development of strategies for Chemicals of Mutual Concern, as described in Annex 3.

Lakewide Action and Management Plans (LAMPs) are five-year ecosystem-based strategies for restoring and protecting the water quality of each of the Great Lakes. These plans are developed by the Lake Partnerships—teams of environmental protection and natural resources managers working on each lake. Lake Partnerships are led by the governments of the United States and Canada and include members from State and Provincial Governments, Tribal Governments, First Nations, Métis, Municipal Governments and watershed management agencies. As described in past Progress Reports of the Parties, restoration and protection activities have continued without interruption through domestic government programs. However, there are regular delays in the final publication of the LAMP documents. The two countries have identified the development and publication of LAMP documents as an area for improvement and will develop a streamlined and efficient approach to this task.

Chemicals of Mutual Concern (CMCs) are pollutants identified by the two countries as requiring additional strategic coordination and communication. CMCs represent a small subset of the many chemicals managed through comprehensive domestic chemical management programs established over the past fifty years. As described in past Progress Reports of the Parties, these domestic chemical management programs have significantly reduced levels of pollutants in the Great Lakes ecosystem. However, there have been regular delays in the binational effort to consider and identify CMCs under the Agreement. The two countries have identified the binational effort to review/designate CMCs an area for improvement and will review previously published CMC strategies and the current chemicals nominated as CMCs to identify the appropriate path forward for this binational effort.

Next Steps

The results of this review will directly inform the U.S. and Canadian Governments' development of the next set of BPSAs for the period 2026-2028. ✧

BASS changes rules for FFS

BASS is changing the rules regarding forward-facing sonar (FFS) that will take effect during the 2026 Progressive Bassmaster Elite Series season. The real-time, high-resolution fishing technology will only be allowed in up to five of the nine regular season events, the Birmingham, Alabama-based pro tourney operator announced September 2. The remaining events will prohibit its use entirely, including during official practice, BASS stated.

Restrictions implemented for 2025—limiting anglers to one live sonar transducer and a maximum of 55 total screen inches—will remain in place. The 2026 Bassmaster Classic will allow FFS, since all qualifiers earned their spot under the 2025 rules. This decision follows two years of careful evaluation, officials stated. FFS has been the subject of much debate. At least one northern Ontario conservation group has asked anglers to voluntarily avoid using it when fishing for muskie. ✧

Lake sturgeon making progress towards Maumee River revival

TOLEDO, Ohio – Lake sturgeon are a fish often known as "living fossils." The species has been around for at least 150 million years and with little anatomical change throughout history. The species once lived in abundance across the Great Lakes. However, lake sturgeon have been functionally eliminated from the Lake Erie Watershed since the late 1800s.

"Due to overfishing, habitat loss, and pollution, lake sturgeon have been kind of extirpated in a lot of regions around the Great Lakes," Dr. Bill Hintz explains. Dr. Hintz is an associate professor at the University of Toledo who helped author a recent investigation analyzing survival rates for an effort to bring this fish back to the Lake Erie Watershed.

"The goal of the reintroduction project is to bring back this iconic Great Lakes species into river systems that it once inhabited," Dr. Hintz says.

USFWS Biologist Jorden McKenna handles an adult lake sturgeon.

Within the last 10 years, biologists and engineers have taken advantage of water quality improvements. A reintroduction plan for lake sturgeon was developed, and the Maumee River was chosen as the pilot river for this effort.

The program is a collaborative effort involving the University of Toledo, Michigan State University, the Toledo Zoo & Aquarium, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

"Think of lake sturgeon as the canary in the coal mine for the Great Lakes… it's a species that is more sensitive to habitat use and pollution," Dr. Hintz says. "If we can bring back that canary in the coal mine, that's a good indicator of water quality improvements, habitat improvements... in any habitat that it is reintroduced to."

"The sturgeon were also a great resource for the ecosystem. These females, which can be 6-7 feet long, have millions of eggs per fish," Dr. Matt Cross explains. Dr. Cross is the Director of Vertebrate Conservation at the Toledo Zoo & Aquarium, and he is heavily involved with the zoo's Sturgeon Recovery Center on the Maumee.

"They're an important food source for a lot of other organisms," Dr. Cross says. "They would have been a great benefit for almost everything involved," 3,000 fingerling lake sturgeon are stocked into the Maumee River each year, with the effort starting in 2018. Around half of the fish are raised at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery in Wisconsin, while the other half are raised just a few hundred feet from the river at the Sturgeon Recovery Center.

Dr. Cross told FOX 55 a little bit about how this process works. "It's a flow-through system… we have a massive pump down in the river. We pump water up the facility, into the tanks, and then it flows back out to the river," Dr. Cross explains. "We're at the mercy of the levels of the river. When we have a big seiche event, the water will drop and our pump doesn't have water, so we have to come in here and get creative with how we get the fish water that day."

"Lake sturgeon go through this process called imprinting where they recognize the water chemistry, the smells in the water… and that might cause them to imprint on the river," Dr. Hintz explains "The idea is that… when it's time for them to come back and lay their eggs, hopefully they'll be out in the river and say, 'Ok, that's where I need to go,' and they'll return this way," Dr. Cross says.

The ultimate goal of this program is to create a population of 1,500 naturally reproducing lake sturgeon in the Maumee River by 2038, and researchers are encouraged by first-year survival rates for some of the first cohorts stocked into the river. Analysis suggests annual survival rates between 19% and 71% for the batches of sturgeon released in 2018, 2019, and 2021. While it is still too early to draw any conclusions about the program's success, early signs have researchers very encouraged for the future.

"In 2019, a commercial angler caught one of our sturgeon that had been released the previous year and it tripled in size. The lake sturgeon they're catching out there this year are about 3 and a half feet long," Dr. Cross explains. "We are seeing intense signs of this program being a success." The Toledo Zoo & Aquarium releases the sturgeon into the river each year at their annual Sturgeon Fest. This year's release is October 11th.

If imprinting is successful, mature sturgeon could begin returning to the Maumee River to reproduce by 2029. ✧

Happy Halloween

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

Western and Indigenous knowledge will help lake sturgeon, study shows
A recent collaborative study conducted by nine Indigenous entities and academic researchers was conducted to understand how climate change threatens the lake sturgeon and to develop adaptation strategies rooted in tribal knowledge.

Hundreds of lake sturgeon released into Cuyahoga River
At Cleveland's Sturgeon Fest, held on October 4, 1,500 lake sturgeon fingerlings were released into the Cuyahoga River

Lake sturgeon making progress towards Maumee River revival
A lake sturgeon reintroduction program in Ohio's Maumee River has released 3,000 fingerlings annually since 2018. Early survival rates are promising, and researchers aim to establish a self-sustaining population of 1,500 sturgeon by 2038.

Wisconsin DNR steps up monitoring for invasive fish in Lake Winnebago
After recent sightings, the Wisconsin DNR is increasing monitoring in Lake Winnebago for invasive round gobies. The DNR is working with local fishing groups and partners to help catch the fish.

New York faces painful history as it marks the Erie Canal's bicentennial
As the 200th anniversary of the Erie Canal approaches on October 26 in New York, organizers are seeking to temper the celebration with an acknowledgment of the waterway's displacement of Native American communities

U.S. Coast Guard to implement emergency alerts for Lake Erie, Lake Ontario
The U.S. Coast Guard Sector of the Eastern Great Lakes plans to introduce a tool called Aqua Alerts, which will be sent straight to the public's phones to notify them and local mariners about search and rescue efforts on Lakes Erie and Ontario

Lawmakers want Lake Superior island chain to become national park
Wisconsin Congressman Tom Tiffany reintroduced the Apostle Islands National Park and Preserve Act this month, which aims to designate Apostle Islands National Lakeshore in Wisconsin as a National Park

Campbell's Co. admits to years of polluting Maumee River, Lake Erie at Ohio canning facility
Campbell's Co. admitted to polluting the Maumee River that feeds into Lake Erie over a six-year span at the company's massive canning facility in western Ohio. The company admitted to violating the Clean Water Act at least 5,400 times

Time running out for Great Lakes whitefish. Can ponds become their Noah's Ark?
As whitefish disappear from the lower Great Lakes, scientists are hatching emergency rescue plans. One idea being floated is to take fish out of the lakes and raise them indefinitely in ponds for safekeeping.

Price tag for Soo Lock mega project drops to $2.6B
The Army Corps of Engineers' latest cost estimate for the mega project to build a new shipping lock in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, has dropped to $2.6 billion

The Great Lakes' strangest phenomenon: seiche
When strong winds push Lake Erie's water east or west, shorelines can be left dry or flooded in a matter of hours, resulting in the water levels drastically decreasing in a short amount of time. However, that water must go somewhere, and that "somewhere" is the opposite lakeshore.

Ontario invests $180,000 to restore waterways on Manitoulin Island
The Ontario government is committing $180,000 to projects aimed at restoring and protecting waterways on Manitoulin Island, part of the Lake Huron watershed. The investment will help improve water quality, strengthen fish habitats and biodiversity, and support both environmental and economic resilience in the region.

Great Lakes features mystery triangle blamed for disappearances. Is the legend true?
Beware when heading out onto Lake Michigan—legend says ships are known to vanish in what's known as the Lake Michigan Triangle, or do they

Surging number of data centers around the Great Lakes could lead to water shortages, report says
A recent report warns the region is not prepared for the unprecedented, growing demand from data centers and other big water users like agriculture.

Hopes and fishes
Across Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, lake whitefish populations have been on the verge of collapse. But in Green Bay, Wisconsin, lake whitefish have been unexpectedly thriving.

As mussels ravage Great Lakes whitefish, Lake Superior survives — for now
Over the last 30 years, Lake Superior has uniquely held off large-scale invasive mussel infestations which have protected the lake's population of lake whitefish

Golden opportunity: Kingston's Great Lakes Museum celebrates 50 years
The Great Lakes Museum in Kingston, Ontario, is celebrating its 50th anniversary since its founding in 1975 by a group of divers conducting underwater archaeology in Lake Ontario. Since then, the museum has grown significantly and is a National Historic Site

$5M grant propels Michigan's dam removal project
The Michigan DNR is halfway through completion of a $5 million grant project to remove 27 stream barriers to conserve and restore aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, improve resilience to flooding and other threats, and expand community access to nature.

$3.6 million in grants available for invasive species projects in Michigan
Michigan's Invasive Species Grant Program is now accepting proposals for the 2025 funding cycle, with an anticipated $3.6 million available to applicants. The program—a joint effort among multiple state agencies—is a statewide initiative launched in 2014 to help prevent, detect and control invasive species in Michigan

Burbot fishing booms in Michigan, worrying researchers and anglers that the species is faltering
As fishing for burbot, a native Great Lakes fish species, has grown increasingly popular, anglers and researchers believe the population is disappearing. Researchers say invasive zebra mussels siphoning nutrients from the water are to blame.

Lake Erie island lab celebrates 100 years of biological science
The Ohio State University and Ohio Sea Grant program are celebrating the 100-year anniversary of the Franz Theodore Stone Laboratory through an open house this weekend. The lab, which moved to its current location on Gibraltar Island in 1925, dates to the late 1800s, making it the oldest freshwater biological field station in the country