



Lake Erie Committee

REPRESENTING THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT AGENCIES OF LAKE ERIE AND LAKE ST. CLAIR

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Lake Erie Yellow Perch and Walleye Allowable Catch Set for 2005

Catch Limits Increased for Yellow Perch and Walleye

NIAGARA FALLS, ON –Fishery managers from Michigan, New York, Ohio, Ontario and Pennsylvania agreed on a 7 percent increase in the yellow perch catch limit and a 142 percent increase in the walleye catch limit for the 2005 fishing season during the Lake Erie Committee’s annual meeting last week. The committee expressed satisfaction about the successful rehabilitation efforts for walleye and the continued strength of the yellow perch stocks.

WALLEYE

After a significant decrease in allowable harvest last year, walleye catch limits have been increased from 2.4 million fish to 5.815 million fish for 2005. “This allowable catch reflects the increased abundance of the age two and older walleye, due in large measure to the phenomenal 2003 year class,” said Lake Erie Committee Chairman Rick Hoopes, of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. The Walleye Task Group of the Lake Erie Committee reported that walleye abundance is estimated to be at 42 million fish, with the 2003 year class comprising 71% of the total population. The robust population is a result of the walleye spawning in 2003, which was the best spawning year for walleye in more than 20 years.

Last year’s reduction was implemented to protect the two-year-old walleye population from harvest and to allow the walleye stocks to rebuild. Agencies have continued to closely monitor the status of walleye spawning and remain committed to implementing a walleye harvest policy that promotes sustainable harvest.

Hoopes continued: “Members of the Lake Erie Committee are very optimistic about the walleye fishery for 2005. We feel confident that the reduced harvest last year afforded the walleye population a needed recovery period. We had weak year classes in 2002 and 2004, which will likely affect the fishery next year. Lake Erie management agencies are committed to increasing their regulatory responsiveness in adjusting to the potential shifts in walleye abundance.”

Using an area-based sharing formula of walleye habitat within the western and central basins of the lake, the LEC establishes the total allowable catch (TAC) for Ohio, Michigan, and Ontario. The walleye fisheries of eastern Lake Erie remain outside the quota management area.

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YELLOW PERCH

After a strong year in 2004, the yellow perch population continued to show improvement. As a result, the Lake Erie Committee increased the catch limits by 7%, from 11 million pounds last year to 11.752 million pounds of fish in 2005. The five jurisdictions on the lake divide the allocation of perch; for 2005, Ontario's share is about 5.5 million pounds and Ohio's is approximately 5.4 million pounds. Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania share the remaining allocation.

LAKE ERIE COMMITTEE

The Lake Erie Committee is made up of fishery managers representing Michigan, New York, Ohio, Ontario and Pennsylvania. The Committee's work is facilitated by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, a Canadian and U.S. agency on the Great Lakes. Each year the Committee sets the total allowable catch for walleye and yellow perch, which represents the number of fish that can be caught annually by sport and commercial fishers.

For more information, visit the Lake Erie Committee online at www.glfsc.org/lec