



## Lake Erie Continues Historic Run of Excellent Fishing

**COLUMBUS, Ohio** – Lake Erie anglers can expect the 2024 fishing season to again offer world-renowned opportunities, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife.

Following years of strong walleye hatches, Lake Erie continues to affirm that it is The Walleye Capital of the World. Additionally, a stable yellow perch population in Lake Erie’s west zone will provide good fishing in 2024, while low catch rates are expected to continue in the central and east zones.

“Lake Erie is known worldwide as a top fishing destination for a variety of

species,” said Travis Hartman, Lake Erie Fisheries Program Administrator for the Division of Wildlife. “Lake Erie’s sustainable high performance is due in part to science-based management which guides regulations and ensures long-term angling opportunities.”



Lake Erie walleye and yellow perch fisheries are managed through an interagency quota system. Each

jurisdiction regulates its catches to comply with annually determined safe harvest levels that ensure sustainability. The quotas were announced by the Lake Erie Committee on Friday, March 22.

### Walleye

The walleye daily limit on Lake Erie is six fish per angler with a 15-inch minimum length requirement. Walleye hatch success has been well above average for six consecutive years, including the three largest hatches ever surveyed. Anglers will mostly catch abundant 2- to 6-year-old-fish ranging from 15 to 24 inches. Larger fish from 2015 and earlier hatches will provide chances to reel in a [Fish Ohio qualifying walleye](#) (minimum 28 inches).

### Lake Erie Excellent Fishing

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## Adopt a tackle loaner site

Have a little time on your hands to help the next generation get into fishing? Many of the DNR’s 54 loaner sites need help maintaining the rods and reels used at fishing clinics. Loaner sites are located at state parks, DNR offices and partner organizations across Wisconsin. Schools, scouts, conservation clubs, church groups and campers at state parks are among the borrowers, and many are first-time anglers. Site hosts would be grateful to organizations or individuals for adopting a loaner site and giving the gear periodic tune-ups.

This would make a well-defined service project for students, scouts, fishing clubs or civic groups. It could

be a one-time visit, or a group could establish a regular maintenance schedule with the site. Supplies are available to perform standard maintenance, including [fixing tangled reels](#) and spooling line.

The quantity of gear at loaner sites ranges from a handful of fishing rods to dozens, depending on the site. Spincasting combos (those with closed-face reels) are most common. However, some sites also have spinning gear (open bail), fly rods and ice fishing poles. To get involved, contact a gear loan site to schedule a volunteer time. Find a site near you on the DNR’s [Fishing Equipment for Loan webpage](#). ✧

## Additional angling opportunities created by successful fall fish stocking season

The Michigan DNR announced the totals from its 2023 fall fish stocking efforts. The DNR stocked six different species— totaling 1,076,204 fish that weighed 14.5 tons— at 103 locations throughout the state.

“It was another outstanding fall fish stocking season that will provide enhanced fishing opportunities throughout Michigan,” said Ed Eisch, assistant chief of the DNR Fisheries Division. “When added to our successful spring and summer stocking efforts, that brings the total for 2023 to more than 10.4 million fish stocked in Michigan’s waters.”

The number and type of fish stocked vary by hatchery, as each facility’s ability to rear fish differs because of water supplies and temperature. In Michigan, there are six state and three cooperative hatcheries that work together to produce the species, strain and size of fish needed by fisheries managers. These fish must then be delivered at specific times and locations for stocking to ensure their success. Most fish in Michigan are stocked in the spring.

Fall 2023 fish stocking consisted of six species: brook trout, coho salmon, lake trout, steelhead strain rainbow trout, walleye and muskellunge.



- Marquette State Fish Hatchery (Marquette) stocked 35,782 fall fingerling and adult brook that weighed a combined 3,876 pounds. These fish were stocked at 42 locations, both in the Upper and Lower peninsulas. Marquette also stocked 290 adult lake trout that weighed 1,800 pounds at three locations in the U.P.
- Platte River State Fish Hatchery (Traverse City) stocked four locations, in both Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, with 416,474 coho salmon weighing 11,840 pounds.
- Thompson State Fish Hatchery (Manistique) stocked three locations with 237,091 fall fingerling steelhead that weighed 2,375 pounds. Thompson also stocked 18,293 Great Lakes strain muskellunge that weighed 2,036 pounds at 11 locations in the Upper and Lower peninsulas.
- Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery (west of Kalamazoo) stocked six locations with 3,320 Great Lakes strain muskellunge fall fingerlings that weighed 476 pounds. Wolf Lake also stocked 344,860 fall fingerling steelhead weighing 5,355 pounds in four locations.
- Fisheries management units also stocked fall fingerling walleyes last year:
  - Southern Lake Michigan FMU: 13,428 Muskegon strain fall fingerlings weighing 817 pounds in 15 locations.
  - Central Lake Michigan FMU: 3,793 Muskegon strain fall fingerlings weighing 281 pounds in three locations.
  - Lake Erie FMU: 623 Muskegon strain fall fingerlings weighing 59 pounds in Lakeville Lake.
  - Northern Lake Michigan FMU: 2,250 same strain fall fingerlings weighing 108 pounds in Little Bay De Noc.

**Successful Stocking** *cont on page 9*



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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

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## Gaden appointed as new Secretary of Fishery Commission

Marc Gaden, the Commission's deputy executive secretary, has agreed to assume leadership of the secretariat. Marc should be familiar to most, if not all, of you. He came to the commission in 1995 as the first communications and legislative affairs specialist, a position he held until he became the deputy executive secretary in 2022. Marc has a deep understanding of Great Lakes fishery governance and of the rationale behind the structures that are in place to ensure sound science, cooperative research, and collaborative fishery management.

Bob Lambe informed our fellow commissioners that he will retire as executive secretary. Bob leaves us after 11 years of truly singular leadership and we wish him the very best. The "Lambe Era" will go down in our history as the time we took stock of the seventy-year-old treaty and applied it to today's needs; as the time when we did not overstep our mandate but did not shy away, either, from the big challenges. Bob is thoughtful in how he approaches issues and is deliberate in his decision-making. During his tenure, he focused on appropriations, infrastructure, and strengthening the relationship between the Commission and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. He had great confidence in our contributions to Great Lakes restoration and sought to replicate the success of the GLRI in Canada. He built bridges among partners and mended fences when needed. He saw potential in each staff member at the Commission and structured our programs in ways that took full advantage of what every individual had to offer. He standardized internal operations and developed consistent policies and procedures to improve functioning of the secretariat. Bob's tenure at the commission is the culmination of a career replete with achievements.

Before the commission, he was director of the Canada-Ontario Invasive Species Centre, a position he took on after his first "retirement," from the Department of Fisheries and

Oceans, where he served as regional director general and in various capacities with the Canadian Coast Guard. And, as we all appreciate, he served for many years as a Canadian Commissioner. We know we speak for the entire Commission family when we express our deep gratitude for Bob's service and our deep admiration for all he has accomplished. Please take a moment to thank Bob for unmatched service to the commission and to the Great Lakes basin.

Bob, of course, will be a tough act to follow. That said, we are extremely pleased that Like Bob, Dr Gaden understands the limits and possibilities of the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. Well known and well respected by this author for many years, Gaden respects jurisdictional authorities and values research. He knows innately that cross-border cooperation is not only the best way to operate, but also essential if we are to avoid the mistakes of the past. In the coming months, Marc will focus on funding, infrastructure, the lake committees, the advisors, the research boards, and everything else that makes this organization function well—basically, his regular portfolio. In addition, Marc also teaches water policy at the University of Michigan, where he received his PhD in 2007.

This time of change is bittersweet. Bob led this organization with tremendous skill and vision, and greatly enhanced our ability to do our job in this modern era of restoration. Marc brings decades of experience in Great Lakes policy, and nearly thirty years of leadership at the commission; he has the skills we need to continue today's momentum. We are excited about the years to come!

Marc Gaden grew up in Oakland Township, Michigan and has spent most of his professional career working to protect and improve the Great Lakes. He is from a family of avid boaters (mostly on Lake St. Clair), fishers, and outdoor enthusiasts.

Marc serves as the Great Lakes

Fishery Commission's Executive Secretary; a position he has held since January 2024. The commission is a US/Canadian agency established by the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries, a treaty to improve and perpetuate the Great Lakes fishery. As Executive Secretary, Marc is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the commission's operations including the implementation of the treaty, the integration of all program directorates, staff oversight, and budgeting.

Marc joined the commission in 1995. At the commission, he served as communications director and legislative liaison from 1995 to 2022 and deputy executive secretary from 2022 to 2024. Throughout his tenure, Marc worked extensively on issues involving regional coordination of fisheries policies, communications and outreach, invasive species, federal appropriations, Great Lakes protection and stewardship, multi-jurisdictional governance, infrastructure, and ecosystem restoration. He continues to spend an enormous amount of time on Capitol Hill and Parliament Hill to communicate the commission's needs and to support Great Lakes restoration.

Prior to joining the Secretariat, Marc was a legislative assistant for the U.S. House of Representatives' Great Lakes Task Force, researching, proposing, and advocating for legislation of benefit to the Great Lakes region. Marc also worked as a legislative assistant and caseworker for U.S. Congressman Dennis M. Hertel (D-MI), specializing in Great Lakes, environment, transportation, immigration, and Social Security issues.

Marc is an adjunct assistant professor at the School for Environment and Sustainability, U. of Michigan, and an adjunct associate professor at the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University. His

**Gaden appointed**

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## DNR collecting walleye eggs on Muskegon River this spring

Muskegon River anglers should be on the lookout for Michigan Department of Natural Resources personnel collecting walleye eggs below Croton Dam this spring. Collections with electrofishing boats started the week of March 18 and will conclude by April 12.

Anglers who wish to avoid the walleye collection activities should fish downstream. The DNR asks anglers to exhibit caution when fishing near the electrofishing boats. For angler safety during the electrofishing work, those wading will be asked to exit the water when boats approach.

The DNR plans to collect approximately 23 million walleye eggs from the Muskegon River this year, which will result in fry (fish that have just hatched) for transfer to rearing ponds and direct fry plants throughout the Lower Peninsula. Walleye fry transferred to ponds will be raised to

fingerling size (approximately 1.5 to 2.5 inches) and stocked in late spring or early summer in lakes and rivers throughout the state.

Lake Michigan and many inland lake walleye populations in the Lower Peninsula depend on the fingerlings produced from Muskegon River eggs. Historically, the number of walleye in the spawning run has been estimated to be between 40,000 and 50,000 fish. The DNR crews will strip milt (sperm) and eggs from approximately 350 adult fish, which will be returned to the river – except for 60, which will be sent to Michigan State University for fish health testing.

"This adult population consists of mostly stocked fish," said Ed Pearce, DNR fisheries technician supervisor who coordinates the egg take. "The Muskegon River has the largest run of walleye in the Lake Michigan watershed south of Green Bay, and the

walleyes contribute to populations in other areas. For example, based on angler tag returns, walleye from the Muskegon River have been recaptured in Lake Macatawa, Spring Lake, Manistee Lake and Port Sheldon Lake, as well as the Grand, Kalamazoo, Pere Marquette and White rivers."

Four or five days of fish collections are planned this spring. The date those collections will begin depends on water temperatures and the presence of ripe fish. This schedule can change daily for many reasons.

Electrofishing sampling usually begins at Croton Dam each day about 8 a.m. and proceeds downstream to the Pine Street Access Site. If more eggs are needed, additional collections may occur downstream to the Thornapple Street Access Site.

Learn more about how the DNR manages Michigan's fisheries at [Michigan.gov/Fishing](https://Michigan.gov/Fishing). ✧

## Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program offers turkey hunt in Tuscola County

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program is offering a Beyond BOW Turkey hunt workshop for women.

Scheduled for the weekend of **May 10-11**, 2024, the program is for women with no previous experience or would like to expand on or learn new skills and abilities. Space is limited to seven participants.

This free Beyond BOW event will be held in Cass City and is sponsored by The National Wild Turkey Federation, Cabela's and Ben's Great Outdoors. The BOW program greatly appreciates the continued support of these sponsor organizations.

Ammo, shotguns and lunch will all be provided. However, overnight lodging will be the responsibility of the participants.

This workshop is open to any properly licensed woman hunter, 10

years of age or older. No experience is required, proper safety and hunting techniques will be taught and



followed.

On Friday, participants will gain knowledge of turkey biology, general turkey hunting techniques, calls and calling, hunting ethics, general firearm safety and shooting. You will then be paired with hunting mentors and set afield to hunt.

Saturday morning, participants and mentors will meet at the Cass City DNR Field Office for a light breakfast

and then head out for the early morning hunt. Following lunch, the participants will have the opportunity to participate in bird cleaning prior to event wrap-up.

To attend this event, you must have a Michigan Base License and Turkey license, which is available as an apprentice option and purchased prior to attending the workshop for **Hunt Unit ZB, Hunt Number 0117**.

Participants must be 10 or older. Enrollment is limited to seven and to first-time participants only. Deadline for registration/cancellation is May 1, 2023.

Class information and registration materials are available online at [Michigan.gov/BOW](https://Michigan.gov/BOW). This will be a rain or shine event.

For further information, contact Michelle Douglas at 906-235-2076, Ron Sting 989-872-5300 or email at [DNRBOW@michigan.gov](mailto:DNRBOW@michigan.gov). ✧

## It's time to renew your annual license

Most all annual fishing licenses and stamp privileges from last season expired on March 31.

Purchase your 2024 license online, in person, or by mail, and check out your state's Licenses & Permits webpages for more information on license expiration dates and fees.

Once you have your new license, start planning for your spring fishing fun. The DNR starts stocking fish in early April, and you can take advantage of these opportunities to get an early start on your spring fishing adventures. ✧

## Host a Free Fishing Weekend event

The Wisconsin DNR invites organizations statewide to host free fishing events for the public on [Free Fishing Weekend, June 1-2, 2024](#). Fishing clubs, civic groups, churches, trade associations, municipal recreation departments and others are encouraged to provide fishing clinics for all ages. The *DNR can help with materials and event promotion*

During Free Fishing Weekend, all Wisconsin waters are open to residents and non-residents to fish without a license or trout or salmon stamp. However, organizations hosting free fishing events should note that all [fishing regulations](#), including size and bag limits and species restrictions, will be enforced. Organizations planning an event can borrow gear for their event from one of nearly [60 tackle loaner sites](#) around the state. Almost half of the sites are at state parks located on water, making it easy for groups to pick up loaner gear and fish in one location. June 1-2 is also Free Fun Weekend, when state park admission fees and trail passes are waived. Organizations are invited to register their events with the DNR for additional promotion to the public. After registering, organizations can request materials to hand out at their events. [The deadline to register events is May 22](#). ✧

## Large trout stocked in SE Michigan's Clinton and Huron rivers, Spring Mill Pond

Approximately 2,800 adult trout recently were stocked by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in the Huron River (Proud Lake Recreation Area, Oakland County) and Spring Mill Pond (Island Lake Recreation Area, Livingston County) in southeast Michigan. These fish are retired broodstock from Michigan's state fish hatcheries.

- The Huron River, downstream of the Proud Lake Dam, was stocked with approximately 1,370 brown trout and 1,400 rainbow trout, all ranging in size from 13 inches to 19 inches.
- Spring Mill Pond was stocked with approximately 450 brown trout and 200 rainbow trout, also ranging from 13 inches to 19 inches.
- In addition, 400 yearling rainbow trout were stocked in the Huron River and 100 in Spring Mill Pond. Anglers should be aware that some portion of these yearlings may at first be smaller than the minimum size limit of 8 inches.

Special regulations apply for anglers interested in targeting these trout:

- The Huron River at Proud Lake Recreation Area is closed to fishing October 1 through March 31. April 1-29, anglers are limited to flies only, catch-and-release fishing, with the exception that children under 12 may keep one trout sized between 8 inches and 12 inches.
- Spring Mill Pond at Island Lake Recreation Area is closed to fishing March 15-31. April 1-29, anglers are limited to artificial lures only, catch-and-release fishing.
- On both bodies of water, beginning April 30, all baits are allowed and anglers may keep up to five trout over 8 inches, but only three over 15 inches.

The Clinton River was also stocked with 640 adult brown trout ranging from 13 inches to 17 inches. These fish

*Continued next column*

## DNR and Conservation Congress to host Spring Hearings

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) and DNR invite the public to attend open houses on April 8 at 6 p.m. to learn about resource management through the annual Fish and Wildlife Spring Hearing process. Additionally, an online opportunity for public input will be available from noon on Wednesday, [April 10 through](#) noon on Saturday, [April 13](#). DNR staff and WCC delegates will be on hand at these open houses to discuss local issues of importance, answer questions from the public and open a dialogue between the public, the DNR and the WCC about areas of interest and concern. The WCC will also hold their delegates' elections at each meeting. Two of the five WCC seats will be up for election in each county. Finally, the public is invited to provide feedback on a variety of fish, wildlife and other natural resources-related topics as part of the spring hearing process. The public is encouraged to provide input online from noon on April 10 through noon on April 13. For those who prefer to do so in person, a number of paper ballots will be available at each in-person meeting.

More information is available on the [Wisconsin Conservation Congress Spring Hearing webpage](#). ✧



### Large Trout Stocked - *continued*

stocked at Riverside Park in Auburn Hills will provide additional angling opportunities beyond the yearling fish that are stocked annually. The Clinton River is open to trout fishing all year and anglers can keep up to five trout over 8 inches, but only three over 15 inches.

The [2024 Michigan Fishing Regulations](#) are available online along with a lot of other helpful fishing information. Visit [Michigan.gov/Fishing](#) for the most up-to-date resources. ✧

## WIS publishes new fishing regulations for the 2024 – 2025 season

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin DNR announced that the 2024 – 2025 [Guide To Wisconsin's Fishing Regulations](#) is now available online. These regulations, which include changes to walleye/sauger bag limits on inland waters and new registration rules for small tournaments, went into effect on April 1, 2024.

Now is the perfect time for anglers to review the season dates, any special regulations and the daily bag and size limits for their favorite fishing spots around the state. All license requirements apply.

All residents and non-residents over 16 must have a 2024 – 2025 [general fishing license](#) to fish in Wisconsin. Annual resident licenses cost \$20 each, or purchase a spousal license for \$31 so you and your spouse can fish together. All fishing licenses and stamps can be purchased online via [Go Wild](#), at a registered [sales location](#) or at [DNR Service Centers](#).

You can find these general fishing regulations as well as the

[trout fishing regulations](#) online and at [locations where licenses are sold](#).

### What's New In 2024 – 2025?

Several [new regulations and changes to bag limits](#) have been implemented this year. These changes include:

- A new [small tournament registration requirement](#).
- Statewide daily bag limit of three walleye/sauger per day on all inland waters.
- Walleye bag limits for the Great Lakes (including Green Bay) and Wisconsin-Iowa, Wisconsin-Minnesota and Wisconsin-Michigan boundary waters will remain unchanged, as will limits on any water with a bag limit currently lower than three.
- A person may harvest walleye from two different lakes or rivers with a three-fish daily bag limit as long as they don't exceed the five-fish total daily bag limit.

A daily bag limit of 10 panfish in Lake Mendota in Dane County.

- Changing the musky minimum length limit to 50 inches on the Wisconsin River from the Lake DuBay Dam upstream to the first dam in Merrill.
- Creating an [urban fishing pond](#) in the Village of Suamico in Brown County.

New bag and length limits have also been enacted for specific waterbodies in Brown, Chippewa, Dane, Dunn, Eau Claire, Iowa, Iron, Lincoln, Manitowoc, Marathon, Marquette, Oconto, Pierce, Polk, Portage, Price, Rusk, Sauk, Sawyer, St. Croix, Taylor, Vilas, Walworth, Waukesha and Waushara counties. Anglers can find a full list of the 2024 – 2025 fishing regulation changes on the [DNR's fishing regulations webpage](#). ✧

## How old is my Buck knife?

POST FALLS, ID – Buck Knives, Inc., a widely-recognized global leader in the hunting, outdoor, and everyday carry (EDC) knife markets, has been manufacturing knives since 1902. Across the span of nearly 125 years, that means many knives have been manufactured, shipped, purchased—and cherished—by knife users and collectors.

A question often received at the company's headquarters in Post Falls, Idaho is "how old is my Buck knife?"

There is an easy way to determine the answer: Visit [w HYPERLINK "http://www.buckknives.com/about/behind-the-blade/how-old-is-my-knife/"w HYPERLINK "http://www.buckknives.com/about/behind-the-blade/how-old-is-my-knife/"w.buckknives.com/about/behind-the-blade/how-old-is-my-knife/](#). There you will discover a chart with 39 symbols which indicate date of manufacturing, and on the knife's

blade you will find one of the symbols on the pivot point where the knife blade opens from the handle. On the company's website there are also details about the dots that could be discovered on a knife's blade. Those many dots, and on which side of the blade the dots are placed, could help determine when the iconic 110 Folding Hunter and 112 Ranger knives were manufactured. There are also numerous details about the knives with the company's trademarked anvil stamped into a blade to detail more manufacturing information. These symbols have been applied to blades since 1986.

Still have questions? Customers can inquire via email at [history@buckknives.com](#) to obtain more details about a knife. When contacting the company historian via e-mail, please provide a few photos of the knife (and photos of the box if it is available) to aid in the determination

of a knife's age. Some models had little to no material changes for several years so a date range of production can possibly be provided. Should you have questions about the iconic 110 Folding Hunter, there is a website that is loaded with precise information about all of the different versions and variations—and the age ranges. Visit [www.historyofthe110.com](#).

Please note that as a policy, Buck Knives does NOT offer appraisals as knife values are very market-dependent. A quick search on eBay or other online markets under 'Sold Items' could possibly give an idea of what people are actually spending on similar knives vs. sellers asking prices. All Buck knives are covered under the company's industry-leading Forever Warranty. Additional details on the warranty, along with the more than 200 knife models the company brings to market, can be found at [www.buckknives.com](#). ✧

## Minnesota DNR seeks input on Muskie plan update

The Minnesota DNR is asking people to share their thoughts on how the DNR manages muskellunge as part of an update to the state's muskie long-range plan.

“We’re gathering input as we update our muskie plan for the future,” said Leslie George, northeast region fisheries manager. “As a first step in updating the plan, we’re asking about the experiences and interests of anglers and others related to muskie management.” Minnesota DNR hopes to hear from anglers who fish for muskies, other anglers, lake-user groups, partners in tribal nations, and anyone interested in muskies. People can share input in an online scoping survey on the [Minnesota DNR muskie webpage](https://mndnr.gov/muskie) (mndnr.gov/muskie).

A webinar about the update process is planned for fall 2024, and in the winter of 2024-2025 the public will be able to review and provide input on a draft plan. As part of the plan update, the Minnesota DNR is considering ways to enhance muskie stocking in lakes that already have muskies, how to ensure that hatcheries can produce enough quality-sized muskies to meet stocking needs in these lakes, and options for improving public education surrounding muskie biology, ecology, and management.

Minnesota has 102 waters managed for muskies, comprising 2% of the state's fishable lakes and rivers and 21% of the total surface area that is fishable. Muskies have been introduced in 48 lakes and are maintained in these lakes through stocking. The state record muskie for catch-and-release length is 58 1/4 inches, caught on Mille Lacs Lake in 2022. ✧

## Eurasian ruffe status

Invasive Ruffe are still common in Lake Superior. The only current population outside of Lake Superior is the population in Little Bay de Noc (L. Michigan) which is monitored by FWS and MI DNR. That population in particular has experienced very little expansion since their invasion in 2002. Historically, there was a population in Lake Huron back in 1995 in Thunder Bay (Alpena), but that has since been eradicated in 2003. In the Saint Marys River, ruffe have been limited to the upper reaches of the river, however, last year, several individuals were captured in the Lake George area (lower Saint Marys River). FWS in collaboration with other partner agencies in the Saint Marys River plans to conduct intense monitoring of the invasion front in the lower Saint Marys River this year to determine the extent of the invasion as well as the movement of the invasion front.

Recently, FWS led an effort to summarize all the ruffe related actions in the Great Lakes as they relate to the Ruffe Control Program. Seeing as that plan is now nearly 30 years old, we thought it would be beneficial to review and summarize all the actions across all the agencies as they relate to the eight objectives the Ruffe Control Committee laid out in the Program. That report is not currently available, but is anticipated it will be later this year. However, to summarize, there is a long list of actions taken by each of the Great Lakes agencies that have successfully led to the containment of ruffe.

The ruffe, a Eurasian fish of the perch family, was introduced to North America in the 1980s, most likely



through the ballast water of a seagoing vessel (Pratt et al. 1992). Ruffe larvae were first collected in Duluth Harbor (1) in 1986. By 1990, ruffe were the most abundant fish in samples taken

## Fishing regulations for Upper Red Lake

Anglers fishing on Upper Red Lake during the 2024 open-water season that starts [May 11](#) will have a three-walleye possession limit, with only one walleye longer than 17 inches allowed. Beginning June 15, the limit will change to a four-walleye possession limit, with only one walleye longer than 17 inches allowed. “This fishing regulation is a reflection of the lake’s popularity, especially when fishing is good,” said Edie Evarts, DNR area fisheries supervisor for Bemidji. “We’ve opted for a slightly more conservative bag limit for the early part of the summer to maintain the long-term health of the fishery and keep Upper Red Lake a premier angling destination.”

Walleye management on Red Lake is a collaborative effort between Red Lake Nation and the Minnesota DNR, governed by a joint harvest plan revised by the Red Lakes Fisheries Technical Committee in 2015. Winter harvest regulations for 2024-2025 will be determined after the summer fishing season and completion of fall assessment netting.

The Upper Red Lake Citizen Advisory Committee reviews walleye harvest totals and regulation options and provides recommendations for the state waters of Upper Red Lake. Upper Red Lake fishing regulations are available on the [Minnesota DNR fishing regulations page](https://mndnr.gov/fishing/upper-red-lake-regulations.html) (mndnr.gov/fishing/upper-red-lake-regulations.html).

✧

### Ruffe – continued from column 2

from the harbor, and their abundance has continued to increase since (Edwards 1995).

The ruffe is 4 to 6 inches long (25 cm). The ruffe is olive-brown to golden-brown on its back, and paler on the sides with yellowish undersides. The ruffe is slimy and has a large spiny dorsal fin that makes it undesirable to predators. ✧

## DNR open water fishing regs for Mille Lacs

Mille Lacs walleye fishing will be catch-and-release during the spring and early summer of 2024, with the potential to harvest a walleye 21-23 inches in length or greater than 28 inches starting on Friday, [August 16](#).

“Despite poor ice conditions, anglers caught a lot of walleye this past fall and winter because those fish weren’t finding enough to eat,” said Brad Parsons, DNR Fisheries Section Manager. “We need to adjust the open water season regulations to account for the active bite and for the likelihood of higher water temperatures this summer. Even with catch-and-release regulations, many fish die when water temperatures get too warm.”

Good to excellent walleye fishing is expected to continue on Mille Lacs throughout the open water season, which begins on Saturday, May 11, and concludes on Saturday, November 30. Catch rates should remain high with fish eager to bite.

While the DNR’s 2023 Mille Lacs assessment found slightly lower walleye numbers in 2022, overall the population remains healthy due to the continued abundance of walleye born in 2013 and 2017. Assessment results also indicate decent numbers of walleye born in 2021 and 2022 that should contribute to the walleye population in the future.

Those same population estimates, netting surveys and population models also indicate there are fewer yellow perch and tullibee, the primary food sources for Mille Lacs Lake walleye. With less natural forage, walleye searching for a meal are more likely to bite on anglers’ baits.

“It seems logical that high catch rates mean there are more walleye in the lake,” Parsons said. “The data we’ve collected and analyzed suggest the hot bite is because walleye aren’t finding as many tullibee and perch to eat. Our management decisions take those data into account.”

Mille Lacs continues to be a lake experiencing changes. Increasing water clarity and the introduction of invasive species such as zebra mussels and spiny water fleas mean there is

less microscopic aquatic food, resulting in decreased production of forage species and fewer walleye maturing past their first year.

“Mille Lacs is a great place to fish and recreate, and anglers will continue to enjoy quality opportunities for walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike and muskellunge,” said Parsons. “Our management approach is aligned with the Mille Lacs management plan and reflects our commitment to navigating the lake’s unique dynamics and preserving its angling tradition.”

The DNR decided to allow catch-and-release only walleye angling from May through August 15. This decision aims to enable the harvest of one walleye measuring 21-23 inches in length or greater than 28 inches starting on Friday, August 16, assuming conditions permit.

State-licensed anglers share the harvest on Mille Lacs with Ojibwe tribes that retain fishing rights by treaty. To conserve the fishery, an annual safe harvest level is set through discussion and agreement between the state and the tribes, with each party setting regulations to stay within their share of the harvest. This year’s agreement took the lake’s overall walleye population decline into account and lowered the walleye safe harvest level by 10% from 2023, setting it at 91,500 lbs. for state-licensed anglers and 65,500 lbs. for tribal fishing.

Anglers are reminded to protect Mille Lacs Lake and all Minnesota waters from aquatic invasive species by cleaning and draining watercraft and equipment and disposing of unwanted bait in the trash. A decontamination station is available 24/7 at the Shaw-Bosh-Kung Bay public access on the west side of Mille Lacs Lake 8 miles south of Garrison.

Complete Mille Lacs Lake fishing regulations and regularly updated surveys that show ongoing state-licensed angler catches of walleye, northern pike and yellow perch are available on the [DNR website](#) ([mndnr.gov/millelacslake/index.html](http://mndnr.gov/millelacslake/index.html))

✧ ✧

## Possible World Record Bighead Carp

**JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.** – The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) confirms George Chance of Festus is the latest state record holder after catching a massive 97-lb. bighead carp from the Mississippi River. Chance was bank fishing for catfish with a bottom-bouncing crankbait when he hooked into the fish March 19. The previous pole-and-line state record was an 80-lb. fish caught from the Lake of the Ozarks in 2004.

Chance was fighting with the fish for around 20 minutes before he finally got it onto the shore. “The more it fought, I saw its tail and knew it was some type of carp,” he recalled. “I was



able to hook him with a hay hook in order to get him out of the water. It looked to be 50 or 60

pounds at least.” Chance took the monster fish to a nearby recycling center to use their scale, which prompted him to call his local conservation agent.

“They told me it was a state record, and I said, ‘You’ve got to be kidding me!’”, he laughed. “Then later they said ‘It’s not just a state record, it’s a world record!’ and I said ‘You’ve got to be kidding me!’ I had no idea this would happen when I woke up that morning.” Chance’s catch is the third state record fish recorded for 2024. The fish also beats the current bighead carp pole-and-line world record of 90-pounds.

For more info on state record fish, visit <http://short.mdc.mo.gov/ZCp>. ✧

## Lake Erie Excellent Fishing

*Continued from page 1*

Abundant young fish will show up in the catch and range from 9 to 14 inches, with an increasing number of 2-year-olds reaching 15 inches as the season progresses. Anglers are encouraged to release sub-legal fish with as little handling as possible so they can contribute to the future fishery. In 2023, Ohio's anglers caught and released more than 1 million small walleye.

“The ‘23 walleye hatch showed above-average results in the western and central basins,” said Hartman. “We expect walleye anglers to find outstanding fishing across the lake.”

### Yellow perch

Yellow perch abundance in the west zone from Toledo to Huron is stable as a large year class of 3-year-old fish will anchor the population in 2024. The best success is anticipated during July through mid-August when the water temperature is above 76 degrees, and again from mid-October through November as adult perch move to shallower water to feed at water temperatures below 60 degrees. Warm water during July and August provided a majority of angler yellow perch harvest in 2023. Abundant perch from 7 to 10 inches will dominate the catch, with jumbo 12-inch and larger fish from older year classes also contributing to the catch.

Lake Erie's central zone from Huron to Fairport Harbor continues to experience low yellow perch abundance, primarily driven by poor to moderate hatches during the past decade. While catch rates are expected to remain low, late season fishing in 2023 provided some limit opportunities from Vermilion to Avon and off Cleveland.

In the east zone, from Fairport Harbor to Conneaut, the population has declined below the prior 20-year average, but moderate hatches from 2019 and 2021 have kept abundance above the central zone. Catch rates are expected to remain low during the 2024 season, except for times such as late fall when adult perch congregate

in larger schools near harbors. Five-year-old perch from the moderate 2019 year class will average about 9 inches in length with some reaching 12 inches.

Conservative quotas ensure that sustainable spawning stocks will allow the best opportunity for population recovery. Yellow perch daily limits remain unchanged compared to 2023, with a daily limit of 30 perch in the west zone, 10 in the central zone, and 30 in the east zone.

### Bass

Smallmouth bass and largemouth bass fishing in 2024 will remain good with the opportunity for trophy catches. The daily limit is five bass per day, with a 14-inch minimum size requirement until Tuesday, April 30, 2024, and again from Saturday, June 22, 2024, to April 30, 2025. During the spawning season, from May 1 to June 21, 2024, anglers may harvest one bass per day with a minimum size requirement of 18 inches.

Lake Erie fishing reports, information on Lake Erie research and management programs, fisheries resources, maps, and links to other Lake Erie web resources are available at [wildohio.gov](http://wildohio.gov). The current fishing regulations can be found on the [HuntFish OH app](http://HuntFishOH.app), at [wildohio.gov](http://wildohio.gov), or locations where fishing licenses are sold.

In 2022, anglers generated \$5.5 billion in economic spending in Ohio, [according to a recent report](#) released by the Wildlife Management Institute, Responsive Management, and Southwick Associates. The survey found that 18% of Ohio's adults, about 1.7 million individuals, participate in fishing, and 37% of them took at least one trip to Lake Erie to fish. ✧

### Gaden appointed

*Continued from page 3*

research and teaching interests relate to the human dimensions of natural resource management. Currently, he teaches the course “Global Water” at

the University of Michigan, Program in the Environment.

Marc is also the faculty advisor for the University of Michigan Fishing Team and Fishing Club. The team and club bring together fishing enthusiasts at the university to share fishing experiences and techniques, to share information about tackle, and to promote fishing among the student population. The team and club organize outings for all seasons and compete in collegiate fishing tournaments. Members regularly attend outdoor shows to educate about fishing and to sell popular Michigan Fishing swag and apparel.

Marc holds a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment (now School for Environment and Sustainability), a Master of Arts degree in United States foreign policy from The American University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and political science from the University of Michigan.

The choice of Dr Marc Gaden to serve the Great Lakes as Executive Secretary of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission is a most excellent choice and will bring skill and vision to serve our Region well. **Go Gaden** ✧

### Successful Stocking

*Continued from page 2*

In general, fish are reared in Michigan's state fish hatcheries anywhere from one month to one and a half years before they are stocked.

The DNR welcomes visitors to its state fish hatcheries and interpretative centers to witness firsthand the fish rearing process and to learn about Michigan's waters. For more information, visit [Michigan.gov/Hatcheries](http://Michigan.gov/Hatcheries).

To find out if any fish were stocked in your favorite fishing spot, or to discover a new one, visit the DNR's fish stocking database at [michigandnr.com/fishstock/](http://michigandnr.com/fishstock/). ✧

# DNR releases Invasive Carp Action Plan update

The Minnesota DNR has released the updated Invasive Carp Action Plan for the next 10 years of prevention and management efforts in Minnesota.

The plan includes a prioritized set of recommended actions that build upon the DNR’s current intensive invasive carp efforts, including additional actions in the categories of:

- Monitoring invasive carp populations to support response actions
- Prevention and deterrence to limit migration in the state
- Response preparation to ensure swift actions if invasive carp are found in new locations
- Management and control strategies to remove fish and minimize populations
- Outreach, communication and coordination to work with key partners and the public to minimize risk and impacts to the state

work with our partners and all Minnesotans to minimize the impact of silver, grass, bighead and black carp on our state.”

The DNR’s update of the plan was informed by engagement with more than a dozen agencies and organizations involved in preventing the spread of invasive carp in the Mississippi River.

“As we have said before, invasive carp prevention and management is a team effort, and the DNR is fortunate to be part of a big team,” DNR Invasive Carp Coordinator Grace Loppnow said. “The updated action plan prioritizes a range of prevention and management techniques—because we want to use the methods that are proving most effective. There is no single solution to this complex challenge.”

### Invasive carp management efforts

The DNR and partners are already using a wide range of efforts to manage invasive carp, including tagging and tracking invasive carp to better understand and exploit their movements, contracting with commercial fishing operations to target invasive carp, and developing and testing new methods to capture invasive carp. In addition to continuing and expanding these existing efforts, the updated Action Plan also includes steps to further evaluate potential invasive carp barriers and other deterrents to protect Minnesota. To date, no evidence of invasive carp reproduction has been observed in Minnesota waters.

Individual invasive carp have been caught as far upstream as Pool 2 of the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities metro area (bighead, grass and silver), the King Power Plant on the St. Croix River by Oak Park Heights (bighead and silver), and just downstream of Granite Falls in the Minnesota River (bighead).

More information about invasive carp is available on the [DNR website](http://mndnr.gov/invasivecarp) (mndnr.gov/invasivecarp). ✧

### Walleye tag study

*Continued from page 11*

harvested. Additionally, for red tags that read “REWARD \$100” with a valid reward date listed, anglers must verify their tag to redeem the reward. This can be done by:

- If harvested, present the physical tag or email a picture of the tag that includes the three-digit tag number to the DNR.
- If released, take a close-up picture of the tag that includes the three-digit tag number and a picture of the angler holding the walleye with the attached tag visible.

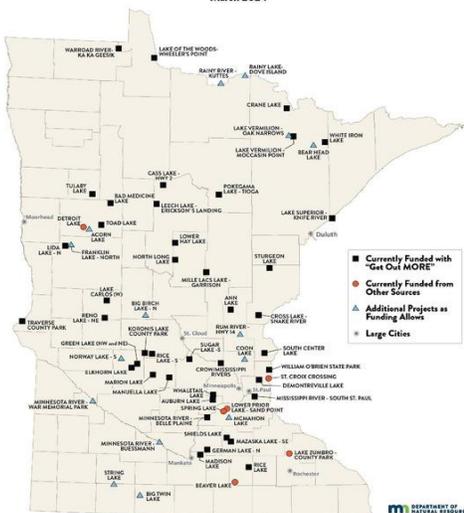
To report your catch to the DNR, email [DNRFHGBFISH@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRFHGBFISH@wisconsin.gov) or call 920-662-5411. To mail in a floy tag from a harvested fish, send it to: ATTN Fish Biologist, 2984 Shawano Avenue, Green Bay, WI 54313

Upon reporting a green or yellow floy tag, anglers will receive information about the fish, including the date, location, size, sex and estimated age at the time of tagging. Anglers do not need to provide picture verification or mail in the physical tag when reporting walleyes with green or yellow tags.

Reported tags from captured or harvested walleye will help guide walleye management throughout Green Bay and its tributaries by providing fisheries biologists with information about exploitation, harvest, spawning site fidelity, movement patterns and growth rates. ✧

## Large-Scale Public Water Access Modernization Projects

March 2024



“Minnesota is a leader in the use of cutting-edge invasive carp management strategies to protect our waters as well as a leader in collaborative planning,” DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen said. “I want to thank the partners who engaged in the process to inform this plan. Today’s updated action plan is a road map that will guide the DNR’s

### Additional information about invasive carp in Minnesota

Invasive carp have been moving upstream since escaping into the Mississippi River from commercial fish farms in Arkansas in the 1970s. These fish compete with native species, and silver carp are known to jump out of the water in a way that can pose a risk to boaters.

## MN DNR plans for \$35 million Get Out MORE investments to modernize boat access

### Minnesotans will see major improvements at more than 40 public water access sites

The Minnesota DNR has identified more than 40 public water access sites throughout the state for extensive upgrades; smaller-scale improvements to more than 75 additional accesses are also anticipated. The work is part of the once-in-a-generation Get Out MORE (Modernize Outdoor Recreation Experiences) investments approved by the legislature and signed by Governor Tim Walz in 2023.

The sites identified for extensive upgrades span Minnesota, from Lake of the Woods in the north to Rice Lake in the south and many points in-between. Examples of typical projects include Whaletail Lake in Hennepin County, where storm water management will be improved, an accessible parking space added, and the aquatic invasive species (AIS) inspection and cleaning area enhanced; and Lake Carlos in Douglas County, where a second boat ramp will be added along with an AIS cleaning area, storm water management, and accessible parking. A map and list of the major project sites can be found on the “modernizing boating access” segment of the [Get Out MORE webpage of the DNR website](https://www.mndnr.gov/aboutdnr/get-out-more) ([mndnr.gov/aboutdnr/get-out-more](https://www.mndnr.gov/aboutdnr/get-out-more)).

“Time on the water is a cherished activity for so many Minnesotans and visitors to our state, and we take pride that Minnesota DNR is a leader in providing access to those waters. We also know that our public water accesses need significant investment,” said DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen. “I’m excited for Minnesotans to start seeing upgrades in the coming months and years as a result of these investments and our commitment to ensuring people of all abilities and interests can enjoy our waters.”

The DNR manages about 1,700 public water accesses, and typically has enough funding to complete large-scale upgrades to only a few sites each year. However, many of the state’s public accesses currently do not meet

the needs of today’s users. The historic Get Out MORE initiative is providing a significant boost in the DNR’s ability to address these needs, and will be coordinated with ongoing baseline investments (also reflected on the map and list linked above) to ensure the efficient use of all funds. Of the \$149.9 million Get Out MORE investments, \$35 million will go toward modernizing boating access, including:

- \$30 million for large-scale projects, which will include accessible features, storm water improvements, enhanced facilities for aquatic invasive species prevention, restoration to improve shoreline health and accessible ramps for non-motorized boats.
- \$5 million for small-scale projects, including longer launch ramps, wider drive lanes, wider and longer parking stalls and improved stormwater treatment.

“We’re making critical investments throughout Minnesota,” Parks and Trails Division Director Ann Pierce said. “These projects are essential to making Minnesota waters accessible to all users, meeting the needs of modern watercraft, protecting our public waters from stormwater runoff and invasive species, and enhancing climate resilience.”

The historic, one-time Get Out MORE investments center on five key areas:

- Enhancing fisheries and fishing infrastructure (\$60 million)
- Enhancing access and welcoming new users to public lands and outdoor recreation facilities (\$35.4 million)
- Modernizing boating access (\$35 million)
- Restoring streams and modernizing water-related infrastructure to support outdoor recreation (\$10 million)

Modernizing camping and related infrastructure (\$9.5 million) ✧

## New walleye tag reward study begins in Green Bay and its tributaries

**MADISON, Wis.** – Together with Walleyes for Tomorrow, the Wisconsin DNR announced the implementation of a walleye reward [tag study](#) for Green Bay and its major tributaries.

Green Bay and its tributaries support a world-class fishery boasting a robust walleye population and trophy-sized fish. Results from DNR angler creel surveys have shown that the popularity of this fishery has grown in recent years, and staff has seen increased angler effort targeting walleyes.

The DNR will begin tagging up to 5,000 walleyes with green and yellow floy tags to better understand the walleye fishery and gather information on population levels and harvest. Fish will be tagged throughout Green Bay’s five major spawning areas in Wisconsin – the Fox, Oconto, Peshtigo and Menominee Rivers as well as Sturgeon Bay.

In addition to the yellow and green tags, 200 red reward tags will be distributed throughout these waters. Walleyes for Tomorrow is offering a \$100 reward to anglers who report catching walleyes with red tags. Thanks to funding from Walleyes for Tomorrow, the DNR hopes to continue this tagging study for the next three to five years.

### What Happens If I Catch A Tagged Walleye?

If you catch a tagged walleye of legal size, you can choose to harvest or release the fish. Any tagged fish not meeting minimum length requirements should be immediately released once the tag information has been obtained. Please [follow responsible catch-and-release practices](#) and leave the tag intact for all released walleyes.

For all colored tags, anglers should report the tag number, tag color, fish length, location caught, date

### Walleye tag study

*Continued on page 10*

## After years of legal delays, FishPass construction set to begin

After more than three years of legal delays, work will finally begin this spring on the long-planned construction of an experimental fish passage system to replace the Union Street Dam. New contracts are being finalized now to clear the way for construction to start on FishPass in April or May—a project that will take until 2026 to complete and will also include a new research facility and improvements to the surrounding parkland.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and contractor Spence Brothers Construction are in the final stages of approving a new construction contract for FishPass, according to Great Lakes Fishery Commission Executive Secretary Dr. Marc Gaden. Spence Brothers, a Traverse City firm, was originally [hired in 2020 for \\$19.3 million to lead construction on FishPass](#). Just prior to groundbreaking, city resident Rick Buckhalter [sued to block the project](#), arguing that the Union Street Dam site was considered city parkland and could not be “disposed” of without a vote of residents under the city charter.

While Judge Thomas Power [originally sided with Buckhalter in Thirteenth Circuit Court](#), preventing construction from proceeding, the Michigan Court of Appeals [overturned that ruling in 2022](#). Last August, the Michigan Supreme Court [declined to take up the case](#), leaving the Michigan Court of Appeals ruling in place. With appeal options exhausted, the injunction prohibiting work was finally lifted, allowing the project to move forward.

During the last several years of legal wrangling, inflation and other factors have driven up construction costs. That required renegotiations between the Army Corps and Spence Brothers, according to Gaden, as well as coordinating “a lot of moving parts” with subcontractors to line up work this spring. The final price tag could rise by several million dollars, potentially putting construction in the \$20-\$25 million range. Still, Gaden

says the Great Lakes Fishery Commission is “optimistic” that between initial contingencies built into the budget and leaning on additional grant and other funding sources, “costs are going to be manageable” and not delay the project.

“The additional costs are not setting up any alarm bells in terms of being so high that it would require rebidding the project,” Gaden says. “FishPass is moving forward, and we’re as enthused as we’ve ever been. Right now, we have enough in hand to move forward. The support is very strong, and the science and work we’re doing is so badly needed, that I think we’ll get our supporters rallying around to make up any shortfall we have.” Funding for the project is coming from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Michigan Department of Natural Resources Dam Management Grant, Great Lakes Fishery Trust, City of Traverse City, and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, among other partners. Numerous local, tribal, state, and federal agencies as well as non-governmental organizations are participants in the project.

FishPass is intended to “replace the deteriorating Union Street Dam with a new, complete barrier to all fish that will have the ability to sort and selectively pass desirable fishes while blocking harmful invaders like sea lamprey,” according to the [project website](#). The project will allow fish biologists from around the world to evaluate different fish-sorting technologies to combat invasive freshwater species, such as the sea lamprey, from moving upstream to spawn. It’ll also allow desired species like sturgeon into the Boardman-Ottaway River. A research station and [multiple park improvements are planned for the surrounding property](#), including kayak landings both up and downstream of the new dam and a connecting rail between them, ADA-compliant boat landings, a step-stone access down to the river, new

boardwalk, benches, trash bins, landscaping, and bike racks.

Once construction contracts are finalized—which could happen this month—work will likely begin in April or May. From there, construction is anticipated to take two-and-a-half years to complete, according to Dr. Daniel Zielinski, principal engineer and scientist with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. The first thing the public will see is fencing go up around the project site, followed by the removal of select trees and brush. Zielinski says in-stream work will take place in two major phases, with a sheet-pile cofferdam installed on the south side of the river where the auxiliary spillway is now. Water will continue to pass through the main spillway while contractors build a new arc-labyrinth weir. Crews from there will be able to isolate half the river and remove existing infrastructure, with the river eventually redirected to pass through the new structure. A fish-passing channel and nature-like bypass channel will also be constructed.

The Union Street Dam property will be blocked off during construction, as will parking Lot J (the dam parking lot on the south side of the river downhill from Hagerty). With the river also planned to be closed off at the site, Boardman-Ottaway users—including groups like the Kayak, Bike & Brew tours—will have to get out at American Legion Park. The city will use additional off-site locations for staging equipment for FishPass construction, including on Woodmere Avenue and Airport Access Road.

At the same time, the Traverse City Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is about to begin a public visioning process for the new Rotary Square, located across the alley at the corner of State and Union streets. DDA Interim CEO Harry Burkholder says four firms responded to a request-  
**FishPass**

*Continued on page 13*

## ATV/UTV Riders: Ride Safe and Wear a Helmet this spring

**MADISON, Wis.** – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds ATV/UTV riders to make safety their number one priority this spring.

A lack of snow melt and early spring weather means drier trails and more opportunities for riders to get out on private and public land across Wisconsin. Regardless of weather and trail conditions, safety must remain a priority for rec vehicle riders.

2023 ATV/UTV incident data underscores the importance of safe riding practices:

- 282 reported crashes
- 32 fatal incidents
- 99 passengers were injured
- 95% of fatality victims were not wearing a helmet

[There have already been five fatal crashes in the state](#) so far this year.

“All of these crashes were preventable,” said Lt. Warden Jacob Holsclaw, DNR Off-Highway Vehicle Administrator. “Riders need to wear a helmet and seatbelt, drive responsibly and choose not to drink alcohol before or during a ride. We continue to see those as top factors in offroad vehicle crashes.”

Crashes can happen to anyone. Always follow basic off-road vehicle safety to mitigate the risk of a crash or fatal incident. This includes staying sober, wearing a helmet, using a UTV seatbelt and taking an ATV safety course.

Some additional things to keep in mind when operating your recreational vehicle include:

- Never consume alcohol or drugs before or during your ride.
- Do not travel in unfamiliar areas.
- Follow all posted speed limits and regulatory signs.
- Let someone not riding with you know where you are going and when you will return.
- Double-check before operating on trails. Many trails open to

ATVs/UTVs are closed during winter in anticipation of snowmobile season.

Wisconsin law requires ATV and UTV operators born on or after January 1, 1988, who are at least 12 years old for an ATV (and at least 16 years old for UTV) must complete an ATV safety certification course to operate in Wisconsin (exception: on private property owned by operator's immediate family). These safety courses can be taken online or in person. [A list of approved safety education classes is available on the DNR Safety Education webpage.](#)

Wisconsin law also requires every operator involved in a crash incident to report the incident to law enforcement officials without delay. Operators must submit a [written report](#) to the DNR within 10 days of the incident.

For more information about ATV and UTV recreation in Wisconsin, visit the DNR's [ATV/UTV Riding in Wisconsin webpage](#). ✧

### FishPass

*Continued from page 12*

for proposals (RFP) by last week's deadline to lead the public input process to identify a design and desired amenities for the park, a process planned to kick off this spring. With the close proximity between Rotary Square and FishPass, Burkholder sees “an opportunity for great collaboration between the two projects”—a relationship that will be explored in the design process to ideally create a flow between the two adjoining properties.

“It's taken two or three years longer to achieve the objectives we wanted to do on the river,” says Gaden. “But sometimes things are worth the wait, and we want to do it right. The delays haven't dampened our enthusiasm for not only restoring the Boardman-Ottaway, but developing technology that can be applied throughout the Great Lakes basin and the world.” ✧

## Lower fishing bag limits aim to help struggling walleye

Wisconsin is adopting its [biggest change](#) to walleye fishing regulations since the 1940s. Starting April 1, the state's bag limit for the prized game fish will fall from five to [three walleye per angler](#). State wildlife authorities are reducing the limit as studies show the species is struggling to adapt to sporadic, warming winters due to climate change.

Zach Feiner, a research scientist with the Wisconsin DNR and at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for Limnology, said “the state hopes lowering the number of fish caught can help walleye recover.”

“When thinking about how to deal with climate change... well, let's control the things we can control,” he said. “It's hard to control the amount of carbon in your atmosphere if you're at your lake. But when you're fishing on your lake, you can control how many you keep, or you can manage the spawning habitat.” Feiner called walleye one of the “best studied” fish in the state. A [new research paper](#), which he co-authored, found the increasing unpredictability of Wisconsin's winters and the warming climate are [threatening the survival](#) of young walleye in many Midwestern lakes.

The change includes:

- Statewide daily bag limit of three walleye/sauger per day on all inland waters.
- Walleye bag limits for the Great Lakes (including Green Bay) and Wisconsin-Iowa, Wisconsin-Minnesota and Wisconsin-Michigan boundary waters will remain unchanged, as will limits on any water with a bag limit currently lower than three.
- A person may harvest walleye from two different lakes or rivers with a three-fish daily bag limit as long as they don't exceed the five-fish total daily bag limit. ✧

## Great Lakes Advisory Board studies explore how to better combat nutrient imbalances in Lake Erie

With the beginning of spring, we wait with bated breath for upcoming blooms of flowers, trees ... and algae.

Nutrients are a critical component of Great Lakes ecosystems. However, issues emerge when there are too many or too few nutrients. Lake Erie has long suffered from harmful algal blooms, fueled by nutrients near the shoreline that are higher than they should be.

Canada and the United States set a goal in 2016 to [reduce phosphorus loads entering Lake Erie by 40 percent from 2008 levels, but have made limited progress](#). The International Joint Commission's Great Lakes Science Advisory Board, in collaboration with the Great Lakes Water Quality Board, recently published two reports that focus on addressing the delicate balancing act of nutrients in Lake Erie.

In September 2023, the Great Lakes Science Advisory Board presented the new reports, which assessed existing rules and agencies that coordinate and support activities to address nutrient imbalances. In case you missed it, you can watch a recording of the webinar below.

Tracking progress toward meeting the nutrient reduction target and Lake Erie's response to changes requires an adaptive management approach. Adaptive management is a structured, iterative process for decision making in the face of the unknown.

Canadian and US government agencies and researchers have agreed on a draft Lake Erie Adaptive Management Framework. The Great Lakes Science Advisory Board-Research Coordinating Committee's report "[Evaluation of Institutional Arrangements to Affect Nutrient Management Through Adaptive Management](#)" examined the draft framework's governance structure to determine if it is being implemented effectively and sustainably.

The committee's report finds that the draft framework is working, but its implementation is informal. Some aspects of the framework, like funding and coordination of efforts across government agencies, differ depending on where they are happening. For example, funds for coordinating adaptive management activities come from various Canadian and US jurisdictions, and these resources are often short-term.

Collaborative efforts also tend to vary among jurisdictions, resulting in the need for greater alignment and coordination of existing activities. The Lake Erie Nutrient Adaptive Management Framework provides an opportunity to increase collaboration and coordination between domestic and federal agencies on activities like research, monitoring and modeling. To work more effectively, the report finds, dedicated staff are needed to support and manage adaptive management processes outlined in the draft framework.

The second report by the Great Lakes Science Advisory Board and the Great Lakes Water Quality Board evaluated initial domestic action plans for Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.

Renewed every five years, domestic action plans are produced by federal, state and provincial governments to guide efforts to achieve the 40 percent reduction target. The boards' 2023 report, "[Nutrients in Lake Erie and Lake Ontario: Synthesis of International Joint Commission Recommendations and Assessment of Domestic Action Plans](#)," found that both countries rely on voluntary reduction programs for nutrient loadings from agricultural nonpoint sources. These sources are the main contributor of nutrients to the western and central basins of Lake Erie.

Better implementation of best management practices is crucial for reducing agricultural nonpoint source nutrient loadings. The report found that relying on exclusively voluntary programs creates barriers to rapid progress on nutrient loading objectives. Farmers may be reluctant to adopt these practices if the perceived risks are too high. To that end, the report makes recommendations on how the federal governments could promote the adoption of best management practices, including exploring a group-level economic instrument to reward implementation. ✧

## Upper Sioux Community and State of Minnesota mark the return of sacred land

Recently tribal and state officials gathered to enact the official transfer of the state-owned land that was within the boundaries of Upper Sioux Agency State Park to the Upper Sioux Community (Pezihutazizi Oyate).

"After years of work, I'm grateful to mark the official return of this land to the Yellow Medicine Dakota People," said Governor Walz. "In 2019, Chairman Kevin Jensvold

shared with me the history and significance of this land to the Yellow Medicine People. Together as partners—Tribal, state, and federal—we worked to return the land to its original caretakers. This isn't us doing the right thing, we are simply undoing the wrong thing."

The ceremony at the Upper Sioux Community included an invocation, traditional Dakota customs, remarks

from Tribal and state leaders, and the signings of the official deed and a ceremonial deed marking the historic land transfer.

The transferred land is the sacred homeland of Dakota people. It was also the site of starvation and death of native people during the summer of 1862 when the United States government did not provide food

promised by treaty. Today, descendants of those who died shared their stories as part of the land transfer ceremony.

“Today is a historic and powerful day for the Yellow Medicine Oyate and the State of Minnesota,” said Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. “It was an honor to be invited by the Yellow Medicine Community to be present during this historic moment, but this didn’t just happen overnight. The Governor was the first Governor to visit the Yellow Medicine Community since former Governor Sibley led a war party to them. The Governor and I are committed to continuing our strong partnerships with tribal governments. We have been working towards this day with

Chairman Jensvold since we took office. I am proud to stand with the Governor at Pezihutazizi Kapi Makoce (Land Where They Dig the Yellow Medicine) to witness this historic event.”

Consistent with legislation enacted in 2023, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources closed Upper Sioux Agency State Park on February 16, 2024, marking an important step toward the transfer of the land to the Upper Sioux Community. “This land transfer is an important moment in our state’s history. Given its significance to Dakota people and the tragic events that took place there, it was inappropriate to continue to operate a park at that site,” DNR Commissioner

Sarah Strommen said. “Minnesota DNR has been honored and humbled to have worked with the Upper Sioux Community on the return this land to the Community. We now look forward to continuing to explore new recreation opportunities in the Minnesota River Valley.”

More information about DNR’s public engagement process on future recreation opportunities in the Minnesota River Valley as well as feedback from the public can be found here: [Upper Sioux Agency State Park Recreation Alternatives | Engage with DNR | Minnesota Department of Natural Resources](#) ↵

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

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#### [COMMENTARY: An oil and gas pipeline threatens the Great Lakes. Shut it down](#)

For years, the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and other tribes of the Great Lakes region have been leading a fight against the Canadian oil giant Enbridge Energy. Enbridge’s 71-year-old Line 5 oil and gas pipeline, which trespasses through sovereign tribal lands, is an environmental disaster waiting to happen

#### [An underappreciated lake that’s great](#)

Sitting at 26 miles long and 24 miles wide with nearly one-third of the sport fishing catch annually in the Great Lakes region, Lake St. Clair should be a household name. While not as well-known as the Great Lakes, this lake has a lot to offer.

#### [Illinois and Army Corps at an impasse over building barrier to prevent invasive carp](#)

To prevent the movement of invasive carp into the Great Lakes, the states of Illinois and Michigan and the Army Corps of Engineers need to sign an agreement, but for months they have been locked in a stalemate over what comes next.

#### [Shrinking ice cover, warmer water: How will Lake Michigan and its food web respond?](#)

Lake Michigan’s food web has been impacted by overfishing and invasive species. Now, climate change is flexing its muscles in the Lake Michigan ecosystem, impacting lake turnover, plankton, and fish

#### [23 million walleye eggs to be collected from Muskegon River this spring](#)

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources will be collecting over 23 million walleye fry starting March 18 through April 12, raising them to fingerling size and stocking Muskegon-area rivers, ponds and lakes. Experts say this helps keep the walleye population up, which is essential for many inland lake ecosystems.

#### [Data: All 5 Great Lakes at record lows for ice cover](#)

Data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shows that all five Great Lakes are below the lowest ice levels on record at this point of the season. As of Monday, only 1.21% of the Great Lakes were covered in ice; comparatively, on March 11, 2022, the Great Lakes had nearly 39% ice coverage

End