



Lake Erie Committee

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

2100 Commonwealth Blvd.
Suite 100
Ann Arbor MI 48105-1563
Tel: 734-662-3209

For Immediate Release
April 11, 2009

Contacts:
Canada: John Cooper: 705-755-5476
USA: Marc Gaden: 734-662-3209 x 14

Binational Panel Recommends Lake Erie Yellow Perch and Walleye Catch Limits for 2010

2010 walleye limits to decrease and yellow perch limits increase

WINDSOR, ON – After careful consideration, the binational Lake Erie Committee, comprising fishery managers from Michigan, New York, Ohio, Ontario, and Pennsylvania recommended a 2010 total allowable catch (TAC) of 13.137 million pounds of yellow perch and 2.2 million walleye¹. The yellow perch TAC represents an increase from last year while the walleye TAC represents a decrease. The committee based these recommendations on the generally stable condition of yellow perch stocks in Lake Erie and on the fact that walleye recruitment has generally been below average since the exceptional 2003 and the moderate 2007 year classes. For both yellow perch and walleye, the committee is moving forward on a revision of fisheries policies and guidelines for the future. The intent is to fully engage all stakeholders throughout that process

YELLOW PERCH

Yellow perch stocks in Lake Erie are healthy, with generally good hatches during the past decade having helped to sustain the fishery. Given the stable state of the Lake Erie yellow perch fishery, the committee recommended a 2010 TAC of 13.137 million pounds, an increase from last year's allocation of 12.012 million pounds, and with some adjustments in various regions of the lake. However, the weak 2004 and 2009 year classes will likely contribute to lower allocations in the near future.

The five jurisdictions on the lake divide the lake-wide allocation of yellow perch based on a sharing formula. For 2010, Ontario's allocation is 6.403 million pounds, Ohio's allocation is 5.255 million pounds, and Michigan's allocation is 0.191 million pounds. New York and Pennsylvania will receive 0.246 million pounds and 1.044 million pounds respectively. In 2009, actual yellow perch harvest was 9.13 million pounds or 76% of the TAC.

Overall, yellow perch stocks in Lake Erie are healthy, especially in the eastern portion of the lake. The committee reported that the yellow perch populations are stable, allowing for a small increase in the TAC recommendation compared to last year.

WALLEYE

The Lake Erie Committee recommended a binational TAC for walleye in 2010 of 2.2 million fish, compared to the TAC of 2.45 million fish in 2009. Actual walleye harvest in 2009 was 2.16 million fish, or 88% of the TAC. State and provincial scientists and field biologists, who comprise the Walleye Task Group, combine data from fisheries and fisheries assessment programs to estimate

¹ Yellow perch are allocated in pounds; walleye are allocated by number of fish.



walleye population abundance and subsequently recommend a TAC to the LEC. The task group reported that walleye hatches had been weak in 2002, 2004, and 2006; small in 2005, 2008, and 2009; moderate in 2007; and very strong in 2003. The 2007 year class will be more fully recruited to the fisheries this year and harvest will be dominated by 2007 and 2003 year classes.

The TAC is recommended by the Lake Erie Committee and is allocated to Ohio, Michigan and Ontario by an area-based sharing formula of walleye habitat within each jurisdiction in the western and central basins of the lake. Under a 2010 TAC of 2.2 million fish, Ohio will be entitled to 1.124 million fish, Ontario 0.947 million fish, and Michigan 0.128 million fish. The walleye fisheries of eastern Lake Erie remain outside the allowable catch management area and are established separately. Because of moderate to low recruitment in recent years, walleye abundance is in a “rehabilitation” condition and continuing to decline. The Lake Erie Committee TAC recommendations in 2010 are designed to sustain the stocks, maintain fish supply for fisheries, and if environmental conditions cooperate, facilitate strong recruitment and increased stock size,

The committee also noted that walleye reproduction, which is essential to rehabilitation, has not been strong since 2003 and, as such, the number of walleye in Lake Erie is expected to continue decline into 2011. The committee recognized that it needs to hold the course of reduced TACs to promote rehabilitation of the walleye stocks, and the recommended TAC represents the management actions that are necessary for a walleye fishery in its current and projected condition.

Decisions regarding the TAC are based on fishery assessments and other information that estimate the abundance of walleye in Lake Erie. Lake Erie agencies together monitor the status of walleye spawning and recommend walleye TACs that are consistent with the state of the fishery and the goal of sustaining walleye stocks. The reduced 2010 TAC will allow the agencies to adhere to their objectives of allowing harvest while protecting future spawning stock biomass.

LAKE ERIE COMMITTEE

“The Lake Erie Committee understands the importance of walleye and yellow perch to the commercial and recreational fishers of Canada and the United States,” said Lake Erie Committee Chair Don Einhouse of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. “These shared fish stocks are self-sustaining, but are subject to annual fluctuations driven by variable hatching success, making annual TAC adjustments necessary. The committee strives to maintain working relationships with stakeholders to discuss long-term trends in the Lake Erie fishery and how those trends relate to allocation decisions.”

“The Lake Erie Committee’s work is based on consensus among all five jurisdictions on the lake,” added Einhouse. “To facilitate our decision-making, committee members work together on collecting standardized data from field surveys, sharing information, and analyzing the shared data. Committee members strive to balance harvest with the need manage the stocks in a way that ensures sustainability. The committee believes its work strikes that important balance.”

The Lake Erie Committee 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 recommends a total allowable catch for walleye and yellow perch. Total allowable catch represents the number or weight of fish that can be caught by sport and commercial fishers without putting the stocks at risk. The individual agencies implement the recommended total allowable catch. For more information, visit the Lake Erie Committee online at www.glfc.org/lec.