



Michigan proposes season to catch Great Lakes region's largest fish, lake sturgeon

Michigan anglers may soon have more opportunities to battle and catch the Great Lakes region's largest fish, a fish that traces back to when dinosaurs roamed the Earth.

The Michigan DNR, in consultation with their counterparts in Wisconsin, are proposing to create a "catch and immediate release" fishing season for lake sturgeon in the Menominee River that forms the Michigan-Wisconsin boundary in the far western Upper Peninsula.

If approved by Michigan, the season would begin on the first Saturday in June 2026 and run through the first Sunday of March 2027 in a section of the Menominee River from the Grand Rapids dam upstream to Sturgeon Falls Dam.



Michigan and Wisconsin biologists have found that between 4,500 and 6,900 lake sturgeon are believed to live in river reaches separated by hydroelectric dams between the Grand Rapids Dam and Sturgeon Falls Dam. These populations currently sustain a short harvest season from Sept. 1-Sept. 30.

"Enacting a (catch-and-immediate-release) season will benefit anglers and should not pose a threat to the robust lake sturgeon population," DNR division chiefs wrote in a proposed fisheries order presented to the Natural Resources Commission at its August 14 meeting in Gaylord. The added season is supported by local law enforcement in the Menominee River region, local sportfishing clubs and the West U.P. Citizen Advisory Council, the division chiefs stated.

DNR chiefs also propose a tweak to the current lake sturgeon season on Black Lake in Cheboygan and Presque Isle counties in the northern Lower Peninsula. The sturgeon harvest season is sometimes incredibly short, lasting only 17 minutes on February 1 before the quota of six lake sturgeon was reached. Interest in the season has continued to rise, despite relatively stable fish quotas, with 776 anglers registered in 2025, up from 403 anglers in 2019.

The Black Lake season can currently run from the first Saturday in February

through the following Wednesday or until the harvest quota is reached. The DNR proposes making the maximum length to the following Monday or until the quota is met.

"With the current season, there is a potential for it to last up to five days, which would be extremely challenging for statewide staff (fisheries and law enforcement) to stay longer than a one- or two-day season due to travel, overtime and overall budgetary issues," the DNR division chiefs stated in a proposed fisheries order presented to the commission.

The Natural Resources Commission could enact the season changes as soon as its meeting, scheduled for September 11. Lake sturgeon are the Great Lakes region's largest fish, relatively unchanged from the time of the dinosaurs. According to Michigan Sea Grant the sturgeon are nearshore fish that live at water depths of 15-30 feet. Most lake sturgeon caught today weigh between 30 and 100 pounds and grow from 3 to 6 feet in length.

Lake sturgeon live longer than any other fish species in Michigan. Male lake sturgeon live an average of 55 years. Females live 80 to 150 years. It takes a long time for the fish to mature—males 15 years; females up to 25 years. The females spawn once every four years. Considered a net-wrecking nuisance by colonial fishermen in the late 1800s and early 1900s, lake sturgeon were destroyed in large numbers. Their populations were further dwindled by the installation of dams on waterways. The current lake sturgeon population is estimated to be 1% of its historical abundance in Michigan. But habitat restoration efforts and strict harvest seasons have allowed sturgeon populations to stabilize and begin to recover. ✧

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Bills introduced in the US Congress and the Michigan Legislature focusing on funding of fisheries and other related outdoor activities.

The links provide the current status and any documents that have been made available. You can follow the progress of the Bills through the links. Ed Blissick is working with a group of supporters on two potential Michigan House Bills that provide several methods of raising fishing fees including a cost-of-living adjustment to future license fees based on the rate of inflation. The Bills will be introduced into the Michigan House of Representatives as House Bills 3463 and 3401, hopefully in September. The bills are not yet introduced. Ed will provide updates when the bills are introduced. For more information on these potential House Bills, Ed may be contacted at 231-233-4471.

Supporters of both the bipartisan Senate Bills 276 and 277 along with the potential house Bills noted above by Ed, are receptive to combining their efforts and enacting one strong joint Bill. Ed has been working long hours attempting to accomplish that goal.

US House H.R. 1917 Great Lakes Mass Marking Bill (Sponsored US Rep. Debbie Dingell)
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1917>

US House H.R.2293 - Cormorant Relief Act of 2025
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/2293>

US Senate Bill 1255 - Cormorant Relief Act of 2025
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/1255>

MI House Bill 4212, Commercial Fishing Bill
<https://legislature.mi.gov/Bills/Bill?ObjectName=2025-HB-4212>

MI Bipartisan Senate Bill 276, Funding for fishing and other outdoor programs
<https://legislature.mi.gov/Bills/Bill?ObjectName=2025-SB-0276>

MI Bipartisan Senate Bill 277, & Senate Bill 276 above to pay senior discounts to a dedicated account
<https://legislature.mi.gov/Bills/Bill?ObjectName=2025-SB-0277>

MI House Bill 4733, Clarifies fish possession limits including fish stored in residences
<https://legislature.mi.gov/Bills/Bill?ObjectName=2025-HB-4733>

Michigan House Bill 4136 Allows the DNR to offer voter registration applications to all who apply for a resident hunting, fur harvester's, or fishing license.
<https://legislature.mi.gov/Bills/Bill?ObjectName=2025-HB-4136> ✧



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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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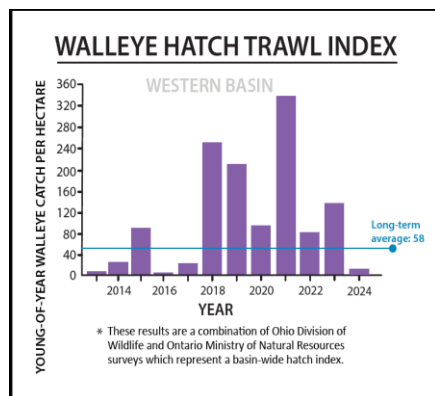
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Lake Erie Walleye, Yellow Perch 2024 Hatch Results, estimates for 2026

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Results from the annual Lake Erie fish surveys revealed that walleye hatches were below average and yellow perch hatches were above average in two of the three management zones, according to the Ohio DNR. Anglers will be able to enjoy many more years of remarkable fishing thanks to robust hatches from 2018 to 2023. Based on the 2024 survey results, anglers can expect good yellow perch fishing in the western half of Lake Erie.

Data from annual trawl surveys are combined with those collected by the OMNR to indicate the success of spawning and early life survival of walleye and yellow perch in the western basin. In the central basin, Ohio's trawls are utilized in conjunction with other agency surveys to gauge hatch success.

Results allow biologists to predict how many young fish will enter the catchable population two or three years later. These indices are a key piece of information used by the Lake Erie Committee to determine annual levels of safe harvest for walleye and yellow perch.



Walleye

Lake Erie is known as “The Walleye Capital of the World” because of its world class walleye fishing. Lake Erie has a robust, sustainable population of adult walleye following an unprecedented run of six straight above-average walleye hatches.

Surveys conducted in 2024 show a below average hatch. The 2024 western basin walleye hatch index was 19 fish per hectare (a standard measure

of catch per area). This was the smallest hatch since 2016 and below the average of 58 fish per hectare, ranking 21st of 37 years. Although this year's hatch is below average, anglers can expect these fish to contribute to the catch in 2026.

Central basin results were similar with a survey index of 7 young-of-year walleye per hectare, slightly below the average of 7.6 fish per hectare. This was the lowest value since 2017. Central basin walleye hatches are likely a small component of the lake-wide population, but tagging studies suggest that fish hatched in the central basin spend more time there compared to migratory walleye from the western basin. Central basin walleye hatches may seasonally provide local fishing opportunities when schools of migratory walleye are not present.

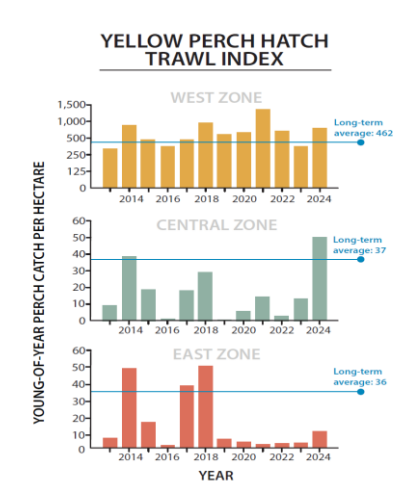
Walleye typically grow to the 15-inch minimum length for harvest two years after hatching. Because recent hatches have been above average and walleye can live more than a decade, Lake Erie anglers can expect walleye fishing to remain fantastic for many years.

Western basin yellow perch

Lake Erie yellow perch are surveyed and managed as regional populations within management zones. The Division of Wildlife uses these zones to monitor perch hatches and, by comparing results to previous years, determine safe harvest levels.

The western basin yellow perch hatch was above average and should make a noticeable contribution to the catchable adult population in 2026. The Ohio-Ontario survey index was 673 young-of-year yellow perch per hectare, above the average of 462 fish per hectare and ranking seventh of the survey's 37 years.

In 2024, mid-summer and late fall yellow perch fishing in the western basin provided great catch rates and excellent fish size. Division of Wildlife surveys in the past decade have shown a trend of more consistent hatch success in the western basin. This year's hatch, along with



contributions from previous years, should continue the trend of good yellow perch fishing in 2025 and beyond.

Central basin yellow perch

The central basin is split into two zones for yellow perch: the central zone (Huron to Fairport Harbor) and the east zone (Fairport Harbor to the Ohio-Pennsylvania border). Hatch results were encouraging in the central zone, with an index of 50 young-of-year perch per hectare, above the average of 37. The east zone index of 11 per hectare was below the average of 36. The central and east zone hatches ranked 10th and 22nd of the 35 survey years, respectively. Late fall limit catches of large yellow perch were again common near central basin harbors in 2024, indicating that good seasonal opportunities still exist.

Variability in regional yellow perch hatch success is expected on Lake Erie because of the size of the lake, differences among basins and zones, and prevailing weather conditions. Hatch success is largely determined by the timing and availability of favorable conditions for both spawning and survival of newly hatched yellow perch in the spring and summer.

For more information on the [Lake Erie fisheries](#) and to find fishing reports, maps, and more resources, visit [wildohio.gov](#). [Download the HuntFish OH mobile app](#) for fishing information on the go. ✨

Fall electrofishing surveys to start soon as DNR checks on young walleye

Planning to be on the water this fall? Be on the lookout for Michigan Department of Natural Resources personnel conducting nighttime walleye recruitment surveys from late September to mid-October.

These surveys are an important tool for fisheries managers to determine whether walleye that hatched in the spring (known as young-of-year) hatched in the wild or were stocked, as well as how many of those fish are present in an area. This information about the status of young walleye in lakes helps the DNR make informed management decisions.

Using electrofishing boats, crews will survey shallow areas near the shoreline of lakes at night with the goal of capturing young-of-year walleye. Walleye prefer cooler, deeper areas of lakes during the day but move into shallow, nearshore areas at night,

making nighttime surveys more efficient. On larger lakes, two or more electrofishing crews using separate boats may operate at the same time to cover more area. The crews will work both on lakes that have been stocked with walleye and lakes that have not.

Biologists also will collect and keep a sample of young-of-year walleye from stocked lakes to determine whether the fish are primarily reproducing naturally or if young-of-year are from stocking. Many walleye that are stocked are marked with oxytetracycline, a chemical marker that can be observed within captured fish by using a microscope with an ultraviolet light source in a laboratory setting. In addition, modern genetic techniques that allow more accurate assessment of stocking success will be completed at Michigan State University on walleye tissue samples collected during some

of these fall surveys.

Some surveys will be conducted collaboratively with tribal agencies, and tribal natural resource departments also will be conducting surveys independently of the DNR. In the Upper Peninsula, the USDA's Forest Service also will be collaborating on surveys and conducting independent surveys in the Hiawatha National Forest as part of an effort to create long-term datasets for a number of inland lakes managed for walleye.

Everyone is urged to use caution when fishing or on the water near electrofishing boats, and those wading will be asked to exit the water when a survey boat approaches and during electrofishing work. Crews will be using bright lights to illuminate the water around the boats and running generators on board, which may make it difficult to hear and speak with anyone on shore. ✧

Find Fall Fish

When fishing, if you want to catch a fish, it's really important that you put your bait where a fish lives. That might sound very basic, but the most basic concept of fishing is to fish where the fish are. You can have the nicest boat around, lots of expensive rods and reels and tackle boxes full of lures, but if you don't put your lure near a fish, all that other stuff is no good. Here are some ideas for finding different species of fish in the next few weeks.

Let's start with crappies. Crappies are abundant and popular almost everywhere. In the spring we catch them near cover like rushbeds and docks and timber in shallow water. In the fall, if you fish those areas you probably won't be eating crappies for supper. They're not in the shallows in large numbers now in most places.

In some lakes the crappies will be on or near the deep weedline. The clearer the water, the deeper they'll be. Sometimes they'll be twenty-five yards off the edge of the deep weedline. On a calm evening you can see them creating dimples as they suck bugs off the surface of the water. Try a

Mr. Crappie Grub or an XL Shadpole on a sixteenth ounce jig and you'll probably catch crappies. If they're being finicky, tie on a Shoo Shiner jig, tip it with a minnow, and work it under a slip-bobber rig. Even when the crappies are being fussy, the Shoo Shiner/minnow combination will get at least a few to bite.

Crappies will also be found on the bottom in the basin of some lakes. Cruise the basin in twenty to thirty feet of water with a close eye on our sonar. When you see a concentration of fish, work them with eighth or sixteenth ounce jigs and plastic. Try a variety of shapes and colors until the fish show you what they want.

Walleyes can be in a lot of places depending on the lake. Different lakes provide different hang-outs. In shallow lakes with stained water, you can find walleyes on windblown points in water two ft. deep sometimes.

In deep, clear lakes they'll be in twenty ft. of water or more on deep structure. Or they might suspend away from structure near baitfish in some bodies of water. They'll go on a night-

bite in other lakes. Research the body of water that you'll be fishing to determine where you should focus your efforts.

Largemouth bass will also be in a variety of areas, but as the weather gets colder, you'll find fewer of them in the sloppy shallows that many inhabited during the summer. On a warm, overcast day in the fall you can find them cruising reed-beds near deeper water. Reeds in six to eight feet of water that are close to cabbage beds in deeper water can be very good. The bass hold in the deeper water during cold conditions, then move shallower when there's a day or two of warmer weather. A Tour Grade Swim Jig tipped with a bulky piece of plastic, something like a Rage Craw, will get most largemouth bass to bite. Big bass like bulky baits in the fall.

Some lakes have more options than others for fall fish. In some lakes there will be just a couple of types of areas that will hold fish. On other lakes you need to try different things to get bit. Keep that in mind and you'll find yourself getting lots of bites. ✧

Michigan DNR has stocked 18.9 million fish so far in 2025

Successful spring and summer fish stocking bodes well for fall fishing opportunities

April showers bring May flowers, and spring and summer fish stocking bring fall fishing! This spring and summer, the Michigan DNR stocked a total of 18,958,970 fish that weighed more than 331.5 tons and consisted of 10 different species and one hybrid.

Fish stocking is an important activity to provide both Michigan residents and visitors with quality fishing opportunities. These efforts help bring an estimated \$3.9 billion into the state's economy through the sportfishing industry, tourism and related businesses.

To complete the task of stocking, it took 417 stocking trips and 2,345 hours. Crews traveled just over 91,000 miles in 17 specialized stocking trucks to get to the 716 stocking sites. Despite the [severe ice storm that affected northern Michigan](#), which caused a loss of power and transition to backup power for several days at Oden State Fish Hatchery, no fish were lost due to the storm, allowing the DNR to meet its stocking goals.

"We had another excellent spring and summer stocking season that will bring ecological benefits and fishing opportunities to Michigan anglers," said Aaron Switzer, DNR fish production manager. "Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our staff, healthy, high-quality fish were reared and delivered to stocking sites in excellent condition. The numbers produced and stocked hit the targets for most areas."

The number and type of fish produced varies by hatchery, as each location's ability to rear fish depends on the source and temperature of the rearing water. Fish are reared in Michigan's state fish hatcheries anywhere from one to 18 months before they are stocked.

In Michigan, there are six state hatcheries and two cooperative

hatcheries that work together to produce the species, strain and size of fish needed for fisheries managers. These fish must then be delivered and stocked at a specific time and location to ensure their success.

Each hatchery stocked the following fish this spring:

- **Marquette State Fish Hatchery (near Marquette)**

stocked 368,452 yearling lake trout, brook trout and splake (a hybrid of lake trout and brook trout) that in total weighed 49,355 pounds. In addition to yearling trout, Marquette also stocked 457 adult lake and brook trout. This hatchery stocked a total of 94 inland and Great Lakes sites

- **Thompson State Fish Hatchery (near Manistique)** stocked 2,397,307 fish, which included yearling steelhead, spring fingerling Chinook salmon, yearling muskellunge and spring fingerling walleye. These fish weighed 69,598 pounds in total. This hatchery stocked 51 sites, the majority located on the Great Lakes.

- **Oden State Fish Hatchery (near Petoskey)** stocked 737,604 yearling brown trout and rainbow trout that in total weighed 129,072 pounds. Oden also stocked 6,270 adult brown and rainbow trout that in total weighed 12,330 pounds. This hatchery stocked 98 inland and Great Lakes sites.

- **Harrietta State Fish Hatchery (in Harrietta)** stocked 825,388 yearling brown trout and rainbow trout that in total weighed 117,875 pounds. This hatchery stocked 171 sites, the majority located inland.

- **Platte River State Fish Hatchery (near Honor)** stocked 4,892,188 fish, which included yearling Atlantic salmon and coho salmon and spring fingerling Chinook salmon that in total weighed 157,584 pounds. Platte River also stocked 31,722 Skamania steelhead obtained from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources that in total weighed 4,209 pounds. This hatchery



stocked 30 sites, the majority located on the Great Lakes.

- **Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery (near Kalamazoo)** stocked 7,198,561 fish that included yearling steelhead and spring fingerling Chinook salmon, which in total weighed 122,878 pounds. Wolf Lake also stocked 29,759 channel catfish obtained from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources that in total weighed 758 pounds. This hatchery stocked 49 sites, the majority located on the Great Lakes.

- A cooperative teaching hatchery at Lake Superior State University (in Sault Saint Marie) stocked 23,378 Atlantic salmon weighing 1,811 pounds into the St. Marys River.

- Included in this year's total are just over 2.5 million walleye spring fingerlings. These fish were reared in ponds by the DNR, with extensive support provided by local sporting organizations. These fish were stocked at 61 inland lakes and rivers and Lake Michigan.

- Some hatcheries will also provide fish for a few additional stockings – consisting of brook trout, Atlantic salmon, walleye, lake sturgeon and muskellunge – to be made this fall. The lake sturgeon will come from the cooperative hatchery in Tower, Michigan, operated with Michigan State University.

The public is welcome at any of Michigan's state fish hatcheries to see the fish-rearing process firsthand. For more information or to plan your trip, visit Michigan.gov/Hatcheries. ✧

Dingell-Johnson Act: 75 years of Sport Fish Restoration funding

The Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act, known as the Dingell-Johnson Act, was passed by Congress in 1950. We're celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, and the more than \$12 billion the Act has generated for the conservation and restoration of sport fish species and their habitats.

Under the Dingell-Johnson Act, an excise tax is collected on sport fishing equipment including rods, reels, tackle, lures, lines, motorboat fuel and import duties on fishing equipment. The money is deposited into the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, which is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Funds are then distributed to state fish and wildlife agencies.

"Nobody gets excited about paying taxes, but this one doesn't bother me a bit," said Nathan "Shags" McLeod, a radio personality from Columbia, Missouri. "When I think about all the ways my tax dollars are spent, I guess

it makes me happy to know at least a few are going to support fishing."

The program requires states to match federal funds with revenue from fishing licenses and other local sources. This structure ensures anglers and boaters, the people who most directly benefit from the resource, are also the primary investors in its management.

The impact of the funding is visible across the country. More than 9,000 public boating and fishing access sites have been built or improved with Dingell-Johnson money. Over 320 state fish hatcheries receive support, producing more than a billion fish annually for stocking in public waters.

The 1984 Wallop-Breaux Amendment was a major turning point for the program. By adding excise taxes on motorboat fuel and expanding the base of taxed equipment, the amendment significantly increased revenue. It also broadened the list of eligible projects,

allowing states to invest in boating infrastructure and safety initiatives in addition to fisheries restoration.

For anglers, the results have been incredible. Improved fish populations, healthier waters, and more public access to lakes and rivers have resulted. In many rural areas, projects funded by Dingell-Johnson dollars have created economic opportunities by drawing visitors and tourism dollars providing both an economic return and intrinsic value.

As the 75th anniversary of Dingell-Johnson is celebrated in 2025, federal and state agencies, as well as conservation organizations, have issued releases highlighting its legacy. The USFWS released figures showing the scope of the program: billions of dollars invested, thousands of facilities built, and millions of people educated. Leaders of the angling and boating community described the law as a cornerstone of modern conservation policy. ✧

Hunting regulations on your phone

The free [Michigan DNR Hunt Fish app](#) offers a convenient way for hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts to:

- Buy hunting and fishing licenses.
- Report deer or fish harvests.
- Look up hunting regulations.
- Find their license history.
- Check out maps, showing features such as shooting ranges and boat launches.
- Get timely notifications from the DNR.

The Michigan DNR Hunt Fish app is available:

- On the [App Store](#) for Apple devices.
- On the [Google Play store](#) for Android devices. ✧

DNR Public Meetings

The Michigan DNR is committed to providing Michigan residents the opportunity to share input and ideas on policy decisions, programs and other aspects of resource management and outdoor recreation opportunities. One important avenue for this input is at meetings of the public bodies that advise the DNR and, in some cases, also set policies for natural and cultural resource management.

The links below will take you to the webpage for each group, where you will find details such as location and agenda (when finalized).

- [Trails Advisory Council](#) – Tues, Sept. 23, 1 p.m. (Annalisa Centofanti, 517-331-6219).
- [Board of Foresters](#) – Mon, Sept. 29, 3 p.m. (Matt Watkeys, 906-458-6965).
- [Tribal Co-management Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee](#) – Tues, Sept. 30, 6 p.m. (Dave Caroffino, 231-350-8654). ✧

Construction project to temporarily close boating access site in Menominee County

A construction project along Lake Michigan in Menominee will temporarily close the Menominee Railroad Dock Boating Access Site, beginning [Sept. 8](#). The boating access site and the road leading to it will be closed in their entirety for the duration of the construction project, which is expected to last until Dec. 15.

"This construction work will replace paving, add shoreline armoring and construct a pedestrian trail and bike path along Lake Michigan," said Ian Diffenderfer, unit supervisor at Wells State Park and the Cedar River Harbor. "The result will be substantive improvements for the public at this recreation location."

For info on DNR facility closures visit [Michigan.gov/DNRClosures](#). ✧

\$3.6 million in grants available for invasive species projects in Michigan

Michigan's Invasive Species Grant Program is now accepting proposals for the 2025 funding cycle, with an anticipated \$3.6 million available to applicants. The program—a joint effort of the Michigan DNR; Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy; and Agriculture and Rural Development—is a statewide initiative launched in 2014 to help prevent, detect and control invasive species in Michigan. [Invasive species](#) are those that are not native and whose introduction causes harm to Michigan's economy, environment or human health.

"Michigan is home to some truly world-class outdoor recreation opportunities," said DNR Director Scott Bowen. "Unchecked, invasive species pose serious threats to those resources and the outdoor economy. Michigan's Invasive Species Grant Program is a valuable tool that allows us to work with community partners around the state to better fight and contain these land and water pests." ✧

Small game opener Sept. 15

Michigan's small game seasons open statewide **September 15** for the following species:

- Cottontail rabbit and snowshoe hare.
- Fox and gray squirrels (black phase included).
- Ruffed grouse.
- Woodcock
 - All woodcock hunters must get a free woodcock stamp, which includes registration with the federal Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program (HIP). Season dates, bag limits and small game hunting regulations are available in the [2025 Michigan Hunting Regulations Summary](#) and at Michigan.gov/SmallGame ✧

Committee that advises DNR on fish and wildlife management asks for public input

The Minnesota DNR Advisory Committee is inviting people interested in fish and wildlife management to share their perspectives at an upcoming webinar. Newly established in 2025, the committee comprises Minnesotans who review outcomes achieved from Game and Fish Fund expenditures and make recommendations regarding Minnesota DNR's fish and wildlife work to the DNR commissioner and the Minnesota legislature.

Reports in odd-numbered years focus on outcomes related to protecting habitat, fish and wildlife population management, monitoring and research, and communications and engagement, while even-numbered year reports focus on biennial budget outcomes achieved from Game and Fish Fund expenditures. In a webinar on Wednesday, Sept. 10, from 6-8 p.m., committee members will present findings and recommendations from their 2025 report. The committee will also ask participants to review its proposed priorities related to fish and wildlife investments for the 2026 reporting period.

A link to join the webinar is available on the [Fish and Wildlife Advisory Committee page](#) of the DNR website. ✧

Big Chinook salmon offer great inshore action now

Lake Michigan charter captain Dumper Dan Welsch reports anglers are catching plenty of mature king salmon close to shore off Sheboygan on Lake Michigan and invites listeners to enjoy ATV riding in Cleveland, Wisconsin and dinner at Rupps on Washington supper club. (<https://dumperdan.com/>, <https://www.facebook.com/RuppsOnWashington>) ✧

NMMA applauds expanding hunt/fish opportunities on national lands

The Department of the Interior announced that it will expand hunting and sport fishing opportunities across more than 87,000 acres within the National Wildlife Refuge System and the National Fish Hatchery System. The expansion creates 42 new opportunities at 16 refuges and one hatchery, opening access in Alabama, California, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, North Carolina, Texas, and Washington.

"Expanding access to fishing and outdoor recreation is a major win for America's boating and outdoor community," said Frank Hugelmeyer, NMMA President and CEO. "Recreational boaters and anglers have always been among the greatest stewards of our nation's waters, and our industry is built on ensuring that every family has the opportunity to connect with the water and enjoy our natural resources. We commend Secretary Burgum and the Department of the Interior for making access a priority, which strengthens local economies, supports conservation, and reinforces our shared commitment to the outdoors."

The recreational boating industry supports more than 800,000 jobs across the U.S. and generates \$230 billion in economic activity. The industry is a major contributor to the \$1.2 trillion outdoor recreation economy. The final rule was published in the Federal Register on August 28, 2025 and will be effective for the 2025-2026 hunting and fishing seasons beginning September 2, 2025. ✧



Put safety first on busy boating days and all season long

Many boaters see Labor Day weekend as a wrap on the summer season: a chance to squeeze in that final voyage before the weather starts to cool and days grow shorter.

Whether you are taking out your own boat or are a guest on someone else's, there are important safety tips to know before ever leaving shore. Besides the obvious—always wearing U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets, making sure your boat is properly equipped and in good working order, and checking and monitoring weather and water conditions—the DNR shared other safety recommendations:

- Always ride with an operator who has completed an approved boater safety course. In Michigan, boater safety certificates are needed by anyone born after June 30, 1996, operating a motorized boat, or anyone born after December 31, 1978, operating a personal watercraft – like a Jet Ski.
- File a float plan with someone you trust. Include details about the trip, boat, others on board, towing or trailer vehicle, communication equipment and emergency contacts.
- Boat sober. Where the primary cause of boating-related deaths was known, alcohol was listed as a leading factor.
- Beware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Gasoline-powered engines on boats, including onboard generators, produce carbon monoxide, a colorless and odorless gas that can poison or kill someone who breathes too much of it. Install and maintain a working CO detector, never block exhaust outlets, and always dock, beach or anchor at least 20 feet away from any boat running a generator or engine.
- Keep in touch. Communication devices, such as marine radios, can be your most important piece of emergency equipment. ✧

Take advantage of fall fishing opportunities

Keep those rods handy. There's still great fishing in the fall. Fall brings a unique blend of ecological and biological factors to create optimal conditions to catch some of Wisconsin's most prized fish. As the weather and water cool, walleye, bass, musky and more spend more time in shallow waters in search of food. This puts more fish within the range of shore anglers and makes them easier to find for those fishing from boats. Fall also is a great time to catch your biggest fish of the year as many species are putting on weight ahead of the winter and spring spawn.

Looking for a new place to fish or more information about your favorite fishing hole? Check out the [Wisconsin Fishing Finder](#)! This new tool provides anglers with information on regulations, boat launch and shore fishing locations, public lands and easement, fish stocking data, fish consumption advisories and more! ✧

2025-27 Municipal Dam Grant Application period is now open!

The Municipal Dam Grant program provides a cost-sharing opportunity for eligible engineering and construction costs for dam maintenance, repair, modification or abandonment and removal up to a maximum award of \$1 M. The 2025-27 Biennial Budget provided \$4 M for dam grants with the majority being committed to the Wis. Municipal Dam Grant program.

The updated application form and instructions, along with additional reference materials, can be found on our [Municipal Dam Grant](#) website. **A fully completed application and all required attachments must be received before close of business on February 27, 2026.**

Applications can be mailed/ emailed/dropped off addressed to: Wendy Soleska, Grant Manager, Community Financial Assistance, Wisconsin DNR, 101 S. Webster St, PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707, Wendy.Soleska@wisconsin.gov ✧

Mille Lacs Lake walleye limit increased from 2 to 3

The walleye limit on Mille Lacs Lake increased from two to three on August 23, and continuing through Sunday, Nov. 30. The size limit—which allows anglers to harvest fish 17 inches or longer but only one longer than 20 inches—remains in place.

==“Our primary management objective is to maintain a healthy walleye population and remain within the state's share of sustainable harvest,” said Brad Parsons, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources fisheries section manager. “The slow bite this year allows the DNR to meet that primary goal and offer anglers the chance to take home an extra fish during the remainder of the season.”

As of July 31, state-licensed anglers have harvested 23.5% of the state's allocation of 113,600 pounds of walleye. The state and the Ojibwe Tribes who retain harvest rights in the 1837 Treaty Area jointly establish a sustainable harvest level each year, and that total harvest amount is then allocated between state-licensed anglers and Tribal anglers.

The slow walleye bite on Mille Lacs Lake in 2025 is due to abundant forage in the lake from strong yellow perch and cisco hatches the previous year that provide an alternative to anglers' baits. With slower fishing, fewer anglers have fished the lake than in a typical year.

“Although abundant forage has slowed angler catch rates, that's a good, healthy sign for Mille Lacs Lake,” Parsons said. “Anglers are reporting they are catching plump walleye, and we expect the lake's walleye population to grow well this season.”

Complete Mille Lacs Lake fishing regulations and regularly updated surveys that show ongoing state-licensed angler catches of walleye, northern pike and yellow perch are available on the [Minnesota DNR website](https://mndnr.gov/millelacslake) (mndnr.gov/millelacslake). ✧

Lake trout live long and prosper in Lake Superior

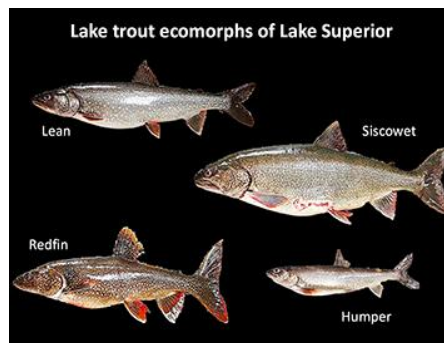
The oldest known lake trout in the Great Lakes, 62 years old at the time of capture, was recently documented by researchers at the Michigan DNR. This fish was collected from Klondike Reef in Lake Superior in 2023 by a team of intrepid researchers.

Age is an important variable in tracking population health for fish, and this finding indicates that lake trout live long and prosper in Lake Superior.

In March 2024, Dan Traynor, fisheries technician at the Marquette Fisheries Research Station, was processing samples collected in September 2023 at Klondike Reef, a remote offshore area near the Canadian border.

Traynor assigned the age of a humper lake trout collected during the survey. Humper lake trout are one subspecies of the fish found in offshore lake mounts in Lake Superior. They are slow-growing and don't get very large because they mostly feed on invertebrates.

The fish was female, weighed 4.62 lbs and was 24.7" in length. These stats aren't remarkable—the longest collected by the Marquette Research Station was 53.1" and the heaviest collected was 35.5 lbs. The state record for Michigan is 61.5 lbs.



This fish hatched in 1961. Age can be measured in fish with multiple body structures, such as spines. For lake trout, the otolith, or ear stone, is the most reliable indicator of age. The otolith is in the inner ear – humans have them, too – and as the fish grows, so does the otolith.

This growth leaves rings each winter, similar to tree rings, which can then be counted to estimate the fish's age. Lake trout are adapted to live in unproductive ecosystems with limited food resources, which makes them take the tortoise approach in life—high longevity over the long road, in contrast to salmon, which live and must do everything on their bucket list in only about four years.

Animals and plants that live in extremely unproductive environments with little food and extreme temperatures and weather (such as the Arctic, deep-sea trenches or deserts) take a long time to grow.

The upper Great Lakes are considered oligotrophic (low-productivity) ecosystems because of how deep, cold and far north they are. This is especially true for [Lake Superior](#), with an annual average surface temperature of only 40°F and average depth of 483 ft.'

Lake trout evolved and adapted to live in this type of ecosystem, and that is why [lake trout can thrive at all depths in Lake Superior, even at Superior Maximus](#), the deepest location in the Great Lakes –1,332 feet – which was first explored in June 2006 by the Marquette Research Station staff.

Due to environmental conditions, competition for resources and fishing, the typical life span for a lake trout in Lake Superior is 25 to 30 years. Prior to this discovery, the oldest known lake trout in Lake Superior was 42 years old. Age is one of the most vital statistics used to assess the health of fish populations.

Scientists look at the age distribution in fish populations to measure mortality, growth and longevity.

Mary Catherine was captured during a special survey to inventory the ecomorphs (sub-species) of lake trout at Klondike Reef (part of the Caribou Island Reef complex), and also to study their reproductive

biology. This study will provide more details on the life history and biology of Klondike-strain lake trout to help fishery managers better understand where to stock these fish and what to expect in terms of their performance.

The Klondike Reef expedition required the crew to plan logistics of operating in remote offshore areas far from land, conduct a reconnaissance of the area (much of that area is uncharted) and set nets to collect the various lake trout forms.



This study is important not only for Lake Superior, but also for lake trout recovery programs in all the Great Lakes.

In the early part of the 20th century, Lake Superior lake trout supported high levels of commercial harvest. However, the invasion of the sea lamprey, combined with ongoing intense commercial fishing, resulted in the collapse of lake trout populations in Lake Superior by the 1950s.

The same thing happened earlier in all the other Great Lakes. In 1954, the United States and Canada adopted a treaty to form the Great Lakes Fishery Commission through the [1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries](#), to combat the sea lamprey, help manage Great Lakes fisheries and rehabilitate lake trout in the Great Lakes. In 2024, the Lake Superior Committee declared that its lake trout populations had been rehabilitated.

This is one of the greatest comeback stories in freshwater fisheries management. ✧

End of summer tips for Big River bassing

When summer's heat turns southern reservoir shallows into bath water, Arkansas pro Dylan Hays knows that the offshore realm offers the consistency he seeks. Whether he's guiding, tournament fishing or spending a casual day on the water, Hays heads to his favorite deep water spots with a diverse array of baits and a singular purpose—finding big bass cooling their heels during the dreaded Dog Days.

First things first, and Hays spares no diligence in locating the right spots. It often takes a lot of looking, but the reward justifies the effort.

"You want to find bait, current, and hard bottom," Hays said. "A lot of times, I'll scan, scan, scan, but the big thing is bait. If you don't find bait, you won't find the fish. On the Tennessee River, with a lot of current, I look for shell bars, or anywhere the current is hitting directly on some kind of structure. They like for the current to be hitting them in the face, and that's almost always a hard spot; otherwise, it would be washed away."

The Arsenal

Always prepared to show the fish a diverse array of looks, Hays typically starts his offshore trips with these baits on his deck.

Crankbait: Size and color will vary by location and daily conditions, but Hays always retrofits his baits with Mustad KVD Elite Triple Grip Treble Hooks.

"The angle of the hook keeps the fish on longer," Hays said. "In the winter, when the fish are less active and they just slap at the bait, I'll go with a Mustad Round Bend treble hook, but the fish are more active during the summer, so those Triple Grip trebles are important. Also, there's a lot of brush on those offshore spots and the angle of that hook comes through the brush. Cranking that brush is a good way to trigger a big one to bite."

Carolina Rig: Hays rigs a creature bait on a Mustad KVD EWG Grip Pin hook with a 3/4-ounce Mustad TitanX Carolina weight. Some may opt for round bend hooks with Carolina rigs, but Hays believes the EWG does a better job of securely holding bulkier baits. "I also like the 6 mm Mustad TitanX Tungsten Beads, instead of glass beads, because tungsten makes more noise," Hays said. "They also help protect your knot."

Big Worm: Rigged on a Mustad AlphaPoint Tak Round Bend hook with a Mustad TitanX Worm Weight, the classic 10-inch ribbontail offers a great tool for dragging along ledges, bars, and points.

Neko Rig: One of the most effective finesse options for summer offshore fishing, a stick worm or a finesse worm on a Mustad Wacky/Neko/Dropshot hook with a Mustad TitanX Nail Weight will get a couple extra bites when the action starts to dwindle. "I'll often use a 1/8-ounce weight, but I try to get away with a 1/16-ounce when I can," Hays said. "The slower the fall, the more bites you get."

Bright Prospects

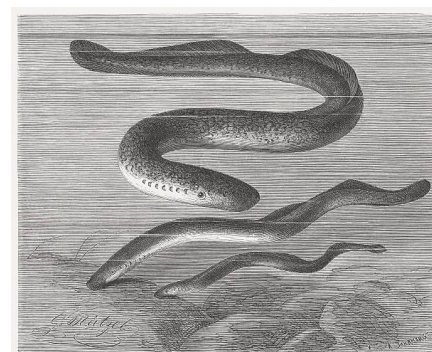
Hays fishes his Neko rig on medium spinning tackle with 15-pound TUF-LINE Addicted Braid and a 10-pound fluorocarbon leader. The braided line is essential for quick hook sets in deeper water, but he also points out another key performance point.

"I really like the orange color because it helps you see your line a little better," Hays said. "When I'm guiding, it helps me keep track of everyone's line to prevent tangles. Also, when I'm tournament fishing in windy conditions, you might not feel a light bite, but with that orange color, you'll see your line tighten." ♦

The fishery depends on sea lamprey control. Fish are part of the fabric of the Great Lakes

- The [Great Lakes fishery](#) is worth more than \$5.1 billion annually.
- [The fishery supports](#) 75,000 jobs, in addition to hundreds of thousands of jobs related to tourism, navigation, etc.
- More than 5 million people fish the Great Lakes annually.
- Commercial fishing is the backbone of many Great Lakes communities. Charter fishing is an important business.
- Subsistence fishing is a right and a way of life for tribal and aboriginal communities.

[Sea lamprey populations](#) have been reduced to a fraction of what they were before control began, creating conditions for the recovery of native and desirable fishes and the ecosystem. Today, [agencies stock](#) hundreds of millions of trout and salmon into the lakes, enhancing the resource.



Sea lamprey control must continue.

Sea lamprey control is a major contributor to the value of the Great Lakes fishery. Sea lampreys are resilient beasts. When control is relaxed for even a short time, they bounce back with a vengeance and inflict major harm. Elevated sea lamprey abundances take years to remedy and higher populations set back fishery and ecosystem recovery by decades. ♦

Massive funding cuts to the Michigan DNR passes the State House

The proposed budget for Fisheries Division reduces full-time positions by 56.5 and cuts the operating budget by \$5.3 million with \$4.1 million coming from restricted funds (e.g., fishing licenses) and the remainder from General Fund allocation of \$1.2 M. The proposed budget will have direct negative impacts on Fisheries' ability to sustain, and improve aquatic habitats and the populations they support. In turn, these effects will have adverse effects on water quality protection and health for citizens and threatens \$3.9 B of economic value to Michigan each year.

The impacts of those cuts, if implemented, will result in a 50% reduction in stocking, risk collapse of Great Lakes fish populations, lost fishing opportunities, violation of federal court orders, and destruction of Michigan's freshwater habitats. Details are provided below.

Fish Stocking – 50% Reduction

In 2025, Fisheries Division produced and stocked more than 18.9 million fish. Our six state fish hatcheries produce 12 species of fish, to supplement natural reproduction and ensure stable populations, fishing opportunities, and long-term conservation and management of the state's resources. Reductions in hatchery staffing levels and operating budgets in the bill will result in a 50% reduction in fish stocking and, if continued, will threaten our ability to maintain and operate all six hatcheries.

Resource Management – Great Lakes Fisheries Risk of Collapse

Michigan's waters of the Great Lakes add to the quality of life in Michigan and generates at least \$2.7 billion to the State economy. The proposed House Budget would put Great Lakes fish populations at risk and potentially cause substantial declines in economic activity through reduced services including:

- Significant reduction of Great Lakes fish marking programs to assess stocking and stock status.

- Reduction or elimination of Great Lakes prey fish surveys, which greatly increases the risk of food web imbalance and could lead to significant population declines in valuable sportfish populations.

- Substantial reduction in survey effort to determine fishing effort, which informs fish population status and contributes to co-management with tribes and Great Lakes states.

- Reduction in Great Lakes fish community surveys, which reduces the ability to assess impacts from invasive species, double-crested cormorants, and other stressors on fish populations.

- Reduces the ability to implement native species restoration efforts, including efforts to rehabilitate the iconic Lake Sturgeon.

Resource Management – Inland Fishing Opportunities Lost

Michigan's fisheries add to the quality of life in Michigan and generate at least \$1.2 B to the State economy. The proposed Budget would result in reduced fishing opportunities and cause declines in economic activity through reduced services provided by the Division including:

- A 50% reduction in core fish population assessments of inland streams and lakes is expected across the state. The impact will vary locally depending upon existing staffing patterns and logistics.

- Reduction in our ability to accurately assess fish stocking, including its utility as a fisheries management tool in a fiscally responsible manner.

- Reduction or elimination of creel surveys to inform and assess fisheries management actions on inland lakes and streams.

- Loss of the ability to assess special harvest regulations on inland waters for some popular species.

- Reduction or elimination of support for management of double-crested cormorants across the United States. Michigan has led the nation in cormorant management need, implementation, and science informing management direction since 2004.

- Significant reductions in staff availability and responsiveness to stakeholders, including stakeholder requests for staff presence at meetings to discuss local issues.

Resource Management – Violation of Federal Court Orders Regarding Tribal Co-Management

Through the 2023 Great Lakes Fishing Decree and the 2007 Inland Consent Decree, Federal courts have placed obligations on the Department of Natural Resources regarding fisheries resource monitoring, data collection, information sharing, regulatory cooperation, and collaboration with Tribal governments. This co-management work has been supported by the State's general fund. The proposed House Budget would result in the following actions by Fisheries Division:

- Elimination of funding would not only place the State in violation of Federal court orders, but it would also pose an unnecessary risk to the shared fisheries resources within treaty waters.

Resource Management - Habitat Protection Lost

Protection and restoration of Michigan's lake and stream habitat provides the backbone of our world-class fishery. The proposed House Budget would result in the following actions by Fisheries Division:

- Significant reductions in representation and contributions to statewide partnerships. Many partnership projects are solicited and implemented at the local level.

- Reduced protection of cold-water aquatic resources and other sensitive habitats resulting from reduced capacity to effectively implement environmental review responsibilities.

- Reduced water quality monitoring, habitat protection, and response to fish kills and other aquatic resource disasters which directly affect the health and safety of public resources for fish and game species as well as public drinking water and clean water for general recreation. ✧

Late-Summer River Smallies

Keep a bead on your surroundings and fish poppers for success

Muskegon, MI – When it comes to feeding behavior, smallmouth bass are generalists, and you can catch them a lot of different ways on any given day. Sometimes they will focus on specific forage—for example, crawfish, certain baitfish species, and at some times of the year they’ll start capitalizing on insects, and after a rain, frogs, salamanders, really anything that washes into the river.

Point is, late-summer river smallies can be caught a lot of different ways on different presentations. And you must keep an eye open for preferred habitat and strategize your efforts in high-probability areas.

River Conditions/Time of Day

During late-summer, river levels are generally lower and clearer than earlier in summer. Water temps are still relatively high in the mid-70s into the low 80s on most rivers throughout smallmouth country. But the fish are still going to be active.

Veteran river guide Jay Anglin in the Michigan/Indiana/Illinois corridor and river smallmouth bass expert noted: “River smallies feed on both sight and sound. On most rivers there will be smallies feeding on crawfish around cover at any point in time besides everything else available. Especially this time of year, you really must figure out where they are in terms of depth, shade, and water flow—the fish really seeking out cooler, oxygenated water but are moving around throughout the day for feeding opportunities.”

Anglin continued: “They’re very adaptive. They’ll change gears quickly because they’re not necessarily locked into one food source. It’s not always a match the hatch situation like trout. Whereas trout might be totally focused on a certain mayfly, a smallie will take advantage of the fly hatch, but also switch gears and go chase down baitfish, crayfish, or bugs.”

Working Windows for Poppers

As such, river smallies are very inquisitive and will check out sonic-oriented baits, like fly poppers or conventional topwater if it drops right over their head. Anglin says that fishing on top with either a fly popper like the proven Boogle Bug or a Rapala Skitter Pop on conventional gear works so well in late summer because you don’t have to worry about snags and you get far more casts in.

“While they can work well, too, if you’re throwing a tube jig, crankbait, or streamer, you’re going to run into snags, which decreases your time with your bait in the strike zone and you’re constantly moving the boat to get the lure back and causing a lot of commotion. Fishing poppers really puts stealth on your side.” Over the past three- to five years, Anglin has noticed river waters running much lower, so there’s also more fish shallow, especially in and out of oxygenated riffle areas near slack water where they might have been deeper in the past.

“Depending on where you are, late-summer fish might be as shallow as 18 inches or so, so if a popper lands over their head, there’s a really good chance they’re going to go for it.” So, whether you employ fly or conventional gear, poppers are great options for late-summer river smallies. “I think it’s important to start out on the easy side of things, too, which in my case, would definitely be throwing a popper,” said Anglin. But if the sun is too high and the fish are skittish at grabbing baits from what’s essentially a giant mirror underwater, Anglin will switch to crawfish fly patterns or tubes to get his clients on fish.

As the sun started moving behind the trees, fish started moving up in the water column to areas along the bank where they could feed on insects, minnows, and small panfish. I’m

always looking for the little blooms of gnats and mayflies along the banks that bring in feeding minnows. The smallies typically follow.

“The bottom line is the bigger fish started to move up in the column, and that’s when we switched to poppers and that flicked the switch. Suddenly, he didn’t get any on his crayfish and I said, ‘Hey, throw one real shallow and strip it quicker.’ And he threw one right up to the bank about eight inches of water and he stripped it out to about two feet and got smoked.”

“That told us what we needed to know. I handed him another rod that had a Boogle Bug popper on it, and he caught another good fish.” The point is you must adjust throughout the day with river smallies depending on the sun.

Finding Structure & Shade

Anglin observes: “When you have peak temps like we do right now in the rivers, usually by mid-August at this latitude the sun angle becomes lower. As the sun gets lower on the horizon you can take advantage of topographical features and foliage quicker.”

“While the sun might be overhead until an hour or hour and half before sunset in June and July, this time of year by three or four o’clock in most rivers you can find a bluff or a tall tree line or a high bank or something even a bridge or a levy-style road and take advantage of smallies in the shade on topwaters,” continues Anglin.

Depending on where you are in the country, the key then is to find shade, which could come in the form of boulders and rock piles like in Minnesota and Wisconsin rivers or bridges, sea walls, old railroad trestles, riprap, as well as wood.

Continued on page 14

Tackling Tough Times

Muskegon, MI – The old saying “a bad day fishing is better than a good day at work” may ring true for millions of anglers, but those struggling on the water may dispute this. While these frontline anglers are out there working the water year-round in any conditions mother nature brews up, if they were being completely honest, they’d very likely say some days just suck.

The Dog Days of summer is a prime example of when conditions can present a daunting task for anglers. Recreational boat traffic, super-hot, often low water and blazing sun don’t exactly ring the dinner bell for big fish, especially during daylight hours. While many take a brief break from fishing and focus on BBQ’s and golf, others pin back their ears and continue fishing.

This may be a good thing, because failure drives the elite to yearn and learn more about their quarry, often peeling away layers of knowledge most anglers cannot fathom. Ultimately, this process becomes instinctive, and success becomes almost involuntary. It’s this sort of confidence that separates the anglers who seem to always catch fish, from the others.

While late-summer heat presents a lot of challenges, the rest of the year also doles plenty less than ideal days for fishing, which begs the question: How do the best anglers seem to always figure out how to catch fish?

Pro anglers don’t get up in the morning and say to themselves, “I’m probably going to lose today”. Nope, they go tackle the challenge with gusto, conditions be damned. Moon phase, air temperature, wind, water levels and all that stuff may be important, but one of the most vital assets possessed by elite anglers from day to day is confidence.

As a guide, unless faced with truly dangerous conditions or the luxury of shifting a client to another less

challenging day, we go fishing. I don’t get too muddled down in the details of barometric pressure or when some fancy phone app tells me the best fishing will be, because my job is to put clients on fish come hell or high water. Sure, there are some big factors to consider when making decisions such as where to fish and the best time to do it—which techniques give us the best shot, what flies or lures are our best option, for example, but my confidence and ability to convey that to my clients is always the biggest factor that brings fish to the net. Even when the odds are stacked against us.

So, what exactly does go through a pro-angler or guide’s mind when faced with the worst-case scenario? How do these anglers push themselves to the front of the pack and figure out a way to make things work? Rest assured it isn’t rocket-science. Through trial and error, countless hours of cracking the codes, these anglers start checking boxes and eventually hit pay dirt.

PRO TIPS

ONE: Look at weather trends and relate them to current conditions. If there is some stability, then stick with what has been working and go from there. Second guessing details is normal, but at some point, you should commit to a plan and then start focusing on it. Ignore the “maybes” and move on! This focus not only motivates anglers, but this mindset also allows them to make better decisions on water.

TWO: Consider water temperature critically important when determining where fish will be located, and when peak activity will likely occur. For instance, at certain water temperatures various species will be pre-spawn, fully engaged in spawning, or post-spawn, and this has a huge impact on how they react to presentations. Also, seasonally, big swings in temperatures at either end of the spectrum should influence what your plan is...cooling water can be your enemy or friend depending on where it was before.

There isn’t a day that doesn’t go by during my time on the water that I don’t encounter other anglers fishing “wrong” and this is especially the case during spring and fall when anglers cling to their summer pattern comfort zone: Fishing too fast, too slow, too high, too low, too big, too small is all too common.

THREE: The sun is also a huge factor to take into consideration, and this is especially the case when coupled with water temperature. During spring, fall and winter, the sun will warm certain areas and kickstart the food chain, thus attracting baitfish as well as predators such as bass, walleye and muskie—besides, the water temperature in these areas is likely to be closer to their preferred “comfort zone” anyway. Shallow water, slow water, dark-bottomed areas, stumps and deadfalls...these areas absorb solar energy quicker than deep water (or fast water in rivers). Warm runoff is also important if present, so know the territory. Even a slight difference of less than a degree can make a big difference. Also, sun angle often dictates when peak temperature occurs in these zones.

FOUR: By the same token, the sun can be a killer during warm summer months by driving peak water temps, often making the daytime hours extremely difficult to fish. When fish are forced to stare straight into direct sun to see your lure, they are prone to not “finish”. It’s very common to observe a bass – especially smallmouth bass, for example, come to a bait quickly and then turn away and race to cover in this situation. They respond to the commotion and sonic profile of the bait and know approximately where it is, but the burning ball of fire in their eyes essentially turns them away. Know where to find shade at any time of day—this could be shoreline vegetation, a topographical feature, a bridge, a dock, or subsurface cover

Continued on page 14

Tough Times *cont'd from page 13*

such as a weed bed, boulders or wood. At the very least present offerings from an angle that mitigates the risk of fish getting "eye blinged".

FIVE: Late-summer water temps can soar and absolutely destroy daytime fishing. Depending on the weather, fishing early morning, evening, and at night will nearly always yield better results. During the day, fish deep, cooler water found near deep thermoclines or target fish congregated in spring-fed zones. Another important factor to consider is oxygen, and to no surprise, hot water diminishes dissolved oxygen levels dramatically. Consequently, fish will often seek areas with higher O₂ levels including riffles in rivers, below dam spillways and turbines, as well as areas where "chop" and waves break over structures. Heavy boat traffic also increases dissolved oxygen levels and both prey and predator species alike can be found roaming open areas, often over deep water. Predators focused on schools of baitfish such as shad are known to remain very high in the water column where they specialize in blitzing schools of bait, even in boat wakes.

SIX: Stealth is critical when targeting fish that are less active. Barging in with abandon is a visual and audible no-no anglers often ignore. Prior to entering a given zone, think about the best way to approach. Obviously, this isn't always possible when competing with other anglers or depth issues for example, but it is important. Again, the sun angle comes into play. Neutral or "off" fish, are likely going to go into flight mode if a huge shadow looms in close while slapping water with the bow. If the water is choppy, you can get away with a lot more, but sunny conditions often associated with post-frontal shutdowns are a prime example of when being attentive to your approach and how you run the boat may dictate success. Be overly cautious until fish reaction tells you otherwise. Stay back, avoid creating shadows and make longer casts when possible.

SEVEN: Lure size is important. If you are "matching the hatch" as fly anglers say, mimicking natural forage predators are focused on works fine, however when you are addled by overall terrible conditions, sometimes you must think outside the box. If fish are well-fed and "off", a smaller lure or fly may be a better option. Smallmouth bass for example, are opportunists and often feed on small forage associated more with trout, such as insects. Finesse fishing for smallies with tiny lures and flies works great when coaxing fish to eat. On the other hand, you can go with shock and awe by using something outlandish. This is a brazen move often reserved for last resort, but if you ask any muskie angler who is dealing with lockjawed fish, throwing the giant lure that looks like nothing they've ever seen will sometimes trigger their predatory instincts. Much the same, fly anglers are known to go with ridiculously large and colorful streamers fished super aggressively to trigger finicky big trout.

EIGHT: When odds are stacked against you, consider dropping down to a lighter line test. If you typically run, say, 12- 17lb test, back off to 8 or 10lb. I much prefer fluorocarbon in these situations, and if the water is clear the ever-popular braid/leader setup may not be your best option. I want everything in my control to be perfect and this includes lighter line, softer casts and presentations with extreme focus. This sort of mindset is how elite anglers put fish in the net, day in and day out.

While we all wish every day we fish offers perfect conditions, this is rarely the case. In fact, often Murphy will greet you at the boat ramp and bring his Law friend along to mess things up. As I like to tell my fishing clients, don't "talk yourself out of fishing, talk yourself into fishing". This theory is based on decades of making fish happen. Fish smart, fish with purpose and be attentive to every cast and presentation, because randomness is a success killer. Most of all just go fishing! ✧

Late Summer River Smallies*Continued from page 12*

"We have fewer boulders in the rivers I fish but we have lots of sea walls and other structure that provides excellent cover for these fish. And in metro settings too, I'm always looking for the decrepit, breaking down stuff that provides nooks, cracks and crannies that draw tons of crawfish, especially with some depth transition around them so the fish just kind of sit off these areas and wait for the food to reveal itself."

"You could drift or crawl a tube in these areas and mess around with getting snagged or you could pinpoint casts with topwaters right on top and you'll get smoked. You might start by catching smaller fish but all the commotion on top will bring in the larger fish on subsequent casts or drifts."

Guide Recommended Gear

- Conventional gear: 6'-6'6" medium-light/medium power, fast action spinning rod with 2500 size reel and 10-lb. monofilament – 2-inch Skitter Pop or favorite popper hardbait
- Fly gear: 9' 6-wt. rod, Scientific Anglers Amplitude Infinity weight-forward line, 7.5' 16 lb. tapered leader with 18" to 24" of 10- or 12-pound mono, nylon or fluoro tippet plus Boogle Bug popper
- Whitewater Spindrift Merino Fishing Hoodie for sun protection
- Whitewater Prevail Pant for sun protection

Take-Home

Looking to catch more late-summer smallies? Rather than whipping around a Beetle Spin randomly throughout the river, keep your head on a swivel and get more casts in with topwaters, whether on-the-fly or spinning gear. As a backup, bring a tube rod or some crawfish pattern flies for deeper, mid-day sun fish, but know that if you find the right shade, structure, and food source, a popper is going to simply catch fish in a way that's explosive and about as fun as it gets! ✧

2nd Amendment Issues

DOJ Says AR-15s, Ammo Magazines protected by Second Amendment in Seventh Circuit Brief. Case will be heard in Court **Sept 22**

Deputy AG Dhillon told Illinois authorities, "I'll see you in court"

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has urged the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals to strike down Illinois's "assault weapon" and magazine restrictions. In a brief filed June 19, the DOJ asked the court to extend Second Amendment protections to ammunition magazines, AR-15s, and other firearms targeted by the state's ban. The DOJ argued the court should reverse its previous analysis [upholding the state's ban](#) on what it labelled "militaristic" weapons in 2023's *Bevis v. City of Naperville*. The brief said the appeals court should instead side with the district court that [initially blocked the law](#).

"Because the Act is a total ban on a category of firearms that are in common use by law-abiding citizens for lawful reasons, it is flatly unconstitutional," the DOJ wrote in its amicus brief in *Barnett v. Raoul*. "This Court should affirm the district court's injunction."

The DOJ released the brief in the wake of the [Supreme Court's decision to deny cert to *Snope v. Brown*](#), a case challenging Maryland's "assault weapon" ban. The Supreme Court has yet to address whether AR-15s or other firearms whose sales are usually outlawed by such bans enjoy constitutional protections. The brief represents a shift in the DOJ's view of the issue since President Donald Trump returned to office, with the department now arguing that the guns are protected, following an order to review its position on the matter.

"President Donald J. Trump has instructed his Administration to 'protect the Second Amendment rights of all Americans,'" the DOJ explained in the brief. "Attorney General Pamela Bondi has likewise instructed the Department of Justice to use its full might to protect the Second

Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens."

Assault weapons bans, which generally outlaw the sale of semi-automatic firearms capable of accepting detachable magazines and containing a set number of regulated ergonomic or cosmetic features, have been adopted by nine states and the District of Columbia. They have long been at the center of the political fight over American gun laws, especially since they target one of the most popular firearms in the country: The AR-15.

The AR-15 is a lightweight, semi-automatic rifle that has dominated the sales market and public attention for decades. [Recent polling from The Washington Post and Ipsos indicates](#) roughly 1 in 20, or 16 million, Americans own an AR-15.

In 2023, Illinois passed a ban on AR-15s and other so-called assault weapons. The state [defines assault weapon](#) as "a semiautomatic rifle that has the capacity to accept a detachable magazine or that may be readily modified to accept a detachable magazine" with at least one of the following: pistol grip, thumbhole stock, protruding grip, folding stock, telescoping stock, detachable stock, flash suppressor, grenade launcher, or shroud. New sales of firearms that fit the description, including the AR-15, are banned under the law.

Gun-rights advocates immediately challenged the law, which has been blocked and upheld by different state and federal courts ever since. Now, the DOJ is jumping in on their side.

"The AR-15 is the most popular civilian rifle in America and is used by tens of millions of law-abiding Americans for lawful reasons," acting

Associate Attorney General Chad Mizelle, who filed the brief, [posted on social media](#). "Total bans on AR-15s are a flagrant violation of the Second Amendment. Today, the Department of Justice filed an Amicus Brief telling the Seventh Circuit that Illinois' law banning AR-15s is unconstitutional under the Second Amendment." The DOJ's involvement hasn't persuaded backers of the ban, though. Illinois Governor JB Pritzker (D) defended his state's law in a [press conference on Monday](#).

"They obviously don't understand the damage that's being done across the country where there are no assault weapons bans," he said. "They are wrongheaded on so many things, but this is yet another of those." The DOJ's brief outlined the department's legal argument against the bans based on the popularity of AR-15s, recent Supreme Court statements, and the idea that history shows "militaristic" firearms are constitutionally protected. It encouraged the Seventh Circuit to apply Second Amendment protections to the guns, asking it to consider recent statements made by the Supreme Court Justices who dissented in the denial of *Snope*.

"First, as explained below, key aspects of *Bevis*'s analysis are wrong, even judged against the Supreme Court's Second Amendment case law that existed at the time," the DOJ wrote. "Second, multiple Supreme Court Justices have since made it clear that they disagree with *Bevis* and other recent lower-court opinions, and that the Court is likely to grant certiorari 'in the next Term or two' to address the errors in those opinions."

In the *Snope* denial, Justices Clarence Thomas and Brett Kavanaugh both cast doubt on the constitutionality of AR-15 bans. Kavanaugh, who voted

against taking up the case, said the Supreme Court would take up a challenge to an AR ban case sooner rather than later.

“This case primarily concerns Maryland’s ban on the AR-15, a semi-automatic rifle. Americans today possess an estimated 20 to 30 million AR-15s,” he wrote. “And AR-15s are legal in 41 of the 50 States, meaning that the States such as Maryland that prohibit AR-15s are something of an outlier. Given that millions of Americans own AR-15s and that a significant majority of the States allow possession of those rifles, petitioners have a strong argument that AR-15s are in ‘common use’ by law-abiding citizens and therefore are protected by the Second Amendment under *Heller*.”

Kavanaugh outright questioned the legitimacy of the lower court’s decision upholding Maryland’s ban, which is very similar to the one enacted by Illinois.

“In short, under this Court’s precedents, the Fourth Circuit’s decision is questionable,” he wrote. “Although the Court today denies certiorari, a denial of certiorari does not mean that the Court agrees with a lower-court decision or that the issue

is not worthy of review.” DOJ also rejected the claim that “militaristic” firearms are not “arms” under the Second Amendment, saying that the Seventh Circuit panel’s previous holding “fails as a matter of text, history, and precedent.”

“Although the militia-related purpose announced in the Second Amendment’s prefatory clause is not ‘the only reason Americans valued the ancient right’ to keep and bear arms, the prefatory clause’s text did capture ‘the purpose for which the right was codified,’ which was ‘to prevent elimination of the militia,’” the DOJ wrote in their brief. “The contrary claim that ‘militaristic’ weapons fall outside its scope wrongly requires reading the prefatory clause entirely out of the Second Amendment.”

The DOJ challenged the idea that the guns Illinois banned fit under the “dangerous and unusual” category. “AR-15s also are not ‘dangerous,’ at least as that term is used in Second Amendment caselaw,” the DOJ wrote in the brief. “Of course, all firearms are ‘dangerous’ in some sense.” The DOJ said that dangerousness is only relevant if the firearm rises to the level of being “uniquely dangerous” or “especially dangerous.” The DOJ

claimed the AR-15 is neither of those things, since the way they function is similar to other firearms, such as handguns.

“There is no meaningful ... distinction between semi-automatic handguns and semi-automatic rifles,” the DOJ wrote. It further argued it would “strain logic and common sense to conclude that the Second Amendment protects semi-automatic handguns but does not protect semi-automatic rifles.” The DOJ made similar arguments about the ammunition magazine ban. It pointed to the popularity of the magazines Illinois has banned.

“So-called ‘large-capacity magazines’ are extremely common in the United States,” the DOJ wrote. “‘Americans have in their hands and homes an estimated 100 million ... magazines’ that hold more than ten rounds of ammunition.”

Ultimately, it came to the same conclusion: Illinois’s ban is unconstitutional. “Because the Act bans the possession of magazines and other firearm attachments that are in common use by law-abiding citizens for lawful reasons, it violates the Second Amendment,” the department wrote. ✧

Other Breaking News Items:

(Click on title or URL to read full article)

[Trump wants to revive the U.S. maritime industry. What does that mean for Michigan’s maritime academy?](#)

Newly graduated Maritime Academy cadets have been in high demand after the coronavirus pandemic led to a wave of early retirements of merchant marine officers. The Trump administration has called for “resurrecting America’s maritime

[Saugeen First Nation looks to the future after Supreme Court denies appeal in dispute over Ontario beach](#)

The Supreme Court of Canada, in its decision released Thursday morning, announced it won’t hear an appeal of lower court decisions that confirm the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation’s ownership of a disputed piece of Lake Huron beachfront

[Data centers will tax Great Lakes water resources, report warns](#)

Demand for water in Great Lakes states is likely to spike from data centers, mining and other uses. Officials should take a more proactive management approach to stave off shortages,

[‘Carrying on the history’: Leading the Lockport Locks into the Erie Canal’s bicentennial](#)

Moving boats up and down through Erie Canal locks 34 and 35 in Lockport, New York used to take more than a dozen people 100 years ago; now, it’s a job of one. The current team of three operators, all of whom take solo shifts, is working

[Early research shows an ancient fish is making a comeback in local waters](#)

Work to reintroduce Lake Sturgeon to the Maumee River and Lake Erie is showing some promising results, researchers say

Ann Arbor's Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab faces potential shutdown

The administration's budget proposal calls for a \$1.7 billion reduction in NOAA's budget and directs the elimination of the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research. This jeopardizes the future of Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab in

Will massive water needs of data centers, farms, mines be too much for the Great Lakes?

The Great Lakes' water supply is threatened by increased demand from industries like data centers and mining, coupled with climate change impacts. Data centers, attracted by tax incentives, consume vast amounts of water, often untracked,

Yellow perch surviving, but at much reduced levels, in the Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan

Though substantially reduced over the last 30 years by the impacts of invasive quagga mussels, yellow perch in Lake Michigan are showing signs of successful annual reproduction.

This invasive plant in Lake Simcoe can injure swimmers, experts warn

In Ontario, experts are sounding the alarm about the spread of water soldier, an invasive aquatic plant that could affect the environment, recreational activity and, eventually, the economy.

How Michigan's inland fish farmers cultivate a sustainable future for the Great Lakes

As global aquaculture has grown to meet increasing demand for protein, a small but determined group of inland fish farmers in the Great Lakes region are working to build a more sustainable, local supply

New ferry destined for Canadian island takes maiden voyage through Soo Locks

A new car and passenger ferry traveled through the Soo Locks last week on the way to its new home on Christian Island on the Canadian side of Lake Huron. The ferry will be serving the Beausoleil First Nations community and can carry up to 150

End