



Lake Erie Committee

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

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Lake Erie Committee Sets Yellow Perch and Walleye Allowable Catches for 2019

Ypsilanti, MI—Today, the binational Lake Erie Committee (LEC), comprising fishery managers from Michigan, New York, Ohio, Ontario and Pennsylvania—the five jurisdictions that manage the Lake Erie fishery—set a total allowable catch (TAC) for 2019 of 8.552 million pounds of yellow perch and 8.531 million walleye. Yellow perch are allocated in pounds and walleye are allocated by number of fish. This TAC represents a decrease for yellow perch from 10.498 million pounds of fish last year and an increase in walleye from 7.109 million fish. Specific allocations of both species are presented below by jurisdiction.

TAC decisions are reflective of the status of Lake Erie's fish populations and take into account the goal of consistent and sustainable harvest each year. The allocations are determined by the LEC after extensive, lakewide biological assessments, analyses, discussions, and consultations with stakeholders. The individual state and provincial governments implement the TAC in their jurisdiction in accordance with their respective regulations and management objectives.

Overall, the LEC believes that yellow perch populations are lower compared to last year's abundance. As a result, the 2019 TAC in each of the three western most management units is lower than the 2018 level. A Management Strategy Evaluation process was recently completed and used to inform this year's decisions regarding sustainable yellow perch harvest. Walleye populations are managed as a single stock and are increasing throughout Lake Erie due to average or better hatches in four of the past five years. These conditions support an increase in the walleye TAC as prescribed by the Walleye Management Plan.

The LEC operates by consensus and relies on biological assessments to inform their TAC decisions. The LEC also supports the Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group, or LEPMAG, a structured process that engages commercial and recreational fishers. The LEPMAG, which has existed since 2010, reflects the committee's interest in involving the fishing community in actions related to management of Lake Erie's percid fisheries.

WALLEYE

Guided by the Walleye Management Plan, the LEC set a 2019 walleye TAC of 8.531 million fish, a 20% increase over the 2018 TAC of 7.109 million fish. The increased TAC reflects positive recruitment during the previous few years and increases in population biomass. The LEC is optimistic about the status of walleye populations.

The Province of Ontario and the states of Ohio and Michigan share the TAC based on a formula of walleye habitat within each jurisdiction in the western and central basins of the lake. Under a 2019 TAC of 8.531 million fish, Ohio will be entitled to 4.360 million fish, Ontario 3.673 million fish, and Michigan 0.497 million fish. Jurisdictions in the eastern end of the lake are outside of the TAC area and harvest limits there are set consistent with lakewide objectives.

The walleye TAC is the result of extensive discussions among scientists, managers, and stakeholders. The Walleye Task Group, whose membership consists of scientists and field biologists from all Lake Erie jurisdictions, meet regularly to share data and reach consensus on biological conditions and population abundance estimates. The LEC's Walleye Management Plan, which incorporates suggestions from the LEPMAG, serves as the foundation for the LEC's discussions and TAC decisions. Each Lake Erie jurisdiction is responsible for implementing its portion of the TAC.

YELLOW PERCH

Yellow perch TAC is the result of deliberations among scientists, managers, and stakeholders through the LEPMAG process. Based on science and those extensive discussions, the LEC today set a 2019 TAC of 8.552 million pounds of yellow perch.

The yellow perch fishery is divided into four management units, which generally correspond to the eastern, east-central, west-central and western basins of Lake Erie. The LEC has strived to maintain a stable and sustainable harvest while responding to changing population trends and other environmental conditions. The LEC acknowledges reduced recruitment of yellow perch in the central basin and expects that allowable catch could continue to decline here.

The five jurisdictions on the lake share Lake Erie's yellow perch under an area-based formula. Pursuant to the 2019 TAC, Ontario will receive 4.072 million pounds, Ohio 3.514 million pounds, Michigan 0.221 million pounds, New York 0.169 million pounds, and Pennsylvania 0.576 million pounds. As with walleye, each Lake Erie jurisdiction is responsible for implementing its portion of the TAC.

THE LAKE ERIE PERCID MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP (LEPMAG)

Since 2010, the LEPMAG has served as the primary method to incorporate stakeholder needs and objectives into the decision-making process regarding harvest of walleye and yellow perch. The LEPMAG consists of senior representatives from all provincial and state jurisdictions on the lake, recreational fishers, commercial fishers, and other interested organizations. Through the LEPMAG, fishery managers and stakeholders work together to identify the harvest policies for Lake Erie percids that meet the needs of all stakeholders while maintaining stability in the percid fishery. Michigan State University's Quantitative Fisheries Center facilitates the LEPMAG process. Walleye are now being managed under the Walleye Management Plan, which was developed through the LEPMAG and formally adopted by the LEC in December, 2015. The LEPMAG members provided input to the LEC to develop population objectives and conduct a Management Strategy Evaluation for yellow perch in Lake Erie. These efforts will inform final development of the LEC's Yellow Perch Management Plan in the coming year.

THE LAKE ERIE COMMITTEE AND TACs

The LEC comprises fishery managers from 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 a TAC for walleye and yellow perch. The TAC represents the number or weight of fish recommended by the Yellow Perch and Walleye Task Groups to be harvested by sport and commercial fishers without putting the fisheries at risk. The individual agencies implement the total allowable catch.