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APRIL 2026

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THE MARCH General Membership Program

was in two parts. The first part was presented by John Schmidt, Program Manager for Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers spoke about the "100% Great Lake Fish Initiative" which focuses on ways to fully utilize (and divert from landfills) all fish commercially caught, raised in aquaculture, and/or processed in the region. The program will also include the fish waste that is collected at our three PFBC fish cleaning stations. So far the program is receiving great support and will help us to completely utilize our great natural resource.

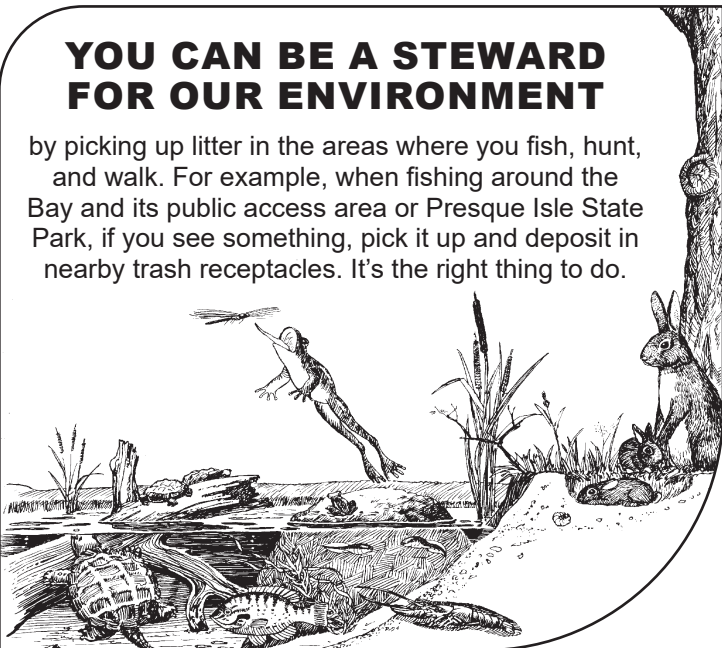
The second presenter was PFBC Exec. Director Tim Schaeffer, who spoke about a study currently being done by the Wildlife Management Institute which is evaluating ways in which the PA Fish and Boat Commission and the PA Game Commission can work together to achieve more efficiency. He pointed out ways to combine agency's services that are provided by both. Potential changes include a combined hunting and fishing license and a unified law enforcement dispatch center. One example he gave was that the PFBC and Game Com. provide and maintain two separate boat launch ramps on the Allegheny River in Pittsburgh. The two ramps are only a short distance apart.

He also pointed out the PFBC's problem maintaining a full staff of law enforcement officers. The officers are being lured to better paying jobs in local municipalities. Combining officers will allow more coverage across the state.

Pennsylvania is the only state operating with separate game and fish agencies. Under the study the agencies' independent, non-political boards will remain separate to make resource-based decisions.

YOU CAN BE A STEWARD FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT

by picking up litter in the areas where you fish, hunt, and walk. For example, when fishing around the Bay and its public access area or Presque Isle State Park, if you see something, pick it up and deposit in nearby trash receptacles. It's the right thing to do.



FISHING REPORT:

The ice is gone, boat covers are being removed and fishermen are getting out on to the Lake and Bay. Posts on Facebook contain photos of some very nice catches of perch, walleye and crappies. Bass fishermen are running up and down the Bay in search of lunker bass.



Kirk Rudzinski shows off a nice Lake Trout he caught



Late March on Marina Docks



PISP Crews hauling away ice rescue poles from the Niagara boat Launch

SONS 2026 MEMBERSHIP BUTTON

is a smallmouth bass this year. This is in keeping with featuring a native species fish on the button. You can pick up the 2026 pin at anyone of our events or meetings or you can get one by sending \$3.00 to SONS of Lake Erie, 3411 Peach St Box 233 Erie, PA 16508



JOIN A FRIEND TODAY!

MAIL TO: S.O.N.S., 3411 Peach St Box 233 Erie, PA 16508

SONS RECORD OF MEMBERSHIP 2026

Renew New \$5.00 ADULT \$4.00 SENIOR CITIZEN (over 65) \$4.00 JUNIOR (under 16)

FIRST DAY FUN

Typically the First Day of Trout Season brings with it the beginning of our club's outdoor activities. On Saturday April 4th, twenty two SONS volunteers again joined with staff from Presque Isle State Park for this kickoff. There were hundreds of fishermen gathered around the perimeter

of the Waterworks ponds on Presque Isle State Park. The floating platform on the East pond is traditionally reserved for children and the handicapped. About 20 kids were there accompanied by parents. Our volunteers also gathered there to pitch in. Bait and fishing gear were provided. The weather was in the

low 40's at the beginning but warmed up after a brief passing rain. Most all of the kids caught fish including some nice trout and even a few nice crappies. We have participated in this even for over 20 years and really look forward to doing it. **See the smiles below!**



2026 ICE OUT PARTY RECAP

645 adults and 78 children converged on the Shrine Club in Erie on March 30th, 2025 to join in the fun at our annual Ice Out Party. Thanks to the hard work of over 70 volunteers we attempted to provide a fun event for our guests and we sure did accomplish that. It was a great success.

Our kitchen crew headed by Jack Bock served over 1400 hot dogs, pans of salads, beans, sauerkraut and Greek sauce to what seemed to be an endless line of hungry participants. Ed Kissell

with the help of Rick Makowski, Sharon Lipinski, Paul Holtz, Casey Grabinski and Rich Cass drew out raffle tickets, auctioned off and handed out hundreds of door prizes that were donated by over 200 individuals and businesses.

There was a wide variety of activities provided by our volunteers, including a 50-50 raffle, a picnic package raffle, pull tab tickets, a ham raffle, a ladies only raffle, a Chinese auction and tip boards and more. Kids activities and games including a perch coloring contest were

provided for kids by Mary Kay Keith and girls from Team Lubak. Each kid in attendance was given a SONS baseball cap. There was a special raffle for ladies in which all participants won something.

Our great team of officers and board of directors spent countless hours getting the logistics in place as well as the great hospitality by the staff of the Erie Shrine Club made the event a huge success. Also we would like to thank all those who attended for their support.



THANK YOU DONORS!

Special thanks to Jack Klapthor, Larry Lipinski, John Krupinski, Mary Runser and Tom Nichols for traveling hundreds of miles around the County to solicit door prizes. They collected over 300 prizes from our extremely generous donors. More thanks are in order to our major prize donors many of whom have been sponsors for decades. We also would like to thank our tackle shops and businesses for providing generous discounts so we could supplement our door prize collection. Please support all of those listed below who support us.

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AND YOU ARE NOT MENTIONED BELOW, WE APOLOGIZE.**

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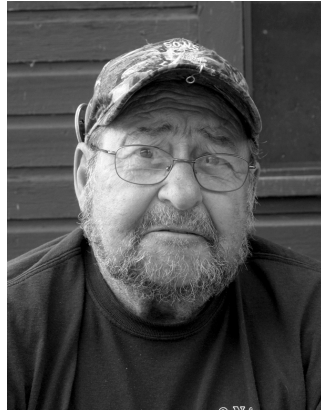
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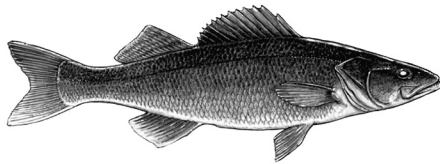
SAFE BOATING COURSE OFFERED

PFBC WCO Matt Visosky will be hosting a Safe Boating Course on April 25th from 8-4 at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center at 301 Peninsula Drive in Erie. The course is free and open to the public. All you have to do is preregister at Mvisosky@pa.gov.



In Memoriam

We must sadly note the passing of SONS Director Emeritus Rich Smith. He served our club for seven years as a member of our board of directors. He was a man of many talents who generously used his life skills in service to our club.. His friendly and patient manner made him fun to work with and to know. He was a good friend to all of us and will be greatly missed. Rest in Peace, Rich!



Send us your Fish Pictures!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sat. April 25 8:30 -12 Rotary Pavilion PI State Park Annual Spring Clean-up volunteers needed to serve lunch to the participants.

Sat. May 2nd 8:30-11 McQuarrie's Pond at Harborcreek Township Community Park Volunteers needed

Wed. May 6th 10-NOON Woodrow Wilson SPED East Water Works Pond Volunteers needed

Mon. May 11th Noon-2 East Water Works pond McDowell HS Volunteers needed

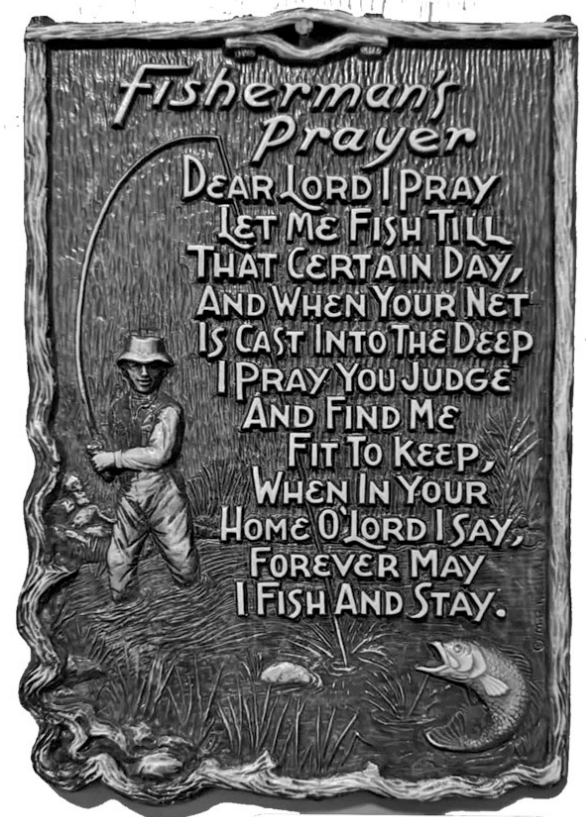
Sat. May 16th 10-NOON Fairview Girl Scouts East Water Works Pond Volunteers needed

Tues. May 19th 10-? East Water Works Pond Neuro Restorative services group. Volunteers needed

Sat. May 23rd 9-12 Perry Monument area of Presque Isle State Park EPSFA's annual Kids Fishing Day Volunteers needed.

Wed. 27th 5-7PM Harding Elementary School East Water Works Pond Volunteers needed

Fri. May. 29th 10-NOON McKean 3rd grade East Water Works Pond Volunteers needed



FIN AND FUR RAFFLE WAS HELD AT THE ICE OUT PARTY

The conclusion of our Ice Out Party was marked with our Fin and Fur Raffle as it has since the event was started 45 years ago. The winners of the raffle were as follows:

1st prize \$ 5000 by C. McCreddie-Erie, PA

2nd Prize \$ 1500 by Debbie Miller-Chester Springs, PA

3rd prize Charter on Heartbeat by Tom Klochak-Berthoud, CO

4thPrize Charter on Waterbok by Linda Critzer-Sugar Grove, PA

5th Prize \$ 300 gift cert. to FishUSA by Michael Petkash- Geneva, OH

6th Prize \$ 250 gift cert. To Edinboro Sports by William Filson-Edinboro, PA

7th Prize \$ 250 gift cert. To Poor Richards by David Scheppelman

8th Prize \$ 200 gift cert. To Poor Richards by Tom Masi-Erie, PA

9th Prize \$ 150 gift cert. To FishUSA by Barrett Robinson-Erie, PA

10th Prize One Year Membership to Lake Shore towing by Marc Griffin-Erie, PA

11th Prize \$ 200 gift cert to Presque Isle Fish& Farm by Tim Roberts-Saegertown, PA

12th Prize \$200 gift cert to Boyer Marine by M. Bliley-Waterford, PA

13th Prize \$200 gift cert to John Adams Cycling & Fitness by M J Koenig-Erie, PA

HATCHERY UPDATE

As reported, on November 6, 2025, the 40 Anniversary of our hatchery's operation began when 1600 Brown Trout were delivered to the SONS hatchery. A crew of volunteers spent the next 5 months feeding treating and caring for the fish resulting in their growing to 8-10 inches. On March 25, 2026, our hatchery crew removed and stocked them into Presque Isle Bay.

Following the fish stocking the tanks and equipment was cleaned and hatchery operations were closed for the season, because this year we will not receive our usual allotment of Walleye eggs. This was due to recent regulations imposed by the DEP that specifies that all fish that are stocked into the Great Lakes be tested for disease. This would require that our newly hatched walleye fry be

held in the tanks for periods up to a month. Our past experience has shown through past attempts to hold walleye failed due to crowding, insufficient food and a propensity to cannibalism results in high mortality. Hopefully by next hatching season we can resolve the problems and resume walleye production. Sorry but we will not have an open house at the hatchery this year either.



THE SHRINK WRAP RECYCLING

has been set in place again this year. Recycling receptacles are in place at all of the Marinas along all of the Bayfront marinas. Last year's Shrink Wrap Recycling Project was an outstanding success. The program was able to divert over 2,500 pounds of plastic from the landfill. This is equivalent to 206,200 plastic bags! This project supports the Regional Science Consortium's new PA Clean Marinas Program, in collaboration with the Erie-Western PA Port Authority and Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful,



which was made possible through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection – Coastal Resources Management Program. One thing to note; All cording and ropes must be removed from the shrink wrap.

**Boat owners-
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Participate-
Do your
part for the
environment.**



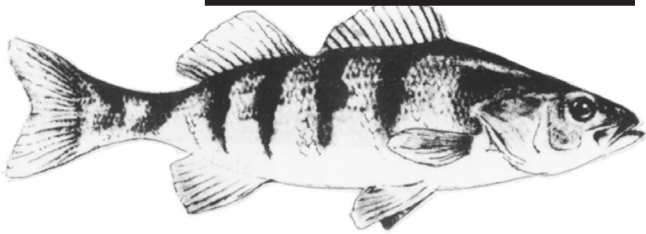
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VOLUME 23 • ISSUE 4
APRIL 2026



"A REPLENISHING SPECIES"

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If you would like to get your newsletter by email rather than regular mail please send us an email to sonslakeri@aol.com list your name, address and note that you would like to change to the electronic version. In 2026 there were 872 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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GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2026 7:00 PM

POLISH FALCONS CLUB

431 E. 3rd Street, Erie

NOTE: OUR MAY MEETING WILL BE MAY 18, ONE WEEK EARLY DUE TO THE MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY

PROGRAM: Our speaker will be Capt. Mark Haffley, PFBC Lake Erie Unit Biologist, who will give an update of the annual Lake Erie fish surveys and hopefully a forecast of what results we may expect this upcoming season.

WALLEYE-PALOOZA #5

FishUSA held their 5th annual Walleye-Palooza event on Saturday March 28 at the company's showroom and headquarters at 6960 West Ridge Rd. in Fairview, PA. This year the event drew a crowd of over 200 fishermen and women

who came to see the latest fishing gear, and learn the latest techniques from the pro staff and Cap. George Kuhns who was the main speaker who presented his program entitled "Four Stages of Walleye Fishing in Lake Erie". There

were some great bargains to purchase as well as door prizes and free give aways. SONS of Lake Erie volunteers cooked and served hundreds of hot dogs and drinks and at the same time soliciting the attendees to join our club.

Over 200 anglers learned some great fishing techniques from guest speaker George Kuhns



REMINDER-LIFE JACKETS REQUIRED

November 1 through April 30