



Lake Michigan Committee

REPRESENTING THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT AGENCIES OF LAKE MICHIGAN

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Lakewide Lake Michigan Yellow Perch Summit Announced

The Lake Michigan Committee (LMC) of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) will host a yellow perch public meeting at the UIC Forum in Chicago on Saturday, March 22, 2014. Anglers and interested stakeholders are invited to attend.

This multi-jurisdictional meeting will take place from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm and is open to persons from all Lake Michigan state (IL, WI, IN and MI) and tribal jurisdictions. The morning program will consist of informative presentations by invited experts, highlighting the latest science about Lake Michigan ecology and yellow perch populations, fishing, and management. The afternoon session will consist of a small-group breakout session where constituents can comment on the information presented and provide input to Lake Michigan fishery managers. A webinar of the meeting will be available online to registered participants unable to travel to the meeting in person.

The event is being hosted free-of-charge to registered participants by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the GLFC. Registration is free of charge until March 15, after which a \$20 fee will be charged. Participants may register on-line at www.glfc.org/lakecom/yp or by calling the Illinois DNR Lake Michigan Program office at 847-294-4134 during regular business hours (8:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday – Friday).

“Yellow perch are a key component of the inshore fish community in Lake Michigan and a favorite target of anglers up and down the Illinois coast, as well as elsewhere around the lake,” said Marc Miller, Director of the Illinois DNR. “We are pleased to work with our Great Lakes partners in ongoing efforts to improve management of the important perch fishery and provide a public forum to engage our enthusiastic angling community.”

Lake Michigan yellow perch experienced a rapid, lakewide decline in abundance during the early 1990s, and abundance has since remained low relative to earlier peaks. Management authorities convened a yellow perch conference in December 1994 to alert constituents about the drastic decline in perch abundance around the lake. A Yellow Perch Task Group was created and the group developed and implemented a research strategy to explore the causes of declining yellow perch populations.

Later in the decade, individual management authorities closed the commercial perch fishery in the lake’s main basins and reduced the potential harvest from recreational angling by implementing restrictive harvest regulations (e.g., slot limits, bag limits and closed seasons). These regulations were intended to ensure that adequate numbers of mature perch remained for future spawning seasons when favorable conditions returned to the lake. Original or modified versions of these earlier regulations have now been in place for almost two decades. While the cooperative actions by Lake Michigan management agencies prevented a complete collapse of the perch population, recovery has been slow and recent stock assessments indicate a continued gradual decline in population abundance.

Brad Eggold, Chair of the LMC, explained what the committee hopes to accomplish. “This meeting will provide our constituents with a lakewide view of the latest information available on Lake Michigan yellow perch and provide managers with input from anglers and other stakeholders around the lake. The LMC will review this information and determine the best path forward for managing the fishery. Possible next steps by the management jurisdictions may include changes to yellow perch management, assessment and/or research.”

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission was established in 1955 by the Canadian-U.S. Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. The commission coordinates fisheries research, controls the invasive sea lamprey, and facilitates cooperative fishery management among the state, provincial, tribal, and federal management agencies. The LMC is made up of a single representative from each of the managing jurisdictions bordering Lake Michigan (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and the Chippewa-Ottawa Resource Authority). The committee uses a consensus approach to make science-based decisions on fishery and environmental management in Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes basin.