



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 2018

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MARKHAM, ON – Fishery managers from Michigan, New York, Ohio, Ontario and Pennsylvania—the five jurisdictions that manage the Lake Erie fishery—agreed to a total allowable catch (TAC) of 10.498 million pounds of yellow perch and 7.109 million walleyes for 2018. Yellow perch are allocated in pounds and walleyes are allocated by number of fish. Specific allocations of both species are presented below by jurisdiction.

The Lake Erie Committee's TAC decisions are produced after extensive, lakewide biological assessments, analyses, discussions, and consultations with stakeholders. The allocations are consistent with the status of Lake Erie's fish populations, taking into the account the goal of sustainable fisheries.

Overall, the Lake Erie Committee believes that yellow perch populations remain similar to last year's abundance and is maintaining the TAC in each of the management units near the 2017 level. The Management Strategy Evaluation for yellow perch is currently in development and will be utilized in future decisions regarding sustainable yellow perch harvest. Walleye populations are managed as a single stock and are increasing lakewide due to average or better hatches in three of the past four years. These conditions support an increase in the walleye TAC as prescribed by the Walleye Management Plan. The individual provincial and state governments adhere to and implement the yellow perch and walleye TACs consistent with their respective regulations and management objectives.

The Lake Erie Committee operates by consensus and relies on biological assessments to inform their TAC decisions. The Lake Erie Committee also supports the Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group, or LEPMAG, a structured process that engages commercial and recreational fishers. 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.

YELLOW PERCH

The proposed yellow perch TAC is the result of deliberations among the jurisdictions and with stakeholders through the LEPMAG process. Based on science and those deliberations, the Lake Erie Committee today set a 2018 TAC of 10.498 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 Lake Erie Committee has strived to maintain harvest stability while responding to changing trends in populations and ensuring long-term sustainability in each management unit.

The five jurisdictions on the lake share Lake Erie's yellow perch under an area-based formula. Pursuant to the 2018 TAC, Ontario will receive 4.945 million pounds, Ohio 4.509 million pounds, Michigan 0.276 million pounds, New York 0.141 million pounds, and Pennsylvania 0.628 million pounds.

WALLEYE

The Lake Erie Committee, guided by the Walleye Management Plan, set a 2018 walleye TAC of 7.109 million fish, a 20% increase over the 2017 TAC of 5.924 million fish. The increased TAC reflects positive recruitment during the previous few years and increases in population biomass. The Lake Erie Committee 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 2018 TAC of 7.109 million fish, Ohio will be entitled to 3.634 million fish, Ontario 3.061 million fish, and Michigan 0.414 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.

As with yellow perch, the walleye TAC is the result of extensive discussions among scientists, managers, and stakeholders. Scientists and field biologists from all Lake Erie jurisdictions, meeting as the Walleye Task Group, share data and reach consensus on biological conditions and population abundance estimates. The Lake Erie Committee's Walleye Management Plan, which incorporated suggestions from LEPMAG, serves as the foundation for the Lake Erie Committee's discussions and TAC decisions. As with yellow perch, each Lake Erie jurisdiction is responsible for implementing its portion of the TAC.

THE LAKE ERIE PERCID MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP (LEPMAG)

The Lake Erie Percid Management Advisory Group was first convened in 2010 and serves as the primary method to incorporate stakeholder needs and objectives into the Lake Erie yellow perch and walleye decision-making process. LEPMAG consists of senior representatives from all provincial and state jurisdictions on the lake, recreational fishers, commercial fishers, and other interested organizations. Through 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 LEPMAG and formally adopted by the Lake Erie Committee in December, 2015. LEPMAG members are working with the Lake Erie Committee to develop population objectives and conduct a Management Strategy Evaluation for yellow perch in Lake Erie. These efforts will inform development of the Lake Erie Committee's Yellow Perch Management Plan in the coming years.

THE LAKE ERIE COMMITTEE AND TACs

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 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.