



Sportfishing Industry, NSSF praises Rep Zinke selection for Interior Secretary

The American Sportfishing Association, National Shooting Sports Foundation along with other associations in the outdoor recreation industry, expressed support for the nomination of Rep. Ryan Zinke (R-Mont.) to be the next Secretary of the Interior.

“In Rep. Zinke, President-Elect Trump has tapped a true leader and a sportsman to run the agency that oversees much of America’s natural resources and public parks and lands that are so important to fishing and hunting” said Scott Gudes, ASA’s vice president of Government Affairs. “Rep. Zinke has served as an active member of the House Natural Resources Committee. He is an angler and a hunter who hails from a state where the importance of the outdoor recreation economy is understood and valued.”

“In Congressman Zinke we have a true friend of American sportsmen who believes in the inestimable value of our public lands. We are confident Congressman Zinke will work to preserve and promote our hunting and related outdoor traditions. He is an American hero, a lifelong hunter and angler, and a true conservationist in the tradition of Teddy Roosevelt,” said Lawrence G. Keane, NSSF Senior Vice President and General Counsel.

“On behalf of our 5 million members, we commend President-Elect Donald Trump for nominating Congressman Ryan Zinke of Montana to be our next Secretary of the Interior,” said Chris W. Cox, executive director of the National Rifle Association’s Institute for Legislative Action. “The sportsmen and women of this nation have long

waited for an Interior Secretary who understands the need to preserve America’s outdoor heritage for generations to come. Ryan Zinke will champion those traditions with the devotion of a true outdoorsman while serving as our next Secretary of the Interior.”

Rep. Zinke was elected to Congress in 2014 after a distinguished career in the U.S. Navy where he served as a Commander.

Rep. Zinke was a recent cosponsor of the [Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act of 2016](#), which was passed and signed into law this month. The Act will lead to the U.S. economic agencies, like the Bureau of Economic Analysis, providing economic statistics and forecasts for the outdoor recreation

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It’s ok to say Merry Christmas

President signs Outdoor Recreation Act Bill counts outdoor recreation economy as part of U.S. GDP

On December 8, 2016, President Obama signed the **Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act of 2016** into law. Better known as the REC Act, it will instruct the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the Department of Commerce to assess and analyze the outdoor recreation economy of the United States and the effects attributable to it on the overall U.S. economy, including recreational fishing and boating and hunting. **Simply put, increased visibility means more and better fishing.**

The House passed it earlier this month.

“The outdoor recreation industry—including fishing and boating—contributes approximately \$646 billion per year to U.S. Gross Domestic Product, or about four percent, of the economy. Our industry is about opportunities and improving the quality of life for Americans, and it is absolutely about jobs, business and the economy,” said Scott Gudes, Government Affairs Vice President for the [American Sportfishing Association](#) (ASA). “This bill will help put our industry sector on the same footing with respect to the agencies that measure and report on the U.S. economy, such as the Commerce Department and its Bureau of Economic Analysis. We look forward to the President’s signature on this bill and thank the House and Senate leaders for their vision and foresight.”

The Outdoor REC Act will guarantee that sportfishing industry jobs and recreational fishing’s economic impact are accounted for as part of the gross domestic product (GDP). It will also ensure that the outdoor industry’s economic statistics be measured in the same way as other sectors, such as the automobile, pharmaceutical and agricultural industries.

A temporary pilot program was enacted by the Secretary of the Interior in April, and the passage of the REC Act was needed to make sure that the outdoor economy—and its estimated 6 million jobs and \$646 billion in economic activity—receives official government recognition for years to come.

ASA is an active part of a team representing a wide range of outdoor industries that will work with the Bureau of Economic Analysis to shape how outdoor recreation is defined and ensure our reach and impact are recognized. ASA is also actively working with an outdoor industry group—the Outdoor Industry Roundtable—on briefing the incoming administration about the significant impact outdoor recreation has on the economy. ✧

Youth Goose Hunt

Youth can register now in the annual Central Illinois Youth Goose Hunt, sponsored by the IDNR, which is scheduled for January 15-16, 2017. To register, phone 217-785-8060 by the **registration deadline of Friday, Dec. 30**. The youth goose hunt will be held at private waterfowl hunting clubs in the Canton area in Fulton Co. A lottery drawing involving all youth who phone in to register will be conducted on January 3, and youth hunters selected will be notified by mail. First-time applicants will be given a priority over previous participants in the drawing. The hunt is open to youngsters ages 10-15 at the time of the hunt.

All applicants must possess a valid Illinois hunting or sportsman’s license, have a Harvest Information Program (HIP) registration number, and have a 20-gauge or larger shotgun. Youth hunt participants must be accompanied by a parent or guardian who must possess a valid FOID card. ✧



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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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PA smallmouth populations improving but caution advised

Following nearly a decade of poor recruitment due to disease affecting young-of-the-year, the smallmouth bass populations in the Susquehanna and lower Juniata rivers are showing signs of improvement, according to information released today by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Surveys conducted from 2013-2016 reveal increasing numbers of adult smallmouth bass compared to severely reduced numbers collected from 2005-2012. Decreased prevalence of disease in young-of-the-year smallmouth bass, along with the implementation of mandatory catch-and-release regulations enacted in 2011, have resulted in better recruitment of young bass to the adult populations.

However, bacterial infections causing sores and lesions continue to be observed in young-of-the-year smallmouth bass, prompting a renewed call by PFBC Executive Director John Arway to list the river as impaired. Other abnormal effects such as melanistic black spots and intersex conditions in adult bass, along with unprecedented nuisance algae blooms continue to plague the smallmouth fishery.

“Although we are cautiously optimistic about the population numbers we have observed over the

last four years, our sampling is still finding young-of-the-year smallmouth bass displaying clinical signs of disease,” Arway said. “We continue to urge the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to list the river as impaired in its final review of the 2016 Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report submitted by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).”

The DEP submits an updated report every two years to EPA Region 3 for approval. Adding the Susquehanna to the list as a “high priority” impaired water would trigger a two-year timeline requiring DEP to develop a comprehensive plan to identify the causes and sources of pollution and put a plan together to clean up the river consistent with the goals of the federal Clean Water Act.

DEP recommended against listing the river as impaired in the 2012, 2014 and 2016 reports. EPA is expected to review the 2016 report and issue a ruling by early next year, either accepting the report or requiring changes. Recently, EPA Region 3 exercised its authority and added 28 stream and river segments to West Virginia’s impaired waters list.

Last year, DEP and the PFBC released findings from a multi-year study (CADDIS) indicating that the most likely causes for the population decline of smallmouth bass in the Susquehanna River are endocrine-disrupting compounds and herbicides; and pathogens and parasites.

Arway says the next step should be to focus on identifying the sources of the endocrine-disrupting compounds and herbicides, which would be required with an impairment designation.

“The Susquehanna River’s smallmouth bass fishery once attracted anglers from all over the world,” he said. “I am confident that the results from last year’s study, along with a continued commitment by DEP to identify the causes and reduce the sources of pollution, will provide for the eventual recovery and return of that once world class recreational fishery.”

“The impairment designation is critical to this effort,” he added. “Our concerns continue to be driven by the need to conserve and protect our aquatic resources so they may be enjoyed by present and future generations as guaranteed by our state constitution.”

Click [here](#) to see the Susquehanna River survey results. ✧

DEC invites initial feedback on wildlife regulations

The New York State DEC has posted options for several changes to wildlife regulations in 2017 on its website and is inviting the public to review and provide comments.

Prior to initiating a formal rulemaking process, DEC routinely seeks public input regarding concerns or interest in potential changes to regulations in continuing efforts to keep hunters and the public informed.

In many situations, DEC uses scientific surveys to gather public opinion about potential rule changes. In other cases, DEC communicates informally through e-mails, letters,

or meetings in response to ideas and suggestions. In all situations, it is helpful to obtain informal feedback to gauge public interest and support and to learn of any concerns that may exist before the formal rulemaking process is initiated. DEC is inviting informal feedback regarding several issues:

- (1) Prohibiting feeding wild white-tailed deer;
- (2) Issuing permits for 4-Poster Tickicide and 4-Poster deer treatment devices;
- (3) Strengthening measures to protect New York deer from Chronic Wasting Disease;

- (4) Eliminating the special permit for hunting and trapping bobcats in the Harvest Expansion Area; and
- (5) Closing the season for take of diamondback terrapin.

The issues listed are not formal proposals at this time, but rather options being considered as potential changes for 2017. Please visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/104785.html> to read the details of each issue and to provide feedback.

Please submit your comments by **December 23, 2016** by [sending an email](#) or by writing to NYSDEC, Bureau of Wildlife, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754. ✧

Wisconsin approves separate lake trout rules for lakes Superior, Michigan

MADISON, Wis. – Two separate measures regarding lake trout harvests in lakes Superior and Michigan gained approval by the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board on December 14. The separate measures reflect the difference in lake trout abundance between the two Great Lakes. Next steps will involve stakeholder meetings in both regions.

For Lake Superior: The Natural Resources Board approved an emergency rule to amend lake trout harvest limits for the 2016-17 harvest season to reflect continued challenges to the population. Terry Margenau, DNR Lake Superior fisheries supervisor, said the recreational season runs from December 1, 2016 through September 30, 2017. The commercial fishing season is open from November 28, 2016 through September 30, 2017.

Under the rule, in the area known as WI-2 extending east of Bark Point, only two lake trout may be harvested per day. In WI-2, lake trout must be greater than 15 inches but only one may be greater than 25 inches. If the recreational harvest reaches 7,350 or 75 percent of the total allowable recreational lake trout harvest of 9,800 fish, the recreational lake trout season will close with no further harvest or fishing for lake trout allowed in the WI-2 area.

West of Bark Point, in the area known as WI-1, the current three fish daily bag limit will remain for lake trout with a 15-inch minimum size limit and only one lake trout may be harvested over 25 inches. Even if the recreational season closes east of Bark Point, up to three lake trout per day may continue to be harvested west of Bark Point.

The emergency rule separates lake trout from the current five total daily bag limit for trout on Lake Superior. Under the rule, anglers

will be able to take up to two (WI-2) or three (WI-1) lake trout per day as well as up to five other trout per day.

"While lake trout were formerly part of the five trout bag limit, the new rule will allow an angler the potential to harvest, for example, five brown trout plus their bag of lake trout," Margenau said. This would apply to both WI-1 and WI-2 waters of Lake Superior.

The rule also revises harvests for commercial fishers and prohibits previously allowed fishing in the Gull Island refuge. However, because of agreements among the parties to the Lake Superior Fishing Agreement, the rule also removes restrictions from the Hagen's Beach area, opening this area to commercial fishing between June 1 and August 31, 2016.

Margenau said the department anticipates holding a public hearing in late January in northern Wisconsin on the emergency rule. For more on the rule development process for lake trout in Lake Superior, visit dnr.wi.gov and search "[Lake Superior fisheries management.](#)"

For Lake Michigan: The board approved a scope statement for development of an emergency rule and a permanent rule. Changes to the current lake trout rules could include an increase in the lake trout daily bag limit from the current level of two lake trout per day; allowing a year round open season in the Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan, except for the Mid Lake Reef Complex; and allowing fishing on the Mid Lake Reef Complex from January 1 to September 30.

The scoping statement and rule development effort follow a series of stakeholder meetings in 2016 during which anglers expressed interest in expanded fishing opportunities for lake trout. Comments received also favored changing the regulations for lake trout.

Brad Eggold, Great Lakes District fisheries supervisor, said the department anticipates holding a public meeting in January or February as part of the rule development effort. For more on Lake Michigan fisheries management, visit dnr.wi.gov and search "[Fishing Lake Michigan.](#)"

What will stocking cut mean for Lake Michigan anglers?

Some Michigan anglers are very concerned that Chinook salmon stocking cuts could hurt fishing in years to come. Thanks to fin clipping and tagging, we now know more than we ever have about how stocked and wild fish contribute to fisheries.

For 2014-2015 in Michigan waters of Lake Michigan:

- 71% of Chinook salmon caught April-September were wild
- Only 7% were originally stocked in Michigan waters of Lake Michigan
- 11% were originally stocked in Wisconsin

Natural reproduction of Chinook salmon has not been consistent:

- On average, about 4.5 million wild Chinook salmon smolts enter Lake Michigan each year
- In 2012, roughly 6.6 million wild Chinooks were produced
- In 2013, this dropped to about 1.4 million Chinooks

Chinook salmon stocking is being reduced from 1.80 million to 1.35 million in 2017, but the total number of Chinook salmon in Lake Michigan might actually increase if wild reproduction returns to normal (4.5 million/year).

Read [article](#) for more details ✧

Lake Sturgeon Management Plan for Michigan's Black Lake

A collective effort among agencies dedicated to the restoration of lake sturgeon populations in Michigan has produced a [management plan for the species in Black Lake \(Cheboygan County\)](#).

Biologists from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Bay Mills Indian Community, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians worked together to write the plan that will guide management efforts to ensure the lake sturgeon population in Black Lake will thrive well into the future.

The plan outlines objectives to achieve the goal of attaining a population of naturally produced lake sturgeon capable of producing a sustained fishery.

"The level of collaboration between the biologists of the tribes and the DNR was incredible," said Dave Borgeson, DNR unit supervisor for the Black Lake

watershed. "The commitment of all the writers of the plan to lake sturgeon rehabilitation was evident, and made this group a joy to work with."

The Black Lake document is the first of a series of lake sturgeon management plans the DNR hopes to complete for priority waters across the state. The plan is based on goals and objectives identified in the DNR's [Lake Sturgeon Rehabilitation Strategy](#). Prior to drafting the plan, tribal and state biologists sought input from their respective constituents to make sure the plan would contain all essential components important to the growing number of people who are interested in this iconic native species.

Rehabilitation efforts in the Black Lake system have been ongoing since a survey in 1997 indicated a decline in the lake sturgeon population relative to the mid-1970s. These efforts have been successful in large part because of the assistance provided by the Black Lake Chapter of Sturgeon for

Tomorrow and Tower-Kleber Limited Partnership who, in coordination with the DNR, built a streamside rearing facility to bolster the population until sufficient natural reproduction occurs. The facility also provides Michigan State University researchers a venue to conduct groundbreaking research that is helping managers better understand the factors currently limiting the population and identify strategies to address them.

"Now that we have a mutual framework we can all draw from, the hard work of implementing the plan's ultimate goal begins," said Brett Fessell, the Restoration Section leader for the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. "A goal that very likely none of the authors may witness—but that we now have confidence will materialize in form and function—is a naturally self-sustaining lake sturgeon fishery for many generations to come." For more information on lake sturgeon in Michigan, visit Michigan.gov/sturgeon. ✧

New Director of the DEC Division of Fish and Wildlife

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has appointed a seasoned conservation professional with 36 years of experience as a wildlife biologist, zoologist, and researcher to head up its Division of Fish and Wildlife, the agency announced.

Anthony (Tony) Wilkinson has been appointed to head up the agency's four Fish and Wildlife bureaus and more than 350 employees whose missions are to conserve, improve and protect New York's natural resources.

"Tony Wilkinson brings a deep awareness of the issues that affect our state's environment and our natural resources, and his decades of experience will fit in perfectly with the hundreds of colleagues here who share his passion," said DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos.

Most recently Wilkinson was the Director for The Nature Conservancy's Eastern NY Program, where he developed and implemented conservation plans for various habitats and species, including migratory fish in the Hudson River Estuary. He previously served as the Director of Operations for the national Natural Heritage Program, and has worked as a biologist and a zoologist for state agencies in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Indiana.

Wilkinson has an undergraduate degree in Fisheries and Wildlife from Michigan State University and a master's degree in Biological Science from Michigan Technological University. He grew up in southern Pennsylvania and spent much of his youth hunting, fishing and hiking with his father.

He is married with two older children and lives in Saratoga County.

"I'm thrilled to be part of the DEC team and look forward to working with the sportsmen and women of New York and our fish and wildlife staff on the sound management of our precious wildlife and fisheries resources," Wilkinson said.

DEC's Division of Fish and Wildlife manages conservation of all the diverse wildlife and fish species in the state, overseeing all facets of hunting and recreational and commercial angling in New York, as well as protecting, maintaining, enhancing, and restoring important ecosystems.

Wilkinson began his tenure at DEC immediately. ✧

Bass Pro/Cabela's deal delayed

October's blockbuster acquisition of Cabela's by rival Bass Pro Shops has hit a snag, according to the AP. The AP reports that federal antitrust regulators have asked both companies for more time, likely a month, to review the \$5.5 billion transaction.

Potential Hurdles

Antitrust review is standard in these situations. The fact that regulators are asking for a few more weeks to review this case doesn't necessarily mean much. However, the FTC did block a merger between retail giants Staples and Office Space in May of this year. They also forced value store chains Family Dollar and the Dollar Tree to sell 330 stores before that merger was completed in July.

The FTC is expected to take a city-by-city look at markets where Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's both operate, gauge the level of competition between other big box stores and local retailers and analyze the demographics.

Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's currently combine for 185 retail stores from coast-to-coast, though their strongholds largely reside in the east and west, respectively. The companies primarily overlap near the middle of those territories — in Texas, Missouri and Kansas.

Under the 1976 Hart-Scott-Rodino Act, the FTC has the power to block deals that the federal agency says "substantially lessen competition." Typically, the FTC says, any deal over \$78 million automatically falls under scrutiny.

If antitrust regulators determine that the merger between the two will lessen competition in specific markets—most likely those where the two companies already overlap—they could force the sale of stores, or, in an unlikely scenario, block the merger entirely.

For now, regulators have requested an extra month to review the situation, and the fishing tackle world sits on hold. ✧

As water temperature dips, DNR urges caution for boaters

30 percent of boating deaths happen on cold water

As the days grow shorter and the water temps dip, the Department of Natural Resources urges hunters, anglers, paddlers and all boaters to use extreme caution, especially when venturing out in small boats.

People on small boats, such as canoes, kayaks, and fishing boats, should take extra precautions to prevent being suddenly thrown overboard in rough, cold waters.

Cold water robs body heat 25 times faster than air of the same temperature. Should you find yourself in the water, righting your canoe or small boat and climbing back aboard is extremely difficult in muscle-cramping cold water. It's best to not boat alone and to always wear a life jacket.

Recent incidents have involved late season boaters ending up in the water after reaching over the side of the boat or small boats capsizing in rough conditions. Even with above average air temperatures it's important to keep in mind that the water is cold. Hypothermia and cold water shock can set in within minutes. Wearing a life jacket, at all times, while boating will increase chances of survival in cold water.

Know the risks and take the right precautions when boating in cold water.

- At the very least, all boats must carry one U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket for each passenger. Wear it, don't just carry it.
- Don't boat alone; boating safety increases with numbers.
- Keep an eye on the sky, head to shore if wind gusts start to pick up.
- If the boat capsizes or swamps, stay with the boat and try to re-board. Do not attempt to swim to shore.

When on the water, life jackets should be worn. For more tips: www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/boatwater/cold-water.html. ✧

Zebra mussels found in NW Wisconsin

The Wisconsin DNR has confirmed Big McKenzie Lake in eastern Burnett and western Washburn County has tested positive for zebra mussels. "This is not good," Dave Ferris, county conservationist for Burnett County said. "Especially because Big McKenzie is a drainage lake."

With water flowing north to Middle McKenzie Lake, then to Lower McKenzie Lake and finally the Namekagon River, there is no telling how the species may spread.

"The water chemistry in Middle McKenzie is slightly better than Big McKenzie," Ferris observed. "There's evidence better water chemistry may slow the spread — but we don't know for sure." To cloud the issue, water flows south out of Big McKenzie Lake into a cranberry marsh, into Lipsett Lake, and eventually into the Yellow River. "Different bodies of water have different levels of susceptibility," he pointed out. "We just don't know what'll happen next."

The main effect a zebra mussel invasion has on an ecosystem is a restructuring of the food web—moving production from the open waters of a lake down to the bottom. Zebra mussels are amazingly effective filter feeders, and they essentially suck all of the phytoplankton and algae (or tiny plants) out of the water column. Those tiny plants are important food for zooplankton (tiny crustaceans) that are, in turn, crucial to the diet of a lot of little fish. Which, of course, are then eaten by bigger fish.

That reduction in plankton leads to dramatic changes in water quality—but it comes at a cost. By pulling food down to the bottom and excreting waste, zebra mussels concentrate nutrients at the bottom of a lake. And, since the water is then clearer, sunlight filters down further. That leads to an explosion of algae and aquatic plant growth—a 170 percent increase according to one study. ✧

DEC Summer Camp registration opens Jan 25

Online registration for the 2017 summer camp program will open January 25 at 10 a.m. Applications will be submitted through the online registration program available through DEC's website: www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html.

Now in its 70th year, the summer camp program offers week-long adventures in conservation education for children ages 11-17. DEC operates four residential camps for children: Camp Colby in Saranac Lake (Franklin County); Camp DeBruce in Livingston Manor (Sullivan County); Camp Rushford in Caneadea (Allegany County); and Pack Forest in Warrensburg (Warren County). All four camps offer programs for children aged 11-13, while Pack Forest hosts children aged 14-17 for six weeks and Camp Rushford offers two weeks of programs for children aged 14-17. The complete schedule is available on the summer camp's website and the online registration program.

Campers participate in a wide variety of outdoor activities including fishing, bird watching, fly-tying, archery, canoeing, hiking, camping, orienteering, and hunter safety education.

Each week features a different sportsman education program (hunter safety, bow education, or trapper education). Parents and guardians are encouraged to sign up their children. Space is limited. This year, Week 3 (July 9-14) at Camp Pack Forest will once again be the popular Outdoor Adventure Week, during which older campers have the opportunity to speak with pros about career choices, participate and gain experience in more advanced activities, and take advantage of fishing in more habitats.

For more info www.dec.ny.gov, call 518-402-8014, visit "NYS DEC Summer Camps" on Facebook, or write to DEC Camps, 3rd Floor, 625 Broadway, Albany, New York 12233-5256. ✧

Zinke praised as Interior Secretary selection

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economy. It is currently estimated that this outdoor sector, including sportfishing and boating, contributes approximately \$646 billion per year to the U.S. Gross Domestic Product.

As Secretary of the Interior, Zinke will lead 70,000 Interior Department employees ranging from fisheries specialists in the USFWS Service to Rangers in the National Park Service. The Department of the Interior administers the [\\$600 million per year in excise taxes](#) collected from sportfishing companies, anglers and boaters which is then used to fund conservation programs in state fish and wildlife agencies in the 50 states. ASA is a member of the Sportfish and Boating Partnership Council which the Secretary chairs.

"Rep. Zinke has visited with ASA members in his home state and has seen first-hand that sportfishing is about outdoor recreation, quality of life and also about jobs and economic growth," said Gudes. "For anglers, the biggest issue nationally is access. Secretary-designee Zinke understands that public lands and waters belong to the public and access is critically important." ✧

Reminder: our newsletters are now archived online

Hey folks, just a reminder — our newsletters are now archived online. Use our site index and go to [Basin Report Newsletters](#) to find Newsletters and Lake Reports from 2013 to the present. ✧

2017 BOW Workshop

The next Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW) workshop will be September 15-17, 2017 at Silver Bay YMCA on Lake George in the Adirondacks. Registration will open in June. 518-402-8862, Kelly.stang@dec.ny.gov, www.dec.ny.gov/education/68.html ✧

Ludington Regional Fisheries Workshop Jan 14

The Lake Michigan fishery has been changing dramatically in recent years. The annual Ludington Regional Fishery Workshop features presentations by scientists who work to understand how ecosystem changes affect salmon and trout.

Plans to cut stocking of Chinook salmon, lake trout, coho salmon, and brown trout around Lake Michigan generated a lot of debate in 2016 and raised some important questions.

How many prey fish do lake trout and salmon eat?

How long do lake trout live and how does this impact how many fish they eat?

How many wild Chinook salmon smolts enter Lake Michigan each year?

How many salmon from Lake Huron migrate into Lake Michigan to feed?

How can management agencies substitute stocking one species for another?

This year's workshop features an afternoon session with MSU's Quantitative Fisheries Center. This will conclude with a unique look at the inner workings of fishery models and Q&A with university scientists. The workshop will be held on January 14, 8:15 – 3:15 PM, at West Shore Community College, 3000 N. Stiles Rd, Scottville, MI 49454. Cost is \$30, and a hot buffet lunch is included. Payment accepted at door but pre-registration is required.

Pre-register by December 23. [Full Agenda](#), [Directions](#), [Campus Map](#) Register [online](#) or contact Cara Mitchell, cemitchell@westshore.edu 231-843-5825. ✧



Reminder: No ice is safe ice; ask locals for conditions

MADISON – Wisconsin again is witnessing winter's annual sudden and severe arrival, dropping snow and temperatures to form early-season ice on ponds, lakes and rivers. The Department of Natural Resources reminds winter enthusiasts that ice should never be considered safe and early season ice conditions vary from waterbody to waterbody.

Outdoor enthusiasts—cross-country skiers, ice fishers, hikers and snowmobilers—are urged to ask local businesses and sporting organizations about the area's ice conditions before they go on the ice and be prepared if they do venture out.

The recent storms have brought sub-zero temperatures into the state, which are just starting the process of forming ice on lakes, flowages and ponds.

The DNR does not monitor ice conditions, making it individuals' responsibility to learn those conditions. Good sources of local ice conditions include bait store

operators, fishing clubs around lakes, ice fishers and snowmobile clubs. These are the places locally most likely to have the most current information about the lakes and areas.

The ice conditions on any lake can vary from location to location. Remember, even though it may look thick on the surface, moving water from streams, rivers and springs can cause ice to form unevenly.

People who do venture out on the ice should:

- Dress warmly in layers and consider wearing a life jacket or vest.
- Not go alone. Head out with friends or family. Take a cell phone and make sure someone knows where you are and when you are expected to return.
- Know before you go. Don't travel in areas you are not familiar and don't travel at night or during reduced visibility.
- Avoid inlets, outlets or narrows that may have current that can thin the ice.

- Look for clear ice, which is generally stronger than ice with snow on it or bubbles in it.
- Carry some basic safety gear: ice claws or picks, a cellphone in a waterproof bag or case, a life jacket and length of rope, and a spud bar to check ice while walking to new areas.
- Wear creepers attached to boots to prevent slipping on ice and take extra mittens or gloves so you always have a dry pair.

If you go through the ice:

- Carry a set of ice picks in your pocket to help you climb out of the ice hole.
- Once out of the water, do not stand up. Rather, walk on your forearms until the majority of your body is on solid surface.
- Try to remain calm, call for help and take steps to get out of the water as soon as possible.

The DNR also has information on its website about what to do should you fall through the ice and how to make ice claws. Learn more by searching the DNR website for "[ice safety](#)." ✧

Michigan snowmobiling trail updates, other need-to-know information

The Michigan DNR announced a number of snowmobile trail updates and other need-to-know information for snowmobiling throughout Michigan.

- Purchase your [snowmobile trail permit](#), which is required to operate snowmobiles in the state and valid for one year October 1 to September 30.
- To operate a snowmobile in Michigan, a valid [registration must be obtained through the Secretary of State](#) (or another state or province).
- To increase safety on the trail, the DNR has implemented [universal snowmobile trail signage](#) to help provide consistent guidance on the trails.

- There are [rules and regulations](#) for snowmobiling in Michigan.
- There are nearly [6,500 miles of designated snowmobile trails](#) in Michigan.
- [Snowmobile safety education training and online safety courses](#) are recommended for all snowmobile operators and required for youth between the ages of 12 and 16.
- The Michigan Snowmobiling Association maintains a list of clubs found throughout the state at [www.msasnow.org/snowmobile-clubs](#).
- Information regarding snowmobiling may be found on the DNR website at

www.michigan.gov/snowmobiling.

Michigansnowmobiling: Michigan is home to nearly 6,500 miles of designated snowmobile trails. Purchase a trail permit and don't miss out on your next Michigan winter adventure at www.michigan.gov/snowmobiling.

- [Michigansnowmobiling.jpg](#)
- [Snowmobile%2347%2349Trail Closure.pdf](#)
- [SnowmobileTrail37BridgeConstruction.jpg](#)
- [NESTBridgeClosureMap.jpg](#)
- [Trail37YumaCopemishMap.pdf](#)
- [Snowmobile%23614TrailClosure.pdf](#) ✧

Deer Creek FWA shooting range taking shape

A new gun range at Indiana's Deer Creek Fish & Wildlife Area will have a grand opening in the spring. The facility consists of 10-, 25-, 50-, and 100-yard shooting lanes, with several shooting stations set up for each distance. There is also an area for shotgun use, with four pads set up for hunters to practice before hunting season or have fun with their friends and family. Stay tuned as we start thinking of classes and trainings that we can now provide at the state-of-the-art facility. [More information](#) ✧

\$750,000 DEC grants support Eco-Tourism in Upper Hudson Recreation Hub Area

Grants for municipalities, small businesses and organizations will support tourism and recreation

Adirondack Park Upper Hudson Rec Hub Eco-Tourism Support Grants are available for municipalities, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos announced.

DEC partnered with National Heritage Trust (NHT) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to deliver competitive grant funding to support new tourism linked to the high quality recreational opportunities now available in the heart of New York's Adirondack Park.

In addition, a companion microenterprise program will soon be available for recreation/tourism-based projects connected with former Finch, Pruyn & Company lands for a total of \$750,000 in funding, provided by a grant from TNC. ✧



2017 Michigan Winter Free Fishing Weekend: Feb 18-19

As part of these weekends, all fishing license fees are waived for two days with residents and out-of-state visitors allowed to enjoy fishing on both inland and Great Lakes' waters for all species of fish during their respective open seasons. All other regulations still apply.

To encourage involvement in Free Fishing Weekends, organized activities are often offered in communities across the state. These activities are coordinated by non-profit groups, schools, parks (local/state), businesses and others. Will you be joining them and planning a 2017 Winter Free Fishing Weekend event? If you would like to plan an event, check out www.michigan.gov/freefishing for information and resources to help! On the site you'll find two toolkits; one focused on planning and the other on promoting your event.

Once your event is coordinated, please register it as an official [2017 Winter Free Fishing Weekend activity online](#). Upon doing so you will be contacted about receiving a packet of materials from the DNR to use during your event. Please join this year's efforts to help get more people out fishing. We welcome you to become a part of the tradition that is the annual Free Fishing Weekends — a time to get together and have some fishing fun! ✧

Southern Lake Michigan Regional Fisheries Workshop

This workshop will focus on the latest results from 2016 research and monitoring efforts. Michigan Sea Grant and South Haven Steelheaders co-host this event. There is no cost to attend.

WHEN: Thursday, April 20, 2017, 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.

WHERE: South Haven Moose Lodge, 1025 Wells St., South Haven, MI 49090 ✧

About fish and wildlife management in Indiana

Fish and wildlife management and public access are funded by fishing and hunting license revenue and also through the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs administered by the USFWS. These programs collect excise taxes on sporting arms and ammunition, archery equipment, fishing equipment, and motor boat fuels. The money is distributed among state fish and wildlife agencies based on land size and the number of licensed anglers and hunters in each state. Find out more information about fish and wildlife management in Indiana at www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild. ✧

3 Things to Know: New Concealed Carry Rules

New concealed carry rules governing troops on base have been released by the Defense Department. The good news is that, thanks to the policy, troops may be able to carry private weapons while off duty. The bad news is that permission is not automatic, and the policy only applies to service members, not their families. Read more about what you need to know on [Military.com's SpouseBuzz blog](#) ✧

State rears and stocks muskies to create fishing opportunities

The Michigan DNR recently stocked 25,740 muskellunge fingerlings into 12 waterbodies located throughout the state in an effort to further enhance Michigan’s world-class fisheries.

Michigan is home to two strains of naturally reproducing muskellunge, Great Lakes and northern. The DNR has been rearing muskellunge in its hatcheries since the 1950s. While the hatchery program initially focused on the northern muskellunge strain, it has shifted focus in recent years to the Great Lakes strain, as it is native to Michigan and widely distributed in waterbodies throughout the Lower Peninsula and eastern region of the Upper Peninsula.

Lake State Fish Hatchery in Mattawan. This hatchery is the only facility in the state currently capable of rearing this species. The muskellunge are reared in hatchery tanks and then transferred to outside ponds after a few months.

Historically, muskellunge were reared by stocking fry in ponds and allowing them to grow by eating natural food, similar to how the DNR currently rears walleye. Because of the highly cannibalistic nature of muskellunge, the success of these rearing efforts was highly variable and often produced low numbers. Current rearing efforts at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery produce a much higher survival rate and more stable, predictable production.

“We are continuing to make great headway in our efforts to increase muskellunge fishing opportunities for anglers,” said DNR fisheries biologist Matt Hughes, who oversees the rearing program at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery. “With time and experience we’ve stabilized and increased production so more and more waterbodies can be stocked.”

Due to infrastructure improvements at Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery, staff has been able to increase the size of fingerlings stocked each year since the program began. Increased stocking size leads to better survival.

Below is a chart of the waterbodies stocked this fall with 8- to 10-inch-long muskellunge.



Since 2011, the DNR has collected eggs and milt (sperm) from adult muskellunge in the Lake St. Clair/Detroit River system. The offspring then are reared at Wolf

Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery will be over-wintering a small number of fingerlings that will be stocked in the spring into future broodstock lakes. It is estimated these fish will be 14 inches at the time of stocking.

An additional 1,110 northern strain muskie were stocked in Chicagon Lake (Iron County). These fish came from the Wisconsin DNR as part of a cooperative agreement to trade Great Lakes strain muskie for northern strain muskie.

For more info: www.michigandnr.com/fishstock/. ↵

Waterbody	County	Number Stocked
Belleville Lake	Wayne	1,905
Cooke Dam Pond	Iosco	2,913
Lake Michigan-Little Bay de Noc	Delta	5,000
Lake Margarethe	Crawford	2,880
Lake Ovid	Clinton	410
Lake Winyah	Alpena	2,295
Murray Lake	Kent	640
North Manistique Lake	Luce	1,700
Ross Lake	Gladwin	441
Teal Lake	Marquette	699
White Lake	Muskegon	3,857
Wixom Lake	Gladwin	3,000
		Total: 25,740

DNR continues effort battling invasive grass carp in Lake Erie Basin

Talk to anyone familiar with Michigan's invasive species and you're likely to hear their concern about carp—voracious, prolific, invasive carp.

News of electric barriers and fish flying into boats by the dozens may sound like a big fish story. However, while they are sizable creatures, there is nothing exaggerated about the ecological and environmental damage that would occur if bighead and silver carp were ever to enter the Great Lakes. Therefore, a good deal of attention is being paid to the work done by researchers and biologists in the Great Lakes states and Canada to help stop invasive bighead and silver carp from moving through the Chicago Area Waterway System toward Lake Michigan.

In addition to this ongoing work in Lake Michigan and its tributaries, Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division staff and researchers are also focused on the problem of grass carp in the Lake Erie Basin.

Distinctions

Small numbers of grass carp have been caught in the Great Lakes and its tributaries since the 1980's.

While bighead and silver carp are believed to have escaped from aquaculture ponds, grass carp were stocked intentionally in water bodies throughout many states for the purpose of aquatic plant control.

Since the mid-1980s, grass carp used

in this manner were required to be sterilized so that they could not reproduce. However, periodic captures of fertile – or diploid – grass carp and the discovery of grass carp eggs in the Sandusky River in 2015 suggest that either the methods used to sterilize these fish were not always effective or compliance with state regulations barring fish able to reproduce was not complete.

It is illegal to possess or stock grass carp in Michigan. However, sterile – or triploid – grass carp may still be used for stocking water bodies in Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania and New York.

Though similar to silver and bighead carp in their breeding and habitat requirements, grass carp are different in two very important ways.

- Grass carp feed exclusively on plants, whereas bighead and silver carp devour large quantities of plankton – the same food source required by native and sport fish species. In large numbers, grass carp can cause significant damage to wetland ecosystems and waterfowl habitat.
- Unlike silver carp, grass carp do not jump out of the water at the sound of boat motors.

Varied research approach

Invasive species management is most effective at the early stages of an infestation, before a species becomes established.

The Michigan and Ohio Departments of Natural Resources have launched a collaborative research effort with Michigan State University and Central Michigan University to better understand the situation posed by grass carp in Lake Erie to then develop effective management measures.

In 2014, grant funding provided to Michigan through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative was awarded to Central Michigan University and Michigan State University to study the biology and behaviors of grass carp, with the ultimate goal of working towards eradicating these invasive fish from the Great Lakes. Under the management of lead coordinator Seth Herbst with the Michigan DNR, Central Michigan University researchers are studying the fertility, diet and origins of grass carp captured in western Lake Erie. Michigan State University researchers are evaluating large-scale movement, seasonal tributary use and migratory patterns of grass carp.

“If eradication is not possible, the next goal is to use research information to develop and implement more effective control strategies,” Herbst said.

Outlook

When asked about the future of Lake Erie, Mahon and Brenden agreed that it is still too early to predict the potential severity of the issue, as so much depends on the feasibility and success of control or eradication methods. ✧

Other Breaking News Items:

(Click on title or URL to read full article)

[Fund for Lake Michigan makes pledge for dam removal](#)

In a major boost to improve the Milwaukee River, the Fund for Lake Michigan is pledging \$250,000 toward the long-anticipated removal of the Estabrook Dam

[EDITORIAL: Ohio congressional delegation comes to the aid of Lake Erie](#)

A united front from Ohio's congressional delegation aims to put an end to the epic legal battles between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Ohio and Cleveland port officials over the Corps' push to dump polluted sediment from the Cuyahoga River into Lake Erie.

[Chinook cuts worry anglers on Great Lakes](#)

Anglers worry that Michigan and New York's decision to reduce Chinook salmon could hurt the region's sport fishing economy.

[Ancient strain of lake trout discovered in Elk Lake](#)

A recent discovery of a remnant population of native lake trout in Michigan's Elk Lake might have ramifications for restocking lake trout populations in Lake Michigan.

[Nuclear plant on Lake Michigan plans to permanently shut down](#)

In Covert Township, Michigan, a nuclear power plant with a recent history of reported leaks and shutdowns is expected to power down permanently in late 2018

[If Asian carp reach Great Lakes, what do we do?](#)

The state Department of Natural Resources conducted an online survey of more than 2,000 Michiganders to find out what people think about the threats of Asian carp.

[Invasive snail found in second stream in Dane County WI](#)

The sighting of an invasive snail in a second stream in Dane County is alarming officials, though it's not clear the tiny mollusk will create the ecological havoc feared when it arrived in this country 30 years ago.

[2 US reps make joint Lake Erie plea to EPA](#)

Great Lakes Congresswomen Marcy Kaptur and Debbie Dingell urged the U.S. EPA to step in and designate the open water of Lake Erie's western basin as impaired under the federal Clean Water Act.

[U.S. Steel to pay \\$2.2 million fine, clean up Gary pollution](#)

U.S. Steel will pay a fine of \$2.2 million and clean up pollution in the city of Gary, Indiana, as well as Michigan and Illinois as part of an agreement with the U.S. Justice Department.

[Wisconsin DNR considers limit on cisco harvesting](#)

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is considering a permanent limit on cisco harvesting in the state's Lake Superior waters, an idea facing opposition from commercial fishing operations.

[Environmental leader applauds Michigan's "impaired" designation for Lake Erie](#)

Last week's announcement that Michigan environmental officials designated the state's tiny piece of Lake Erie an "impaired waterway" is being applauded from environmental leaders.

End



As we reflect on 2016, our soldiers on active duty around the world, our own safety, our health, family and all we have to be grateful for...our best wishes for a very Merry Christmas and wonderful New Year in 2017.

"...behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour..." Luke 2:10-11

***Merry Christmas and best wishes
for a prosperous New Year***

