Inland Seas Angler
GREAT LAKES BASIN REPORT©

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Iconic whitefish on edge of collapse, struggle to survive

Whitefish populations in the Great Lakes are facing a severe decline, primarily due to invasive species and ecological changes, putting them on the brink of collapse.

Current Status of Whitefish

Whitefish, a beloved species in the Great Lakes region, are experiencing a dramatic decline in their populations, particularly in Lakes Michigan and Huron. After decades of slow decrease, the situation has escalated to a critical point where many scientists believe whitefish are now on the verge of collapse. The commercial harvest of whitefish has plummeted from 6.9 million pounds in 2009 to less than 2 million pounds in 2024, indicating a significant drop in their numbers.

The primary culprit behind this decline is the invasion of quagga mussels, which have drastically altered the ecosystem. These mussels filter out essential microorganisms and nutrients from the water, leading to a lack of food for young whitefish. As a result, many baby whitefish are starving shortly after birth, unable to find the phytoplankton they rely on for survival. Additionally, the aging population of whitefish, with many individuals in their mid-20s, is struggling to reproduce effectively, further exacerbating the decline.

Whitefish hold significant cultural and economic importance in Michigan, being a staple of local cuisine and a symbol of the region's identity. The decline of whitefish not only threatens the fishing industry but also impacts local traditions and community ties to the Great Lakes. As the fish become increasingly rare, they transform from a daily staple to a nostalgic memory for many residents.

Efforts are underway to address the crisis, including research into controlling the invasive mussel populations and exploring methods to support whitefish reproduction. However, experts warn that significant changes may take years or even decades to implement effectively. The situation remains dire, with many scientists expressing concern that without immediate and effective action, whitefish may disappear entirely from their historic waters.

In summary, the iconic whitefish of the Great Lakes are facing a critical situation, with their populations dwindling due to ecological changes and invasive species. The implications of this decline extend beyond the fish themselves, affecting local culture, economy, and the broader ecosystem ✧

In this issue…

Federal grant creating new academy for Great Lakes Management

The State of Wisconsin is using a federal grant to establish a new Great Lakes-focused academy. Governor Tony Evers's Office and the Wisconsin DNR announced the creation of the Wisconsin Great Lakes Coastal Leadership Academy after the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program received a $209,894 grant through NOAA's Project of Special Merit competition. Evers says the project will increase the resilience of Wisconsin's Great Lakes communities to coastal hazards through in-person workshops for local officials, planners, and decision-makers.

A survey conducted through the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative reveals that cities along the Great Lakes will invest millions in coastal resilience-related projects and hazard preparation over the next decade.

Evers says Republicans gutted an investment to remove contaminated sediments in the Great Lakes and tributaries.

More information about the Wisconsin Coast Management Program can be found on the Department of Administration website at doa.wi.gov. ✧

Ohio River Way is America's Newest National Water Trail!

CINCINNATI, OH (June 9, 2025) – The Ohio River Way, a trail connecting communities across Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio, has officially been designated as a National Water Trail at the recommendation of the National Park Service. This rare recognition marks the largest addition to the National Trails System this year—out of 387 miles designated nationwide, the Ohio River Way accounts for 308 miles.

"This has been years in the making," explained Forest Clevenger, Executive Director of the Ohio River Way. "The idea for the Ohio River Way grew from a crew of volunteers, including the visionaries Brewster Rhoads and Dr. David Wicks. Since then, volunteers and community leaders spanning three states have collaborated to make this designation a reality. I couldn't be prouder of our incredible team."

Stretching from Ashland to West Point, KY, the Ohio River Way links Appalachian wilderness, vibrant small towns, and metropolitan centers like Cincinnati and Louisville. The designation not only puts the Ohio River Way on the map nationally, but it recognizes the route's world-class resources for paddlers and boaters. These include the Ohio River Way's interactive map, paddling guide, boating safety information, and signage at its 74 public access points.

When making the designation, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum said, "National Recreation Trails create opportunities for locally managed tourism to boost economies and benefit hikers, bikers, paddlers and other recreationists." Designations of new National Recreation Trails, such as National Water Trails, are made by the Secretary of the Interior or, if predominantly on U.S. Forest Service lands, the Secretary of Agriculture. "This investment into conservation and outdoor recreation will benefit the American people for generations to come."

Over 90 entities formally endorsed the Ohio River Way's application, including Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear. In his letter of support, Gov. Beshear wrote, "This designation would bring national recognition to this vital waterway, highlighting the natural beauty of our region and the vibrant culture of Kentucky's river towns."

The growth of the Ohio River Way was guided by a partnership with the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance program. According to Stephan Nofield, Associate Director of the National Park Service, this designation offers "substantial benefits to the cities and towns along its route." He explained, "As a designated National Water Trail, the Ohio River Way will attract paddlers, anglers, boaters, and nature enthusiasts from across the country, increasing tourism and outdoor activity in riverside communities."

The Ohio River Way's route highlights the region's rich history, from the Lewis and Clark expedition, the Underground Railroad, and early river commerce propelled by flatboats and steamboats. Now, with National Water Trail status, its cultural and ecological value will be shared with even more people across the nation.

The National Trails System includes scenic, historic, and recreation trails. Other 2025 National Recreation Trail designees include the Miner's Ravine Trail in California, the Elizabeth River Trail in Virginia, the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway in Wisconsin, and Ohio's own Cuyahoga River Water Trail.

About the Ohio River Way

The Ohio River Way is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to promoting outdoor recreation, environmental stewardship, and economic development along the Ohio River. Through its commitment to on-the-ground and on-the-water community engagement, the organization fosters regional collaboration and encourages individuals to explore and appreciate one of the country's most historic waterways. **Ohio River Way** ✧

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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.

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Shallow-water ciscoes gone from Lake Erie for decades may come back from northeastern Pa.

Efforts are underway to determine if a lost native species of fish in Lake Erie can be reintroduced from its descendants that have been found on the opposite side of Pennsylvania.

Doug Fischer, nongame fisheries biologist and ichthyologist for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, is one of several biologists investigating the shallow-water strain of ciscoes that's been missing from Lake Erie for 65 years.

Ciscoes, a member of the trout family, were extirpated from Lake Erie in the 1950s or early 1960s. However, in 2016, biologists found a strain of the shallow-water ciscoes descending from Lake Erie thriving in a pristine private lake in NE northeastern Pennsylvania.

"There are a bunch of things that are happening all at once and they do involve multiple states. This fish used to be extremely common in the Great Lakes and in particular, Lake Erie. In the late 1800s, it supported the largest fishery, probably in the world, certainly in the U.S.," Fischer said.

"Lake Erie is kind of a unique scenario within the Great Lakes system, it's on average the shallowest among the Great Lakes," he said. "Because of that, it also had a unique group of ciscoes. There were actually two types. One was the really common Great Lakes cisco. That's the cisco that's common throughout the upper and lower lakes, but Lake Erie also had one called the shallow-water cisco. It, in its pure form, looks different than the Great Lakes cisco."

"A shallow-water cisco had some attributes that were different. It was a bigger individual, it was more slab-sided and it resided in the shallower waters," he said. Some adults can grow to be 18 inches long or longer. Ciscoes primarily eat plankton and small organisms found in the water. "They eat small fish, they eat macroinvertebrates, small May flies, any of the other fleas and diatoms in the water," he said.

However, in the past decade, there has been a push by the Great Lake states to take a look at the coldwater aspects of the Great Lakes. During his research for the book, he found out about a lake trout population in a lake in Lackawanna and Susquehanna counties in northeastern Pennsylvania. "It's the only reproducing lake trout population in the whole state," he said.

The following year the agency sent a team of biologists to survey the now privately-owned Crystal Lake and found both lake trout and cisco. "It was like a rediscovery," he said.

"When we got the first individual, it was pretty obvious what it was. It was huge, one of those 18-inch or so ones," Fischer said. The people in the area thought they were whitefish, but the biologists quickly could tell they were ciscoes.

"You have the only lake producing lake trout in Pennsylvania and the long lost population of cisco," he said.

Through his research, he found out that cisco were collected from Lake Erie and delivered to a nearby hatchery and then sent to Pleasant Mount State Fish Hatchery. "From there, they were distributed to local waters, which makes sense because a lot of those natural lakes, that were subsequently improved with a low-head dam to increase the water volume, were stocked with lake trout in the late 1800s or early 1900s to create a fishery for people who vacation there. Knowing that ciscoes were the primary forage item for lake trout, the commission, we assume now, released those ciscoes to create a forage base for the lake trout," Fischer said.

He said the same scenario happened at other waterways like Harveys Lake in Luzerne County, and Lake Wallenpaupack, although they were not able to establish a reproducing population. Fortunately, Crystal Lake, which was open to public fishing more than 100 years ago, had the right pristine conditions for a natural reproducing population. "The shallow-water form, as far as we know, exists only in this one little lake as a remnant of stockings from the Fish Commission from the late 1800s or early 1900s," Fischer said.

The agency now visits the lake, with permission from the owners, to collect specimens to study their genetics. "The fish we found align strongly, very strongly, with the shallow-water cisco which would have been present only in Lake Erie historically," Fischer said. "It's kind of like finding the missing link when you're talking about Lake Erie.

The Great Lake cisco are still present in the upper lakes and Lake Ontario, but there's no other place to get shallow-water cisco for Lake Erie to round out the community there," he said Now the PFBC is evaluating whether or not the eggs and milt from Ciscoes in Crystal Lake can be used to create an aquaculture operation to then use to repopulate Lake Erie.

"That's pretty much where we are right now. We have lots of partners, the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, both federal agencies, a number of universities, the state of New York, the state of Pennsylvania, Fish and Boat Commission, have all been discussing this and talking about next steps and figuring out how this population may feed into this management plan for Lake Erie," Fischer said.

The fishery in the Great Lakes, governed by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, is also engaged in the project. Each lake has its own committee and subcommittee to work on proposals like this one. ✧

Commercial fishing license issued for lake whitefish in southern Lake Huron

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has issued Pinconning-based Serafin Fish Company a commercial fishing license for lake whitefish in southern Lake Huron from the port of Harbor Beach.

This license mirrors the prior research permit issued to Lixey Fish Company (now doing business as Serafin Fish Company) in 2015 through 2022. During the research period, DNR personnel monitored and evaluated the catch and health of southern Lake Huron whitefish populations, as well as determined the long-term potential of a sustainable and profitable commercial whitefish fishery in the area. Those efforts demonstrated the sustainability of managing a whitefish fishery in the Harbor Beach area.

The license is being issued in conjunction with a settlement term in *Serafin et al v DNR et al*, a federal suit on appeal to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, and reflects the parties' pre-litigation agreement to move one commercial fishing license from Saginaw Bay to the new port and retire three other commercial fishing licenses in Saginaw Bay.

The new Harbor Beach license is authorized to fish up to 10 large mesh trap nets for lake whitefish and other legal commercial fish species. Going forward, area recreational fishers and boaters are asked to watch for and avoid these nets while on the water; some nets have already been set, and additional nets will likely be set in the coming weeks. Though commercial fishing activity is weather-dependent and usually occurs between April and December, commercial fishing nets may be legally set and fished all 12 months of the year.

For more information on this fishery, including a map of the fishing grounds, net locations and pictures of the net markings, visit michigan.gov/dnr/managing-resources/fisheries/business/commercial/harbor-beach-fishery. ✧

New York Sea Grant Marine Camp connects youth to the outdoors

New York Sea Grant (NYSG) organizes a marine camp for youths from underserved communities in New York's Nassau County.

NYSG educators are skilled at utilizing New York's diverse shorelines as outdoor classrooms to teach lessons about coastal ecosystems to audiences of all ages. This place-based educational strategy often describes ways to mitigate adverse human impacts, and empowers communities to participate in coastal conservation efforts. While it may require less than twenty minutes for Long Island residents to travel to the shoreline for recreation, many low-income and immigrant households seldom have the opportunity to benefit from this local resource.

In 2024, NYSG continued its leadership in a partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Nassau County and the Jones Beach Energy & Nature Center to organize marine camp for underserved youth in low-income communities, teach lesson plans about shoreline ecology, and highlight common coastal and marine wildlife for camp participants.

More than 300 students from twelve youth support service organizations attended marine camp classes at the Jones Beach Energy and Nature Center. This was the largest enrollment in the seven-year history of this marine camp program. Eight one-day classes were offered, including opportunities to use a seine net to catch-and-release fish, hike to learn about dune ecology, tour the natural history museum display, and receive an introduction to green energy sources. Ten youth support service organizations received more than $10,000 from the NY State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant program to offset transportation costs.

This NYSG marine camp partnership provides 'hands-on' experiences to engage youth from low-income households in marine and coastal education programming. ✧

Sea Grant by the numbers

For over 50 years, the National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) has supported coastal and Great Lakes communities through research, extension and education. In 2023, a federal investment in Sea Grant of $94 million led to $828.3 million in economic benefits. This nationwide federal-university partnership program brings science together with communities for solutions that work.

Learn about the impacts of Sea Grant's research, education and extension efforts at **seagrant.noaa.gov/ourstory/impacts**. You can also download **a two-page fact sheet** (pdf). ✧

How to find your next fishing hot spot

Finding your next great fishing spot is as much about preparation as it is about getting on the water. Glenn May of BassResource shares his approach to uncovering the best fishing spots by combining research, understanding bass behavior, and hands-on exploration. With these tips, you'll not only find new hotspots but also enjoy the process of exploration. Here's how to do it: Watch **here**. ✧

New boating regulation in New York

As of January 1, 2025, New York State requires all motorized boaters to carry a Safe Boating Certificate from their home state or New York while operating. For those who do not already have a Safe Boating Certificate from their home state, boaters can earn their certificate by taking a classroom course with certified New York State instructors or through several other approved online courses. Visitors may rent and operate a boat without obtaining a boating safety certificate. Visitors who possess a valid state driver's license may rent power and pontoon boats, as well as certain non-motorized boats, at half-day, full-day, or multi-day rates. ✧

‘Lampreys don’t carry passports’: City plays key role in protecting Great Lakes

The Lakehead Region Conservation Authority has been collecting data for Canada’s Department of Fisheries and Oceans on Sea Lampreys an invasive species that cause the collapse of the fishing industry in the mid-1950s and early 1960s.

THUNDER BAY – Recent funding and staffing cuts at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have raised concerns in Canada about invasive lamprey population. Sea lamprey control is managed binationally by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Canada and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

“We're going to have huge problems in very short order on our Great Lakes,” warned Michael Rennie, Canada Research Chair in Freshwater Ecology and Fisheries at Lakehead University. “If there are major shortages in staffing and resources, the sustainability of our native fisheries is at risk and everyone should be concerned.”

“The success of our program has always been because of strong partnerships and a border-blind attitude,” Greg McClinchey, director of policy and legislative affairs for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC). “Lampreys don’t carry passports; they go where the food is. And that means we have to fight them where they are.”

In February, a series of decisions in the U.S. federal government terminated all Fish and Wildlife employees with probationary status and implemented a hiring freeze—this meant the agency couldn’t bring on seasonal staff as usual, McClinchey said. These setbacks hit a program already operating with minimal resources.

“Nobody in the administration or Congress woke up and said, ‘I hate the Great Lakes. I'm going to be on Team Lamprey,’” McClinchey commented, acknowledging the unintended consequences of the cuts.

Thanks to stakeholder pressure and scientific advocacy, emergency measures were enacted to hire additional seasonal workers and restructure treatment schedules, salvaging much of the 2025 control season, said McClinchey.

"We lost some pretty critical weeks, about five weeks, to be exact. However, we managed to get things back on track. They allowed the Fish and Wildlife Service to hire seasonal employees, and the administration even made the decision to hire extra help to compensate for that lost time," he said.

In 2024, the DFO installed a permanent sea lamprey trap in the Neebing River near Edward Street, strengthening long-term efforts to manage invasive species in the Great Lakes. This permanent installation replaces earlier temporary structures and reflects a broader strategy that includes monitoring and data collection in partnership with the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA).

Efforts to manage sea lampreys suffered a major setback during the COVID-19 pandemic, when treatment programs were paused. McClinchey called it a “forbidden experiment” that confirmed long-held fears. The lapse resulted in an estimated $2 billion in economic and ecological losses, significantly impacting both commercial and recreational fishing industries.

“During COVID, we did see the number of sea lampreys go up because there was no treatment schedule going around,” said McClinchey. "Anglers began reporting more fish with lamprey wounds, and in some regions, populations surged by up to 300 percent."

Thunder Bay currently operates two traps: the new permanent trap in the Neebing River and a seasonal trap at the Tamblyn site on Lakehead University property. The traps are active for six to eight weeks each spring, aligning with colder water temperatures that prompt sea lampreys to migrate upstream for spawning.

Captured lampreys are tagged and released as part of a mark-recapture program used to estimate population sizes and track movement. Lampreys from the Neebing trap are marked on the first dorsal fin, while those from Tamblyn are tagged on the second.

Originally native to the Atlantic Ocean, sea lampreys entered the upper Great Lakes in the 20th Century through the Welland Canal, which bypasses Niagara Falls, a natural barrier. Once established, they fed parasitically on large native fish such as lake trout, whitefish, sturgeon, and walleye, leading to devastating impacts.

Their arrival contributed to the collapse of regional fisheries in the mid-1900s. “The lampreys invading from the lower lakes was the straw that broke the camel’s back, especially in Lake Superior,” said Rennie.

In addition to traps and chemical lampricides, the control program uses electric barriers, portable traps, and the release of sterile males to reduce successful spawning. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission also publishes an annual treatment schedule to coordinate efforts across the region.

As these efforts continue, McClinchey said Thunder Bay’s expanded trapping infrastructure is playing a vital role in protecting the ecological and economic health of the Great Lakes. ✧

SCOTUS to decide if shutting down Great Lakes pipeline is a state or federal fight

The U.S. Supreme Court announced it will review whether Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel's lawsuit seeking to shut down a section of an aging pipeline beneath a Great Lakes channel belongs in state court.

Nessel sued in state court in June 2019 seeking to void the easement that allows the Enbridge energy company to operate a 4.5-mile section of pipeline under the Straits of Mackinac, which link Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. She won a restraining order shutting down the pipeline from Ingham County Judge James Jamo in June 2020, although Enbridge was allowed to continue operations after meeting safety requirements.

The company moved the lawsuit into federal court in 2021, arguing it affects U.S. and Canadian trade. But a three-judge panel from the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sent the case back to Jamo in June 2024, finding that Enbridge missed a 30-day deadline to change jurisdictions.

The Supreme Court did not explain its rationale for taking up the matter. Enbridge officials said they were encouraged by the Supreme Court's choice, noting that exceptions to the 30-day deadline exist.

Concerns over the section beneath the straits rupturing and causing a catastrophic spill have been growing since 2017, when Enbridge engineers revealed they had known about gaps in the section's protective coating since 2014. A boat anchor damaged the section in 2018, intensifying fears of a spill.

The company is seeking permits to encase the section of pipeline beneath the straits in a protective tunnel. The Michigan Public Service Commission granted the relevant permits in 2023, but Enbridge still needs approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy.

DNR approves $3.8 million in grants for recreational boating improvements

The Michigan DNR recently announced $3.8 million in Waterways Grant Program funding to 12 communities throughout the state to boost recreational boating.

This year, projects in Alger, Baraga, Barry, Benzie, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Huron, Mackinac, Macomb, Mason and Sanilac counties were approved for projects including marina renovation, dock replacements, seawall improvements, fuel tank replacement and engineering studies.

The funding is made possible through the DNR Parks and Recreation Division's Waterways Grant Program, which began in 1949 with the goal of expanding the harbor system along the Great Lakes and boating access sites throughout the state. Today, the system includes more than 1,200 state-sponsored boating access sites, 19 state-managed harbors and 63 local state-sponsored harbors of refuge along the Great Lakes.

Local units of government and state colleges and universities are eligible to apply for grant assistance for recreational boating improvements and development at grant-in-aid harbors and public boating access sites. The grant-in-aid program provides matching funding to help support quality recreational boating infrastructure. Communities are asked to match 50% of required funds.

Visit the Waterways Program Grants webpage to see the full list of 2025 Waterways Grants/description of projects. The grants are funded through the Michigan State Waterways Fund, a restricted fund derived primarily from boat registration fees and a portion of Michigan's gas tax that supports the construction, operation and maintenance of public recreational boating facilities.

The application period for the next round of Waterways Grant Program funding is due April 1, 2026. Learn more about the grant program and application materials at Michigan.gov/DNRGrants. ✧

Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary Designation

National Marine Sanctuary status will increase tourism and spur economic growth in New York State's eastern Lake Ontario region.

New York Sea Grant (NYSG) successfully worked with multiple community-based partners to promote maritime heritage and safe and environmentally-friendly recreation across NY's Great Lakes region. The region's impressive collection of historic shipwrecks draws divers and history buffs making a substantial economic impact on local coastal communities. The designation of a Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary (LONMS) was sought by four Lake Ontario counties to help promote recreational opportunities and provide protection for significant underwater sites along the lake's eastern shore. NYSG collaborates with partner groups to educate the public about the cultural and historic resources along the length of NY's Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River shoreline.

NYSG has participated on the LONMS Advisory Council since its inception and helped facilitate the four-county LONMS Nominating Committee's development of an application to the NMS designating authority, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Officially designated in 2024, the LONMS now has federal protection for this unique maritime historic, tourism, economic, and cultural resource area that spans a 1,722 square mile region from the western Wayne County line east to where Lake Ontario meets the St. Lawrence River. The Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary is the newest (and 3rd) National Marine Sanctuary on the Great Lakes (America's 16th). The designation will increase tourism and spur economic growth in New York's Great Lakes region. ✧

DNR Sucker River project set to start in Alger County

Construction will improve fish passage and control sea lamprey

Work on a new bridge and sea lamprey control barrier on the Sucker River in northern Alger County is set to begin this month.

"This two-stage project along Alger County Highway 58 that will improve stream health and connectivity consists of installing a new bridge and an upstream seasonal sea lamprey barrier, which will have myriad benefits for the fishery," Cory Kovacs, Michigan DNR Lake Superior Unit Manager, said.

Several organizations have come together to implement this project, including the DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Alger County Road Commission, Burt Township, Superior Watershed Partnership, Green Watershed Restoration, Beaver River Consulting and Sanchez Engineering.

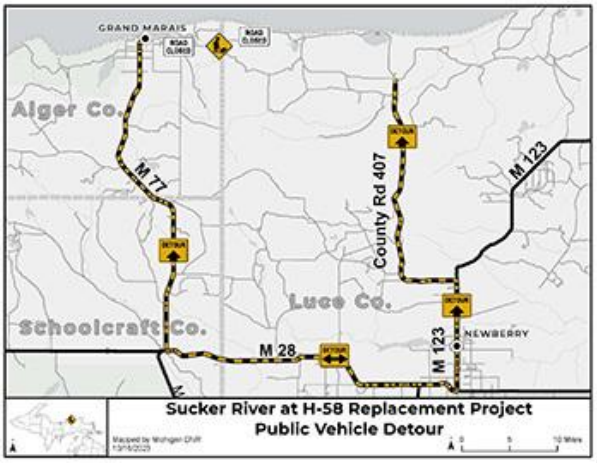
This $2.35 million project received funding from the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Sustain Our Great Lakes program, Great Lakes Fisheries Trust and the DNR's Fisheries Habitat Grant program.

The first phase of the project will replace two culverts at the Sucker River/H-58 road crossing with a free span bridge. The existing culverts are undersized, resulting in erosion of the stream banks. The erosion increases sedimentation in the river, degrading water quality for fish and other aquatic species.

In addition, the perched culverts, which hang above the water on the downstream end, prevent fish passage for many species unable to make the jump, like brook trout and suckers. However, while preventing passage for those species, the culverts only serve as a partial barrier to sea lamprey—an invasive species that parasitizes lake trout and other fish in the Great Lakes.

Sea lamprey migrate upstream in numerous Great Lakes tributaries to spawn. Lamprey barriers are one of several means employed to control sea lamprey populations, including dispensing lampricide in streams and capturing and sterilizing male sea lamprey.

Replacing the culverts with a bridge will allow fish, including the eponymous longnose and white (common) suckers, brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout (steelhead), coho salmon and Chinook salmon to move upstream to ideal spawning habitat, increasing their natural reproduction.



The bridge will also restore natural stream function to the downstream reaches of the river, improving movement of woody material and sediment in the system and reducing erosion of the stream banks.

During the second phase of the project, a seasonal sea lamprey barrier will be constructed farther upstream. This new lamprey barrier will stop the advancement of sea lamprey, allowing seasonal fish passage around the structure when lamprey are not spawning.

Constructing this barrier will also eliminate the need for lampricide treatments in 95 miles of upstream spawning habitat, reducing costs and labor for sea lamprey control on the river, which can be difficult to access for treatment.

"A common challenge in restoring altered Great Lakes fish and wildlife habitats to more natural conditions is the trade-off between benefiting target species and consequences associated with invasive species movement into restored habitat," said James Farquhar, Proposal Review Committee chairman for the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Grant Program. "The Sucker River, H-58 road crossing and seasonal sea lamprey barrier project addresses both. We are pleased to see this worthwhile project move forward with the support of Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act funds."

Construction for the first phase of the project is expected to take approximately 12 weeks, beginning June 2. During this time, a detour will be in place. Work on the second phase of the project is expected to take place in summer 2026.

Learn more about this and other projects supported by Fisheries Habitat Grant funds at Michigan.gov/DNRGrants. ✧

Public input sought on reducing statewide walleye limit from six to four

Changes in lake habitat, ecology and conditions coupled with technological advances in fishing gear and methods are prompting the Minnesota DNR to seek public input on a possible reduction in the statewide walleye possession limit from six to four fish. If enacted via a rulemaking process, the change would not become effective until May 2027.

"We consider this a proactive step to maintain quality walleye fishing," said Brad Parsons, DNR fisheries section manager. "This regulation has been in place since 1956, and conditions in Minnesota's lakes have, and continue to, change. Our consideration of a walleye limit reduction is a wise management response to what's happening."

People can view additional details and share their thoughts on the regulation being considered through Friday, Aug. 15, by visiting the DNR's walleye web page (mndnr.gov/walleye) and completing the online questionnaire.

The DNR's most-recent statewide angler survey results reported that 48% of respondents favored the change and 23% were opposed. Remaining respondents had no opinion.

Results of more than 4,000 on-the-water interviews with anglers about their catches conducted from 2021-2023 showed 67% supported the change, 18% opposed and 15% were neutral.

Factors the DNR considered in its decision to suggest the reduction:

- Anglers have become much more effective at catching fish due to technological advances in everything from fishing line to mobile ice fishing houses, and particularly because of GPS devices and incredibly sensitive fish finding electronics.
- Ice fishing has exploded in popularity, as evidenced by more than 3 million hours of fishing effort in the winter of 2019 on Mille Lacs Lake and Lake of the Woods.
- Social media postings alert anglers to where the fish are biting and anglers can move there quickly, potentially depleting local walleye populations.
- Peer-reviewed scientific studies continue to show that system changes related to climate and invasive species may be detrimental to walleye populations and more conducive to other species in northern temperate lakes like those in Minnesota.
- All but two (Cass and Winnibogoshish lakes) of the state's 10 largest inland lakes, which produce about 40 percent of Minnesota's annual walleye harvest, already have a lower limit. Resorts on Kabetogema, Lake of the Woods, Leech, Pepin, Rainy and Vermilion have not reported a decline in business due to a lower walleye limit.
- All surrounding states and provinces—and Minnesota's border waters with them—have walleye daily limits less than six.

"Simplifying our regulations also is a factor," Parsons said. "This change would cause less confusion by providing regulation consistency across most of our lakes."

More information about the proposed regulation change is available on the DNR's walleye web page (mndnr.gov/walleye). ✧

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Perfect Photo #6 cont.

If you want a picture with a fish you are going to release, keep the fish wet before lifting it out of the water. Speed matters. ✧

Tips for the perfect fish photo

1. Have a Good Grip

Photographing fish can be tricky, and it all starts with a good grip. If you're not comfortable handling your catch, it'll show in the photo. Tools like lip grips can make it easier and safer—for both you and the fish.

A great photo should highlight the fish, not your fingers. Try supporting the fish from underneath or behind with your hands mostly out of view.

2. Focus on the Fish

Rods, people, consoles and other gear can clutter the frame and be distracting. Frame your catch with just open water behind you for a distraction-free background.

Make sure your lens is clear: Water spots, fog, or smudges on your lens can ruin an otherwise great shot.

3. Move Quickly

Timing is everything. Fish lose their vibrant color fast once they're out of the water, especially once they're on ice. A lot of anglers throw fish in the box then take pictures later, but you should take them before you throw them in the cooler.

To capture that natural, lit-up look, have a buddy ready with the camera and take the shot as soon as the fish comes out of the water. Keeping it wet will also help those colors pop.

4. Use Natural Light

Lighting can make or break a fish photo! One of the most important tips: Face the sun while the photographer keeps the sun at their back.

5. Make the Most of Your Smartphone

Smartphones can capture images that look great for social media, websites, and even print. You'll want to take photos in portrait but landscape is great for capturing the full scene.

Burst mode: Takes a bunch of pictures quickly and grabs the best shot—this gives you more options and helps catch that split second where everything looks just right

Portrait mode: Adds depth and a soft background blur (especially great for highlighting the fish)

6. Handle Fish Safely

Prioritize taking pictures of the fish you are going to keep. (cont. col. 2)

Reeling Them In: Teaching Kids Why Science Matters

Getting students excited about science, marine life, conservation, and fishing is an annual event in St. Petersburg, Florida, home of the St. Petersburg Science Festival. The event brings the science and academic communities together to create a hands-on experience for students to be engaged, have fun, and consider a career in science.

The day before the family event, 1,000 local 4th and 5th grade students are invited to get a sneak peek! With exhibits featuring fire and touch tanks, children are able to learn about cool science and understand how science might impact their lives. This year a new fishing exhibit allowed students to learn how to cast!

"It was clear very early on who had been fishing and who had never held a rod," said Sean Meehan, NOAA Fisheries' recreational fishing coordinator. "But whether they seemed unsure about what they were doing or cast like a pro, they all had fun and that's why we are here," Meehan said.

Rec Fishing Coord, Sean Meehan teaching a student how to cast

Each school group visits the exhibit for 15 minutes, which means important science and conservation messages have to be woven into the planned activity. "This was my first time as an exhibitor and watching the kids get excited about fishing and learning more about how to safely release a fish back into the ocean was rewarding," said Lauren Westcott, NOAA communications specialist. "Even though they weren't reeling in an actual fish, they 'caught' the message about responsible and sustainable fishing best practices."

The exhibits featured during the festival highlight everything from marine science to health, earth, and life sciences. Over the last 14 years the St. Petersburg Science Festival School Day event has given more than 14,000 students the chance to be part of science and consider the field as part of their future. ✧

A Good Troll

In today's world, the word "troll" has several meanings. In folklore, a "troll" is an unpleasant creature. In the internet world, a "troll" is someone who intentionally tries to cause trouble on message boards by posting inflammatory messages. But in the world of fishing, "trolling' is a great way to present a bait to fish.

In the summer, there's lots of food for fish to eat. The baitfish that were atched recently are getting to a size where the predator fish can feed on them, and last year's baitfish can be forage also. The food supply is higher now than any other time of year.

However, that doesn't mean fishing is going to be easy. In fact, because of all the forage in the water, the predators have a lot of food options. The fish are often willing to eat, but you need to make it easy for them to eat your bait. Trolling is a good way to present a bait in many situations this time of year.

Trolling enables us to cover lots of water in search of fish looking for food. We'll be moving fairly fast, as fish in warm water often respond favorably to a faster moving bait. We'll cover water quickly until we find fish that seems to be interested in eating, then we'll probably slow down and work them over.

We'll cover a variety of structures. A weedline is a great place to start a trolling run. Pay attention to your depth-finder or you'll be in the weeds more often than you want. Try to determine the depth where the deep weedline ends, then keep your trolling passes a little deeper than that.

In some bodies of water off shore structures will be good. On off shore structures, where possible, you'll want to get multiple lines per angler in the water. You're covering more water by doing so, which increases your odds of getting bit. Pulling planer boards is the best way to get multiple lines in the water. Planer boards enable you to get lines out to the side and directly behind the boat. This permits you to troll effectively without tangling lines. Use a variety of baits until the fish show you what they want. Off Shore planer boards are easy to use, easy to read, and run exceptionally well. Planer boards will help you catch more fish.

If you're just looking to get bit, crankbaits are probably the best bet for a wide variety of fish. Pretty much every gamefish will eat a crankbait. Try baits that run at different depths so different zones will be covered. Also try different colors to give the fish different looks. Sometimes a particular color will be more productive.

Any rod will work for trolling, but if you want a rod just for trolling, something a little longer and with a softer action will do the job well. The softer action will bend to the fish and you'll land more of the ones that hit. .

Now all you need to do is put a bait in the water and start trolling. If you do, you're going to get bit, even on the hottest days of the year. ✧

Tagged fish lead biologists to school of invasive carp in Mississippi River Pool 8

Invasive carp previously fitted with acoustic tags have led the Minnesota DNR and its state and federal partners to a school of invasive carp in Pool 8 of the Mississippi River at the confluence of the Root River in Minnesota, near La Crosse, Wisconsin.

"Tracking tagged invasive carp like these help us identify where the fish are gathering in the river and target them for removal. This surveillance and detection effort is one key strategy that the DNR and partner agencies are using to prevent and manage invasive carp," said DNR Invasive Species Unit Supervisor Kelly Pennington.

A team of U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) biologists, who partner with DNR to share tagged carp monitoring data, notified the DNR last week of 10 tagged Grass Carp and Silver Carp in the location, with reports that invasive carp were observed jumping out of the water. Silver Carp sometimes jump out of the water when disturbed.

The DNR immediately deployed contracted commercial fishers to the area to attempt to capture invasive carp, and response efforts are continuing this week, as weather allows. Invasive carp tend to congregate below dams and at tributary confluences when water levels rise, as they have with recent rains. Due to high flow conditions in the river, capture success has been limited, but DNR was able to capture two adult male Silver Carp. Upon inspection, it was determined that these adult male fish were releasing milt, indicating readiness to spawn. DNR staff also observed fish jumping in the wake of a DNR boat.

Minnesota DNR, USFWS and Wisconsin DNR will continue aggressive efforts this week to track and capture invasive carp in the area. Commercial fishers who contract with Minnesota DNR have built a custom net that is being used in the high flow conditions. The commercial fishing activity may also disperse schools of invasive carp, reducing the risk of a spawn. Additional receivers to track tagged fish have been deployed on the Root River to monitor the area. Minnesota DNR and partners continue to monitor for jumping activity below area dams, and to use tracked carp to locate schools to target.

"The public may encounter an increased level boats in Pool 8 near the Root River as we attempt to locate and remove additional invasive carp," Pennington said, "Please give these boats plenty of space to operate."

Additional information about invasive carp in Minnesota

Invasive carp have been moving upstream since escaping into the Mississippi River from commercial fish farms in Arkansas in the 1970s. These fish compete with native species, and Silver Carp are known to jump out of the water in a way that can pose a risk to boaters.

Individual invasive carp have been caught as far upstream as Pool 2 of the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities metro area (Bighead, Grass and Silver carp), the King Power Plant on the St. Croix River by Oak Park Heights (bighead and silver), and just downstream of Granite Falls in the Minnesota River (bighead).

The Minnesota DNR has been working to slow the spread of invasive carp since the early 2000s. The program uses several key strategies:

- Monitor for all life stages of invasive carp in Minnesota: adults, juveniles, eggs, and larvae.
- Tag and track invasive carps in Minnesota waters to better understand and exploit patterns in their movements.
- Contract with commercial fishing operations to target invasive carp for capture and removal.
- Work with partners to develop new methods to target carp in low-density populations using new technology and approaches.
- Assess watershed boundaries for vulnerability to invasive carp movement and install and maintain deterrents or barriers to prevent invasion.
- Evaluate and design a deterrent system at Lock and Dam 5 on the Mississippi River to slow upstream movement of invasive carp. The lock deterrent has been scoped with partners who have relevant expertise and jurisdiction, and an agreement was recently signed to enable the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to undertake the engineering design that will be needed to guide construction.
- Coordinate with researchers on modeling to determine key locations and actions for invasive carp monitoring and management.
- Conduct outreach to encourage public reporting and awareness of invasive carp.
- Participate in state, regional, national, and binational coordination efforts.

State and federal funding sources, including the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund and Outdoor Heritage Fund, have provided key funding.

Invasive carp captures in Minnesota must be reported to the DNR immediately by calling 651-587-2781 or emailing invasivecarp.dnr@state.mn.us. People are asked to take a photo and transport the carp to the nearest DNR fisheries office or make arrangements for it to be picked up by a DNR official. A permit can be requested (files.dnr.state.mn.us/natural_resources/invasives/aquaticanimals/asiancarp/angler_caught_carp_permit.pdf) to keep captured invasive carp for consumption or disposal. The DNR also encourages reporting of sightings of Silver Carp, which can jump 10 feet into the air. Reports can help inform response efforts.

More information about invasive carp is available on the DNR invasive carp webpage (mndnr.gov/invasive-carp). ✧

Long rod & light line strategies for smallmouth

Finesse fishing for smallmouth has come a long way. More anglers are turning to long spinning rod and high-capacity reel set-ups for achieving long casts with light line presentations.

Browse across the internet, and search through your favorite online retailers and manufacturers. From rod selection to line choices, and baits, everyone is prioritizing the marketing and sales for long line finesse fishing.

I used to be of the belief my 20-pound Cortland Master braid main-line on a 7-foot MF was light enough for my spinning set-ups. It has the diameter of 6-pound mono. When I started fishing this line in 2011 it was the only line size I've ever needed until 2018. While 20-pound is still a big player for me, especially in most snaggy-bottom and monster fish regards, it's presently considered heavy. Nowadays, this 20-pound line gets spooled on my baitcasting reels that I use for heavier jigging and casting applications for both smallmouth and largemouth.

Each winter off-season, I find myself going on a main-line decrease, downsizing my reel spools to a greater variety of 10, 8, or 5-pound Masterbraid. It's crazy to think that a size-30 spinning reel can now hold upwards of 250-yards of 5-pound braided main line. On the long rod, unthinkably, it casts baits a mile!

It's amazing to think that nowadays a 5-pound braided line has the strength and capacity to handle a fish of similar weight or heavier. For example, 5-pound Master braid has the diameter of less than 1-pound monofilament. Because of the noteworthy advancements in braided lines offered by all manufacturers, very rarely does anyone ever need to fish with antiquated monofilament anymore. Long rods with powerful backbone and lively flex help achieve that perfect handling with finesse baits deployed on a super-thin braided line.

How did we get to this point?

Outwitting the Smart Smallmouth

Smallmouth are experts in sensory detection. Nowadays, more adult smallmouth are wary of overhead boat traffic and high-powered sonar. Deploy your FFS transducer in forward mode, and those smallmouth scatter and disperse from the boat, or choose to lay low to the bottom. They've become elusive and uncatchable as a result.

As these fish undergo changes in behavior and feeding locations, anglers must cater their gear and strategies to these changes. Today, everyone is showing up to the lake with an arsenal of finesse rods and baits rigged up. Whether the strategy calls for jigging or casting, finesse fishing has turned into an arms race

As adult fish are repeatedly caught and released throughout their lifetime, they learn not to strike certain lures. We see this all the time on pressured community lakes and derby waters. Most days, the shallows of these fisheries get pounded the most. Fish want to feed and spawn in the shallows without feeling exploited, but the pressure forces them to abort those areas and relocate to new areas. So, not only are they conditioned to lures, but they're also learning to avoid the most pressured lake regions, and angler capture.

In the recent Covid seasons, the fishing pressure and overall angling hours on my local lakes sky-rocketed. Smallmouth that customers and I once had to ourselves got hit from several anglers. The fisheries took a beating from capture, re-capture, and harvest

in 2020-21. The surviving fish became better educated as a result.

Gone are the days of being the only boat on the water. Nowadays my boat has to use lighter diameter lines (described above) in order to better manipulate, subtler and natural presentations, and make longer casts with. Likewise, most casting and jigging set-ups are requiring several feet of fluorocarbon leader line to help conceal and mask the offering. If you don't come prepared to finesse fish like this, you could swing and miss.

Long Line Strategies

Smallmouth inhabiting almost every lake are seeing some form of each downsized plastic offering on a daily basis. Yet they are also getting more suspicious and conditioned to them. Dropped baits and disengagement are becoming as frequent as pickups. More finesse is now required to keep up with their feeding habits and personalities. More anglers are now turning to lighter lines and longer rods.

Lightweight braids are advantageous for the deployment of most finesse baits. Consider a 1/16-ounce hair jig for example. While this ball of marabou or bucktail might have been too light and impossible to cast with the common set-up of years prior, it's now possible to launch for extreme distances with 8-foot length rods such as St. Croix's Victory Crosshair (VTS710MLXF) and my personal favorite, the Legend Tournament Bass Hair Jig (LBTS710MLXF).

Some finesse anglers might not be as like-minded as me. Perhaps you like going old-school with 4 and 6-pound mono instead. The benefits of it remain stretch, flotation, and better control of lure sinking. This could greatly aid and manipulate in the fall rate of that same hair jig being worked with 5-pound braid and fluoro leader through the shallows. I still find applicable year-round uses with mono

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Long Line/Light Rod

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when casting 3-inch Kalin's Lunker Grubs and other twister-tail styled moving plastics.

I'm not a fan of operating fluorocarbon lines as a main line, but some prefer it on targeting deeper-holding, suspending fish. This would be a winning formula with spy-baits for sure, and drop-shotting.

More anglers today are rigged up with long rods and light line in order to deploy their favorite finesse baits like these types:

SWIMMERS – In recent years, no other segment of fishing lures and bait styles has grown exponentially and diversely as paddletails and swimbaits. Many brands feature different designs and variations, models, colorways, and styles. For catching smallmouth quickly, the lineup of soft swimbaits offered by Z-Man Fishing Products accomplishes this task.

Z-Man's top-selling baits worldwide, the 4-inch DieZel MinnowZ, 3-inch MinnowZ and 2.5-inch SlimSwimZ replicate the look, action and strike-evoking attraction of a live minnow better than any other soft baits manufactured. These bite sized paddletails both conquer the fisheries from my boat.

Their ElaZtech formulation creates a lifelike swimming action and durability. I am most keen on swimbaits that can pump under any retrieve speed. In this capacity, ElaZtech formulation is a modern marvel.

"I prefer a bait whose tail continues kicking even as you stop the retrieve and let the bait freefall. It's one minor detail that can make a huge difference, and very few soft plastic paddletails can pull this off because they're mostly composed of PVC plastics rather than ultrasoft ElaZtech, which offers more freedom to move in the tail," says Cory Schmidt, Z-Man's marketing director.

Also benefitting Z-Man's swimbaits is ElaZtech's buoyancy, allowing for slower retrieves than other swimbaits. This characteristic is a necessity in my search for smallmouth that could be anywhere in the water columnSwimmers can come in downsized finesse offerings, too. Z-Man capitalized on this need with the 2.5-inch Slim SwimZ. "On the small side, the little 2.5" Slim SwimZ is one of the most versatile, downsized swimbaits in existence. Put it on a 1/5-ounce Finesse ShroomZ jighead and fish it almost any way you want," admits Schmidt. Slightly larger, "The 3-inch MinnowZ is a thin (slightly flattened) profile that can mimic shiners, ciscoes and baby perch—all staple forage in the north. Its medium sized, flattened paddletail lies at a perpendicular (90-degree) angle to the body, which gives it plenty of water resistance and thereby, more rapid tail thumping action. Also means you can retrieve it a little slower and still benefit from its motion and vibration (thump)."

For my long-casting program, I bomb the 2.5 Slim SwimZ and 3-inch MinnowZ with St. Croix's Victory Open Water (VTS710MMF). Released in early 2022, this long-cast spinning rod excels at launching baits in big water, open-water scenarios. Intended for spybait fishing, I found several other uses with it that includes covering water with small swimbaits and light line. Complemented with a long-cast 3000 or 4000 size spinning reel spooled up with 8 or 10 lb. Cortland Masterbraid, and you have the perfect medium moderate action lure launcher to cast baits far while still being able to make contact with fish and hold on to long-distance hook-sets. The long length of the rod enables you to hang on to fish that typically strike mid-retrieve, and from several yards out.

Additionally, The Keitech Fat Swing Impact is another finesse favorite. I was turned on to these on an Indian-summer afternoon a few Septembers ago when St. Croix Rods marketing director, Jesse Simpkins, put on a clinic with them. Head-to-head with me, his 2.8 model in Pro Staff Special rigged on a 5/32-ounce red head caught more than 20 smallmouth compared to the one I caught with an identical 3.8 model of the same bait. The Swing Impact is heavily salt impregnated, and formulated with a softer and supple plastisol. While these features make it deadly, their downfall is poor durability and at a higher cost. Despite these shortcomings, the swing impact remains the most popular paddletail manufactured.

And might you need something even subtler, try a swimming grub. Whether smallmouth are active or inactive, a grub can always be relied on for catching a few fish, no matter where. Whether slow rolled and retrieved along bottom, high in the water column, or somewhere in-between, a swimming grub does it all.

The grubs I depend on the most are made by Kalin's, Strike King, and Berkley. Kalin's 5-inch Lunker Grubs fished on exposed ¼ oz. minnow heads are my boat's fish finders and fish catchers on most days. If downsizing is necessary, in which smallmouth are fixated on smaller prey, consider downsizing to a 3-inch Lunker Grub with 1/8-ounce head. With lighter line it usually seals the deal.

Long Line/Light Rod

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Long Line/Light Rod

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Grubs will imitate everything. I always strive to match the hatch with natural baitfish profiles and translucent colors. On other fisheries such as river systems, smallmouth could be favoring crayfish instead. Many grubs are available in crayfish patterns.

I fish them with the same aforementioned rods for my paddletails. Casting and steady retrieving them is the standby technique. Jigging and crawling the bottom under slower speeds can be done too, with the only adjustment to consider is usage of a mushroom or football styled head.

HAIR JIGS - Today's generation of smallmouth remain unconditioned to the simplicities of a marabou hair jig. The ultra-light weight and extreme slow fall of the hair jig enables it to hang in range of a smallmouth's strike zone in the upper water column. With the proper tackle, allow the hair do all the work and slow glide for you.

You need a long rod with a large capacity spool to get hair jigs out there. I've previously favored 7-and-a-half-foot medium light rods such as the Mojo Bass Hair Jig (MJS76MLXF), however St. Croix's new introduction of the Legend Tournament Hair Jig (LBTS710MLXF) overtook it as being my favorite. It launches them a mile.

Selection of finesse swimbaits for targeting pressured smallmouth bass

SPY BAITS – Spy baits can be fished effectively at different levels of the water column. Most anglers fail to understand that spy baiting requires long distance casting with long rods and light line in the form of 5 lb. fluorocarbon or braided line, and painfully slow retrieves in order to maintain its sink rate, quiet profile, and undetectability. The deeper it's fished, the slower it must be retrieved. The St. Croix Victory Open Water (VTS710MMF) is ideal for the presentation.

Selection of finesse swimbaits for targeting pressured smallmouth bass

The Victory Open Water rod leaves no guessing on what it excels at: Launching baits in big water, open-water scenarios.

The three prong blades of spy baits do a majority of the work for you. Also, depending on your cadence and retrieve, you can fish them like a jerkbait, or a slow hanging glide bait, and even snap jig them. When snap jigging, it produces a powerful vibration. Let it sink downwards, it has a steady glide with just enough hang time.

Worked thru shallow water, suspended mid-column, and out in the open water abyss, you'll quickly learn spin baits can often be a solution to catching fish and when nothing else works. The ideal situation for me is flat calm, sunny days and roaming spooky fish.

Smallmouth fishing strategies are quickly evolving more to open water. Whether you finesse fish or power fish, The Open Water is a can't-miss.

Long Rods and Thin Lines

Your strategies might not be like mine, but hopefully you are utilizing at least one long rod for your fishing that is fast, flexy, and strong like my bomb-casting arsenal of St. Croix spinning setups.

Today's medium-light and light action long rods are rated for lines as light as 5-pound test. Their fast tops also improve casting accuracy and distance. Lengths help manage and control big smallmouth when hooked from afar and through the duration of battle until successful capture. Their flex also offers better pressure and tension too. The greatest benefit of them all—long rods won't tire out a big bass to death like short rods of yester-year were prone to do.

Cast lighter lures farther with less effort and no more fatigue. Embrace the long rod mentality, and make magic with finesse. ✧

About the Second Amendment

DOJ says Illinois Gun and Magazine Ban Violates Second Amendment

U.S. files amicus brief in Illinois rifle ban challenge

Brief argues that no "militaristic" arm exception exists

The U.S. Department of Justice on June 13 filed an amicus brief telling the US Seventh Court of appeals that Illinois' gun and magazine ban is unconstitutional.

In **the brief,** the DOJ argues there are "three very good reasons" why the appellate court should reverse course and affirm the district court's injunction, despite overturning U.S. District Judge McGlynn's earlier decision granting a preliminary injunction against the gun and magazine ban.

The DOJ brief declares that the Seventh Circuit simply got it wrong in a previous case dealing with an "assault weapons ban" called *Bevis v. Naperville*, in which the court declared that AR-15s and other semi-automatic long guns are "militaristic" firearms that fall beyond the scope of the Second Amendment's protection.

1.Arms cannot be banned unless they are both dangerous *and* unusual. The AR-15 and other arms banned by the PICA aren't uniquely dangerous, and they're certainly not unusual,

2.This Second Amendment's militia-related text, as interpreted by the Supreme Court, thus suggests that the government may not prohibit weapons simply because it considers them "militaristic." The contrary claim that "militaristic" weapons fall outside its scope wrongly requires reading the prefatory clause entirely out of the Second Amendment.

3.factual findings that show that the Act violates the Second Amendment as applied to semiautomatic firearms and attachments that are in common use by law-abiding citizens for lawful reasons.

The four plaintiffs groups filed their reply briefs earlier this month arguing there is no historical analog from the country's founding era of governments banning commonly owned firearms.

In a filing siding with plaintiffs Friday, attorneys for the DOJ said the district judge got it right that Illinois' ban on AR-15s and similar firearms is unconstitutional because they are commonly owned for lawful purposes.

The brief also touches on another NFA device, silencers, which Congress (with the apparent approval of the Administration) is currently seeking to remove from the NFA. (See my post here.) In explaining that the Illinois Act violates the Second Amendment by banning magazines that are in common use, the brief generalizes that "firearm attachments that are useful to the exercise of the right, including magazines, suppressors, and other firearm attachments" are protected. It references its recent *Supplemental Response in United States v. Peterson* arguing that "a complete ban on suppressors would be unconstitutional." That concession may assist in challenging state laws that totally ban suppressors. But the Response also argues that the NFA's tax and registration requirements survive Second Amendment scrutiny.

Most of DOJ's Barnett brief is devoted to the familiar theme that the banned rifles meet the Heller-Bruen common-use test. The district court's multi-day bench trial made extensive factual findings that are not clearly erroneous. If it wants to overturn these findings, the Seventh Circuit will have to engage in substantial judicial antics to reach a preconceived result.

"History confirms what the Second Amendment's text suggests: Possessing weapons for the common defense was a core aspect of the preexisting right to keep and bear arms that the Founders codified in the Second Amendment," the filing said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Harmeet Dhillon posted on X that "The Second Amendment is not a second-class right," and "See you in court, Illinois." Also Friday, 35 state's attorneys from across Illinois filed a brief arguing the ban is unconstitutional.

CLICK HERE to Read the Amicus Brief Filed by The US Department of Justice.

The Harrel appeal (Caleb Barnett, et al v. Kwame Raoul, et al) has been set for argument on Monday, September 22, 2025, at 2 p.m. in the Main Courtroom, Room 2721, of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, 219 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois. Each side limited to 45 minutes. ✧

NSSF celebrates unanimous SCOTUS decision in Smith & Wesson v. Mexico

WASHINGTON, D.C. – NSSF, The Firearm Industry Trade Association, celebrates the U.S. Supreme Court's **unanimous 9-0 decision** that the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA) bars Mexico's claims that firearm manufacturers "aided and abetted" illegal firearms trafficking to narco-terrorist drug cartels in Mexico.

"This is a tremendous victory for the firearm industry and the rule of law. For too long, gun control activists have attempted to twist basic tort law to malign the highly-regulated U.S. firearm industry with the criminal actions of violent organized crime, both here in the United States and abroad," said NSSF's Lawrence G. Keane, Senior Vice President and General Counsel. "The firearm industry is sympathetic to the plight of those in Mexico who are victims of rampant and uncontrolled violence at the hands of narco-terrorist drug cartels. The firearm industry works closely with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to prevent the illegal straw purchasing of firearms and the illegal transnational smuggling of firearms. This unequivocal decision by the Supreme Court that PLCAA applies and there is no evidence whatsoever that U.S. manufacturers are in any way responsible is verification of commitment to responsible firearm ownership."

The Court wrote in the **unanimous decision**, "Recall that Congress enacted the statute to halt a flurry of lawsuits attempting to make gun manufacturers pay for the downstream harms resulting from misuse of their products. In a 'findings' and 'purposes' section, Congress explained that PLCAA was meant to stop those suits—to prevent manufacturers (and sellers) from being held 'liable for the harm caused by those who criminally or unlawfully misuse firearm[s].' Mexico's suit closely resembles the ones Congress had in mind: It seeks to recover from American firearms manufacturers for the downstream damage Mexican cartel members wreak with their guns."

NSSF filed an **amicus brief** supporting *Smith & Wesson Brands, Inc., et al.*, in its petition to the U.S. Supreme Court to dismiss Mexico's claim for $10 billion in damages against several U.S. firearm manufacturers. Mexico filed their claim in a U.S. District Court in Boston in 2021, which was dismissed by that district court based on the bipartisan PLCAA that prohibits frivolous lawsuits against the firearm industry for the criminal misuse by remote third parties.

Mexico appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, which revived the lawsuit holding that Mexico's "aiding and abetting" theory fit within one of the PLCAA's narrow exceptions. *Smith & Wesson Brands, Inc., et al.*, successfully petitioned the Supreme Court last year. The case was argued before the Supreme Court in March of this year. ✧

Other Breaking News Items:
(Click on title or URL to read full article

Isle Royale initiates fishing study on Lake Superior for the first time in 27 years
Isle Royale National Park is partnering with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to conduct a creel survey of the Isle Royale-Lake Superior fishery, asking anglers to voluntarily report their catch rates, species, and fishing methods

Aquaculture can help local communities, economies and food security, study shows
Due to environmental, species, and economic shifts in the Great Lakes region, aquaculture may be one method to help fill the gap left by a decline in commercial fishing

New Soo lock project in Great Lakes gets $95M in funding
The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded more than $95 million to an Ohio firm tasked with completing the third phase of construction on a new Soo Lock in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

Port Clinton residents invited to help study health impacts of Lake Erie algae toxins
Researchers have launched a first-of-its-kind community health project to find out if people who live, work or recreate on or near a harmful algal bloom are being exposed to airborne toxins in ways that could impact their long-term health—and how to better

COMMENTARY: Great Lakes, greater potential: The case for Great Lakes ports
U.S. Representative Dave Joyce (OH-14) says that while Great Lakes ports may not always make headlines, they are central to our national security, economic efficiency, and domestic supply chain resilience. As the federal government considers infrastructure

Sea lamprey larvae targeted in Tuscola County's Cass River
In Michigan this week, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will begin applying lampricides to the Cass River in Tuscola and Saginaw counties to kill sea lamprey larvae burrowed in the stream bottom

Conservation group buys land near Tobermory giving it new Indigenous name
More land at the tip of Ontario's Bruce Peninsula has been protected as a nature reserve, with two levels of government providing funding to buy the approximately one kilometre section of shoreline.

Shallow-water ciscoes gone from Lake Erie for decades may come back from northeastern Pa.
Shallow-water ciscoes, a native fish species extirpated from Lake Erie in the mid-20th century, have been rediscovered in a lake in northeastern Pennsylvania. Efforts are underway to determine if the lost native species of fish in Lake Erie can be reintroduced

Research pinpoints type of blue-green algae that may produce toxins in Lake Superior estuary
Researchers have identified a species of blue-green algae in the Duluth-Superior harbor that's capable of producing harmful algal blooms, which may lead to better monitoring

Sturgeon restoration efforts in Michigan show significant progress
The lake sturgeon population in Michigan and the Great Lakes is on the rebound thanks in part to a collaborative effort between many entities. While efforts span the Great Lakes overall, the sturgeon population in Cheboygan County's Black Lake has doubled

Can Arctic grayling make a comeback in Michigan? Work to reintroduce fish continues
An effort to restore grayling in Michigan is entering a new phase. Michigan DNR provided 400,000 eggs to be released by Native American tribes to stock in rivers as the reintroduction plan moves ahead

Meet the men, women guiding Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary
The citizens serving on the Sanctuary Advisory Council for the new Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary have backgrounds as diverse as the people who will enjoy the sanctuary in the years to come. The council includes retirees, lawyers and teachers,

Tiny fish tags helped identify oldest recorded lake trout in Lake Michigan
A 35-inch, 16-pound lake trout caught by an angler in 2023 out of the port of Sheboygan, Wisconsin contained a coded wire tag that was the oldest on record according to the USFWS

New study explores sterilization to control invasive sea lamprey
A new study led by the Hammond Bay Biological Station in Michigan explored a novel approach involving the sterilization of male sea lampreys as a promising method to control the invasive sea lamprey population in the Great Lakes.

A look back at the 18 days when there were six Great Lakes
For a brief period in 1998, Lake Champlain, a freshwater lake between New York and Vermont, was considered a Great Lake. That status was quickly rescinded after controversy over its significantly smaller size compared to the five currently designated

How deep is Lake Huron? What to know about parks, fishing and more
Lake Huron, which runs along much of Michigan's eastern coast, has the longest coastline of the Great Lakes, and offers opportunities for underwater exploration and waterfront recreation, as well as providing a key link in international shipping and

A great lake, several unnamed lakes and some key lagoons: What to know about Green Bay-area water
While Lake Michigan and its offshoot, Green Bay, get most of northeastern Wisconsin's attention, there are many other bodies of water in the area, including the Fox River, an unusual shaped "lagoon" lake, and lakes that have yet to be named

Study of invasive mussels finds PFAS is nearly everywhere in the Great Lakes
Every summer throughout the mid-2010s, researchers scoured the Great Lakes in search of PFAS contamination, taking tissue samples from invasive mussels at 120 locations in total. The results: The scientists found PFAS nearly everywhere.

Invasive mussels drastically altered the Great Lakes. Now, scientists are fighting back.
Scientists are experimenting with methods to remove invasive zebra and quagga mussels from Lake Michigan, using tarps, an underwater crawler and a 1,100-pound plow known as the mussel masher. However, this work faces funding challenges due to federal cuts and reduced university funding.
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