

COMMERCIAL FISH PRODUCTION IN THE GREAT LAKES 1867-2015

BACKGROUND

Records of commercial fish production in the Great Lakes were collected as early as 1867 in Canada and 1879 in the United States. This information appeared in reports and records of a number of agencies but was not brought together until the establishment of the International Board of Inquiry for the Great Lakes Fisheries in 1940. Tables showing commercial production of principal species in both countries were published by the Board in 1943. This report was for many years the main reference on Great Lakes production for the period 1867-1940, but has been long out of print. The need for an up-to-date record of the production of the fishery was drawn to the attention of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, which republished in 1962 the early statistics (to 1940), with those collected in the period 1941-1960, as Technical Report No. 3. A supplement covering the years 1961 to 1968 was released in 1970. As catch records from 1969-1977 became available, a revised edition of Technical Report No. 3, describing 110 years of Great Lakes fish production (1867-1977), was issued. The revised edition also incorporated corrections of past entries and used previously unavailable material. The Commission has continued to aggregate annual records of catch after 1977 and has issued periodic updates of catch records in an accessible format on its website, one in 2009, which documented production through 2006, and the current update, which documents production through 2015 as well as incorporating corrections in 1978-2006 entries.

The collection of commercial catch records for the Great Lakes is presently carried out by state and tribal agencies and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. The United States Geological Survey's Great Lakes Science Center (formerly named the Great Lakes Fishery Laboratory and formerly under various other federal agencies including the Fish and Wildlife Service and before that the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries) routinely tabulates catch for New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Minnesota waters. The Science Center also tabulates catch in Michigan except for that of tribal fishers in the 1842 treaty-ceded waters of Lake Superior and in Wisconsin except for that of tribal fishers in the Apostle Islands region of Lake Superior. Catch in those areas is tabulated by the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife

Commission (Michigan) and the Red Cliff Natural Resources Department (Wisconsin). The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry prepares similar tabulations for fisheries in Ontario.

Ralph Hile, J. W. Davies, Stanford H. Smith, Gary Eck, Joan Ridgley, Joseph H. Elrod, and Sharon McDonald have been particularly helpful in the preparation of the print copy of Technical Report No. 3. The second website edition, which updated production through 2006, would not have been possible without help from the following: Stewart Ludsin, Peter McHugh, George Spangler, and Paige Etter. The current (third) website edition, which updates production through 2015, was facilitated by Lloyd Mohr, Stephen James, Shelly Gurnoe, William P. Mattes, and Limei Zhang.