



US House passes Great Lakes hatchery fish-tracking bill

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a bill to implement a mass marking program for the Great Lakes, improving the federal government's tracking of hatchery-origin fish in the bodies of water.

"Establishing a Great Lakes Mass Marking Program will improve the effectiveness of our fisheries while enhancing the environmental, scientific, and recreational benefits that healthy fish populations provide," U.S. Representative Bill Huizenga (R-Michigan) said in a statement. "This bipartisan initiative is a win for both the economy and the ecology of the Great Lakes."

The U.S. government utilizes 10 national hatcheries to supply fish to the Great Lakes, where commercial,

Tribal, and recreational fisheries produce USD 7 billion in economic value to the region. In 2024, national hatchery programs stocked 4.8 million fish in the lakes.

The USFWS marks hatchery fish to better understand how they are interacting with the regional ecosystem, however, the government only has enough resources to mark roughly 41 percent of the fish raised. Since 2010, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has marked many of the fish raised in hatcheries, allowing the government to better understand how they are interacting with the Great Lakes ecosystem.

"Mass marking is the practice of tagging large numbers of hatchery-raised fish so we can easily distinguish them from the wild fish population," U.S. Representative Debbie Dingell (D-Michigan) said in a statement. [The Great Lakes Mass Marking Program Act](#) would bolster those efforts,

establishing a federal mass marking program with USD 5 million (EUR 4.6 million) in annual funding.

"The implementation of mass marking will help us better understand the fish populations of our Great Lakes and the cultural, economic, recreational, and food benefits they provide," Dingell said. "This bill provides the tools needed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement a mass marking program for every hatchery fish in the Great Lakes region, which will allow fishery managers to collect valuable, timely information, ultimately improving the effectiveness and efficiency of hatchery operations and fishery management. I'm proud it passed the House, and will continue to work across the aisle with my colleagues to get it signed into law."

The legislation has been sent to the Senate, which will also have to approve of the legislation before it becomes law. ✧

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Panfish, A Passion Success is Key to about Fishing

Catching your first panfish is practically a rite of passage in Wisconsin. If you're looking to pass on the tradition of fishing to the next generation, remember that early success can make all the difference in getting kids excited about fishing. Try a public fishing pier or a designated fishing pond; these spots are often easy to get to, comfortable and provide a great chance for success.

Sophisticated equipment and complicated rigs can be frustrating for

Forever: Early Getting Kids Excited

even experienced anglers—we recommend starting kids out with the good old-fashioned hook and bobber. This approach is easy, adds visual excitement and most importantly, it's a proven fish catcher for panfish (and just about anything else that swims, too).

Wondering where to go? Our [Places to Take Kids Fishing webpage](#) provides information on where you can wet a line and help your kids land their first fish. ✧

Back from the Brink: Endangered Shortnose Sturgeon in the Hudson River

DEC recently announced new research that estimates the population of endangered shortnose sturgeon in the Hudson River to be nearly 70,000 individuals, likely making it the largest population of sturgeon anywhere in the world! The study was coauthored by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) [Eastern Ecological Science Center](#) (EESC).

[Shortnose sturgeon](#) are among the most endangered animals in the world but were once abundant in rivers along the Atlantic coast. However, their numbers declined dramatically as the result of overfishing and habitat degradation, leading to their listing under the federal [Endangered Species Act](#) in 1973. During this period, the population in the Hudson River was estimated to be only about 6,000 adults.

In spring 2021, DEC's [Hudson and Delaware Marine Fisheries](#), in partnership with USGS EESC, Cornell University, University of Delaware, and Delaware State University, embarked on a large-scale project to update estimates for the Hudson's shortnose sturgeon population using acoustic telemetry in tandem with side-scan sonar to locate and count fish. Acoustic telemetry uses stationary receivers to detect signals emitted from tagged marine species such as sturgeon. Side-scan sonar uses sound waves to create an image of the river floor and objects in the water column. Funding was provided by the [Hudson River Foundation](#) and DEC's [Hudson River Estuary Management Program](#) through New York State's [Environmental Protection Fund](#).

Despite the encouraging population estimate, the study also raises concerns about the sturgeons' vulnerability to localized disturbances. More than 40 percent of the population congregates in a small overwintering habitat, which coincides with an area of high human activity, including commercial shipping and underwater construction. ♦

DNR stocks 12 Indiana lakes with Striped, Hybrid Striped Bass

The Indiana DNR East Fork State Fish Hatchery recently completed its annual stocking of striped and hybrid striped bass. More than 21,000 striped and 147,000 hybrid striped bass fingerlings were added to 12 lakes around the state. The fingerlings averaged 1.5 inches in length.

The breakdown of stockings by lake, with the respective counties listed in parentheses, follows.

- Worster Lake (St. Joseph) – 3,270 hybrids
- Gilbert Lake (Marshall) – 370 hybrids
- Cedar Lake (Lake) – 7,810 hybrids
- Lake Shafer (White) – 12,910 hybrids
- Nyona Lake (Fulton) – 1,040 hybrids
- Lake Freeman (Carroll and White) – 15,470 hybrids
- Clare Lake (Huntington) – 420 hybrids
- Shadyside Park Lake (Madison) – 1,000 hybrids
- Cecil M. Harden Lake (Parke) – 20,600 striped bass
- Monroe Lake (Monroe and Brown) – 53,750 hybrids
- Hardy Lake (Scott) – 1,000 striped bass and 7,000 hybrids
- Patoka Lake (Dubois, Crawford, and Orange) – 44,000 hybrids

Indiana anglers can look forward to continued quality striped and hybrid striped bass fishing opportunities in the coming years as a result of these stockings. To learn more about striped and hybrid striped bass fishing, see bit.ly/stripped-hybrid-bass-fishing. ♦

The Wisdom of Thomas Jefferson

"The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not."



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Position Statement

Representing a major interest in the aquatic resources of the Great Lakes states and the province of Ontario, the Great Lakes Sport Fishing Council is a confederation of organizations and individuals with a concern for the present and future of sport fishing, our natural resources and the ecosystem in which we live. We encourage the wise use of our resources and a search for the truth about the issues confronting us.

Inland Seas Angler

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Reclaiming Michigan streams: Over 140 miles reconnected so far

The Michigan DNR, with help from many conservation partners, is halfway through completion of a [\\$5 million grant project](#) to remove 27 stream barriers, including 16 DNR-managed dams. Efforts to date have reconnected more than 140 miles of streams.

Funding for this work was awarded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (formerly the America the Beautiful Challenge), which seeks to conserve and restore aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, improve resilience to flooding and other threats, and expand community access to nature. The DNR was awarded grant funding in 2022, and work on the project began in June 2023.

"Funding from this partnership helped us restore connectivity to two major fisheries (Five Mile and Wycamp creeks) for LTBB citizens,"

said Samuel Day, Great Lakes fisheries research specialist at Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. "The new crossings make it easier for native fish like suckers to migrate from Lake Michigan to their spawning grounds and will help sustain these fisheries for generations to come."

Other completed aspects of the project also have yielded positive ecological and community effects. Removal of the Altona Dam on the Little Muskegon River has helped reconnect 116 miles of streams and tributaries and restore natural stream function. Native grasses and shrubs were installed in fall 2024, and native shade trees were planted in spring 2025. According to the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly, which partnered with the DNR on this effort, a public-access kayak launch is planned at the site, and additional ways to improve public river access on

the Little Muskegon are being explored, too.

An additional 11 projects are slated for action in 2026. The outcomes from all of these projects will serve to address public safety, protect valuable natural resources, and improve the ability of the DNR to focus management efforts and resources on dams in places that provide high-quality resource benefits and public use.

Many of the removal projects that are called "dams" aren't really serving as dams but are barriers that require removal for public safety and better fish movement upstream and downstream. The following four projects slated for removal are located in the channel but serve no useful purpose and prevent fish from moving upstream: Carr Creek Fish Barrier (**Delta Co.**), Big Trout Lake Fish Barrier (**Marquette Co.**), Buckhorn Creek Dam (**Mecosta Co.**) and East Branch Dam (**Oscoda Co.**). ✧

Walleye and saugeye successfully stocked across state this spring

This spring, the Indiana DNR completed its annual stocking of waterways with walleye and saugeye. These fish are known for being excellent table fare and for the skill it takes to catch them. Because these fish don't reproduce naturally in most of Indiana, DNR spawns and stocks them.

Spawning operations from late March to early April, which are organized at Brookville Lake, resulted in 32.2 million fertilized walleye eggs. The eggs yielded 18.9 million walleye fry, 487,304 walleye fingerlings (average 1.4"), and 156,725 saugeye fingerlings (average 1.4"). Fry were stocked at the end of April, and walleye and saugeye fingerlings were stocked at the end of May.

Additional walleye fingerlings are being grown in state hatcheries for fall stockings.

Stocked bodies of water, with their county in parentheses, include:

- Walleye fry: Bass Lake (Starke), Brookville Lake (Franklin and Union), Monroe Lake (Brown and Monroe), Patoka Lake (Orange, Dubois, and Crawford), and Shafer Lake (White).
- Walleye fingerlings: Cagles Mill Lake (Owen and Putnam), Fish Lake (LaGrange), Kokomo Reservoir (Howard), Lake of the Woods (Marshall), Pike Lake (Kosciusko), Prairie Creek Reservoir (Delaware), Shafer Lake (White), Summit Lake (Henry), and Tippecanoe River/Oakdale Dam (Carroll).
- Saugeye fingerlings: Cedar Lake (Lake), Clare Lake (Huntington), Glenn Flint Lake (Putnam), Huntingburg Lake (Dubois), Koteewi Park Lake (Hamilton), and Sullivan Lake (Sullivan).

The statewide bag limit for walleye, sauger, and saugeye is six

fish per day, in combination. For walleye, the minimum size limit is 14 inches for waters south of State Road 26 and 16 inches for waters north of State Road 26. Exceptions to the walleye size limit are Bass Lake (Starke) and Wolf Lake (Lake), where the minimum is 14 inches; Lake George (Steuben), where the minimum is 15 inches; and Wall Lake (LaGrange), where the minimum is 16 inches with a two fish daily bag limit.

There is no size limit on sauger or saugeye, except at Huntingburg Lake (Dubois), Glenn Flint Lake (Putnam) and Sullivan Lake (Sullivan), and on the Ohio River, where the minimum size limit is 14 inches. Typically, walleye and saugeye will reach 14 inches after two years and 16 inches after three years.

Learn more about fishing for walleye and saugeye at on.IN.gov/walleye ✧

DNR Publishes 2024 Fish Stocking Summary

Over 5 Million Fish Stocked into Wisconsin Waters

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin DNR recently released the 2024 fish stocking numbers for inland waterbodies and the Great Lakes.

The DNR raises millions of yearling and fingerling fish to stock into Wisconsin waters every year. Over 5 million fish were stocked in 2024, which helped fulfill the quotas submitted by county fisheries biologists.

Stocking helps boost natural fish populations where natural reproduction can no longer support the fishery, maintain or restore existing fisheries and support recreational fishing opportunities. Stocking is also used to evaluate management actions or fish culture techniques.

DNR biologists analyze data collected from present and past surveys to determine which species and quantity should be stocked, along with other factors such as:

- Public input received during the development of species-specific management plans
- Experimental fisheries management strategies
- Specific watershed goals to restore self-sustaining fish populations, maintain existing fisheries or create recreational ones

DNR fish crews stocked fish in inland waters, Lake Michigan, Lake Superior and their tributaries across the state in 2024.

The following summaries provide total fish stocked by species in Wisconsin waters in 2024:

Inland Waters

- 231,685 brook trout
- 288,290 brown trout
- 10,945 lake sturgeon
- 86,552 lake trout
- 59,112 muskellunge
- 243,588 rainbow trout
- 1,195,570 walleye

Ohio approves 2025-26 hunting seasons

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Ohio Wildlife Council approved 2025-26 hunting and trapping seasons for white-tailed deer, migratory birds, small game, and furbearers during its regularly scheduled meeting according to the Ohio DNR. The [2025-26 deer hunting season dates](#) are similar to last year. As in years past, only one antlered deer may be taken during the 2025-26 hunting season.

Ohio's statewide deer seasons:

- Archery: Saturday, Sept. 27, 2025, to Sunday, Feb. 1, 2026
- Youth gun: Saturday, Nov. 22 to Sunday, Nov. 23, 2025
- Gun: Monday, Dec. 1 to Sunday, Dec. 7, 2025; Saturday, Dec. 20 to Sunday, Dec. 21, 2025
- Muzzleloader: Saturday, Jan. 3 to Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026

The Ohio Wildlife Council also voted to increase the antlerless deer limit on public hunting areas from one to two deer, as well as allow deer management permits to be used to hunt or take deer from public hunting areas. Deer management permits are valid statewide for antlerless deer until Sunday, Dec. 21, 2025. ✧

Continued from column 1

Lake Michigan

- 50,184 brook trout
- 475,045 brown trout
- 1,361,857 chinook salmon
- 517,166 coho salmon
- 1,139 lake sturgeon
- 15,495 muskellunge
- 446,150 rainbow trout

Lake Superior

- 199,885 brown trout
- 60,732 lake trout
- 54,743 splake

This data does not include the stocking of newly hatched fry, fish stocked by private fish farms under a stocking permit, fish stocked by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or fish stocked by our tribal partners. Visit the DNR's [Fish Stocking database](#) to view stocking data from previous years or specific waters. ✧

New sea lamprey barrier construction begins at Little Manistee River Weir

Construction began July 21 on a new sea lamprey barrier and trap at the Little Manistee River weir and egg take facility in Manistee County, Michigan. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will design and build the project in coordination with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, USFWS and Michigan DNR. The [Little Manistee River Weir](#), which has been in operation since 1968, is Michigan's primary egg collection site for Chinook salmon and only site for steelhead (rainbow trout) egg take. The weir underwent major renovations in 2019 to upgrade aging infrastructure; this new project will further improve the weir's function and prevent sea lamprey from infesting 41 miles of the Little Manistee River upstream of the weir. ✧

Nominations requested to Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Org Consultative Committee

NOAA Fisheries is seeking nominations for qualified individuals to be appointed to serve as members of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization Consultative Committee. The purpose of this body is to ensure that the interests of U.S. stakeholders are considered in the development of positions and policy relative to U.S. participation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO). Please submit nominations electronically to Shannah Jaburek, at the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office by email at Shannah.Jaburek@noaa.gov. You can submit nominations, including self-nominations, at any time. Please read the [federal register](#) notice for more detailed information. ✧

Researchers, officials reassess Lake Erie's health 11 years after water crisis

TOLEDO, Ohio – Eleven years after [Toledo's water crisis](#) left more than 400,000 people without safe drinking water, officials, researchers and residents gathered on Lake Erie to take a closer look at the lake's current health.

"It's always a great opportunity to see firsthand about the status of the lake," said Ohio Sen. Paula Hicks-Hudson aboard the research boat. The boat tour included elected leaders, scientists and curious residents, all eager to know how far the region has come since the 2014 crisis.

"It is a vital economic driver for our area," said Hicks-Hudson. "We are a major port, we're the eighth largest port in the country."

Researchers collected water samples from the lake, revealing an unsettling sight: algae-filled water.

"Liquid death," said Thomas Bridgeman the director of Lake Erie Center with the University of Toledo, holding up a bottle of green water.

The high concentration of algae is a sign that Lake Erie's health remains a concern. Despite years of remediation efforts, water quality advocates say improvements have been slow.

"We're not getting very far," said Sandy Bihn of Lake Erie Waterkeeper. She pointed to phosphorus runoff, primarily from animal manure, as the leading contributor to harmful algal blooms.

"The biggest growing, changing one that's caused this is the manure from the confined animal operations," Bihn said. "5,000 cattle at one facility, 150,000 in another. It's just too much waste being generated for the land around it to be able to take."

That waste, she explained, ends up in the lake through runoff, fueling the algae growth.

Researchers also pointed to the proximity of algae to Toledo's water intake system, which supplies drinking water to the city.

This wetland fight could go to the Supreme Court

A pending court case could impact farmers across the country. At issue is a USDA rule aimed at protecting wetlands called "Swampbuster." In place since 1985, it's being challenged in court by an absentee landowner in Iowa. Under Swampbuster, farmers have to agree not to drain or fill their wetlands, in order to receive farm benefits such as crop insurance, disaster relief and USDA loans.

Jim Conlan, in suburban Chicago, claims Swampbuster is unconstitutional. "And the reason I say that is because the federal government prohibits it from being used for anything that has any economic value at all," says Conlan. Conlan's investment firm owns a 72-acre parcel near the small town of Delaware, Iowa, which Conlan rents out to a local farmer. About nine acres of that land are considered wetlands.

"Every acre of wetland holds about one million gallons of water," says Katie Garvey, an attorney with the Environmental Law and Policy Center in Chicago. That is a concern for farmers who live downstream from Conlan's farm. "This is not an Iowan," says Elle Gadiant, who owns a farm with her husband in Worthington, Iowa. "This is someone who lives in Chicago, who has an investment property, and is trying to make a change that affects Iowa farmers."

A federal judge has ruled against Jim Conlan. His attorneys say they will be appealing. ✧

Continued from column 1

"So that's where our drinking water comes from," said Bridge. "And there's a big algal bloom around it right now. We're confident that the water plant is treating the water successfully, but we'd rather not have to worry about toxic algae in our water and toxic toxins from the algae."

While Bridgeman said recent algal blooms have been smaller than those in previous years, the region still has ways to go to ensure Lake Erie's long-term health. ✧

DNR to host Family Fun Day at Brule State Fish Hatchery Aug. 16

The Wisconsin DNR will host the annual Family Fun Day at the [Brule State Fish Hatchery](#) August 16. Festivities will begin at 10 a.m. This free, family-focused event will feature a variety of family fun activities. Attendees will be able to see stream shocking and fish filleting demonstrations, take guided hatchery tours, participate in fly tying and youth archery lessons, t-shirt paintings, and catch-and-release fishing. Vehicle admission stickers are not required on the day of the event. A valid [Wisconsin fishing license](#) is required for anyone age 16 or older to fish. For more info: [DNR Events Calendar](#) ✧

New record flathead catfish above 64 lbs

While bowfishing in Monroe County, an angler from Newport, Michigan, caught a new state-record fish: a flathead catfish weighing in at 64.46 lbs. and measuring 45 in. Codie Carlson was bowfishing Plum Creek June 29 when he brought in the record-breaker. This fish beats the previous state-record flathead catfish—53.35 lbs., 43 in.—caught in 2022 by Lloyd Tanner, of Hobart, Indiana, on the St. Joseph River in Berrien County ✧

DNR wants conversations about wildlife

Anyone interested in wildlife is invited to chat with Minnesota DNR wildlife managers in local DNR offices across the state from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 21, or by phone during these same hours. "We're asking people to please stop by or give us a call about anything related to Minnesota wildlife or habitat. We really want to talk," said David Trauba, wildlife section manager. "These conversations give us important viewpoints that can make our work more effective." Conversation topics can include anything related to wildlife. ✧

An Important Update from RBFF

July 14 We are writing to share an important update regarding RBFF's current status—and to thank you for the continued support that has powered our shared progress over the past 27 years.

On June 10, 2025, the USFWS and Department of the Interior (DOI) terminated RBFF's cooperative agreement to implement the National Outreach and Communication Program (NOCP), citing a shift in agency priorities. This decision came after an internal review process involving the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). RBFF, nor its Board, were offered an opportunity to meet with DOI or address any perceived misalignment, despite attempts by RBFF to connect.

Funding for our work was initially paused on April 1, and that disruption has already led to significant impacts. As a result, RBFF has had to pause or cancel major national outreach initiatives, including:

- The **Take Me Fishing™** campaign, along with our search, social, influencer, content and PR activations;
- State grant programs, the [State Marketing Workshop](#), [First Catch Centers](#), and the Boat Registration Reactivation Program;
- State-industry R3 pilot projects and other partnership efforts.

More than \$550,000 in matching funds from our partners have also been delayed or withdrawn. We have also been forced to furlough more than half of our staff.

Perhaps most concerning, since RBFF's funding and campaigns stopped on April 1, states participating in the national dashboard have reported an 8% drop in fishing

license sales—a reversal of the long-term growth trend we've worked together to build. If this decline were to play out nationally, the resulting economic loss could exceed \$18 billion annually, with nearly 90,000 jobs at risk.

Moving forward, DOI has posted a new funding opportunity for the NOCP, which appears to favor a different delivery model including an estimated 15 grants awarded instead of one. RBFF will be applying for these grants. Given the new approach, however, RBFF will not likely be the same organization going forward.

Still, we remain hopeful. RBFF was created by state and industry leaders with strong bipartisan support, and for nearly three decades, we've worked alongside you to elevate fishing and boating participation to [record high levels](#). This collaboration has helped boost conservation funding, outdoor access, and rural economies across all 50 states—and we believe it is something worth continuing.

We encourage you to [visit our website](#) to learn more about:

- RBFF's legislative mandate and funding model,
- Our 27-year track record of results, and
- The many ways you have contributed to a stronger future for fishing, boating, & conservation.

We're proud of all we've accomplished together. And we remain committed to advancing this important mission—even as we work to chart a new path forward.

Thank you again for your support.

Warm regards,
Dave Chanda, President & CEO
Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation ✧

Cash in black carp for \$100 and help invasive species research

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Illinois DNR are mapping the spread of invasive black carp throughout the Mississippi River Basin through a program called "Keep, Cool, Call." Arkansas anglers may participate and earn \$100 if they hook one of these fish by sharing the information about their catch.

According to Rachael Irby, invasive carp biologist for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, any angler can report the catch of a black carp in Arkansas to her and receive up to 10 payments per month, with each reward equaling \$100.

"Commercial anglers and recreational anglers, including bowfishers, who happen to catch a black carp are eligible," Irby said. "But they'll need to follow the correct

procedure to ensure they receive payment for their catch."

Anyone who catches a fish they believe to be a black carp should keep the fish, humanely dispatch it and place it on ice. Transporting a live invasive carp is illegal in Arkansas, so the fish must be dispatched before moving it. Make note of the location (preferably GPS coordinates), the type of fishing gear and bait used, and habitat conditions such as depth, water temperature and current conditions. Photos of the fish's head and mouth and total length will be required for identification purposes as well. Send all materials to Irby at rachael.irby@agfc.ar.gov or call her at 501-517-3904 to submit your entry. Please keep the carp on ice or frozen so the AGFC can arrange pickup to analyze the fish.

"We have an invasive carp identification flyer available at www.agfc.com/ans to help differentiate between the four species of invasive carp in Arkansas," Irby said. "Although the reward is only for the black carp, we still would like to know details about any other invasive carp caught in the state."

The black carp tracking program originated in Illinois and has been very successful in documenting information about this elusive invasive species. Due to its success, "Keep, Cool, Call" has expanded to include the entire Mississippi River Basin and its tributaries. Visit www.agfc.com/ans for more information about aquatic nuisance species in Arkansas. ✧

Bipartisan bill wants walleye to be Ohio's state fish

Ohio lawmakers are trying to reel in a catch by making walleye the official state fish. Ohio Reps. Sean Brennan, D-Parma, and D.J. Swearingen, R-Huron, once again introduced a bipartisan bill that would make the walleye Ohio's official state fish.



"I'm optimistic that we're going to reel this one in and finally make the walleye our state fish," Brennan said. "We are the walleye capital of the world, and Ohio is open for anglers from all over to come here and experience what Ohio is all about."

The lawmakers introduced [House Bill 312](#) at the end of May and it had sponsor testimony last month in the House Arts, Athletics and Tourism Committee. Ohio, Indiana, and Iowa are the only states without a designated state fish. The walleye is the state fish in Minnesota, South Dakota, and Vermont.

"By having an official state fish, it allows the state of Ohio to market that

to folks in other states," Brennan said. "I've talked to environmentalists who said that having a state fish can help them on their grant applications with different levels of government and with other nonprofits that make donations."

There are 72.1 million walleye in Lake Erie at least two years or older, meaning they are ready to be caught and kept, Brennan said in his testimony. For comparison, there are about 600,000 white-tailed deer in Ohio, he said.

The Walleye are the nickname of [Toledo's professional minor league hockey team](#) and Port Clinton celebrates the annual Walleye Festival as well as the Walleye Drop on New Year's Eve.

Brennan—who grew up fishing on Catawba Island—and Swearingen introduced the same bill during the previous General Assembly and it [easily passed the House](#) with only four dissenting votes, but it ran out of time in the Senate and died.

"It's not really controversial," Brennan said. "I mean, we passed almost unanimously last year." Having the walleye become the official state fish would help show off Lake Erie, Swearingen said. "There's a lot of people that come into the

district just to fish for that fish on Lake Erie," he said. "The economic impact is pretty large."

Jason Fischer runs three competitive walleye tournament series in Ohio—the [Lake Erie Walleye Trail](#), the [Walleye Fall Brawl](#), and the Ohio Walleye Federation. "Ohio is the walleye capital of the world," he said. "No questions asked, it is just astronomical." People from more than 20 states and Canada come annually to compete in the Walleye Fall Brawl. "You come to Ohio to fish for walleye because it's the best place in the world to do it," Fischer said.

Ohio fishing has an economic impact of \$5.5 billion per year, according to the [Ohio Department of Natural Resources](#).

"Just because somebody comes here to fish doesn't mean that the restaurants don't benefit, the fuel stations don't benefit, the hotels don't benefit," Fischer said.

For Ohio Marine Trades Association President Michelle Burke, naming the walleye the official state fish is a no brainer. "This shouldn't even have to be brought up again," she said. "It should just be a full vote. We love eating perch. Perch tastes great, but I think what the walleye does for Ohio far exceeds any other fish. ✧

Ohio Landowner-Hunter Access Partnership

COLUMBUS, OH – Although the program is currently closed, the program enhances hunting opportunities in Ohio. Landowners take notice and consider enrolling your property the next time the opportunity becomes available. The program is the Ohio Landowner-Hunter Access Partnership, which incentivizes property owners to provide land access to hunters. Since the program's launch in 2021, nearly 31,000 acres have been enrolled. Those interested in enrolling their property can visit the [Ohio Landowner-Hunter Access](#)

[Partnership](#) page at [wildohio.gov](#) to receive more information. Landowners can receive annual payments ranging from \$2 per acre for crop land to \$30 per acre for perennial wildlife habitats such as grasslands, wetlands, and forests. Additionally, landowners may receive a bonus payment if they allow white-tailed deer gun hunting. Enrollment contracts are two years, with the possibility of re-enrollment.

Enrolled lands can be accessed between September and June by hunters with a free daily access permit.

Permits are distributed on a first come, first served basis, and reduce overcrowding on huntable lands. Participating hunters receive a list of rules for the property prior to accessing the land, and landowners receive a notification when hunters will access their property. All hunting activities except white-tailed deer gun hunting and trapping are permitted by Ohio Landowner-Hunter Access Partnership users. Permits can be obtained at [wildohio.gov](#) or on the free [HuntFish OH](#) mobile app. ✧

Record High Fishing Participation Reached in 2024

57.9 million Americans went fishing in 2024, but churn continues to threaten long-term gains.

Alexandria, VA – The post-pandemic surge of participation in fishing continues to get record numbers of participants on the water, but data from the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation's (RBFF) [2025 Special Report on Fishing](#) finds churn continues to pose a significant challenge for the industry. In 2024, 57.9 million Americans ages 6 and up took to the nation's waterways to enjoy recreational fishing, an all-time high 19 percent of the U.S. population. Data also continues to underscore the critical importance of introducing fishing at a young age.

Eighty-five percent of current fishing participants fished before the age of 12, but participation rates fell sharply after a child turned 18, and specifically female youth quit fishing at an 11% higher rate than male youth.

"Retaining newcomers remains an integral part of fishing's continued success," said RBFF President & CEO Dave Chanda "New anglers are younger, from all walks of life and digitally connected. The industry must remind newcomers about great fishing experiences, highlight convenient water access, provide beginner educational resources, emphasize the social aspects of fishing and boating and recommend cost-effective equipment."

According to the new report, spending time with family and friends was a key driver for new anglers in 2024. Many new anglers also reported that being in the great outdoors and relaxation inspired their first fishing trip. In addition to these results, the report provides a comprehensive look at the state of fishing participation in the U.S.:

- 5.1 million Americans tried fishing for the first time in 2024, representing 9% of total participants, up from 7% in 2023.

- More than 43 million Americans ages 6 and over went freshwater fishing in 2024, holding steady for the third consecutive year.
- After hitting 15 million anglers for the first time in 2023, saltwater fishing participation grew slightly to 15.1 million in 2024.
- For the second year in a row, fly fishing topped 8 million participants.
- 21.3 million women went fishing in 2024, the highest number of female participants on record.
- 36.7 million men went fishing in 2024, the highest number of male participants on record.
- More than 5.5 million Black Americans ages 6 and over fished in 2024, the highest number since activity tracking began in 2007.
- Hispanic fishing participation increased by over 3 million in a decade, increasing from 3.3 million in 2014 to 6.6 million in 2024.

"Despite all this good news, there are two very concerning trends in fishing participation," added Chanda. "Each year we're losing more and more participants, and avid participants are fishing less."

In 2024, fishing lost 16.6 million anglers (a -23% churn) vs. -18 percent five years ago and -12% 10 years ago. In addition, participation among more frequent anglers has gradually declined since participation tracking began in 2007. Just 32% fished once a month or more in 2024, down from 37% a decade ago. RBFF conducted research in 2023 on the [Psychology of Churn](#) to help its state and industry stakeholders tackle these challenges.

The Special Report on Fishing, an annual report in its 15th year, provides an overview of fishing participation in the U.S., including participation numbers among key groups, barriers to entry, reasons for participation, and more. RBFF

created the report in partnership with the Outdoor Foundation.

The full report is available at [TakeMeFishing.Org/SpecialReport](https://www.TakeMeFishing.Org/SpecialReport). ✧

Grass carp caught from Lake Huron

A 58-pound grass carp caught on Lake Huron on July 14 was sterile, according to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The massive fish was found barely alive and floating near the Bruce Nuclear Power Plant in Baie Du Doré, Bruce County by longtime angler Richard Elliot. It is the third, and biggest, grass carp reported on Lake Huron—and, it is thought, the second largest reported in Canada.

Elliot, who recognized the fish for what it was, immediately reported it to the DFO, who sent a crew over that day to analyze it. "This grass carp capture, while shocking due to its size and proximity northward, does not represent a significant risk to our waterways," Invading Species Hotline Advisor Brook Schryer said. "(The carp) was found to be sterile, and its size is an indication that it spent its time feeding as opposed to reproducing."

If allowed to establish in Canadian waters, this species would have significant impacts on wetlands and aquatic vegetation, which would lead to the loss of biodiversity and essential habitat for a number of native species. Schryer advises anglers who believe they have seen or captured a grass carp to take a photo of it, mark the location, and call the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711 or report online at:

<https://www.EDDMapS.org>

Visit

www.invadingspecies.com/downloads/invasive-fish to download a grass carp lookalike fact sheet ✧

Pennsylvania Governor signs Legislation Repealing Sunday Hunting Ban

Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro signed bipartisan [House Bill 1431](#), introduced by Representative Mandy Steele (D-33), into law to repeal the state's centuries-old ban on Sunday hunting. The Pennsylvania Game Commission today announced that beginning September 14, and through the second Sunday in firearms deer season December 7, all Sundays that fall within established hunting seasons will be included as part of those seasons and open to hunting. Migratory game bird seasons are the lone exception. No Sundays will be added to the 2025-26 migratory game bird seasons because those seasons are set through federal frameworks and adding any Sundays at this time would result in a loss of hunting days in 2025-26. For other species with open seasons, the Sundays authorized for hunting in 2025 are: Sept. 14, Sept. 21, Sept. 28, Oct. 5, Oct. 12, Oct. 19, Oct. 26, Nov. 2, Nov. 9, Nov. 16, Nov. 23, Nov. 30, and Dec. 7. ✧

DNR welcomes 15 new conservation officers to protect Michigan's natural resources

The Michigan DNR Conservation Officer Training Academy hosted graduation at the Ralph MacMullan Center in Roscommon, welcoming 15 officers into the ranks of some of the most highly trained law enforcement professionals in the state. The officers of Training Academy No. 13 completed one of the most competitive law enforcement academies in the state. ✧

[Summary of the 163rd Meeting of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission](#)

HARRISBURG, Pa (July 28) – The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) began its quarterly business meeting by encouraging anglers and boaters to continue to enjoy summer fishing and boating adventures across the Commonwealth while staying safe and being aware of weather conditions. Click on title to view/read the seven page report. ✧

Black River sturgeon hatchery open for tours **Aug. 23**

Following the tours, enjoy the release of hatchery-reared sturgeon fingerlings into the Black River and Mullett Lake

If you'd like to get an up-close look at lake sturgeon and learn more about what goes into rearing this unique fish, you're invited to take a free tour at the Black River hatchery **Saturday, Aug. 23**. Tours will run from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the facility, located northwest of Onaway. "Visitors will see 3-month-old lake sturgeon currently in the hatchery and learn about early life history, as well as how we can all play a role to keep this species healthy in our waters," said Tim Cwalinski, Northern Lake Huron Unit supervisor with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Researchers from the DNR and Michigan State University will be on-site to talk about lake sturgeon biology, life stages and current research. Sturgeon for Tomorrow representatives will discuss restoration work to improve sturgeon spawning habitat, sturgeon conservation and outreach programming. ✧

Hunters: Sign up for fall Gun Deer Hunt for Hunters With Disabilities

Deadline to apply is Sept. 15

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin DNR reminds eligible hunters hoping to participate in the [Gun Deer Hunt For Hunters With Disabilities](#) to contact and confirm a location with a hunt landowner sponsor before September 15, 2025. Thousands of acres of land are available for this year's hunt, which will take place October 4-12, 2025. Hunters should [contact sponsors directly](#) to participate in the 2025 hunt.

Some properties can accommodate more hunters than others, so hunters are advised to contact potential sponsors as early as possible to determine availability. "This special hunt offers hunters with disabilities the opportunity to deer hunt during a time and in a place that is more accessible for them," said Brooke VanHandel, DNR assistant deer and elk specialist. "We are so thankful for our landowner sponsors who are willing to partner with hunters and open their properties to allow more individuals to participate in Wisconsin's deer hunting tradition."

To sign up for a hunt, hunters or assistants provide your name, contact info and DNR customer ID number. To be eligible, hunters must possess a valid Class A, C or D disabled permit or qualifying Class B permit. Eligible hunters may sign up for one sponsored property per year and must possess a gun deer license. For more info: [Deer Hunting for Hunters with Disabilities webpage](#) ✧

Watch out for commercial fishing nets in Michigan

When you're on the water, keep an eye out for commercial fishing operations. These commercial fishing nets are often found near popular ports, marked by tall buoys with orange flags and typically a fair distance apart.

Getting snagged in a net or its lines not only impacts recreational anglers, tribal fishers, state-licensed commercial businesses and scientists, but can cause serious damage to your gear or boat's motor.

If you become entangled, 1) turn off the engine or put the boat in neutral, 2) cut yourself free using wire cutters and/or label your gear if left behind, 3) mark the net's location on your GPS and attach a buoy or jug for officials and 4) report GPS coordinates to an enforcement agency.

Nets are often clustered together within designated management zones. In some areas of the Great Lakes, boaters and anglers could go a lifetime without encountering commercial, tribal, or state agency fishing equipment. Even in areas of active net use, most boats pass harmlessly over nets without even knowing they're there. Visit the [Michigan DNR commercial fishing website](#) to find updated information about possible net management zones in Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, and Lake Erie.

For specific information on Great Lakes fishery co-management and commercial fishing regulations:

The information on this page provides essential safety tips for those who may encounter fishing nets while on the water in Michigan. Intentional damaging or tampering with fishing gear or cutting of buoys is a federal offense punishable by fine and/or imprisonment under 18 USC 241 Conspiracy Against Rights of Citizens and 18 USC 245 Federally Protected Activities.

For more detailed information about specific regional or institutional regulations and authorities, please see the resources listed below:

- [Michigan Department of Natural Resources \(MDNR\) Great Lakes co-management](#)
- [Michigan laws related to aquatic species](#)
- [Great Lakes Fishery Commission fishery management](#)
- [Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission \(GLIFWC\) fishery management](#)
- [Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority \(CORA\) 1836 regulations](#)
- [Keweenaw Bay Indian Community tribal governance code](#)
- [Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians code of laws](#)

Net users are responsible for all aspects of net safety and are required to make sure that their operating procedures are compliant with local, state, and tribal regulations. For more information about regulations and requirements for operating fishing nets in the Great Lakes, contact your local natural resources office. Tampering with commercial and tribal fishing gear is illegal and can create safety hazards for others on the water.

Here are some key safety tips for helping everyone safely share Great Lakes waters:

- If you see an orange marker, pull up any of your own gear, TURN AWAY from the visible marker, and navigate out of the area.
- If additional markers are visible, DO NOT pass between them. Give a wide berth as nets can cover over an acre (the size of a football field) underwater.
- If a crew is actively working on a net, do not pass between the boat and nearby markers.

- Additional markers could be out of sight. Waves, glare, fog, or low light may limit visibility.
- Stay mindful in surrounding waters for more nets or floating ropes.

[Find contact info and learn more.](#) ✧

DNR's Eastern UP Citizens' Advisory Council to meet Aug. 21 in Alger County

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Council is scheduled to hear a status update on a Little Lake Harbor project, upcoming wildlife user group meetings, and review several old business items when the council meets **Thursday, Aug. 21.**

The meeting will take place from 6 to 8:30 p.m. EDT at the Munising Township Hall, located at E9630 Prospect Street in Wetmore.

Additional business includes reports from various DNR division staff and council subcommittees.

For public comment instructions, please contact Kristi Dahlstrom at dahlstromk@michigan.gov or 906-226-1331.

====The DNR's eastern and western Upper Peninsula citizens' advisory councils are designed to provide local input to advise the DNR on regional programs and policies, identify areas in which the department can be more effective and responsive and offer insight and guidance from members' own experiences and constituencies.

The council members represent a wide variety of natural resource and recreation interests. Agenda items are set by the council members and council recommendations are forwarded to the DNR for consideration. ✧

2 Amendment Issues:

Republican AGs join gun rights groups' suit to repeal NFA law

Fifteen Republican state attorneys general joined Second Amendment groups that went to court last month to strike down the National Firearms Act. The lawsuit challenges the constitutionality of a new \$0 tax and registration scheme for certain suppressors and firearms with short barrels to justify upholding the NFA as a tax statute.

Attorneys general from Alaska, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, West Virginia and Wyoming joined a coalition suit following the failure of the GOP-run Congress to fully repeal the 1934 gun control law in the One Big Beautiful Bill.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said at the Gun Owners of America's leadership summit last weekend that although Republicans didn't repeal the NFA through the One Big Beautiful Bill, reducing the NFA tax from \$200 to zero opened a legal opportunity.

"That repeal of the fee was what the Supreme Court in 1937 had used to allow the federal government to say it was a tax, and therefore they could regulate guns and override the Second Amendment," Mr. Paxton said. "With no fee, now there's no tax, and that means we have an opening, and so we have sued along with Gun Owners of America to try to get that taken out so there's no longer regulation registration for those different weapons, and we're going to win that."

GOA said in a statement that "in the 1930s, the Supreme Court only narrowly upheld the NFA solely as a tax statute—not as a firearms regulatory law," citing that the court ruled in 1937's *Sonzinsky v. United States* the NFA was

permissible under Congress' taxing power. "But once the tax is reduced to \$0, the constitutional justification for the law collapses," GOA said.

GOA has also long argued that the NFA's registration mandates violate the Second Amendment and are an unconstitutional overreach of federal power. With the tax mechanism gutted and reduced to an unworkable state by Congress, GOA's forthcoming legal challenge will aim to strike down what remains of what it sees as an obsolete and abusive law. A similar argument was brought to the Supreme Court in 2021 in *California v. Texas*, when the high court ultimately upheld the Affordable Care Act after ruling the plaintiffs lacked standing to challenge the law.

The case originated from a lawsuit saying that the ACA's individual mandate, which requires most Americans to have health insurance or pay a penalty, was unconstitutional after Congress reduced the penalty to zero, but the Supreme Court opined that the plaintiffs didn't suffer any injury from the mandate, so the challenge was dismissed.

GOA's Aidan Johnston told *The Washington Times* that its suit is different from the one brought up against Obamacare four years ago and that the NFA needs to be struck down completely despite the fees being at zero, because firearm owners can still face penalties for not complying with the statute.

"Well, in our case, for gun owners, right now, the tax is \$0 but if you don't pay it, if you don't comply with the National Firearms Act, then Congress has specified in 1934 that you should go to jail for 10 years, and you should pay a

\$250,000 fine per violation," Mr. Johnston said.

"So the tax is zero, and the whole National Firearms Act is based on being a tax and a registration of the tax paid, and yet there is a heck of a large punishment for gun owners who violate that law."

He added, "So we believe there's going to be standing in our case. We believe we've got a great shot at challenging the whole National Firearms Act." ♦

DNR Seeking Input on Franklin Lake Walleye Rehabilitation Project

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) invites the public to meet with DNR staff and partners in person on Wednesday, Aug. 27, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the VFW post in Eagle River, Wisconsin, for a public meeting on an



upcoming walleye spawning reef project on Franklin Lake.

This meeting will discuss the results of a 2025 comprehensive survey of Franklin Lake and the changes that have been documented in the fishery over the past 50 years. The majority of this meeting will focus on the walleye population, which was once strong but has been below what is considered a "fishable" level over the past 20 years. Public input will be sought on a proposed walleye spawning reef that would be constructed along U.S. Forest Service property to help rehabilitate the walleye population. ♦

Other Breaking News Items:**(Click on title or URL to read full article)****[Cheboygan Lock reopens to boaters after completing extensive underwater renovation project](#)**

The Cheboygan Lock in Cheboygan, Michigan, is once again open to boaters following the completion of significant underwater repairs

[‘Safer, healthier, more accessible’: \\$7M Kalamazoo River restoration project completed](#)

A decades-in-the-making project that aimed to remove the Plainwell Dam and restore nearly a mile of the Kalamazoo River has wrapped up.

[Democratic state lawmakers want drilling banned under Ohio state lands and Lake Erie](#)

Two Ohio state lawmakers want to ban any drilling for oil and gas under public state lands or the bed of Lake Erie. In early 2023, Ohio governor Mike DeWine signed a law clearing hurdles for drilling companies to obtain leases to extract resources from public

[Great Lakes mussel research starved of funds as whitefish vanish](#)

Invasive quagga mussels are one of the greatest threats to fish in recent Great Lakes history, but experts say funding for research to keep them at bay is woefully inadequate.

[This massive invasive fish with a voracious appetite was just found in Ontario. Here’s why it’s a problem and what’s being done about it](#)

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) confirmed a recreational angler reported finding a dying grass carp – a massive invasive fish – floating in Baie du Doré on Lake Huron on July 14. The DFO collected the fish and confirmed it was a

[“Incredibly rare” freshwater jellyfish captured on camera in Lake Erie](#)

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) shared a video of freshwater jellyfish at Presque Isle Bay in Lake Erie. The incredibly rare jellyfish is super hard to find, according to the DEP.

[Goldfish, traps and electric currents: Inside Canada’s quiet war against invasive carp](#)

Since 2012, a total of 34 grass carp have been captured in Canadian waters. Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada crews are documenting the native ecosystem, as the entire Great Lakes watershed may be on the brink of irreversible

[Great Lakes fisheries bill wins House approval in bipartisan show of power](#)

In a rare show of bipartisan unity, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Great Lakes Mass Marking Program Act. The bill directs the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to coordinate with state and tribal agencies to implement a standardized

[Extreme heat. Warmer water. More ticks. Fewer fish. Climate change report brings grim news.](#)

Climate change continues to have a profound impact on the Great Lakes region, bringing more extreme weather, declining fish populations, and subtle but profound economic transformation, according to a new report by the Environmental Law

[Decline of whitefish in Lake Michigan sparks fears that the fish might disappear](#)

Wisconsin state regulators say the commercial harvest of lake whitefish in Lake Michigan has reached its lowest level since 1990, and some fisheries biologists fear the species might largely disappear in parts of the lake.

[Lake Erie feels like a ‘bathtub’ right now. Here’s why that’s fueling fears for harmful algae blooms in Ontario](#)

Rising water temperatures are creating unusual “bathtub conditions” in western Lake Erie this summer, raising concerns for harmful algal blooms.

[‘We can’t regulate ourselves’ out of whitefish crisis, experts say](#)

More research into how to stem the scourge of invasive mussels is needed if Michigan has any hope of revitalizing the collapsing lake whitefish population, fishery experts told state regulators. The experts also advised the state to take up

[Whitefish decline a ‘big’ problem in Great Lakes, DNR biologist says](#)

The Great Lakes whitefish population is in steep decline, particularly in the main waters of lakes Michigan and Huron. Invasive quagga and zebra mussels are largely to blame for the decline, as they have gobbled up the vast majority of the

Scientists test methods to fight invasive mussels in Lake Michigan

Scientists are trying new strategies to manage invasive mussels in Lake Michigan after decades of ecological disruption caused by the fast-spreading species

Could new fishfinder technology sink muskie population?

A simmering debate over the use of forward-facing sonar to catch fish is heating up on Northwestern Ontario's Eagle Lake with its world-class muskie fishery. A group of lodge owners on the lake is urging anglers to voluntarily avoid using the

'Astonishing' increase in Lake Erie surface temperature this summer, scientist says

The surface temperature in the western basin of Lake Erie is currently 26 degrees Celsius (78.8 degrees F), and even higher in some places. Elevated water temperature is a contributor to the formation of blue-green algae, which can

Michigan fishing regulators to discuss Great Lakes whitefish crisis

Michigan fish and wildlife regulators will receive an expert presentation this week on the troubles facing lake whitefish as populations of the iconic Great Lakes species plummet in lakes Michigan and Huron

Lake trout restoration gains momentum

A lake trout recently caught off Sheboygan, Wisconsin, may offer a sign of the long-term success of Great Lakes restoration efforts

Western Lake Erie's 2025 algal bloom has begun

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said in a bulletin issued Thursday that "patches" of cyanobacteria, commonly called blue-green algae, have been detected via satellite in western Lake Erie.

Plan to reopen a commercial port on Lake Superior gets a financial boost

The Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation announced that it will contribute \$1 million toward reestablishing Ontario's Peninsula Harbor Port as a modern, functional transportation hub. Organizers have said the facility, to be constructed on the

End