

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission Established by Treaty to Protect Our Fishery



PHOTO: KEN WEIDLINGER

Historical Perspective

THE GREAT LAKES are highly valued resources that respect natural, not political boundaries.

While the lakes fall under the management jurisdictions of two nations, eight states, one province, and several tribes, the resources (including the fish, the water, and the wildlife) do not observe these boundaries. The people of the United States and Canada recognized decades ago—as they recognize now—that the best way to manage the Great Lakes fisheries for use today and to sustain the fisheries for the benefit of future generations is through continuous, binational cooperation.

Having a mechanism to develop and implement coordinated fisheries management programs between Canada and the United States—a need which seems obvious today—was not always a given. Efforts to establish an international fishery commission exclusively for the Great Lakes failed repeatedly

in the period from 1893 to 1952 because of an unwillingness of the states and the province to cede management authority to the U.S. or Canadian federal governments or to an international commission. The Great Lakes states, the Province of Ontario, and certain tribes, after all, manage fisheries as well as fishes. In particular, these entities set the conditions for harvest and stocking.



Failed attempts to create an international institution for the protection and perpetuation of the Great Lakes fisheries include:

- a joint board between Canada and the United States, 1893;
- the Treaty Between the United States and Great Britain—Fisheries in United States and Canada Waters, 1908;
- the Convention Between the United States of America and Canada for the Development, Protection, and Conservation of the Fisheries of the Great Lakes, 1946.

more 



In 1954 and 1955, representatives from Canada and the United States negotiated the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries.

PHOTOS:
GREAT LAKES
FISHERY COMMISSION,
U.S. FISH AND
WILDLIFE SERVICE



Great Lakes Fishery Commission

2100 Commonwealth Blvd., Ste. 100, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-1563 • Tel: 734-662-3209 • www.glfsc.org



U.S.
Department
of State



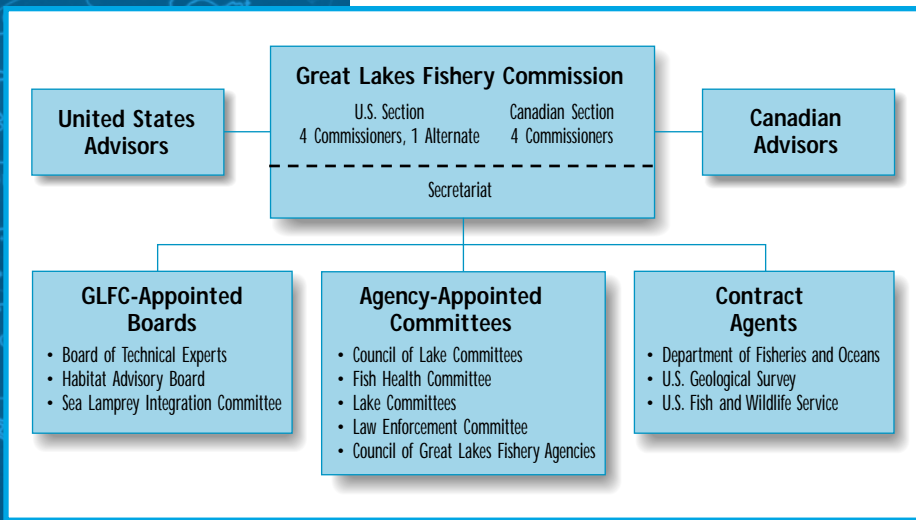
U.S.
Fish & Wildlife
Service



Department of
Fisheries & Oceans
Canada



U.S. Geological
Survey, Biological
Resources Division



It was the destructive power of the exotic sea lamprey which propelled the nations to put into place a mechanism for effective, cooperative, binational fisheries management. By the early 1950s, sea lamprey predation, combined with overfishing and habitat destruction, severely reduced valuable stocks of whitefish and lake trout. The two nations knew that something needed to be done at the highest level, if the Great Lakes fisheries were to be saved from complete devastation.

To facilitate coordinated, binational fisheries management, the governments of the United States and Canada negotiated and ratified the 1954 *Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries*, which created the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. This bilateral agreement affirms the need for the two nations to collaborate on the protection and the perpetuation of the Great Lakes' fisheries resources.

Organization and Duties of the Commission

The commission consists of four Canadian commissioners appointed by the Privy Council and four American commissioners (plus one alternate) appointed by the President. The commissioners are supported by a small secretariat, located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Canada and the United States each

pay the costs of their appointees to the commission. Common costs (administration, committee and scientific support) are shared 50:50. Sea lamprey control and research is funded 69% by the United States and 31% by Canada, based on the historic value of the commercial lake trout and whitefish fisheries and an approximation of the areal apportionment of the Great Lakes between the United States and Canada.

The *Convention* charged the commission with five major duties:

- to formulate a research program to identify measures to enhance the sustained productivity of any Great Lakes fish stock of common concern;
- to coordinate research made pursuant to such programs and, if necessary, to undertake such research itself;
- to recommend appropriate measures to the contracting parties on the basis of the findings of such research programs;
- to formulate and implement a comprehensive sea lamprey control program; and
- to publish or authorize the publication of scientific and other information obtained by the commission in the performance of its duties.

At the request of the states, the province, and the tribes, the commission also has the responsibility to facilitate the implementation of *A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries*.

The commission formulates its program based on advice from the Sea Lamprey Integration Committee, the Board of Technical Experts, the Habitat Advisory Board, the Lake Committees, and the Great Lakes Fish Health Committee. These boards and committees are made up of fishery experts from academic and research institutions, from government organizations, and from tribal resource agencies. In addition, the commission receives advice from the Committee of Advisors, made up of citizens from Canada and the U.S.

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission was established by Convention between Canada and the United States in 1955 to improve and perpetuate fishery resources.

Great Lakes Fishery Commission

2100 Commonwealth Blvd., Ste.100 Ann Arbor, MI 48105-1563 • Tel: 734-662-3209 • www.glfc.org