



## Michigan to rear more steelhead at Thompson Hatchery

The Michigan DNR announced that up to an additional 150,000 steelhead will be reared at Thompson State Fish Hatchery in Manistique, Michigan, in the coming year, to be stocked in spring 2016.

Angler demand for steelhead consistently has outpaced the DNR's 1.15 million steelhead capacity and the department has been looking for ways to increase production to meet that demand. Ultimately, improvements to the infrastructure at Thompson State Fish Hatchery are required to increase steelhead production levels to best meet that demand, but for the time being this production increase will help.

"These additional steelhead will not be as large as the fish we normally stock each spring — they likely will be about 6 inches compared to 8 inches, which is our

target size," said Ed Eisch, DNR fish production manager. According to Eisch, fish stocked below the 8-inch "smolting" size generally will not recruit as well to the Great Lakes fishery as those that reach that 8-inch mark prior to stocking.

Steelhead need warmer rearing water that allows the fish to grow to the size where they leave the river environment and head to the Great Lakes when stocked. Thompson State Fish Hatchery uses geothermal well water to accomplish this, but is limited in the amount of warmer water available because there is only one well that has geothermal capabilities.

The brown trout fingerlings currently on inventory at Thompson State Fish Hatchery will be stocked as fingerlings at sites soon to be determined. Because the hatch and early survival of brown trout at Oden and Harrietta state fish hatcheries have been so successful this year, there are enough fish on hand to absorb the brown trout production previously reared at Thompson State Fish Hatchery.

Interested anglers can see where the fish reared in Michigan's state fish hatcheries are stocked throughout the state by checking out the [DNR's Fish Stocking Database online](#). ✧

## Bighead carp captured in St. Croix River near Stillwater

Five bighead carp were captured in the St. Croix River earlier this month, just south of Stillwater near the Xcel Energy Allen S. King power plant, according to the Minnesota DNR. This is the furthest upstream invasive carp have been detected in the St. Croix, and is about 7 miles north of the previous point. Prior to these captures, four bighead carp had been taken in the St. Croix River, dating back to 1996.

The DNR and anglers caught the fish.

"The DNR thanks the anglers who have reported the capture of bighead carp and have sent photos so they could be immediately verified," said Nick Frohnauer, DNR invasive fish coordinator. "Knowing these details allowed our invasive carp crew to do follow up sampling in a timely manner."

The DNR responded with intensive sampling in an effort to

determine if more invasive carp are in the area. DNR staff set additional gill nets and conducted electrofishing. Additionally, they are working with a contracted commercial fishing operator to seine a large bay.

Populations of bighead and silver carp are established in the Mississippi River and its tributaries from southern Iowa northward. While bighead and silver carp have been found as far north as Hastings, there is no evidence bighead or silver carp are reproducing in the Minnesota waters of the Mississippi or St. Croix rivers.

The DNR reminds anyone who catches a bighead, silver, black, or grass carp to immediately contact the DNR at [nick.frohnauer@state.mn.us](mailto:nick.frohnauer@state.mn.us) or 888-646-6367. Do not release the fish. Take a photo, and store the fish until it can be delivered to the DNR.

For more information on invasive carp in Minnesota, visit <http://tinyurl.com/neg3q57>. ✧

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## Wild salmon dominated catches in 2014

Anglers enrolled in the Salmon Ambassadors program found that wild Chinook salmon made up 57-82% of the total catch in areas around Lake Michigan and northern Lake Huron.

The Great Lakes salmon stocking program began in 1966 and for many years anglers and fishery biologists lived by a simple equation: more fish stocked equals more fish caught.

By the late 1980s the situation was more complex. Chinook salmon catches dropped off as BKD took its toll, and biologists realized they had come close to the limit of salmon that Lake Michigan can support.

Another wrinkle to the equation was the increase in natural reproduction of Chinook salmon. Dams and stream habitat improvements led to successful spawning of salmon in Michigan rivers. The gradual colonization of new rivers by this non-native species led to what has been called a “runaway freight train” of young salmon produced by reproduction in streams of Michigan and Ontario.

Thanks to an angler science project led by [Michigan Sea Grant](#), anglers can now share information on wild and stocked catches with each other and with trained biologists.

Volunteers of the [Salmon Ambassadors](#) program track the length of each Chinook salmon caught and look for a clipped fin (the adipose fin) that indicates a stocked fish. Last year, 125 anglers signed up for the program. At the end of the 2014 fishing season, 59 volunteers provided useful data on 3,460 Chinook caught from Lake Michigan and northern Lake Huron. Wild Chinooks made up the majority of the catch in the following areas:

- 75% - wild in Manistee
- 70% - wild in the Ludington area (including Pentwater)
- 74% - wild in the Grand Haven area (including Muskegon and Holland)
- 65% - wild in South Haven
- 74% - wild in St. Joseph and Benton Harbor

- 62% - wild in Door Peninsula, Wis.
- 57% - wild in southern Wisconsin (Illinois border to Port Washington)
- 67% - wild in Illinois
- 82% - wild in northern Lake Huron (Straits of Mackinac to Alpena)

At least 200 Chinook salmon were caught in each of the areas above, with the exception of Illinois where only 63 Chinooks were reported in volunteer catches.

Some of the results were expected. For example, volunteers in the Ludington area saw an early-to-late season increase in wild salmon (from 58% to 79%). Nearby spawning rivers like the [Pere Marquette and Pentwater rivers probably contributed to the increase of large \(30 inches and up\) wild salmon in August.](#)

Other results were a bit more surprising. St. Joseph and Benton Harbor do not offer as much high-quality spawning habitat, but even here in southwest Michigan nearly ¾ of all Chinook salmon caught were wild. However, most Chinooks caught by St. Joe area volunteers were taken early in the season.

Across the lake in Wisconsin the situation was different. Southern Wisconsin ports don't offer much spawning habitat either and volunteers here reported the lowest contribution (57% wild) of naturally produced Chinook salmon. Although southern Wisconsin volunteers reported a low level of satisfaction with the late-season Chinook salmon fishery, they did find that large (30" and up) stocked salmon were an important contribution to fishing in August and September.

A [detailed report on Salmon Ambassadors results by port is now available at the program web page.](#)

The results are also available to biologists and fishery managers faced with the difficult task of maintaining the delicate balance of predators and prey. The old equation, “more fish stocked equals more fish caught,” is obsolete but this one is timeless, “more information equals better decisions.” ✧



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### Position Statement

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

### Inland Seas Angler GREAT LAKES BASIN REPORT

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## Wisconsin statewide trolling rule to take effect July 1

A rule to allow motor trolling while fishing on all inland waters of Wisconsin takes effect July 1, 2015.

Trolling means fishing by trailing any lure or bait that may be used to attract or catch fish from a boat propelled by means other than drifting, pedaling, paddling or rowing. Drifting or "row trolling" is allowed on all waters statewide. Previously motor trolling had been prohibited except under special regulations.

The rule received extensive public input through Conservation Congress hearings and was reviewed and approved by the Natural Resources Board. The rule extends trolling opportunities to all waters.

Under the new rule, in most counties anglers may troll using up to three hooks, baits or lures with no

restrictions per boat. However, trolling is allowed with only one hook, bait or lure per angler and two hooks, baits or lures per boat in certain counties and in certain waters of other counties. For a listing of waters open to trolling with three hooks: [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), for "[trolling](#)."

In addition to simplifying fishing regulations, the rule will reduce confusion when a technique called "position fishing" is used. Position fishing involves fishing from a boat with a line that extends vertically into the water while the boat is maneuvered with a motor. The new rule allows anglers to trail at least one minnow or lure behind a moving motor boat, regardless of whether the occupants are casting other lures. It also provides more fishing

opportunities for anglers who may have difficulty fishing by other methods and eliminates the need for disabled anglers to apply for trolling permits.

Available data indicates no difference between casting and trolling in terms of angling success or "catch rate" for muskellunge, walleye and northern pike.

The rule expires on May 4, 2018, but many anglers have expressed interest in continuing to make the trolling option available. The department will assess trolling over the next couple years and work with anglers to develop another trolling proposal for 2018 and beyond. For more information on trolling and other rules, search the DNR website, [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), for "[trolling](#)." ✧

## Panel to examine effects of commercial net-pens on the Great Lakes

Michigan announced the appointment of a scientific advisory panel to evaluate proposals to allow commercial net-pen aquaculture in Michigan's Great Lakes waters.

Net-pen aquaculture is named for the offshore floating enclosures (usually located off coastlines) capable of raising large numbers of fish. These operations take small fish from a hatchery and raise them to a harvestable size for the food market.

Currently, the only commercial net pens in the Great Lakes are located in the Ontario waters of Lake Huron in the North Channel and in Georgian Bay. State agencies are working jointly to review the concept and make a policy recommendation to Gov. Rick Snyder. In addition, the state will analyze the economic and legal implications of net-pen aquaculture in Michigan.

"The proposal to allow this activity in Michigan waters raises many questions about protecting the Great Lakes' ecology and our fisheries," said DEQ Director Dan Wyant. "We take seriously our charge to protect Michigan's natural resources. These panelists were selected on the basis of their expertise

in many key areas, and we look forward to their help considering some critical issues."

Panelists include:

- Dr. Eric Anderson, NOAA, Great Lakes Ecological Lab, Ann Arbor.
- Dr. John Dettmers, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Ann Arbor.
- Dr. Jim Diana, Michigan Sea Grant director Ann Arbor.
- Keith McCormack, P.E., vice president, Hubbell, Roth and Clark, Detroit.
- Dr. James Morris, NOAA, Coastal Aquaculture Planning & Environmental Sustainability, Beaufort, North Carolina.
- Dr. David Scarfe, OVA-CAP Veterinary & Consulting Services, Bartlett, Illinois.
- Dr. Roy Stein, professor emeritus, Ohio State U., Columbus. (chair)
- Dr. Craig Stow, NOAA, Great Lakes Ecological Lab, Ann Arbor.

The volunteer panelists have agreed to assess scientific information surrounding the issue of commercial aquaculture net pens in the Great Lakes. Dr. Stein will serve as chair of the panel, which expects to deliver a findings report in October 2015 to the DNR, DEQ and MDARD directors.

The panel will work independently and seek information and input from other scientists as needed.

"It's important that Michigan looks at the issue of commercial net pens with a critical eye, given the wide range of issues and interests affected," said DNR Director Keith Creagh. "We want to have a firm understanding about the impact of aquaculture net pens on water quality, health of fish populations, and the Great Lakes ecosystem — things that greatly influence quality of life for residents in the Great Lakes region."

"While closed or recirculating systems or flow-through facilities are well supported, this new approach to raising fish in the Great Lakes will need to be carefully considered."

In late June, there will be an opportunity for the public to provide input to the panel regarding commercial net-pen aquaculture issues and information. The three agencies will host a stakeholder workshop this fall for the purposes of reviewing the information and providing comment and input toward the development of any future policies to govern this activity in the Great Lakes. ✧

## DNR explores commercial fishing in southern Lake Huron

The Michigan DNR has issued a research permit to an existing Saginaw Bay commercial fisher to explore lake whitefish populations in southern Lake Huron. Beginning in June 2015, this fisher will be permitted to set large mesh trap nets on experimental fishing grounds located several miles south of Harbor Beach and north of Port Sanilac.

It is anticipated this research fishery will continue over the next three years while the DNR monitors and evaluates fish populations, as well as determines the long-term potential for a sustainable and profitable commercial lake whitefish fishery.

The Michigan waters of southern Lake Huron have not been commercially fished in five decades — although a substantial commercial

fishery exists in Canadian waters of Lake Huron. Over the years, significant interest has developed to examine the health and productivity of lake whitefish stocks in Michigan waters of Lake Huron. The DNR's Fisheries Division believes there could be an abundant stock of lake whitefish available for harvest.

“Southern Lake Huron presents a unique opportunity to explore an under-utilized commercial fishing opportunity in Michigan waters,” said the DNR's Commercial Fishing Program administrator, Tom Goniea. “There are very few areas of the Great Lakes that can accommodate new commercial fishing and this is one. It is an excellent location to evaluate lake whitefish stocks with the possibility of expanding Michigan's natural resources-based economy.”

It is expected the experimental commercial fishing will begin June 7 and continue through the remainder of 2015. If successful, the DNR anticipates this activity will continue in 2016 and 2017. Careful consideration has been given to net locations so as to avoid conflict with recreational fishing near the ports of Harbor Beach and Port Sanilac.

Other key benefits of this management action include a reduction in the number of nets that will be allowed to be fished in Saginaw Bay, and a reduction in commercial harvest of yellow perch from Saginaw Bay. These actions are consistent with concurrent recreational fishing regulation proposals aimed at improving yellow perch populations and fishing in Saginaw Bay, which are seeking public comment until July 2015. ✧

## New Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations to improve rapid response

OTTAWA, ONTARIO – The Honourable Gail Shea, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, announced new regulations to strengthen the prevention of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in Canadian waters have come into force. The *Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations* were posted June 17, in the *Canada Gazette*, Part II and are now in effect.

The Government of Canada worked collaboratively with provincial and territorial governments to develop the *Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations*. The regulations provide tools for both the Department and provinces to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS. They also greatly improve the ability to respond rapidly to an invasion or manage the spread of established AIS in Canadian waters.

These new regulations prohibit the import, possession, transport and release of significant risk species in specific geographic areas and under specific conditions. In the future, other species can be added or removed through regulatory

amendments when necessary. The prohibition on importation would be enforced by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). Asian carp, quagga mussels and zebra mussels are some examples of species targeted by the new regulations.

These new measures also allow prescribed Ministers to authorize the deposit of deleterious substances to control AIS under certain conditions including the need to take into account alternative measures and possible impacts of the deposit. The regulations only allow the deposit of drugs and pest control products in compliance with the legislation of Health Canada and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada undertook consultations with Canadians on the proposed regulatory framework for AIS and a draft of the regulations was published in the *Canada Gazette*, Part I for public input. Input that was received from Canadian citizens was considered and aided in the development of the new regulations.

### Quick Facts:

- ◆ The Government invests over \$14 million annually to address the issue of aquatic invasive species in Canada.
- ◆ The regulations are designed to help prevent the entry and control the spread and establishment of aquatic invasive species in Canadian waters, including Asian carp.
- ◆ In 2012, the Government of Canada announced funding of up to \$17.5 million over five years to prevent the introduction and establishment of Asian carp into the Great Lakes.
- ◆ Strong preventative action is key to avoiding or lowering costs associated with the establishment of invasive species, including costs related to reduced fishing yields, reduced tourism and tourism-related activities, control activities, loss of biodiversity, and loss of intrinsic ecosystem value.
- ◆ To read the new *Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations*: <http://canadagazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2015/2015-06-17/html/sor-dors121-eng.php> ✧

## 2014 fishing survey shows Great Lakes offer excellent angling opportunities

New York's 2014 Great Lakes angler surveys indicate Lake Erie and Lake Ontario offer anglers excellent fishing opportunities, the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced. Survey results indicate Lake Erie experienced the greatest level of fishing participation in 12 years, while Lake Ontario anglers experienced another year of excellent trout and salmon fishing.

New York's Great Lakes waters offer anglers a broad diversity of outstanding fishing opportunities ranging from tackle-busting fishing for trophy Chinook salmon on Lake Ontario, winter steelhead fishing on the lower Niagara River, to catching a family meal of yellow perch from a dock on Lake Erie or the St. Lawrence River.

"Anglers in New York's Great Lakes waters continue to experience outstanding fishing opportunities," Commissioner Martens said. "New York's Great Lakes offer some of the best angling experiences available in North America. DEC staff conducts angler surveys each year that are critical in providing information necessary to effectively manage these fisheries for future generations."

Anglers can fish from shore, in tributaries, from a kayak or a canoe, or hire a local fishing guide to ply the waters in a large, fully equipped charter vessel. Due to a broad range of habitats and water temperatures, trophy fishing opportunities include trout and salmon, small and largemouth bass, walleye, muskellunge, northern pike and even catfish. Children can experience panfish angling in quiet backwaters for perch, pumpkinseeds, bluegills and bullheads.

In particular, anglers on Lakes Erie and Ontario in recent years have enjoyed exceptional fishing success, which is measured by the number of fish caught per hour of fishing.

The survey found on Lake Erie in 2014:

► Anglers spent 370,000 hours fishing, the highest effort in over 12 years.

► The majority of anglers sought walleye (50%), yellow perch (21%) and bass (17%). Angling quality for walleye, smallmouth bass and yellow perch in 2014, as measured by angler catch rates, was at or near record levels. Walleye and yellow perch catch rates were the highest observed in the 27-year survey, while smallmouth bass catch rates were the second highest on record.

► Yellow perch anglers harvested some 212,000 fish, the highest observed in the survey, and walleye anglers harvested nearly 62,000 fish, the third highest on record.

DEC's annual Lake Ontario Fishing Boat Survey provides information essential for managing a diverse, world-class trout and salmon fishery that attracts anglers from across the U.S. (38 states in 2014). In recent years, Lake Ontario anglers have experienced the best trout and salmon fishing on record. That trend continued in 2014 despite colder than normal water temperature patterns. The Lake Ontario 2014 survey found:

► Trout and salmon anglers represented 94% of all anglers' hours on Lake Ontario.

► Availability of brown trout along New York's entire Lake Ontario shoreline resulted in above average (18%) success in 2014.

► Six species of trout and salmon stocked by DEC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provide anglers diverse opportunities to target different species when needed, and anglers took advantage of this during 2014 with catch rates for all trout and salmon species combined 20% above average.

► Chinook salmon anglers experienced periods of both excellent and difficult fishing in 2014, but overall angling quality was up 34% above average, the 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of elevated catch rates.

Rainbow trout angling quality was 35% above average, maintaining near-record high levels for the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.

► Lake trout fishing quality improved in recent years, and Atlantic salmon

angler success remained 11% above average.

► Coho salmon fishing quality was slightly below average in 2014.

For further information on the Lake Erie angler survey visit [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/32286.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/32286.html) and

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27068.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27068.html) for Lake Ontario, or contact Steven LaPan, New York Great Lakes Section Leader at Cape Vincent Fisheries Research Station, (315) 654-2147. ✧

## Expanded hunting, fishing opportunities on Wildlife Refuges

As a part of Great Outdoors Month <http://www.greatoutdoorsmonth.org/> the USFWS announced a proposal that would expand hunting and fishing opportunities on 21 National Wildlife Refuges around the country and amend regulations for these activities on more than 100 others.

USFWS Director Dan Ashe said the proposal would allow for the continuance of a hunting and fishing tradition that is in accordance with sustainable recreational use in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ashe went on to say that these types of recreation benefit local economies by bringing people into refuges, as well as help provide an important connection between people and the outdoors.

Hunting is currently allowed on 335 National Wildlife Refuges and fishing is allowed on 271. Use this link

[www.fws.gov/refuges/hunting/huntFishesRegs.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/hunting/huntFishesRegs.html) to find refuge specific hunting and fishing opportunities and regulations. The USFWS will be seeking public comments regarding this proposal. Visit [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) Docket No. FWS-HQ-NWRS-2015-0029 to learn more and make comments from June 11 through July 13. ✧

# DEC proposes to amend hunting and trapping regulations

## Public comments accepted through June 29

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is now accepting public comments through June 29 on three regulatory proposals for hunting and trapping of wild turkey, deer and fisher, Commissioner Joe Martens announced today. The changes cover fall turkey hunting seasons in most areas of the state; modifications of antlerless deer hunting seasons in portions of western and southeastern New York and Long Island, and changes to the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) procedures statewide; and reduction of the current fisher trapping seasons in northern New York, opening a limited new fisher trapping season in central and western New York, and clarification of general trapping regulations. Pending review of public comments on each of these proposals, some or all of the regulation changes could be in effect for fall 2015.

### Proposed Fall Turkey Hunting Regulations

DEC is proposing to adjust fall turkey seasons in all areas of the state by limiting the season to two weeks only with a bag limit of one bird of either sex for the season.

“This proposal is an important step in a multi-year study to understand and respond to long-term declines in turkey populations, while maintaining some harvest opportunities,” Commissioner Martens said. “DEC staff and our partners have worked hard over the past several years to collect and analyze information on the influence of habitat and weather on turkeys in different regions of the state, to understand what hunters want, and to assess seasonal survival and harvest rates of hen turkeys. This proposal is based on the results of those research endeavors.”

### Proposed Antlerless Harvest and DMAP Regulations

DEC is challenged to manage deer populations across a diverse range of

environmental conditions and desired population levels. Currently, despite not issuing Deer Management Permits (DMPs) in Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) 6A in the St. Lawrence Valley since 2011, managers have identified the need to further restrict antlerless harvest to increase deer populations in that area of the state. Antlerless deer continue to be harvested during bow and muzzleloader hunting seasons, with the greatest harvest occurring during the seven-day early muzzleloader season. Over the past 25 years, DEC modified muzzleloader season opportunities in the Northern Zone, switching between either-sex, antlerless-only, or antlered-only as needed to achieve management objectives.

This proposed rule will restrict harvest during the early muzzleloader season to antlered deer only in WMU 6A until such time as populations increase to desired levels and the season may again be returned to an either-sex opportunity.

In stark contrast, antlerless deer harvest must be increased in WMUs 1C, 3M, 3S, 4J, 8A, 8C, 8F, 8G, 8H, 8N, 9A, and 9F, which include Suffolk County, portions of southeastern New York, and much of the Lake Plains and northern Finger Lakes area of central and western New York.

### Proposed Fisher Trapping and General Trapping Regulations

Earlier this year, DEC released a Draft New York State Fisher Management Plan. Based on detailed information presented in the plan on fisher population status in various regions of the state, DEC is proposing the following changes to fisher trapping regulations:

- ▶ Reduce the fisher trapping season from 46 to 22 days in selected Adirondack Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) where populations have declined in recent years;
- ▶ Establish a nine-day trapping season, with a one-fisher seasonal

limit, in parts of Central/Western New York, where populations have expanded dramatically in recent years; and

- ▶ A special fisher trapping permit with a trapping activity report would be required for anyone trapping fisher in northern New York or in any areas where a new season is opened.

The draft plan is available on the DEC website at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/9357.html>.

For more information or for instructions for submitting comments, go to the DEC website: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/proregulations.html>. Comments on the proposals must be received by Monday, June 29. ✧

## 'Move over law' expands Wis highways to waterways

MADISON – Wisconsin's "move over law" to protect roadside emergency responders expands to the state's waters this summer under revisions to the boating rules and regulations code, also known as chapter NR 5 of the Wis. Code.

The purpose is to create a safety buffer for emergency responders to work without risk of being struck or maneuvering in big wakes by boats passing too close to an emergency site.

The revision adds a slow-no-wake within 100 feet of patrol boats displaying emergency lights. The revisions took effect June 1 and DNR efforts this summer will be to inform and educate boaters on the change.

Other changes to the state's boating rules and regulations affect the use of blue lights and noise levels. Boaters can no longer display blue colored lights. The blue LED lighting had been mistaken for law enforcement lights at night and was causing some confusion to the public.

✧

## DEC advises anglers to be aware of spawning lake sturgeon

### Lake sturgeon is a threatened species in New York with no open season

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) reminded anglers to be aware of spawning lake sturgeon in New York's Great Lakes waters, Great Lakes connecting channels, and in tributaries of the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence River, Finger Lakes and Oneida Lake. Lake sturgeon is listed as a threatened species in New York, therefore, there is no open season for the fish and possession is prohibited. It is illegal to target these rare fish and anglers should move away from areas where they are catching them.

Anglers who do unintentionally hook one should follow these practices to ensure that the fish are returned to the water unharmed:

- Avoid bringing the fish into the boat if possible;
- Use pliers to remove the hook; sturgeon are almost always hooked in the mouth;
- Always support the fish horizontally. Do not hold sturgeon in a vertical position by their head, gills or tails;
- Never touch their eyes or gills; and
- Minimize their time out of the water and return them to the water immediately once they are freed from fishing gear.

Lake sturgeon populations in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River are recovering as a result of protection and stocking efforts by DEC and several partners. Other populations are supported by stocking. Adult sturgeon are captured in the St. Lawrence River and their eggs and sperm are collected by DEC biologists and partners from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the New York Power Authority facilities below the Moses-Saunders Dam. The fertilized eggs are reared in DEC's Oneida Hatchery to a size of about eight inches before stocking. ✧

## MN walleye stocking: By the numbers

Anglers are never far from a lake where they can catch walleye in Minnesota. Fish stocking keeps it that way.

Stocking walleyes involves taking eggs from waters that have reproducing walleye populations and releasing newly hatched fry or small walleye fingerlings into lakes that don't have reproducing populations.

The Minnesota DNR pays for its stocking effort with fishing license and walleye stamp dollars. This year, the process started April 8 in the Pike River near Tower, used eight egg-take sites and ended April 26 in Fergus Falls.

Curious about walleye stocking? Here's a snapshot, by the numbers.

### 2015 stocking effort

- Eggs taken: 4,655 quarts of eggs, or 582 million eggs, close to the 10-year average.
- 2015 stocking plan: 286 rearing ponds get 115 million fry and 272 lakes get 296 million fry. The goal for fingerling stocking is about 140,000 pounds.

### General walleye stocking stats

- Length of a walleye fry: about 1/3-inch.
- Length of a walleye fingerling: 4- to 6-inches.
- Lakes stocked with walleye (each lake usually every other year): about 1,050, statewide.
- Lakes where, without any stocking, anglers could still catch walleye: 260, mostly in the northern half of the state.
- Estimated percentage of walleye harvested that result from natural reproduction: 85 percent, with about half from popular walleye lakes like Lake of the Woods, Leech, Red and Winnibigoshish.
- Cost of an easy way to support walleye stocking: \$5, to buy a walleye stamp, sold wherever Minnesota hunting and fishing licenses are sold. ✧

## Ohio drops Wild Ohio eNewsletter

Unfortunately, the Wild Ohio eNewsletters and Fish Ohio Reports have been **discontinued**. This decision was made based monetary costs, low open rates of emails, and a decreasing interest in the eNewsletter's content in its current format.

Because sportsmen and women provide the money we have to serve them, and we do not receive state taxes, it is our duty to use that money wisely. Unfortunately, sending email newsletters costs money every year. But social media and RSS Feeds are completely free. Also, thousands have been responding to our social media posts every day, while the number of people opening our emails was steadily decreasing.

Other news outlets include the following:

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In the press release, Ohio stated "We apologize for the inconvenience and disappointment caused by discontinuing the eNewsletters and fishing reports, but we hope you enjoy the similar, and more timely information that is being provided via the communication channels above. Thank you for continuing to support Ohio's wildlife! ✧"

## Great Lakes muskie-rearing program has been decades in the making

The Michigan DNR's conversion from northern muskellunge to Great Lakes muskies for its stocking program is going swimmingly now, but it took a long time to get here. Switching from the northern strain — native to only the westernmost tip of the Upper Peninsula — to the more widespread, native Great Lakes strain has been on the DNR's wish list for decades. It's finally happening.

Back in the 1970s and '80s, Michigan's muskie-stocking program centered on tiger muskies, the laboratory offspring of pike and muskies. The program depended on a solar-heating system at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery, which provided enough warm water to rear the hybrids. By the 1990s, the solar system was failing and repair costs were deemed too high.

"The (Fisheries) Division made a decision to get out of the tiger muskie business," explained DNR Fish Chief Jim Dexter, then a biologist in Plainwell. "We moved into northern muskies, though what we really wanted was Great Lakes muskies. We didn't have a good source of brood stock. Lake St. Clair wasn't the musky mecca it is today."

When the DNR finally located what it thought was a potential source of Great Lakes muskie brood stock — the Indian River system — biologists decided that population wasn't large enough to support a full-scale rearing program. And a fish disease — piscirickettsia — set the program back as the DNR decided it was too risky to add a possible pathogen to the hatchery system. "That set us back at least five years," Dexter said.

By the turn of this century, the muskellunge population in the Lake St. Clair system had exploded and it looked like it was a viable brood stock-source. The piscirickettsia problem had been solved. That's when viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) reared its head.

"Everything was put on hold until the science was able to catch up with the disease," Dexter said.

Once plans were in place for an isolated rearing facility, the DNR ran into yet another problem: acquiring sufficient brood stock. Initial attempts to net Lake St. Clair muskies did not go well. The department switched its efforts to the Detroit River, but netting there didn't go any better.

"In 2009 and 2010, we netted and it just didn't work out," explained Todd Somers, the DNR fisheries technician supervisor who oversaw egg take this year at the Detroit River. "So we started electrofishing at night. The first year we electro-fished, we caught 215." But that doesn't mean the DNR got what it wanted. "We don't always get ripe fish," Somers said. "We'll get green ones, but they won't ripen in the cage. They've got to swim around to get ripe. It's very disappointing when you catch a 35-pounder and she won't ripen up. "And it's 10-to-1 males to females," he said. "Some nights we catch 20 males and one female. The ratio is crazy."

Collecting eggs from numerous pairs is important to ensure genetic diversity. It's not a good idea to build populations with limited genetics; low diversity leads to low survival and the DNR wanted to build potential brood-stock populations in two inland lakes for future egg takes. The eggs are collected over a three-week period and it wouldn't help to extend brood-stock collection longer.

Last year, Wolf Lake produced 36,000 fall Great Lakes muskie fingerlings. The current goal is 48,000, but that's a high goal, given the lack of rearing space.

The DNR continues to raise a smaller number of northern muskies for stocking in western U.P. waters and in a few land-locked inland lakes in southern Michigan, including two brood-stock lakes as something of an insurance policy should problems with the Great Lakes strain ever develop. Northern muskies currently are obtained from Wisconsin in exchange for Great Lakes muskellunge fingerlings.

Great Lakes muskie fingerlings remain in the hatchery until late

August or early September, when they are transferred into lined ponds at Wolf Lake that have been stocked with fathead minnows. Ponds are drained beginning in late October and fingerlings are stocked by mid-November.

For more information on muskellunge and all fish species found in Michigan, visit [www.michigan.gov/fishing](http://www.michigan.gov/fishing) ✧

## Anglers asked to monitor bait to spot juvenile Asian carp

The Michigan DNR reminds anglers to monitor their live bait purchases and to look for juvenile Asian carp during the entirety of the fishing season. Juvenile Asian carp can be confused with common baitfishes — such as gizzard shad, emerald shiner, spottail shiner or golden shiner. Because bait often is transported across state lines, including from areas with breeding populations of Asian carp, it would be possible for juvenile Asian carp to make their way into the bait supply without anyone realizing it.

A video is available online to assist anglers and the public in identifying juvenile Asian carp: [michigan.gov/asiancarp](http://michigan.gov/asiancarp). ✧

## CAWS recent Asian Carp monitoring

Recent reports from the Illinois DNR show agency crews contracted with commercial fisherman and electrofishing sampled upstream of the Electric Dispersal Barrier System. A total of 74 net set (8.4 miles) were made at fixed and targeted sites collecting 157 fish (7 species and 1 hybrid). 75 electrofishing runs (18.75 hours) at fixed and random sites were completed with 4820 fish sampled (42 species). **No Bighead Carp or Silver Carp were captured or observed.** ✧



## \$3.6 million in available Mich. grant \$\$ to combat invasive species

Funding proposals for 2015 are now being accepted through the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program, with an anticipated \$3.6 million available to applicants. The program is part of a Michigan statewide initiative launched in 2014 to help prevent and control invasive species in Michigan.

The [2015 grant program handbook](#) outlining focus areas and information on how to apply is available on the DNR website [www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants). The Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program supports projects that prevent, detect, manage and eradicate invasive species on the ground and in the water. Total grant funding is set by the Legislature and the governor during the annual budget cycle.

The Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program targets four key objectives:

- Preventing new introductions through outreach and education.
- Monitoring for new invasive species as well as expansions of current invasive species.

- Managing and controlling key colonized species.
- Responding to and conducting eradication efforts for new findings and range expansions.

"These grants offer a great opportunity to expand crucial efforts to battle invasive species in Michigan's woods and waters," said DNR Director Keith Creagh.

"Partnerships like this are vital to protecting our world-class natural resources," Creagh added. "There is an enormous need to work together to address invasive species in our state, and just as big a willingness by residents, agencies and other stakeholders to get the job done. This grant funding will go a long way toward achieving that success."

Local, federal and tribal units of government, nonprofit organizations and universities may apply for funding to support invasive species projects conducted in Michigan. For this 2015 funding cycle, pre-proposals will be accepted through July 31 and full proposals are due by October 30.

Grant requests for 2015 projects can range from a minimum of \$25,000 to a maximum of \$400,000. Applicants must commit to provide at least 10% of the total project cost in the form of a local match. Proposals with match levels above 10% will receive higher ranking.

Competitive applications will outline clear objectives, propose significant ecological benefits, demonstrate diverse collaboration and show strong community support.

Those considering applying for a grant should attend one of two [upcoming workshops](#) in Hastings (June 30) or Detroit (July 7).

Attendees will learn about program goals, 2015 focus areas, applicant eligibility and the application procedure. Optional discussion sessions to help connect groups interested in developing Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas will be held following the workshops.

To register or for more info, go to: [www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants). ✧

## DNR offers tips for residents when encountering snakes

This time of year, as snakes are out and about in the great outdoors, the Michigan DNR gets many questions about [Michigan's snakes](#). Michigan is home to 18 different snakes, 17 of which are harmless to humans.

There are two that are very similar and often cause a stir when people encounter them. [Eastern hognose snakes](#), when threatened, puff up with air, flatten their necks and bodies, and hiss loudly. (This has led to local names like "puff adder" or "hissing viper.") If this act is unsuccessful in deterring predators, the snakes will writhe about, excrete a foul-smelling musk and then turn over with mouth agape and lie still, as though dead. Despite this intimidating behavior, hog-nosed snakes are harmless to humans.

The [eastern massasauga rattlesnake](#), the only venomous snake species in Michigan, is quite rare and protected as a species of special

concern due to declining populations from habitat loss. As the name implies, the massasauga rattlesnake has a segmented rattle on its tail. It should not be confused with the other harmless snake that does not have segmented rattles but also will buzz their tails if approached or handled.

Eastern massasauga rattlesnakes are shy creatures that avoid humans whenever possible. Also known as "swamp rattlers," they spend the vast majority of their time in year-round wetlands hunting their primary prey, mice. When encountered, if the snake doesn't feel threatened, it will let people pass without revealing its location. If humans do get too close, a rattlesnake will generally warn of its presence by rattling its tail while people are still several feet away. If given room, the snake will slither away into nearby brush. Rattlesnake bites, while extremely rare in Michigan (fewer than one per year),

can and do occur. Anyone who is bitten should seek medical attention immediately. To learn more about the massasauga and for more snake safety tips:

<http://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/emr/index.cfm>.

Those who encounter a snake should leave it alone and should not try to handle or harass the snake — this is primarily how snake bites happen. A snake can only strike roughly one-third of its body length, so it is physically impossible for people to get bitten if they do not get within 24" of the snake's head. Michigan snakes do not attack, chase or lunge at people or seek out human contact. If left alone, Michigan snakes will leave people alone.

To learn more about [Michigan's snakes](#), [www.michigan.gov/wildlife](http://www.michigan.gov/wildlife), click on the "Wildlife Species" button and select "Amphibians and Reptiles." ✧

## Wisconsin DNR Outdoor Report summary by week

### [Complete DNR Outdoor Report.](#)

Reports from conservation wardens, wildlife and fisheries staff and property managers, by region from around the state. ✧

## Ohio boaters, swimmers, anglers urged to avoid high water

COLUMBUS, OH – Ohio has experienced steady rains and rising waters in the past week. The Ohio DNR urges Ohioans and visitors to avoid high, fast-moving water in rivers and streams.

"With the increased amount of rain, extra precautions are essential to ensure that the strength, depth and speed of a river does not exceed people's swimming or paddling skills or that of their equipment," said ODNR Director Jim Zehringer. "Always remember to wear a life jacket while boating. It's a simple decision that can save lives."

Lakes, rivers and streams will remain high and swift moving, creating and concealing hazards. These conditions pose dangers for boaters, swimmers, paddlers and anglers. High and fast stream currents, downed trees that act as "strainers," undercut and eroded banks, debris and other underwater obstacles can be dangerous to people walking, wading or boating in or near a waterway. ODNR recommends "scouting" a stream before launching a boat or wading in an unfamiliar area. Boaters are urged to file a float plan with a responsible person. Capsizing or falling unexpectedly into high, fast water can be life-threatening.

ODNR further advises Ohioans and visitors to properly wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket while boating and when wading and fishing in rivers, lakes or streams. ✧

## New video helps Great Lakes anglers avoid commercial, tribal ghost nets

The 13-minute video, filmed and produced by Wisconsin Sea Grant, features Wisconsin DNR Warden Amie Egstad describing the ways in which fishing nets are marked using specific types of flags and buoys. It also provides detailed safety tips on what boaters should do if they run into trouble.

Every year, thousands of recreational boaters and anglers take to the waters of Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. And every year, a handful of them run afoul of commercial and tribal fishing nets, even though those trap and gill nets are often marked with flags and buoys. In rare cases, boats can become swamped, putting lives at risk.

Now boaters have a new safety tool to help them avoid damage and disaster, in the form of an educational video produced through a partnership between multiple agencies.

Anchored nets are only one of the net-related safety hazards about which boaters must be aware. Ghost nets, commercial or tribal nets that have become unmoored due to strong currents or storms, can also create a dangerous situation. No longer marked, these ghost nets continue to drift on the water's surface or in its depths, presenting an unseen hazard that can easily entangle unwary boaters.

The key question with ghost nets is obviously, what do you do? The video outlines several action steps. First, you want to free yourself right away, especially if weather conditions are threatening. Then, if possible, we'd like boaters to be able to mark the location with a GPS system and a float. That helps a lot with recovery.

The video instructs boaters who become entangled in a ghost net to call a Wisconsin DNR tip line (800-847-9367) or visit the website [www.greatlakesghostnets.org](http://www.greatlakesghostnets.org) to report the location. To view the video: <http://bit.ly/1G44Ynf>. ✧

## MN sturgeon fishing: Opportunities keep getting bigger

Anglers have more opportunities to fish for lake sturgeon because of a new catch-and-release fishing season that reopened in most of Minnesota on June 16.

The new catch-and-release season on inland waters began in March. Each year, it closes from April 15 to June 15 to protect sturgeon during spawning. During the season, anglers can intentionally fish for lake sturgeon on inland waters. This allows sturgeon fishing on waters like Otter Tail Lake and the Littlefork, Bigfork and Kettle rivers — all of which have good numbers of lake sturgeon. Anglers can also catch and release lake sturgeon on additional border waters like the Red, St. Louis and Mississippi rivers.

Comebacks staged by lake sturgeon in recent years are making new fishing opportunities possible. Sturgeon numbers have increased because of improved water quality, dam removals, restorative stocking efforts and conservative regulations. The new catch-and-release season is a very positive outcome of recovery. However, it will still be many years before lake sturgeon have recovered enough to allow for expanded harvest opportunities.

In March 2015, new regulations went into effect for shovelnose sturgeon, a species found mostly in the Minnesota River and the Mississippi River below St. Anthony Falls. Those regulations can be found on page 52 in the 2015 Minnesota Fishing Regulations booklet.

Lake sturgeon season details can be found at [www.mndnr.gov/fishmn](http://www.mndnr.gov/fishmn) or in the fishing regulations booklet. Information on lake sturgeon tags is on page 43 of the booklet. [Sturgeon Season Map.](#) ✧

## New study sheds light on the decline of Lake Huron charter fishing

Changes in fishing success are often blamed on the drop in Lake Huron charter trips. Recent research reveals which fish species were most important and also suggests that fishing success was not the only reason for the decline.

**Chinook salmon can still be caught in Lake Huron but the fishery has shifted to walleye in some areas and a mix of salmon and trout species in others.**

The decline of Lake Huron's charter fishery is well-documented. From 2002-2011, the number of trips taken from ports along Michigan's sunrise side dropped by 51 percent. The loss of tourism was devastating for some lakeside communities.

In 2009, I was involved in a [charter economics project](#) that calculated a loss of 51,531 employment hours per year to Lake Huron coastal communities in Michigan. This loss was attributed directly to the drop in charter fishing, but why did fishing effort decline in the first place?

A research paper published in the May issue of *Fisheries* magazine seeks to provide an answer. Collaborators from [Michigan State University Extension](#), [Michigan Sea Grant](#), [Michigan Department of Natural Resources](#) and [Chonnam National University](#) used long-term data sets to explore the reasons behind the fall of charter fishing efforts. Factors such as the rise in gas prices, the economic recession, and trouble in the auto industry have been suggested as potential reasons for the decline in the charter industry. However, the collapse of an invasive baitfish (Alewife) and resulting changes in predatory gamefish usually take the blame.

Our first step was to determine which species of gamefish (or combination of species) were most closely linked to charter fishing efforts. Charter efforts were closely linked to catch rates for Chinook and coho salmon combined and salmon

and trout combined. However, the best predictor of charter efforts was Chinook salmon alone.

Chinook salmon rely heavily on alewife and nearly disappeared from many areas of the lake when alewife collapsed. Two other gamefish actually benefitted from the loss of alewife. Natural reproduction of lake trout and walleye increased when alewife disappeared.

Unfortunately, neither lake trout nor walleye catch rate had a direct relationship to lakewide charter fishing efforts. Increasing walleye catch rates actually corresponded to decreasing lakewide effort, which seems very strange when you consider that walleye are one of the best-eating freshwater fish around.

One exception to this is that one area of Lake Huron (Saginaw Bay) actually experienced big increases in charter fishing while most of the lake suffered. Saginaw Bay now offers charter anglers the highest walleye catch rates in the state, but even this localized boom in walleye charters was not enough to offset the loss of Chinook salmon from a lakewide perspective.

The decline of alewife and Chinook salmon was not the only concern in the mid-2000s, though. Unemployment rates were high, the auto industry was in crisis mode, and gas prices skyrocketed. The research team looked for the single best indicator of economic well-being to find out if the economy might share some of the blame for Lake Huron's charter fishing decline.

Both unemployment rate and total non-farm employment statistics that were available from the U.S. Department of Labor showed a direct relationship to charter fishing decline. However, the price of gasoline was the single most important economic factor.

The next step was to determine if fishing success (as measured by Chinook salmon catch rate) or economic conditions (as measured by

gasoline price) acted alone or together to drive trends in Lake Huron's charter fishery. The results strongly suggested that both fishing success and economic factors were important.

In fact, mathematical models that included both Chinook salmon catch rate and gas prices had an 84.2 percent likelihood of being correct in the context of all models tested. Models that included Chinook salmon catch rates without including gas price had a 14.5 percent likelihood of being correct, while models that only included gas prices had a 1.3 percent.

In short, the collapse of Chinook salmon was the single most important factor in the decline of Lake Huron charter fishing, but it was not the only cause. Economic factors beyond the control of fishery managers and conservationists also played a part.

The story of Lake Huron charter fishing is not all glum. Saginaw Bay offers [world-class fishing for walleye](#). Mixed bags of trout, salmon and walleye contribute to [quality fishing](#) in other parts of the lake. Northern Lake Huron still produces good catches of Chinook salmon at times, and also offers unique species like Atlantic salmon and pink salmon.

Lake Huron has had its ups and downs but, to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of the lake's demise have been greatly exaggerated. ✧

### Find out what fish are biting in your area lakes

Check out the updated Indiana [DNR fishing reports](#). The new look splits the state into three zones, North, Central and South. Each zone can be clicked on an interactive map to see all lake reports in that region. A dropdown list of lakes in the system is also available to allow specific searches. ✧

## **Other Breaking News Items:**

(Click on title or URL to read full article)

### **[While Great Lakes levels rise, status quo on Lake St. Clair](#)**

Lake St. Clair water levels remain stable even as the larger lakes continue to rise.

### **[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducting lamprey survey in Au Gres River this summer](#)**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will follow up on sea lamprey treatments performed in 2014 during a June 16-25 survey in Michigan's Au Gres and East Au Gres rivers

### **[Commercial fishing trial worries Lake Huron anglers](#)**

When the Michigan Department of Natural Resources announced a three-year trial to allow a commercial fishery to pursue whitefish in southern Lake Huron, recreational anglers took to social media to express their outrage.

### **[New York DEC survey: Anglers enjoy Lakes Erie and Ontario](#)**

Survey results indicate Lake Erie experienced the greatest level of fishing participation in 12 years, while Lake Ontario anglers experienced another year of excellent trout and salmon fishing.

### **[Identifying the best rivers in the Great Lakes region for Asian carp eggs](#)**

Researchers with the U.S. Geological Survey are using a model nicknamed FluEgg to predict which rivers in the Great Lakes region are the most suitable for Asian carp to reproduce.

### **[New York rule cracks down on anglers who photograph out-of-season fish](#)**

Those who take photos of out-of-season fish can be ticketed by a conservation officer; the penalty can be a fine of up to \$250, and/or 15 days in jail.

### **[Google offers unusual view of Michigan](#)**

Michigan's tourism board has teamed with Google to become the first Midwestern state to give computer users a virtual travel experience.

### **[COMMENTARY: Low or high, Great Lakes water levels always blamed on global warming](#)**

Michigan legislators once tried restricting the sale of bottled water for fear of running out. Today, water levels are once again high and rising.

### **[Shrinking alewife population could deplete Great Lakes salmon](#)**

Scientists are concerned with a decline in the population of this invasive species and how the shrinking numbers of alewives could impact their main predator, the popular Chinook salmon.

### **[Michigan plants splake in Lake Superior](#)**

The DNR Marquette State Fish Hatchery released 23,400 splake into Lake Superior, and another 32,700 near Munising.

### **[White bass run on Wolf River 'spectacular'](#)**

The Wolf River white bass population is in very good shape, bolstered by a 2011 hatch that was the second-largest on record, according to Lake Winnebago trawling surveys conducted by the Department of Natural Resources.

### **[Muskellunge thrive in Lake St. Clair](#)**

Many people have yet to discover that Lake St. Clair is one of the top fisheries in the country — maybe even the world. That goes double for muskellunge — one of the largest fish in the Great Lakes and easily the largest predator.

### **[Bay City officials want no-wake on Saginaw River at Uptown, some boaters say no way](#)**

Bay City officials are lobbying the Michigan DNR to turn a mile long stretch of Saginaw River into a no-wake zone.

### **[Is it safe to swim in Lake Erie? Here's how to find out](#)**

Local and state officials regularly monitor and report the water quality at most public Lake Erie swimming beaches, primarily for elevated bacteria levels, which can cause harm to swimmers, particularly children, the elderly and those in ill health.

End