



Great Lakes Fishery Commission

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Contact: Greg McClinchey
226-980-9193

Great Lakes Fishery Commission and Friends of the Refuge Mississippi River Pools 7 & 8 to Host Free, Educational Event and Screen Award-Winning Documentary Film

La Crosse, WI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (Commission) and Friends of the Refuge Mississippi River Pools 7 & 8 will host an evening of conservation and conversation enabled through a free screening of the Commission’s award-winning documentary *THE FISH THIEF: A Great Lakes Mystery* on Wednesday April 8 at the Weber Center for the Performing Arts, 428 Front Street South La Crosse, WI 54601. Doors for the event will open at 5:30pm; it is free and open to the public, but tickets are required and available for reservation [on the Weber Center’s website](#).

Attendees are encouraged to come early and enjoy an educational reception with local environmental organizations, live sea lampreys, and complimentary snacks and beverages. The documentary will begin promptly at 6:30pm and last 90 minutes. Following the film, there will be a panel discussion featuring the film’s director, a staff member from the Commission, and local subject matter experts. In addition to a Q&A with audience members, the panel discussion will explore the film’s themes, consider the importance of science communication, and examine the connection between science, management for healthy ecosystems, and societal benefits.

Narrated by Oscar-winner J.K. Simmons, *THE FISH THIEF* dissects the sea lamprey’s invasion into the Great Lakes and the subsequent cooperative effort to save the fishery and preserve a way of life. Upon their arrival, sea lampreys quickly decimated populations of large-bodied fish, such as lake trout, whitefish, and other species that were integral to the region’s ecosystem and economy. The crash destroyed jobs and businesses, devastating towns, tribal communities, and First Nations in United States and Canada. Scientists relentlessly searched for a solution to the environmental crisis; what they discovered continues to influence the Great Lakes region’s economic fortunes and sounds a warning about the future of natural resources and the prosperity of millions around the world today.



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“We’re excited to host this event in a location that is fundamental to the sea lamprey story,” said Dr. Marc Gaden, Commission executive secretary and executive producer of the film. “The Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center in La Crosse is the site of much of the past and current work that supports the sea lamprey control program. From research on improving efficacy and understanding non-target impacts to ensuring regulatory compliance of control tactics, the Center is an essential component of the success of the sea lamprey control program.”

Added Gaden: “Sea lamprey control is critical for safeguarding the economy and livelihoods of the over 35 million people who call the Great Lakes region home; and the film serves as an important reminder of the potential dangers of aquatic invasive species and the importance of ongoing sea lamprey control.”

Said Dr. Michael Siefkes, director of the sea lamprey control program: “This film gives a firsthand perspective of the devastating impacts sea lampreys had on the Great Lakes. The world-class Great Lakes fishery we enjoy today is the result of tremendous hard work by U.S. and Canadian citizens, past and present, many of whom are highlighted in the film.” [Dr. Siefkes will speak at the Weber Center event on April 8.]

Coming as a result of nearly eight years of extensive research and production, this incredible documentary captures the heart of the Great Lakes region and the people who live, work, and recreate there. Director Lindsey Haskin and his team traversed across two nations to work closely with Indigenous communities, biologists, historians, anglers, conservationists, and environmental agencies to chronicle the struggle of restoring balance to the ecosystem. [Mr. Haskin will speak at the Weber Center event on April 8.]

THE FISH THIEF has been showcased at numerous regional, national, and international film festivals, earning multiple awards along the way. Those unable to attend the screening are encouraged watch the film for free on [YouTube](#). It is also available from streaming on [Amazon Prime](#), and for purchase on the [Google Play store](#). Learn more about the film and watch the trailer at <http://thefishthief.com/>.



Left: Anglers enjoy a day on the lake. Photo: Lindsey Haskin.



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Right: A scientist at the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center examines a tank of sea lampreys Photo: Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center.



The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is an international organization established by the United States and Canada through the 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. The commission has the responsibility to promote measures that protect and improve the multibillion-dollar Great Lakes fishery. Visit online at www.glfsc.org

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