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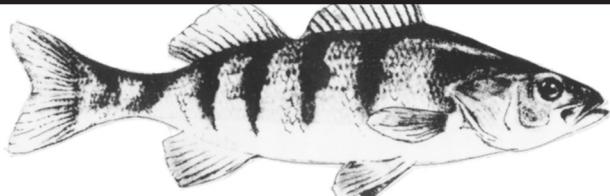
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THE Bucket

VOLUME 23 • ISSUE 2
FEBRUARY 2026

S.O.N.S. PHONE NUMBER 814-453-2270 (ALSO FAX NUMBER)
sonslakeri@aol.com • www.sonsoflakeerie.org

IT'S ICE FISHING TIME!



According to a story aired by *Erie News Now* on August 26, 2025, Erie's Presque Isle Bay has been named one of the top 10 winter fishing destinations in the country by *FishingBooker*.

"Presque Isle Bay is one of the first spots to provide safe ice for anglers to fish through, and this can happen as early as December," said the website, which matches fishing guides with

anglers all over the world. "As soon as the conditions allow it, excited ice fishermen flock from all over the country and start drilling holes."

In spite of a couple of false starts caused by temperature fluctuations, the ice finally formed on Presque Isle Bay in the last half of January and living up to the *Erie News Now* story. The anglers showed up in force. There were about 20 days in a row that had temps below

freezing and even below zero and by the first week of February the ice had thickened to ten plus inches and Lake Erie had over 90% ice cover.

Yellow Perch, Crappie, and Blue Gill are being caught in the Bay, Misery Bay, Horseshoe Pond, and Marina Lake. Size and quantities are variable according to the reports on Facebook and the grapevine.

FLAGSHIP OPEN DRAWS BIG INTEREST

After being postponed for one week, the Flagship Open ice fishing tournament commenced at 7 AM on January 31, 2026 at Misery Bay on Presque Isle State Park. The tournament was sponsored by FishUSA and the Western PA Team Bass Series. Seventy eight teams participated despite the very cold conditions that day. There was an 8-fish limit consisting of any combination of crappie, perch, and/or bluegill. The event concluded at 2:00 PM. The first place winner was angler Eric Yurkschatt. He entered a total weight of 4.74lbs, which include a huge 1.16lb perch! There were hundreds of prizes including cash and fishing gear. Full results can be seen at: <https://www.wptbs.net/2026-flagship-ice-open>

LATE SHIP ARRIVALS BREAK UP BAY ICE

Top to Bottom, on January 24th USCG the Algoma Niagara sailed into Presque after the ice was broken up by ice breakers. Notice the ice fishermen on Misery Bay in the background and on Feb. 8th the Kaminiastqua is getting ready to leave. Luckily none of the ice breaking activity caused any problems within the usual ice fishing areas, however the ice breaking may facilitate movement of the ice in the event of high winds as the ice is now unlocked. Use caution when venturing onto the ice! These ship movements are awful late this year.



PATRIOT ON THE BAY

The American Flag flying over the ice fishing hut near the "Head" of Presque Isle bay caught my attention. Our hats are off to this patriotic angler. God Bless America!



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!

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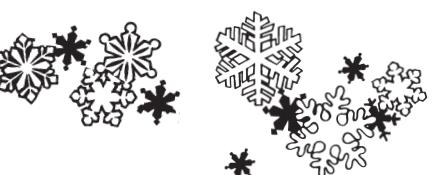
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WINTER DISCOVERY DAY AT PRESQUE ISLE



On Saturday February 7, 2026 the Presque Isle Partnership held the annual Winter Discovery Day at Presque Isle State Park. Twenty SONS of Lake Erie volunteers were on hand to help out along with DCNR Environmental Specialists and other volunteers, giving people the opportunity to learn and play at the peninsula. There were many different activities people could participate in including, ice fishing, ice skating, and learning how to snow shoe.

The day was sunny and clear with near zero temperatures. The Rotary Pavilion

and other cabins were open with fireplaces working as warm up locations along with other demonstrations going on. There were also activities and indoor educational exhibits and videos at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center and the Presque Isle Lighthouse was open to visitors.

The SONS Volunteers helped out with the ice fishing and also set up our ice fishing game for kids to try inside the Rotary Pavilion.

Outside, the Environmental Specialist set up an ice fishing tent to make it more

comfortable for the kids to fish. They also set up an underwater camera for the kids to see the fish below the ice. SONS Director Ron Morrow brought his gas powered auger and used it to make fishing holes. SONS Secretary John Krupinski cleared snow away from the holes.

There were about 200 participants, which was lower than usual, probably because of the extreme cold, but those who tried seemed to like ice fishing. Only one fish was caught. It was a nice Brown Trout. Thanks for the pics, Chuck.



LtoR Park Env. Specialists set up warming tent while SONS Director Ron Morrow drills holes, Sec. John Krupinski shovels snow while PI Partnership Ex. Dir. Jon DeMarco gives a TV interview.



LtoR Volunteers gather outside warming tent, inside tent Environmental Specialist helps kids fish while others try it outside.



LtoR Fishing outside while inside the hut a nice brown trout is caught while others try outside

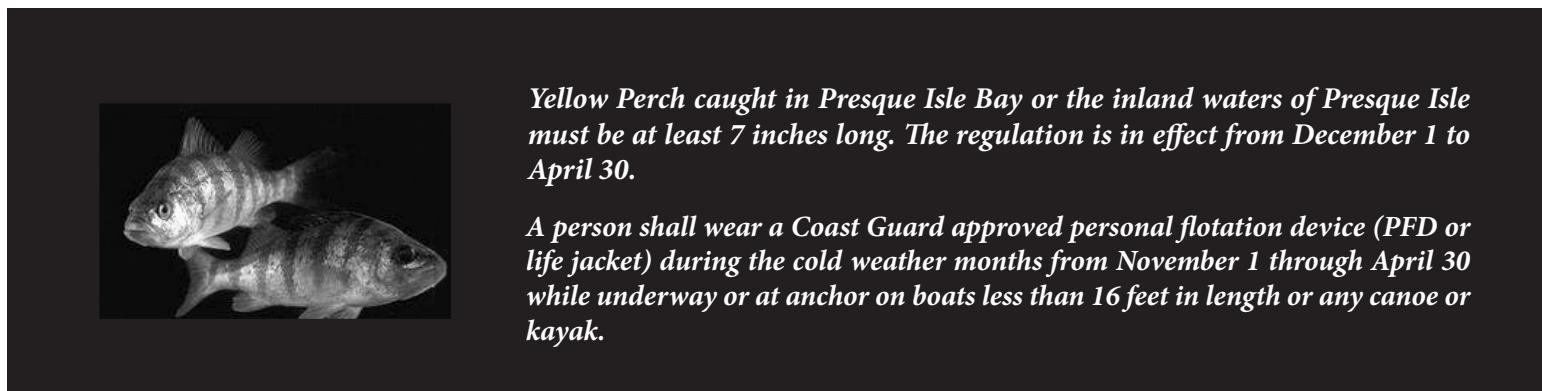
MEANWHILE INSIDE THE ROTARY PAVILION



LtoR Winter Discovery Day participants come to warm up and get a hot lunch while kids gather around to play the SONS ice fishing game.



LtoR Having lunch by the fireplace and others play the game while Environmental Specialist John Laskos show a collection of skins on animals found at PI.



FISH USA OFFERS GREAT “HOW TO” ARTICLES

The FishUSA Pro Staff members have published numerous articles on fishing techniques and equipment configuration on their web site at: <https://www.fishusa.com/learn/>. Are you new to ice fishing or other types of fishing if so there are many articles including:

Kids on the Ice: How to Make Ice Fishing Fun, Safe, and Comfortable for Families at <https://www.fishusa.com/learn/ice-fishing-with-kids/>

Done right, ice fishing with kids is one of the best ways to introduce them to winter, wild places, and the excitement of watching a bobber dip or a spring bobber load up. Done wrong, they'll decide they hate ice fishing before they ever really experience it. This guide breaks down practical, advanced family ice fishing tips to make your time on the hardwater fun, safe, and comfortable—for you and your kids.

We'll cover safety basics, how to dress kids for success, choosing the right weather and lakes, kid-friendly gear, games and snacks, simple teaching strategies, and a set of FAQs that answer the most common questions parents have about taking kids on the ice.

Tips for Beginner Ice Anglers: Start Safe, Stay Warm, Catch Fish at <https://www.fishusa.com/learn/tip-for-> Curious about ice fishing but not sure where to start? You're not alone. Plenty of people want to try it but get overwhelmed by the gear, worried about ice safety, or simply unsure how to actually catch fish through a hole in the ice. If that sounds familiar, these practical, no-nonsense tips for beginner ice anglers are for you.

In this guide, we'll walk step-by-step through everything you really need to know for your first few trips: how thick the ice should be, which beginner ice fishing gear is worth buying, what to wear to stay comfortable, basic locations and techniques, and the common mistakes that cost new anglers fish. We'll also include answers to the most common beginner questions.

By the time you finish reading, you'll be ready to plan your first ice fishing trip with confidence—and actually enjoy it.

Ice Fishing: Inline vs Spinning Reel – Which Setup Is Best for You? <https://www.fishusa.com/learn/ice-fishing-inline-vs-spinning-reel-bd774e/>

If you've spent much time on hardwater, you've probably heard this debate: ice fishing – inline vs spinning reel, which is better? Most anglers start with a simple spinning reel, then later see seasoned panfish guys running slick inline setups and wonder if they're missing out. The truth is, both reel types have real strengths and weaknesses, and choosing the right one can make a huge difference in how your lures behave and how many fish you put topside.

In this guide, we'll break down inline vs spinning reels for ice fishing in plain language. You'll learn how each reel works, where each shines, and how to match the right reel to your species, depth, and fishing style. Along the way, you'll get practical setup advice, common mistakes to avoid, and answers to the most common FAQs anglers ask when they're trying to decide which reel to buy.

By the end, you'll know exactly which ice fishing reel belongs on each rod in your sled—and how to get the most from both inline and spinning reels on the ice.

Top 9 Ice Baits for Lake Erie Walleye found at <https://www.fishusa.com/learn/top-ice-baits-for-lake-erie-walleye/>

When winter locks up Lake Erie and the crowds of trollers disappear, the diehards know the fun is just getting started. This lake is home to an incredible walleye population, and the anglers who dial in the right ice baits for Lake Erie walleye can enjoy some of the best action of the year. But with so many spoons, jigging baits, and blade baits on the market, it's easy to get overwhelmed.

This guide breaks down the top 9 ice baits for Lake Erie walleye—lures that have earned a permanent place in hardwater boxes all around the Big Lake. You'll learn when to reach for each one, how to work it on Erie's deep basins and structure, and what colors and sizes tend to shine in real-world conditions.

There are many other articles like these on the FishUSA site check them out.

Ice Out Party set for March 29th

The SONS of Lake Erie Annual Ice Out Party will be held on Sunday March 29th from 1-5 at the Erie Shrine Club located at W.38 and Zuck Rd. The admission to the party will be \$15 for adults and \$5.00 for kids 15 & Under. With much reluctance it was necessary to raise the cost of admission for adults in order to be in line with our operating costs. You should have received a mailing including more information regarding this fund raiser as well as benefit tickets soon. If not, call 814-453-2270 or email sonslakeri@aol.com and we'll get some for you. The Ice Out Party has been our major fund raiser for over 40 years now. It was named ICE OUT to celebrate the end of winter and the beginning of another fishing season. It is a family friendly event and is open to the public. There are games of chance, door prizes, kid's games, door prizes, food and beverages. Come and join us.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**MONDAY, FEB. 23, 2026
7:00 PM**

POLISH FALCONS CLUB 431 E. 3rd Street, Erie

PROGRAM: Expert Angler Jeremy Scott will talk about his recent trip of a lifetime to Guatemala catching Sailfish and Mahi.

NOTICE: Because we cancelled the January General Membership Meeting we will hold the drawing for our membership drive benefit winners at our February 23 meeting. If you were not able to turn in your tickets you will be able to do so at this meeting.

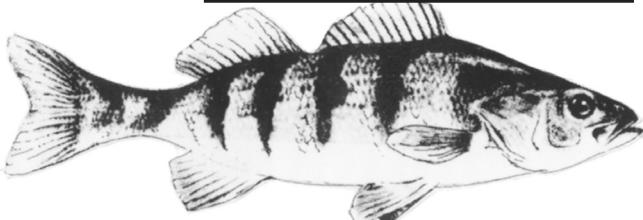


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3411 PEACH ST BOX 233 ERIE, PA 16508

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by the S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie

VOLUME 23 • ISSUE 2
FEBRUARY 2026



"A REPLENISHING SPECIES"

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431 E. 3rd Street, Erie

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

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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PROPOSAL HAS NEW SHIPYARD IN ERIE

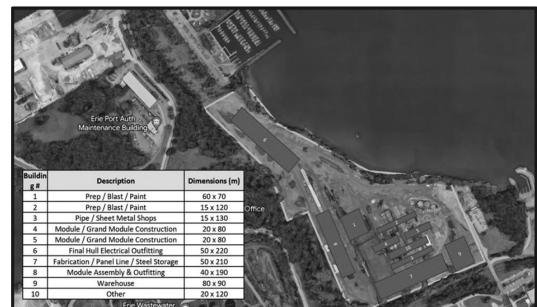
On January 28th, 2026 the Erie Western PA Port Authority, heard a proposal from Gem City Shipbuilding, an organization aiming to transform the former Erie Coke company property into a U.S. Navy shipyard to build vessels for national defense. Building US Navy vessels here has been part of our heritage since 1813 when we built the fleet of ships that were used to win the Battle of Lake Erie and the War of 1812. In 1843 the first iron hulled ship in the US Navy was assembled here and during WWII the Perry Shipbuilding Co. built over 30 vessels for the war effort. Hundreds of vessels have been built here over the years evolving from sailing ships, steam ships, iron and steel ships including two 1000 ft long lake carriers. The Don Jon Shipbuilding facility is still in operation building and repairing vessels of all kinds.

In the presentation, Gem City Shipbuilding's spokesperson said the project could cost anywhere between \$250 million to \$750 million, funded both privately and publicly. By reviving Erie's legacy of naval shipbuilding, Gem City Shipbuilding will contribute to national security while invigorating the economy of Erie and the surrounding Great Lakes region. The plan

will help the US keep up with China who is building 6 naval ships as opposed to 1.8 in the US.

Before any plans can move forward the remediation of contaminants at the former Erie Coke site must be completed. If it goes forward high employment and high salaries will be the result. The presenters promised reliance on greener technology in their production.

The Marinette Marine Corp in Marinette Wisconsin is already building navy ships on the Great Lakes. The company employs 2,175 workers. If it comes true here benefits would trickle down as tax revenue, small businesses such as logistics firms, fabricators, and so on. Our local, state, and federal legislators are on board. We'll see what happens.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

Saturday April 4
8-12 East Waterworks Pond
Trout opening day
Volunteers needed

BAYFRONT CONVENTION CENTER SHOWS

We have been invited by Erie Events to participate in the upcoming shows at the Bayfront Convention Center:

Feb 27- Mar 1
Erie Boat & Fishing Expo
Volunteers needed.

We will need volunteers to help out at these shows and signup sheets and schedules will be available at our general meetings prior to the dates.