



**Lake Erie  
Committee**

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## **Lake Erie Committee Sets Yellow Perch and Walleye Total Allowable Catches for 2023**

**Hamilton, ON**—The binational Lake Erie Committee (LEC)—composed of fishery managers from Michigan, New York, Ohio, Ontario, and Pennsylvania—the five jurisdictions that manage the Lake Erie fishery—set total allowable catches (TACs) for 2023 of 6.573 million pounds of yellow perch and 13.526 million walleye. Yellow perch are allocated in pounds and walleye are allocated by number of fish. These TACs represent a decrease for yellow perch from 7.185 million pounds of fish last year and a decrease in walleye from 14.533 million fish. Specific allocations of both species are presented below by jurisdiction.

TAC decisions are made by consensus of the LEC after extensive, lakewide biological assessments, analyses, discussions, and consultations with stakeholders. Scientists and field biologists from all jurisdictions meet annually and on an ongoing basis to analyze fisheries and agency data to estimate population levels and recommend the annual TAC. These decisions are reflective of the status of Lake Erie's fish populations and consider the goal of maintaining sustainable harvest each year. The individual state and provincial governments implement the TAC in their jurisdiction in accordance with their respective regulations and management objectives.

**YELLOW PERCH:** Yellow perch TAC decisions are the result of deliberations among scientists, managers, and consultation with stakeholders through the Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group (LEPMAG). Based on science and LEPMAG input, the LEC set a 2023 combined TAC of 6.573 million pounds of yellow perch, a 9% decrease from the 2022 TAC.

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. Poor recruitment of yellow perch in the central basin (management units 2 and 3) continues to be a challenge. Despite this, the LEC continues to strive to maintain sustainable harvest while responding to changing population trajectories and other changing environmental factors.

The five jurisdictions on the lake share Lake Erie's yellow perch under an area-based formula. Pursuant to the 2023 TAC, Ontario will receive 3.155 million pounds, Ohio 2.480 million pounds, Michigan 0.221 million pounds, New York 0.181 million pounds, and Pennsylvania 0.536 million pounds. As with walleye, each Lake Erie jurisdiction is responsible for allocating its portion of the TAC.

**WALLEYE:** Guided by the Walleye Management Plan, the LEC set a 2023 lakewide walleye TAC of 13.526 million fish, a 7% decrease from the 2022 TAC of 14.533 million fish. Overall, though the LEC believes that walleye populations have increased compared to last year's abundance, the average size of fish is smaller, resulting in a lower population biomass. The Province of Ontario and the states of Ohio and Michigan share the TAC based

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REPRESENTING THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT AGENCIES OF LAKE ERIE

The Lake Erie Committee, comprised of Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources, New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, operates under *A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries*, a non-binding consensus-based agreement facilitated by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

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on a formula of walleye habitat within each jurisdiction in the western and central basins of the lake. Ohio will be entitled to 6.913 million fish, Ontario 5.824 million fish, and Michigan 0.789 million fish. Jurisdictions in eastern Lake Erie are outside of the TAC area, but harvest limits are set consistent with lakewide objectives.

**THE LAKE ERIE PERCID MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP (LEPMAG):** The LEPMAG has served as the primary method to incorporate stakeholder needs and objectives through formal advice that is considered during the LEC decision making process since 2010. The LEPMAG consists of senior representatives from all provincial and state jurisdictions on the lake, recreational fishers, commercial fishers, and other interested organizations. Fishery managers and stakeholders, through their participation in the LEPMAG, work together to identify the harvest policies for Lake Erie yellow perch and walleye that meet the needs of all stakeholders while maintaining stability in the fishery. Michigan State University’s Quantitative Fisheries Center facilitates the LEPMAG process. Both walleye and yellow perch are managed through management plans, which were adopted by the LEC in 2015 and 2020, respectively. The LEC intends to evaluate both plans before their expiration at the end of 2024. The LEPMAG played a major role in developing the management plans, and is expected to provide additional insight to the LEC during plan reviews.

**THE LAKE ERIE COMMITTEE (LEC) AND TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCHES (TACs):** The LEC’s work is facilitated by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, a Canada and U.S. treaty organization. Each year the committee reaches consensus on TAC decisions for walleye and yellow perch. The TAC represents what the committee considers to be a sustainable level of harvest, as guided by recommendations from the Yellow Perch and Walleye task groups. The individual agencies allocate the TAC through setting commercial fishing quotas and recreational fishing daily limits intended to maintain annual harvest levels within the TAC.

The table below reflects the distribution of the 2023 yellow perch TAC within each management unit for each agency. Units are expressed in millions of pounds.

Management Unit	Agency	2023 TAC
1	Ontario	0.987
	Michigan	0.221
	Ohio	1.222
	Total	2.430
2	Ontario	0.218
	Ohio	0.259
	Total	0.477
3	Ontario	1.612
	Ohio	0.998
	Pennsylvania	0.472
	Total	3.082
4	Ontario	0.339
	Pennsylvania	0.064
	New York	0.181
	Total	0.584
	Lakewide	6.573