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THE Bucket

VOLUME 22 • ISSUE 3
MARCH 2025

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SURVEY RESULTS ARE IN

According to a recent article by outdoor writer Brian Whipkey in the Erie Times News, the PA Fish and Boat Commission staff conducted a Lake Erie Boat Angler Survey in 2024 of boaters launching from Walnut Creek, Northeast Marina, Lampe Marina, and East Avenue Boat Launch.

They calculated 31,251 boats launched for 242,828 hours from the four sites, which is a 6% increase over 2023. The boaters were targeting walleye, perch, lake trout, steelhead, and smallmouth bass in Lake Erie.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission estimates 513,000 walleyes were caught by boaters launching from four Pennsylvania marinas in Lake Erie in 2024. The survey estimated 513,042 walleye were caught and anglers harvested 318,220 of them. That's the highest walleye harvest in 20 years.

He quoted PFBC Biologist Mark Haffley, as saying "It was phenomenal this year. In the month of July, we showed a two-fish-per hour catch rate. It only took three hours to catch your limit on an average, which is just phenomenal," he said. "And really a tribute to the quality of the fishery and just the sheer numbers that are out there."

The study efforts also looked at the size of fish carcasses that were filleted at the public fish cleaning station at Walnut Creek Marina. Most of the fish averaged around 3 years old and about 20 inches long. A lake wide survey revealed that there are roughly 72 million walleyes in Lake Erie.

Regarding yellow perch the PFBC estimates there are about 56 million yellow perch in Pennsylvania's portion of Lake Erie.

While the walleye fishing has been great, Haffley reported the story is different for yellow perch. "Currently we are in a decline from a recreational fishery of yellow perch," he said. "A lot of that is due just to a population that is declining. Everything is cyclical."

He said even though there is currently a poor recreational fishery, that's not necessarily indicative of the lake's population of 168.4 million yellow perch that are at least 2 years old and about 8 inches long with 56.3 million perch in Management Unit 3 which includes Pennsylvania's portion along Lake Erie. This is compared with about 20 years ago between 2005 and 2010, Management Unit 3 had twice that many perch. During that time, more anglers targeted yellow perch than walleyes.

"We saw this explosion in perch and perch fishing. We had this great fishery. As the walleye population bounced back, we see folks abandoning the perch fishery and starting to target the walleye, rightfully so. Our fishermen are very smart. They fish for what's going to give them the most bang for their buck," Haffley said. "Whether it's sitting and anchoring and jigging up 30 perch because walleye fishing stinks or it's trolling around and catching 18 walleye because they're out there and easy to catch."

FISHING REPORT:

The weather is warming, the ice is receding so it is now time to switch into the spring fishing mode.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sunday March 30

1-5pm Erie Shrine Club Ice Out
Party West 38th and Zuck Rd

Saturday April 5

8:00 to 11:00 Waterworks Pond
PISP 1st day of trout season
volunteers needed

Saturday April 26

8:30 -12 Rotary Pavilion on
PISP Presque Isle clean up.
We will be serving lunch to the
volunteers. Volunteers needed.

**We will have signup sheets
for volunteers to help at
these events at our March
24th General Membership
meeting.**



PLEASE DON'T LITTER.



REMINDER A person shall wear a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (PFD or life jacket) during the cold weather months from November 1st through April 30th while underway or at anchor on boats less than 16 feet in length or any canoe or kayak.



SONS 2025 MEMBERSHIP BUTTON

is a depiction of a crappie this year. This is in keeping with featuring a native species fish on the button. You can pick up the 2025 pin at anyone of our events or meetings or you can get one by sending \$3.00 to SONS of Lake Erie, PO Box 3605, Erie, PA 16508

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LAKE ERIE WIND TURBINES ARE BACK ON THE TABLE



Typical Wind Turbine Structures

State Representative Bob Merski is the prime sponsor HB. 522 of 2025, "The Lake Erie Energy Development Act" which authorizes the Department of Environmental Protection, in consultation with the Department of General Services to lease certain submerged lands within Erie County and associated wind, water and solar resources for the assessment, development, construction and operation of utility scale offshore wind, solar or kinetic energy generation facilities; providing for collection of certain lease and royalty payments; establishing the Lake Erie Large-Scale Energy System Development Fund; and providing for distributions and transfers from the fund.

HB 522 closely mirrors HB 254 which was introduced to and was passed by a vote by the House of Rep. in 2024. That bill was sent to the State Senate but died after in failed to pass through committee.

The latest bill HB 522 was submitted to the House Committee on Environmental on Natural Resource Protection by House Resolution HR 53. We were asked to comment on the proposed legislation. We sent letters to the committee's chairmen listing our concerns and objections against this legislation.

Ohio and New York has already scrapped similar attempts to place these devices in Lake Erie. On the Federal side President Trump has issued an executive order prohibiting the construction of wind turbines in the Atlantic Ocean. We will follow the progress of this legislation and hopefully it will die as did the other bills.

THE SPEAKER AT OUR FEBRUARY MEETING

was Honey Stemka, Project Manager, Proposed Lake Erie National Marine Sanctuary, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation for Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration. She gave a presentation that highlighted the description, benefits and process towards establishing a sanctuary here. The sanctuary will be dubbed the Lake Erie Quadrangle and will include all of the Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie which has an estimated 100 shipwrecks and evidence of earlier civilization. The purpose of the sanctuary is to protect these historic treasures, as well as using



research & monitoring assets to further locate, document and monitor cultural resources, provide a national stage for promoting heritage tourism and recreation, expand education and research activities to build public knowledge of and appreciation for maritime cultural heritage.

The first meetings resulted in the presentation of an application to NOAA for this designation.

The application was reviewed and the project was moved into a study phase. Studies and surveys were completed, support letters were reviewed and the project was moved in the formation of a Sanctuary Advisory Council which allows its members to meet and begin establishing the fine details of the process.

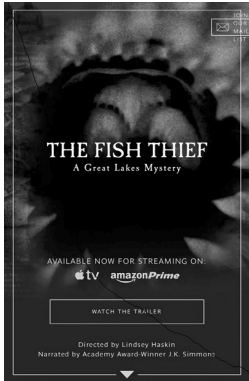
After her talk she took questions from the floor. A few of our members expressed concern on how the sanctuary designation would affect our fishing, such as a placement of buoys over the wrecks and restrictions to fishing in designated area of the shipwrecks. At our original meetings we were told that there would be little change to how and where we fish.

We confirmed this by contacting two charter captains who fish out of Alpena, Michigan, the location of the Thunder Bay Marine Sanctuary, which was established about 20 years ago. Both of these captains assured me that there was very little that affected their sport. They also said that the rules that were negotiated were the result of input presented by all stake holders.

We feel confident that as it stands now there are no red flags that would cause us to withdraw support at this time. However we will be meeting with the coordinator of the program to discuss the fine details that may affect our fishery and will let you know what's going on in the other Great Lake Sanctuaries. For more info visit NOAA's web site at <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/lake-erie/>

A GREAT DOCUMENTARY

“The Fish Thief: A Great Lakes Mystery”, is available by streaming on Apple TV or Amazon Prime Video. This documentary recounts the history of commercial fishing in the Great Lakes and the subsequent devastation that sea lampreys had on this fishery when they gained access to the Lakes. It then recounts the development of measures to control sea lamprey numbers which allowed fish populations to dramatically rebound in the Great Lakes.



HATCHERY UPDATE

PFBC biologist took a sample of 60 brown trout from the SONS hatchery to test for disease. The fish were found to be healthy. Some were 10 in. long. They were stocked into Presque Isle Bay late March. More details will be in our April 2025 *Bucket*.

TOP 20 BEST TROUT LURES

According to a recent post by ***Field and Stream*** magazine experts, published the following list of the top 20 best trout lures. Your personal opinion may differ.

1. Panther Martin Holographic Spinner
2. Worden's Original Rooster Tail
3. C.P. Swing Spinner
4. Mepps Aglia Spinner
5. Blue Fox Classic Vibrax
6. Joe's Flies Hot-4-Trout Kit
7. Trout Magnet Neon Kit
8. Kalin's Marabou Jig
9. Mister Twister Curly Tail Grub
10. Rapala Original Floating Minnow
11. Smithwick Suspending Rattlin' Rogue
12. Rapala X-Rap
13. Rebel Jointed Minnow
14. Yo-Zuri Pin's Minnow
15. Rebel Hellgrammite
16. Acme Phoebe
17. Acme Kastmaster
18. Thomas Buoyant Spoon
19. Keitech FAT Swing Impact
20. Berkley PowerBait Floating Trout Worm

VAMPIRE FISH POPULATION ON RISE

The Great Lakes region has long been heralded for its commercial fishing industry and large hauls. That wasn't always the case, thanks to a mysterious invasive species that began popping up across the basin more than 100 years ago: the sea lamprey.

It came to the Great Lakes from the Atlantic Ocean and began rearing its literally ugly head by attacking various freshwater fish populations.

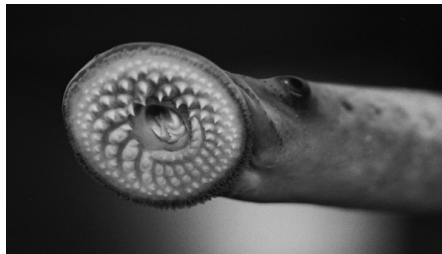
Lamprey are so pesky and resilient, they even figured out a way to get from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie — bypassing the 51-metre-tall Niagara Falls, swimming upstream through the Welland Canal and shipping channels.

Like vampire bats, these fish are blood-sucking eel-like creatures without any bones. They have suction-cup mouths with multiple rows of sharp teeth to pierce the skin, usually of fish, and suck the blood of their prey. While sea lamprey has a particular taste for lake trout it is also known to eat salmon, brown trout and even lake sturgeon.

The fish has been kept under control by applying lampricides to kill larval sea lampreys in the tributaries, while a combination of barriers and traps are used to prevent the upstream migration and reproduction of adult sea lampreys. The program is administered by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, lamprey control programs were significantly reduced enough that resulted in “huge spikes, causing a sea lamprey to make a comeback and threatening Great Lakes fish populations. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission says since the pandemic, the prevalence of sea lamprey has increased in all five Great Lakes thanks to the control effort in 2024 which was continued at pre-pandemic levels.

Sadly, due to recent layoffs by the Federal Government, many of the licensed technicians that apply the lampricides have been laid off causing great concern for the future of the program.



Mature sea lamprey



Lamprey wound on a lake trout

LAMPE MARINA UPDATE

by Tersea Guerrein

This winter's Lampe Marina reconstruction project is on schedule. Heavy snow in late November, bone chilling temperatures, high winds and thick ice throughout the winter made the project challenging.

The general contractor, E.E. Austin & Son Construction is doing the surveying, concrete work and new security gate. Lakeshore Towing Marine Services removed the old docks, drove new dock pilings and is assembling and installing the new docks. The plumbing work is being performed by Scobell Company Inc. while the electrical work is being performed by Church and Murdock Electric Inc.

The new docks are galvanized steel construction with synthetic wood decking. They are a major upgrade from the previous docks. All docks will have power and water, including the 20' slips. The project will be substantially complete by April 1st and the marina will be ready to open May 1st. Please thank the Erie Western Pennsylvania Port Authority for this much needed upgrade.

2025 ICE OUT PARTY AND FIN & FUR DRAWING SET FOR MARCH 30

For over 30 years we have held our annual fund raiser “*The Fantastic Fin & Fur*” benefit at our annual “Ice Out Party” which will take place on Sunday March 30th, 2025 from 1-5 PM at the Erie Shrine Club. This family friendly event is open to the public. There will be free food, beverages door prizes, kid’s games raffles, and fun. The admission price for the party is \$10.00 for adults, \$5.00 for kids 15 and under. Toddlers are free. For some fun, join us on March 30, 2025.

**NOTE: PLEASE MAIL YOUR FIN & FUR TICKETS IN
OR BRING THEM TO THE ICE OUT PARTY
IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DRAWING**



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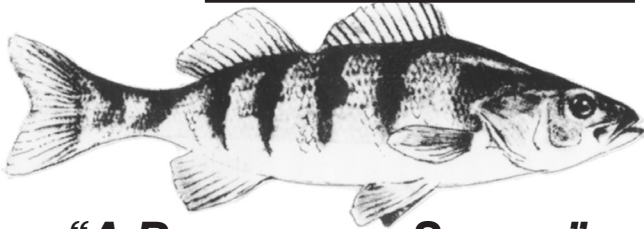


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**"The Bucket" published monthly
by the S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie**

**VOLUME 22 • ISSUE 3
MARCH 2025**



"A REPLENISHING SPECIES"

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2025 7:00 PM

POLISH FALCONS CLUB

431 E. 3rd Street, Erie

PROGRAM: Speaker will be Jim Pfendler, Past President of the Northwest PA TU Chapter, will give a slide presentation showing how much a group of volunteers can accomplish in their attempt to clean up and restore a section of Lamson Run a tributary of Elk Creek.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET YOUR SONS NEWS LETTER BY EMAIL?

If so, send us an email to sonslakeri@aol.com list your name, address and note that you would like to change to the electronic version. So far we have about 575 members who have requested the change so far. You can always read the current and past issues of the *Bucket* at our web site, sonsoflakeerie.org at any time.

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PREPARE YOUR GEAR FOR THE UPCOMING SEASON

Jan 14, 2025 By Dreisbach and Sons inc

As the fishing season approaches, it's time to dust off your rods and reels and ensure they're in top condition. Start by inspecting each piece of equipment for wear and tear. Look for any signs of rust, frayed lines, or damaged guides. Addressing these issues early can save you from potential failures during your fishing trips.

Once you've inspected your gear, it's crucial to clean it thoroughly. Use warm water and mild soap to remove dirt and salt residue from your rods and reels. Pay special attention to the reel's moving parts; use a soft brush to ensure all debris is removed. After cleaning, dry everything completely to prevent rust. Proper maintenance will extend the life of your gear significantly.

Don't forget about your tackle box! Take time to sort through your lures, hooks, and other essentials. Remove any rusty or damaged items and restock with fresh supplies. Organizing your tackle box not only makes it easier to find what you need but also ensures you're prepared for any situation on the water.

Updating Your Tackle

Now that your gear is clean and organized, consider updating your tackle for the upcoming season. Start by researching new lures and techniques that have been successful in recent months. Adding a few new options to your arsenal can increase your chances of success on the water.

Consider the types of fish you plan to target this season. Adjust your tackle accordingly, ensuring you have the right equipment to match the species you're after. This might mean investing in specialized lures or lines designed for specific conditions or fish behaviors.

It's also wise to check the local fishing regulations and ensure your gear complies with any new rules or restrictions. Staying informed not only keeps you legal but also contributes to sustainable fishing practices.

Preparing Your Boat

If you're a boat angler, preparing your vessel is just as important as readying your rods. Start with a thorough inspection of the boat's hull, motor, and trailer. Look for any signs of damage or necessary repairs that could impact performance or safety.

Ensure all safety equipment is on board and in good condition. This includes life jackets, flares, fire extinguishers, and a first aid kit. Regularly checking these items ensures you're prepared for any emergencies that may arise while out on the water.

Finally, organize your boat's storage areas to maximize space and efficiency. Having a well-organized setup allows for quicker access to gear when you need it most, making your fishing trips more enjoyable and productive.