



DNR seeks feedback on Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Public comment period open now through **Dec. 1**



Michigan’s outdoor recreation system – including public lands and waters,

playgrounds and bike paths, and so much more – provides critically important social, health, economic and environmental benefits to us all. Over the past several months, the Michigan DNR has been compiling information about the state’s integrated system of federal, state and local recreation assets.

The DNR is seeking input on its draft 2023-2027 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). A comment period is open through **December 1.**

The DNR’s SCORP is:

- A broad, flexible, five-year strategic plan designed to evaluate ongoing and emerging outdoor recreation trends, needs and issues, and to establish priorities for achieving outdoor recreation goals.

An ongoing framework and action plan for state and local recreation partners to guide their outdoor recreation management and policy decisions.

- Required to access certain federal grants; it shapes investment by the state of Michigan and local communities in priority outdoor recreation infrastructure, land acquisition and programming.

Most significantly among the plan’s activities, a statewide survey was conducted in coordination with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and other partners.

The results of this effort have demonstrated the significance of outdoor recreation to the state’s economy, health and well-being. The

DNR’s SCORP

Continued on page 6

In this issue...

Indiana DNR stocking walleye, Chinook salmon and rainbow trout.....	2
Upper Red Lake walleye regs for winter.	3
Wis postponed meeting to Nov 30	3
DEC start of construction for New Oneida boat launch	3
Deer hunters can help families in need ..	3
Lake Erie Open Lake Angler Survey Update.....	4
Resist the urge to swerve to avoid deer .	4
Lake Huron Coho Salmon Stocking Proposal.	4
ADA-Accessible Yurt now open for reservations	5
APA and DEC hold joint public comment period for Sharp Bridge Public Campground.....	5
Proposed settlement of landmark Lake Erie case skkes comments by Dec 12..	6
The Grand Inquisitor	6
Michigan DNR Great Lakes fisheries survey findings.....	7-9

Happy Thanksgiving

Ohio angler catches 10 lb Lake Erie smallmouth, sets Great Lakes record

A 10.15-pound [smallmouth bass](#) caught November 3 on Lake Erie set a new record for a Great Lakes smallmouth. Greg Gallagher and his son Grant from OH caught the 10.15-lb. smallmouth bass on Lake Erie, biggest Great Lakes smallie ever.

“The countless time Grant has spent scouting, graphing, and working on fine-tuning our smallmouth techniques all paid off when he located what we both knew was a unique and likely un-fished spot. With an abundance of baitfish located and unique bottom content, we dropped down our forward-facing sonar.”

“My bait got hit before it even hit the bottom and my rod quickly doubled over. I honestly thought I had hooked into a sheepshead. We

We quickly learned we had just caught the smallmouth of a lifetime. After a quick weight in the boat, we knew the fish was approaching at least nine pounds. We needed to get the weight verified on an official scale. After a few more phone calls we were able to meet Travis Hartman (Lake Erie Fisheries Program Administrator for the Ohio DNR).”



Indiana DNR stocking walleye, Chinook salmon and rainbow trout

Walleye

Nearly 70,000 fingerling walleyes are planned to be stocked by DNR during the next few weeks in 14 northern Indiana lakes. The fingerlings being stocked average 4 to 7" long. Adult walleye typically reach 14" in length after two years of growth and 16" by their third year. These walleye were purchased from Gollon Bait and Fish Farm and grown at Fawn River State Fish Hatchery.

Many of these locations are stocked with fingerlings every fall to sustain the walleye population because the species' natural reproduction is limited in these waters. A few locations are stocked on alternate years to improve walleye fishing at a broader geographic range. In addition to the fall walleye stockings, walleye fry (1 inch) and fingerlings (1.5 to 2 inches) were stocked this spring at an additional 15 lakes.

To evaluate the spring and fall walleye stockings, biologists conduct nighttime walleye surveys during October. These surveys evaluate stocking success and growth from previous stockings. In addition to these lakes, multiple other lakes are stocked with walleyes by privately funded lake associations. A stocking permit from DNR is required to stock fish. For more info: wildlife.IN.gov/fishing/walleye-fishing.

Rainbow trout

Roughly 2,000 rainbow trout will be stocked in seven different bodies of water by the end of the month. DNR plans to stock two locations in Fort Wayne (Allen County) and one in Huntington (Huntington County) with trout measuring 12-14" long. DNR plans to stock the remaining locations with trout averaging greater than 7". All trout come from Curtis Creek Trout Rearing Station near Howe in LaGrange County.

The bag limit for trout in inland waters, which excludes Lake Michigan and its tributaries, is five fish per day with a minimum size limit of 7". There is no closed season for taking trout from inland lakes. ✧

Chinook salmon

Indiana DNR will increase Chinook salmon stocked in Lake Michigan by 50,000 starting in spring 2023, per Lake Michigan Committee agreement. The change will increase the annual production target for Chinook from 225,000 to 275,000.

Baitfish populations have rebounded from an all-time low in the mid-2010s after lake-wide stocking reductions made by all state agencies during the past decade. Ben Dickinson, Indiana DNR's Lake Michigan biologist, says the improved predator-prey balance in the lake allows for the increase, which should benefit anglers, but biologists will be monitoring for the need for future adjustments. "Anglers should realize increasing stocking does increase predation pressure and may increase future risk to baitfish populations," he said. "We will continue to closely watch the predator-prey balance to help ensure the long-term health of the fishery."

Staff from Mixsawbah State Fish Hatchery recently traveled to Michigan to obtain Chinook salmon eggs to meet the new production target. Fish from the eggs will be raised at Mixsawbah to be stocked in April 2023. They will spend one to three years feeding in Lake Michigan before returning to their stocking sites as mature spawning adults in the fall. More information on Lake Michigan fishing is at on.IN.gov/lake-michigan-fishing.



• Established 1972 •

President

Daniel N. Thomas, *Illinois*

Vice President

Open

Secretary

Michael D. Sanger, *Wisconsin*

Treasurer

Thomas G. Couston, *Wisconsin*

DIRECTORS

Illinois – Robert Gaik

Indiana – Mike Schoonveld

New York – Thomas Marks

Ohio – Rick Unger

Ontario – Darryl Choronzey

Pennsylvania - Ed Kissell

Wisconsin – Robert Wincek

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

Publisher

Dan Thomas, 630/941-1351

Editor

Jeanette Thomas

Webmaster

Chad Lapa

© Copyright 2022 by Great Lakes Basin Publications, the *INLAND SEAS ANGLERS-GREAT LAKES BASIN REPORT* is the newsletter of the Great Lakes Sport Fishing Council, a federally recognized not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and recognized for tax-deductible giving by the federal government.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of GLSFC, its officers or staff. Reproduction of any material by paid-up members is encouraged, but appropriate credit must be given. Reproduction by others without written permission is prohibited.

Address Change:

Send six weeks in advance with old mailing label to GREAT LAKES BASIN REPORT, P.O. Box 297, Elmhurst, IL 60126, (630) 941-1351 or glslc444@gmail.com.

Upper Red Lake walleye regulations change for winter season

Anglers fishing during the winter season on Upper Red Lake in northern Minnesota will have a three-walleye bag limit, with only one walleye longer than 17 inches allowed in possession. The new regulation becomes effective Tuesday, Nov. 1.

The fall fisheries assessment on the Red Lakes found the walleye population to be at a healthy, sustainable level with a wide range of sizes. This winter's walleye regulation on Upper Red Lake is based on the abundance of mature female walleye, or spawning stock, in "optimal" condition. The fall numbers indicated that a regulation that allows a moderate amount of harvest is most appropriate to maintain spawning stock at a level that is both sustainable and promotes the consistent success of new year classes.

Last winter, the bag limit was four fish in an effort to reduce "surplus" spawning stock to a level that is more likely to encourage success of young fish and relieve some pressure off the walleye population's primary forage, yellow perch.

"We are actively managing for optimal spawning stock to maximize the likelihood of strong year classes, which bodes well for future fishing," said Edie Evarts, Bemidji area fisheries supervisor with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. "Our fall survey indicated that the walleye population is healthy and there should be an abundance of harvestable fish just under 17 inches, and always an opportunity to catch a larger fish."

The Red Lake Nation and the DNR manage the walleye harvest on Red Lake under a joint harvest plan that the Red Lakes Fisheries Technical Committee revised in 2015.

The DNR will determine next year's open water harvest regulations after the winter fishing season. An Upper Red Lake Citizen Advisory Committee reviews walleye harvest totals and regulation options and pro-

Wis postponed Oct. 24 Lake Michigan fisheries public meeting to **Nov 30**

The Wisconsin DNR has postponed the Lake Michigan Fisheries public meeting scheduled for October 24.

Originally scheduled for October 24 at Lakeshore Technical College in Cleveland, Wisconsin, this second public meeting will be rescheduled for December. The public comment period will remain open through **November 30**. ✧

DEC start of construction for New Oneida Lake boat launch

New York DEC announced the start of construction of a new boat launch on the Barge Canal at Cove Road in the town of Verona, Oneida County, to enhance fishing and boating recreational opportunities. The boat launch will connect to Oneida Lake and provide additional access to the world-class fishing in [Oneida Lake](#) for all visitors, including people with disabilities. Once complete, anglers will have additional boating access to Oneida Lake, New York's most heavily fished inland water. Oneida Lake is the largest lake lying wholly within New York State, with a surface area of 50,894 acres. The lake's waters support walleye, yellow perch, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and panfish, among other fish and wildlife species. Lake sturgeon can be found in the lake and its tributaries; however, lake sturgeon are on New York's threatened species list and cannot be fished for or possessed. ✧

~~~~~

### Upper Red Lake - *continued*

vides recommendations for regulations for the state waters of Upper Red Lake.

Upper Red Lake fishing regulations are available at the [DNR website](#) ([mndnr.gov/fishing/upper-red-lake-regulations.html](http://mndnr.gov/fishing/upper-red-lake-regulations.html)). ✧

## Deer hunters can help families in need, enter to win prizes

As hundreds of thousands of hunters head into the field with Michigan's firearm deer season kicking off, the DNR encourages them to help hungry families in their community by donating a deer to Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger.

"Hunters who donate a deer will help local communities in need by providing them with highly desirable venison meals," said Joe Presgrove, public outreach analyst in the DNR Marketing and Outreach Division who coordinates the department's partnership with Michigan Sportsman Against Hunger.

"Also, donating a deer is not the only way hunters may help. To help cover the cost of processing donated deer, individuals can make a monetary contribution when purchasing hunting and fishing licenses. Every dollar donated helps feed those in need, and hunters who donate a whole deer have a chance to win some great prizes."

Hunters have a chance to win gift cards and other prizes by donating a deer at:

- Any [Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger participating processor](#) during the 2022 Michigan deer hunting season (win one of five \$100 gift cards).
- Jay's Sporting Goods deer drive in Clare Nov. 18, 19 and 20 (win one of 10 \$50 gift cards).

Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger – an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization – helps connect donors, wild game processors and charities like food banks, pantries and shelters that help feed those in need.

The organization distributed over 100,000 pounds of venison last year, providing more than 400,000 meals for needy families.

To learn more about the deer donation drives, find a participating processor or make a donation, visit [SportsmenAgainstHunger.org](#). Questions? Contact [Joe Presgrove](#) at 517-284-6108. ✧

## Lake Erie Open Lake Angler Survey Update - October 2022

Angler effort in October 2022 was above the 20-year average (similar to fishing effort seen last October) with the majority of October anglers (57%) targeting yellow perch.



### Yellow Perch:

The best yellow perch fishing in the New York waters of Lake Erie typically occurs in the spring and fall months. October perch fishing effort was double the 20-year average (4,033 angler-hours), with the bulk of the effort based out of Cattaraugus Creek. Fishing quality was slightly below average in 2022, with anglers catching about 28 perch per boat trip at a catch rate of 2.29 fish per angler hour (October average = 2.50 fish per hour). About 2% of yellow perch anglers achieved a 50 fish limit with an average size of 11.2 inches.

### Smallmouth Bass:

Effort in October (2,000 angler hours) was below the 20-year average (2,870 angler hours) with most (88%) of it occurring out of Buffalo. The October bass fishing quality was well above average in 2022, with anglers targeting bass catching an average of 26 bass per boat trip with a catch rate of 1.91 fish per hour, the best October catch rate for smallmouth bass in the last 20 years (October average = 0.86 fish per hour).

### Walleye:

Effort was very low in October 2022, with only 6 walleye angler interviews for the entire month. October was the final month of the annual Lake Erie angler survey. A brief summary of the 2022 survey results will be released next month and complete results will be available this winter in DEC's Lake Erie Unit Annual Report. ✧

## Resist the urge to swerve to avoid deer

**SPRINGFIELD** – Fall is here and the Illinois Department of Transportation and Illinois DNR are reminding motorists that deer mating season has also arrived. That means deer become more active, mainly at dawn and dusk from October through December.

"Deer often travel in groups, so if a deer crosses the road ahead of you, there is a good possibility that another will follow. Always be prepared for the unexpected. A deer might stop in the middle of the road or double back," said Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman. "Don't veer for deer – it could cause you to lose control of your vehicle and swerve into another lane or off the road."

In 2021, 14,522 motor vehicle crashes involved deer in Illinois. Of these, 13,936 resulted in damage to property or vehicles, while 584 caused personal injuries. Two resulted in fatalities.

Although a collision with a deer can happen any time, we are entering the peak season for crashes with them. Last year, more than 42% of crashes involving deer in Illinois occurred in October, November and December, with November being the highest-risk month. Rural environments were the site of more than 72% of all motor vehicle crashes involving deer, with more than 71% occurring at twilight or nighttime.

Safe driving tips for deer mating season:

- Be aware of your surroundings, especially in areas with deer crossing signs.
- Scan the sides of the road for eye shine – the reflection of headlights in their eyes.
- Slow down if you see a deer. They travel in groups, so more are likely nearby.
- Prepare for the unexpected. Deer may stop in the middle of the road.
- If a collision is inevitable, don't veer. Try to glance your vehicle off the deer and avoid swerving into the opposite lanes of traffic or off the road. Continued

## Lake Huron Coho Salmon Stocking Proposal

Stock the existing yearling sites every year at the Au Sable River, Harbor Beach, Port Sanilac, and Thunder Bay River with 50,000 yearling Coho salmon per site per year. Stock fall fingerling Coho at the existing sites of East Au Gres River and Port Hope, and add Harrisville, Grindstone, and Rogers City to the fall fingerling stocking site list. Stock fall fingerling sites up to 75,000 per site per year when they are available.

### Existing and proposed Lake Huron Coho salmon stocking sites

● Coho Yearlings

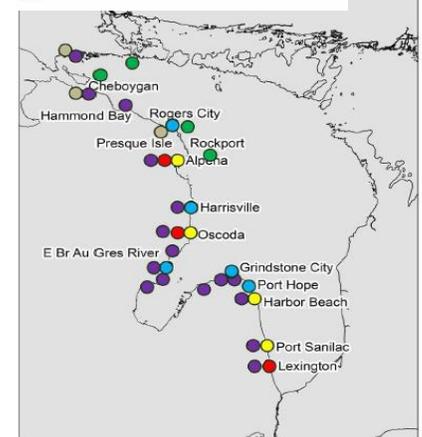
● Coho Fingerlings

● Atlantic Salmon

● Chinook Salmon

● Steelhead

● Lake Trout



### *Resist the urge - continued*

Deer can appear suddenly in surprising environments, so be on alert, slow down and pay attention in areas where they are known to travel. ✧

## ADA-Accessible Yurt now open for reservations



The Wisconsin DNR announced the opening of an ADA-accessible yurt for hunters in the [Flambeau River State Forest](#) in Sawyer County.

The ADA-accessible Elk Ridge yurt was paid for with a Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (PR Act) grant and is exclusively available to hunters until November 30. It will reopen on May 1 for the spring turkey seasons and then, from June 1 through August 31, the yurt is reservable for all recreation purposes.

“It will be so nice to allow people to enjoy

such a unique opportunity while staying in the Flambeau River State Forest. The yurt will provide an experience to enjoy nature, hunting, fishing, relaxing and most of all to create lasting memories,” said Maggie Lorenz, Flambeau River State Forest Property Manager.

The yurt offers nearby access to hunter walking trails and a carry-in canoe/kayak launch on the Flambeau River. The yurt can also be accessed directly from the Flambeau River, as it is just upstream from Dix-Dox Landing. Amenities include:

- bunkbeds
- one ADA-accessible bunk
- wood-burning stove
- bear-proof food storage box
- enclosed vault toilet
- fire pit
- outdoor game pole for processing

In addition to the Elk Ridge yurt construction, the PR Act grant also helped DNR complete more than 140 access improvement projects at 75 state properties, including:

- upgrading over 100 parking areas
- improving 57 miles of roads
- upgrading 200 miles of hunter-access trails
- building new hunting blinds
- upgrading dams for impoundments that support waterfowl
- creating habitat for game birds through 3,000 acres of rotational grazing projects

The PR Act grant is funded through firearm and ammunition purchases. The funds translate into approximately 540,000 acres of improved hunter access across Wisconsin. More information on the PR Act and the Wisconsin Habitat Partnership Fund can be found on the [DNR’s website](#). Additionally, Elk Ridge yurt reservations can be made on the DNR’s [reservation webpage](#) ✧

## APA and DEC hold joint public comment period for Sharp Bridge Public Campground - Comment period open through **December 19, 2022**

RAY BROOK, NY – The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) are holding a joint public comment period to solicit comments for the Sharp Bridge Public Campground and Day Use Area Draft Unit Management Plan (UMP). The public is invited to submit input on the draft plan, which will guide future management of the facility over the next five years and its conformance to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. Comments will be accepted until **December 19, 2022**.

The campground is located on NYS Route 9, 15 miles north of Schroon Lake in the town of North Hudson, Essex County. The Campground and Day-Use Area was originally opened in 1920. It borders the western shore of Schroon River

and offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities. Amenities include fireplaces, charcoal grills, hot showers, flush toilets, a picnic area, and pavilion. The 45,619-acre Hammond Pond Wild Forest surrounds the campground.

Management goals for this unit include administering recreation programs to ensure protection of the natural resources in accordance with Environmental Conservation Law and the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, providing recreational opportunities for the enjoyment of visitors, and enhancing economic benefits to local communities.

The Draft UMP proposes the following management activities:

- Replace caretaker cabin;
- Rehabilitate roads;

- Replace trailer dumping station;
- Rehabilitate water system;
- Replace overhead electric lines with underground system;
- Tree and shrub plantings; and
- Campsite restoration.

The draft UMP for the Sharp Bridge Campground and Day-Use Area and a [presentation of the draft plan can be viewed at Adirondack Park Agency’s website](#).

Copies are also available on compact disc and may be requested by calling (518) 457-2500.

In addition, the public can visit the Sharp Bridge Campground and Day-Use Area Survey to share comments on recreational opportunities. Please visit the [Sharp Bridge Draft UMP Public Input Survey website](#) to access the survey. ✧

## Proposed settlement of landmark Lake Erie case seeks comments by Dec. 12

A proposed consent decree that will serve as a roadmap for state and federal regulators to get more serious about reducing western Lake Erie's chronic algal blooms is now available for public viewing until **December 12**. The document has been prepared by Senior U.S. District Judge James Carr, who since February 7, 2019 has been hearing a landmark case brought against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on the grounds that the federal agency has not been living up to the spirit and intent of the powerful Clean Water Act that Congress passed in 1972 by going soft on Ohio.

The Board of Lucas County Commissioners later joined as a co-plaintiff. The state of Ohio, while not technically listed as a defendant, is integrally affected by what happens in that its efforts are audited by its federal counterpart.

The document does not lay out specifics about what kind of rules, if any, Ohio will be required to pass along to the agricultural industry and others to reduce the levels of phosphorus and other nutrients getting into the Maumee River and other western Lake Erie tributaries, nor does it say if Gov. Mike DeWine's H2Ohio program for improving water quality statewide is sufficient.

But it establishes a set of clear deadlines and penalties for the Ohio EPA to finish writing its blueprint for future management goals, known as a Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL, for the Maumee River Watershed. What the Ohio EPA has under development will become one of the largest TMDLs in the country. ✧



## The Grand Inquisitor will tolerate no criticism!

*"When they took our Fourth Amendment, I was quiet, because I didn't deal drugs.*

*When they took our Fifth Amendment, I was quiet, because I was innocent.*

*When they took our Second Amendment, I was quiet, because I didn't own a gun.*

*Now, they've taken our First Amendment, and I can say nothing....." ✧*



## DNR's SCORP

*Continued from page 1*

plan provides regional breakdowns of data collected. Among the results, Michigan's outdoor recreation system provides a total net economic value of \$165 billion. The cost of annual illness savings realized through outdoor recreation totaled \$2.76 billion.

The top motivations to participate in outdoor recreation in Michigan were to study nature (94%), feel better mentally and emotionally (93%), have time away from work or life routines (89%) and exercise and being physically challenged (82%).

The top three recreation activities by participation respectively included, going for a walk on streets or sidewalks, visiting the beach but not swimming and going for a walk on local unpaved trails or paths.

To [review the plan visit the DNR's website](#). Send comments or suggestions to [DNR-SCORP@Michigan.gov](mailto:DNR-SCORP@Michigan.gov) no later than **December 1**.

Public input on the draft will be incorporated, as appropriate, in development of the final plan, which will be submitted to the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service by December 31. Early next year, the plan will be put into effect for the next five years, guiding actions of numerous entities seeking to improve outdoor recreation opportunities for everyone across the state of Michigan. ✧

# Michigan DNR

## Great Lakes fisheries survey findings

A lot of factors go into effective fisheries management, including the valuable research data conducted each year by Michigan DNR research vessels on Lake Michigan, Lake Erie and Saginaw Bay that guides management decisions on how best to care for fisheries now and for future generations.

DNR Fisheries Chief Jim Dexter said the most recent survey results highlight important population trends among walleye, yellow perch and other species, as well as factors such as angler intensity and presence of forage fish.

“Regular surveying of Michigan waters tells us things about state fisheries that we’re not going to learn through other means, and that data helps us make sound, informed choices for different regions,” said DNR Fisheries Chief Jim Dexter. “Our research crews and biologists, along with state and federal partners, do an incredible job of collecting and analyzing information that’s essential to these three regions.”

Here are the highlights by each survey area:

### Lake Michigan

The DNR’s survey vessel *Steelhead* and vessels from two other agencies



cooperatively plied the waters of Lake Michigan in August, sampling key forage fish populations critical to the health of salmon, steelhead and lake trout, and found forage fish numbers to be improving in Michigan waters.

The 2022 hydro acoustic survey comprised 26 transects spanning nearshore and offshore regions around Lake Michigan. A transect essentially is a predetermined line, from point A to point B, that determines the survey route.

The *S/V Steelhead* completed 13 of these transects in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey research vessel *Sturgeon* (eight transects) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service *R/V Baird* (five transects).

“The work was completed in late summer in spite of midseason shipyard repair delays that gave the *S/V Steelhead* a later-than-normal start,” said Dave Clapp, Charlevoix Fisheries Research Station manager. “Thanks to the crew’s hard work and favorable weather, though, the *S/V Steelhead* was able to complete the largest number of annual survey transects since this survey began in 2004.”

Transects completed by the *S/V Steelhead* this season stretched from waters offshore of Chicago in the south, around the Michigan shore, to Platte Bay in the north. At roughly the same time, the *R/V Sturgeon* completed transects along the Illinois and Wisconsin shore in the west, while the *R/V Baird* completed transects along the Wisconsin and Michigan shore in the north.

While final survey results have not yet been compiled, several noteworthy observations emerged:

- As expected in recent years, forage fish abundance was much greater in nearshore areas than further offshore. However, unlike previous years, midwater trawl catches and apparent fish densities were higher in the northeast nearshore than in the

southeast nearshore where fish abundance is nearly always greatest.

- Largest catches in midwater trawls were yearling and older rainbow smelt, alewife and bloater. Yearling and older rainbow smelt have rarely been encountered in recent years, so the large catches this year mark a sharp departure from recent surveys.

- The size distribution of the alewives captured in 2022 was also very different than recent years. Typically, smaller size groups have dominated the catch, but this year’s alewife catches included a much broader range of sizes from 4-8 inches and included some large individuals greater than 8 inches in length. Moreover, very few young-of-year (< 4 inches) alewives were captured at any transect location. These results may indicate that 2022 was a low recruitment year for alewives, but also that predation and other mortality was low, allowing some to survive to larger sizes.

- Finally, acoustic density estimates and midwater trawl catches of bloater have been increasing in recent years; 2022 survey results suggest that densities of bloater continue to remain high and may be increasing regionally in Lake Michigan.

Overall, the forage community is showing signs of improvement that bodes well for future fishing on Lake Michigan.

### Saginaw Bay

Based on the 24 trawl tows and 16 gillnet lifts conducted in September by the Department’s *R/V Tanner* and *Channel Cat*, initial findings indicate few changes to the Saginaw Bay fishery. Overall, a total of 24 different species were collected by trawling and 27 different species were collected by gillnetting, with no new species collected.

Walleye abundance appears strong, and there are large year classes being documented from 2021 and 2022. Observations of a strong 2021-year class were supported by a large catch of juvenile walleye ranging in size from 10 to 12 inches. The evidence supporting the predicted strong 2019-year class will have to wait until all specimens can be aged in the laboratory this winter. Overall, the mean catch of larger walleye in gillnets (36.6/net) was slightly higher than the average (33.8/net) since 2003. The mean catch of young-of-year walleye in trawls was the highest since 2009, and second highest ever, indicating young walleye production remains very high.

Yellow perch appear to continue to be very depressed in numbers and may be nearing record lows. The catch of larger yellow perch in gillnets remains low (33.5/net), and much less than the average since 2003 (45.3/net). The production of young yellow perch was also noted to be very low, and the trawl numbers were the lowest since



2014. Research also indicated that the survival of yellow perch in their first year of life was low.

Preliminary forage fish numbers appeared to have declined for the second straight year, too, and were below the long-term mean but slightly above the last 10-year mean. The most common forage fish in the trawling by number were trout-perch, sand shiner, white perch, round goby and young age-0 yellow perch.

While the DNR has been working cooperatively with partners including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey to restore

native cisco to the Saginaw Bay area, no cisco were collected during the survey. A juvenile lake sturgeon, another species with active rehabilitation efforts, was collected in a gillnet and then tagged and released.

“Overall, walleye continue to dominate Saginaw Bay and its fish community, while efforts to improve yellow perch continue to struggle with that component of the fishery and forage fish numbers are generally stable,” said David Fielder, Alpena Fisheries Research Station, research biologist. “We expect the Saginaw Bay fishery will continue to look similar to 2022 for the next few years.”

## Lake Erie

Lake Erie is one of the most popular fisheries in our state as it accounted, in 2021, for 14% of the total Great Lakes angling effort, 31% of the catch, a catch rate three times the other Great Lakes waters combined, and an angling intensity more than 54% that of the other Great Lakes

waters in our state.

Fisheries surveys and other companion surveys are critical to maintaining this fishery, which Michigan shares with New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania and the Canadian Province of Ontario.

The DNR does two surveys using the *R/V Channel Cat* to obtain information from Lake Erie’s complex fisheries community:

- The first is a bottom trawl survey that examines the number of young-of-year walleye and yellow perch in Michigan waters of Lake Erie, contributing to interagency knowledge about reproduction for these two species. This survey, in its ninth year, also documents the relative abundance of forage fish species that live near the bottom.
- The second survey is a gillnet survey that samples the abundance and age structure of yearling and older walleye in Michigan waters. These data drive the population models that

are used to determine the total allowable catch and daily bag limits for walleye in this valuable water. This survey was conducted in October at four locations with two index stations (Stony Point and Luna Pier) that have been sampled every year for 45 years.

Walleye populations remain near the all-time high, with trawling



indicating that recruitment continues to be very strong. The age-0 walleye catch rate in the bottom trawl (14 fish caught per 10-minute trawl tow) was comparable to the past two years, coming in above the nine-year average of 11 fish per 10-minute trawl tow. Walleye reproduction during the past seven years has been strong, with multiple large year classes beginning in 2015.

Similarly, older walleye were caught in gillnets this year at rates (150 fish per net lift) 40% greater than the long-term average. This was a 150% increase from last year and the highest rate at index stations since 2005. Of the 404 walleye captured and measured for biological data, nearly 75% were above the minimum size of 15 inches. All these fish have had their stomach contents examined; 80% had food present, with 66% of them having eaten gizzard shad. More information on these larger adults will be gathered this winter when the fish are aged.

Yellow perch populations were found to be holding their own. While

reproduction was down, as the trawl catch rate of age-0 yellow perch dropped from last year (>1,200 fish per 10-minute trawl tow to 157 fish per 10-minute trawl tow). This level of young-of-year relative abundance is not unprecedented; in fact, it is comparable to observations during the first four years of the survey (2014-2017).

Survival of young-of-year yellow perch to older ages is needed to increase the abundance of harvestable-sized fish. This seems to be occurring, as the catch rate of yearling and older yellow perch (46 fish per 10-minute trawl tow) was at a six-year high and above the time series average of 33 fish per 10 minute trawl tow. Creel data from clerks' conversations with

anglers will be available later this fall and should show whether these fish are appearing in the recreational fishery.

Sufficient number of forage fish are required to support Lake Erie's important recreational fisheries. Even though bottom trawling shows that forage catch rates were down, driven by a decrease in age-0 white perch and age-0 yellow perch, anglers shouldn't be concerned about their favorite target species running out of food.

"These collections are on the low end of the range of forage catch rates observed during the last nine years. However, this doesn't mean that there is a lack of forage in the lake, as our trawls only sample fish that live near the bottom," said Todd Wills, Lake St. Clair Fisheries Research Station

manager. "Walleye health, as measured by visceral (stomach) fat, is very good, and their diets often contain gizzard shad, which are not sampled well by our trawls and live higher in the water column."

The DNR will know much more about this remarkable urban fishery when all of the fish are aged, survey data is fully examined, creel census data is proofed and creel census biological data is available in early 2023.

To learn more about [how the DNR manages fisheries](#) in Michigan, visit [Michigan.gov/Fishing](https://Michigan.gov/Fishing). ✧

#### **Other Breaking News Items:**

**(Click on title or URL to read full article)**

#### **[Biden's promise to tribes faces test in Great Lakes](#)**

Though a White House memo vowed to elevate tribal consultation across the country, no formal cross-agency policy yet exists. Protecting wetlands in the Great Lakes region is testing this agreement.

#### **[Illinois project aims to keep invasive carp out of Great Lakes](#)**

The threat of invasive species to America's lakes and rivers has increased in recent years, but one Illinois project is attempting to protect the Great Lakes from invasive carp

#### **[Lake Erie's toxic cyanobacterial bloom lasted an unusually long time this year](#)**

The toxic cyanobacterial bloom that's become a yearly problem in Lake Erie's western basin was relatively small this year but the bloom has lasted an unusually long time and was still there well into the fall. [Read the full story by Michigan Radio.](#)

#### **[Port of Oswego makes \\$3.5 million in dock upgrades](#)**

In the last 18 months, the port of Oswego in New York State, has invested over \$3.5 million in dock upgrades with the investments predicted to double by the end of next year.

#### **[What lies on the lakebed of the Great Lakes? NOAA ship conducts survey](#)**

Exploring new territory, the commanding officer of the NOAA ship *Thomas Jefferson* and his crew have discovered multiple shipwrecks on the lakebed of the Great Lakes. The ship surveyed Lake Erie and Lake Ontario last spring for the first time in over 30 years.

#### **[Local nonprofit stocks Wolf Lake with walleye for 24th year](#)**

In Hammond, Indiana, Perch America has stocked Wolf Lake 24 times, adding an estimated 124,000 advanced-growth walleye to the lake over the years.

#### **[Lake Erie algal bloom more severe than expected](#)**

It's back to the drawing board for scientists trying to come up with an accurate forecasting model for the annual harmful algal bloom in western Lake Erie. For the second year in a row, the severity of the bloom has been underestimated.