



Fed Order expands fishing/hunting and removes unnecessary barriers

DOI Issues Order to Expand Hunting and Fishing Access on Public Lands

Secretarial Order on Expanding Hunting and Fishing Access, Removing Unnecessary Barriers, and Ensuring Consistency Across Department of the Interior Lands and Waters.

The nation's 58 million recreational fishermen support 1.1 million jobs and generate \$230 billion in economic activity nationwide, while providing a primary funding source for fisheries conservation

The order reinforces a clear commitment to maintaining and expanding recreational fishing access on public lands and waters, while directing Interior agencies to remove outdated or unnecessary restrictions that limit participation without clear conservation benefit. This order establishes a framework that

prioritizes fishing/hunting access while respecting conservation needs and state wildlife management authority.”

The order directs Interior bureaus to review existing regulations and management plans to identify opportunities to expand access, reduce duplicative permitting requirements, and improve consistency across federal lands and waters. It also establishes a thoughtful, science-based framework for the use of lead fishing tackle on National Wildlife Refuges by requiring site-specific scientific justification, state consistency and senior-level review.

Order 3447 highlights that “hunting and fishing are foundational components of the Nation’s conservation tradition,” noting that hunters and anglers contribute to conservation in many ways, including funding via license sales and excise taxes and hunting and fishing equipment and on-the-ground conservation efforts. The expanded opportunities to hunt and fish on federal public lands will advance these conservation outcomes, support rural economies, bolster public health, and improve access to America’s enviable landscapes.

Fed Order

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Stay Safe in Cold Weather

When there is a risk of extreme low temperatures and icy roads, the Michigan State Police encourage Michiganders to make a plan for winter weather emergency preparedness. To learn more about how to prepare, check out the [MIREADY Winter Weather Preparedness](#) page.

To stay safe during this extreme cold, the Michigan State Police recommend the following:

• **Limit Time Outdoors** – If you must go outside, wear several layers of warm clothing and always have a hat and mittens or gloves.

• **Watch for Signs of Frostbite or Hypothermia** – Frostbite can occur in as little as 10 minutes on skin exposed to extreme cold. Older adults, babies, and people who remain outdoors for long periods are more likely to be victims of frostbite and hypothermia.

▶ Frostbite symptoms: Numbness, loss of feeling, pale or waxy skin, especially on the face, fingers, and toes.

▶ Hypothermia symptoms: Shivering, exhaustion, confusion, slurred speech, or drowsiness.

• **Keep a Winter Emergency Kit in Your Car** – If you must drive, ensure your gas tank is full and your vehicle is stocked with an emergency kit, including warm clothing, blankets, gloves, hats, and a phone charger.

• **Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning** – Use generators and grills only outdoors and away from windows. Never use a gas stovetop or oven to heat your home.

• **Avoid Overexertion** – Shoveling snow can put extra strain on your heart, so take it easy and avoid sudden bursts of activity.

• **Check on Others** – Older adults, young children, and pets are especially vulnerable to extreme cold and should be checked on regularly. Keep pets indoors.

• **Stay in your Vehicle** – If you become stranded, stay with your vehicle and wait for help rather than attempting to walk in the cold. ✧

Construction of Asian carp barrier in Illinois hits another snag

Washington – Nine months ago, President Trump [signed a presidential memorandum](#) instructing his administration to "achieve maximum speed and efficiency" in moving to block invasive Asian carp from reaching the Great Lakes. But the key project in Illinois to erect barriers that would prevent the fish from infiltrating Lake Michigan has since been paused and remains under administrative review by the Trump administration, according to lawmakers in Michigan and Illinois.

The Democratic senators from both states wrote to the White House budget director and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, urging them to end the pause, review, and release the federal funds that Congress already approved to allow the project to proceed. They expressed concern that continued delay could soon affect the next round of contract awards and cause the long-delayed project's cost to spike after more than a decade of study, engineering work and planning.

"The federal investment is currently on hold without justification, and additional contracts for the project cannot be awarded due to the funding pause," the senators wrote. "The current pause and review could increase the cost and slow the final completion date of (the project), increasing the likelihood that invasive carp could enter the Great Lakes. If [invasive carp](#) were to become established in the Great Lakes, they would outcompete existing fish populations, permanently damage ecosystems, and significantly impair the \$7 billion Great Lakes economy."

The senators who signed the January 15 letter are Michigan Sens. Gary Peters of Bloomfield Township, Elissa Slotkin of Holly and Illinois Sens. Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth,

though the project has historically had bipartisan support.

Neither the White House nor the Army Corps responded to questions Tuesday about the administrative pause and halt in spending on the carp project, including when it was put in place. The episode is just the latest holdup for the \$1.15 billion project at the Brandon Road Lock & Dam in Joliet, Illinois, that Congress authorized in 2020 after a decades-long effort by the Corps, scientists and state officials to address the invasive carp. The fish are currently held in check by electrical barriers downriver that are considered unreliable.

Michigan and Illinois officials had reached an agreement in 2024 with the Army Corps to move forward on construction of the project at Brandon Road. The agreement allows for \$274 million in federal funding and \$114 million in state funding to be used for the construction of the first of three phases of the project. Almost all of the federal appropriation comes from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed under former President Joe Biden.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer last year raised the Asian carp issue during face-to-face meetings with Trump and he brought it up in remarks in the Oval Office in April, calling the carp a "powerful" fish.

"We're also working on a certain fish that's taken over a beautiful lake called Michigan, right? And that's a tough one," Trump said at the time. "They jump out of the water. They jump at the fishermen. I mean, I've never seen anything like it." At the time, Trump said he had spoken with the Army Corps and noted they have a "pretty gruesome method" for blocking the fish, even if it's "expensive." ✧



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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.

Inland Seas Angler

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2026 Sturgeon Spearing Season opens Feb. 14

Season Forecast Now Available

OSHKOSH, Wis.— The Wisconsin DNR is preparing for the sturgeon spearing season opening Saturday, Feb. 14, 2026, on the Winnebago System. With one of the largest lake sturgeon populations in North America, the Winnebago System supports an annual spearing season that runs for a maximum of 16 days (closing March 1, 2026) or until any of the predetermined harvest caps have been met.

If any harvest cap is met early, a closure notice will be posted to the DNR's [Winnebago System Sturgeon Spearing webpage](#) and sent to subscribers of the DNR's Sturgeon Spearing Updates email list. [Subscribe online to receive DNR sturgeon spearing season updates by email.](#)

Season Predictions

The sturgeon spearing harvest is usually dictated in part by water clarity and ice conditions on the Upriver Lakes and Lake Winnebago. This year's assessments indicate excellent water clarity throughout Lake Winnebago, which is on track with other highly successful years. The DNR does not check water clarity in

the Upriver Lakes, although clarity is usually not a major factor in predicting harvest on these waterbodies because they are shallow.

Spearmen will be able to find the season forecast and daily harvest updates on the [Winnebago System Sturgeon Spearing webpage](#) and via email.

The DNR would also like to remind spearmen of the [construction work off Samers Bay](#) on Lake Butte des Morts, which is likely to occur during the spearing season.

Registration Information

The DNR reminds spearmen that their sturgeon spearing tag must be on their person. Spearmen are encouraged to visit [Go Wild](#) and print their tag before heading onto the ice. Once they have successfully speared a sturgeon, the tag must be validated by tearing off the bottom portion, and the sturgeon must then be brought to [an official registration station](#). The spearer needs to be in line by 2 p.m. on the day it was speared.

Any sturgeon harvested from Lake Winnebago must be registered at one of the registration stations on Lake Winnebago, and any sturgeon

harvested from the Upriver Lakes (lakes Poygan, Butte des Morts or Winneconne) must be registered at one of the Upriver Lakes registration stations.

As successful spearmen head off the ice to register their fish, the sturgeon must be openly exposed, meaning it is visible to a person in a passing vehicle.

Please check the [2026 Sturgeon Spearing Regulations](#) for specifics.

Stay Safe While Spearing

Spearmen and spectators are reminded that no ice is 100% safe. The DNR does not monitor ice conditions; check with local fishing clubs and conservation groups for current conditions. Get tips for staying safe on the ice from the DNR's [Ice Safety webpage](#).

Share Your Spearing Experience

Help us keep the spearing tradition alive! The DNR is seeking [photos of the spearing season](#) for communication and outreach. Photos of cutting in, shanty life, spearmen with their catch or any other part of the spearing tradition are encouraged. ✧

Public feedback is open for proposed sea lamprey barrier in Upper Peninsula

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are seeking public feedback on a seasonal sea lamprey barrier in the Upper Peninsula.

The first phase of [the project](#), which replaced undersized culverts with a free-span bridge to reduce streambank erosion and improve fish passage, was completed in fall 2025. The second phase outlines a plan to construct a barrier to block the invasive lamprey from spreading up the Sucker River in Alger County.

Pete Hrodey works with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sea lamprey control program in Marquette. He said invasive lamprey have been in the Great Lakes since the early 1900s. Part of [its life cycle](#) is a 12- to 18 month-

feeding phase during which a single lamprey can [kill up to forty pounds of fish](#). "They've been very successful in invading and occupying Great Lakes habitats," Hrodey said. "It's kind of a pest that isn't going away."

Hrodey said the barrier would block lamprey from getting into areas where it's difficult to apply lampricides, making the chemical treatments more effective. "We should be seeing less larval sea lamprey making their way back out into the Great Lakes to prey on fish," he said.

The proposed barrier would be adjustable so it can be in place during the lamprey's spawning season and retracted the rest of the year.

"The goal of this project is really to ... focus on invasive species control, but also increasing fish passage for

desirable species where we can," Hrodey said. "So really finding win-win projects where everybody is able to walk away with something." According to a [press release from the Great Lakes Fishery Commission](#), reducing sea lamprey infestation in this area would redirect resources to manage lamprey populations in other Great Lakes tributaries. Public comments on the project are open until February 22. Comments should be directed to [Pete Hrodey](#).

Construction on the barrier will likely begin this summer, after reviewing feedback, Hrodey said. The goal is for the second phase to be completed by early fall. The project is funded by federal, state, and non-profit organizations. ✧

2026 sturgeon fishing season on Black Lake lasts only 48 minutes for 679 anglers

This year's sturgeon season on Black Lake (in Cheboygan and Presque Isle counties) ended at 8:48 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 7. The season, which included spearing and hook-and-line fishing, was scheduled to run February 7-11, or until the harvest limit of six lake sturgeon had been reached—but just 48 minutes turned out to be enough time.



The Michigan Department of Natural Resources set the harvest limit for the season at six fish, though anglers were allocated a season quota of seven sturgeon by agreement with tribal governments. This limit was placed to accommodate the expected number of anglers and anticipate the possibility of near simultaneous harvest of more than one fish, as occurred in 2025.

There were 679 registered anglers this year. The harvested sturgeon ranged in size from 52.9 inches to 67.2 inches long and weighed 40.4 pounds to 79.4 pounds

- The first fish was a 61.5-inch male that weighed 50 pounds.
- Fish number two was a 64.1-inch female that weighed 78.4 pounds.
- Fish three was a 52.9-inch male that weighed 46.6 pounds.
- Fish four was a 67.2-inch female that weighed 79.4 pounds.
- The fifth fish was a 58.1-inch sturgeon that weighed 40.4 pounds.
- The sixth fish was a 62.5-inch female that weighed 58.4 pounds.

Only one of the harvested fish had not been captured before by Michigan State University and the DNR during spring spawning runs in the Black River or during past surveys of Black Lake. The sex of the fifth fish, which was not previously tagged, will be determined using DNA from fin clips collected when the fish was registered.

Participating anglers were notified of the season closure in a variety of ways,

including text alerts and ice shanty visits from DNR personnel. All methods were used to indicate the season's end within minutes of the final fish being harvested. DNR law enforcement officials and other DNR personnel were embedded in the on-ice fishing communities and were able to quickly and safely report harvested fish, as well as to quickly contact all lake sturgeon anglers on the ice to close the season.

Rehabilitation of lake sturgeon in the Cheboygan River watershed is a cooperative effort involving the DNR, the Black Lake Chapter of Sturgeon For Tomorrow, Michigan State University, Tower-Kleber Limited Partnership, 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,

For more information on lake sturgeon in Michigan, visit Michigan.gov/-Sturgeon. To learn more about all fishing opportunities statewide, go to Michigan.gov/Fishing. ✧

2026 Ontario fishing regs released

The '26 Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary, which became effective January 1, is now available [as a downloadable PDF](#). Here's some of the Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ)-specific changes in this year's 142-page summary, which will be available at select Service Ontario and license issuer locations. These updates are in red, bold font in the document.

FMZ 6

- Changes to species exceptions, waterbody exceptions, and fish sanctuaries

FMZ 7

- Closing Borealis Lake as part of the three-year Aurora trout rotational cycle

FMZ 8

- Adding two lakes to brook trout Additional Fishing Opportunities
- Closing Lake 57 and Pack Can Lake as part of the three-year Aurora trout rotational cycle

FMZ 9

- Change to zone-wide size limit for muskie
- Changes to Species Exceptions for walleye and northern pike in Black Bay, Lake Superior

FMZ 10

- Opening Carol, Lake 21, and Sorley lakes as part of the three-year Aurora trout rotational cycle

FMZ 18

- Removing temporary fish sanctuaries from Charleston and Opinicon lakes

Anglers are encouraged to consult the new regulations and ensure their fishing licenses are current before heading out in the new year.

The Ministry of Natural Resources also stated that it continues to work with federal partners to clarify the rules to allow anglers to photograph, measure, and weigh fish caught during an open season. Anglers interested in this proposal are encouraged to go to www.ontario.ca/FishingUpdates for more information and updates. ✧

ODNR stocks Ohio's waterways with 36M fish in 2025

COLUMBUS, Ohio – More than 36 million fish were stocked by the Ohio DNR in Ohio's public lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams in 2025. Eleven different species of fish were stocked at 233 locations statewide.

Annual fish stockings play an important role in providing excellent fishing for Ohio's 827,000 licensed anglers. The Division of Wildlife operates six state fish hatcheries that raise sport fish for stocking in Ohio waters, expanding fishing opportunities for anglers. Ohio's hatcheries raise saugeye, walleye, yellow perch, rainbow trout, steelhead trout, brown trout, muskellunge, hybrid-striped bass, blue catfish, channel catfish, and bluegill.

Most of Ohio's fish populations are sustained through natural spawning, such as largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, crappie, and walleye in Lake Erie; however, stocking expands and diversifies fishing opportunities in waters where existing habitats do not support some fish reproduction.

The 36 million fish stocked in Ohio last year were of five life stages: 25.5 million fry, 10 million fingerlings, 258,925 advanced fingerlings, 493,840 yearlings, and 117,942 catchable size fish. These life stages included the following sport fish:

- Fry (less than 1" long): saugeye (13.1 million), walleye (8.5 million), yellow perch (2.1 million), hybrid-striped bass (1.2 million), and triploid saugeye (449,595).
- Fingerling (1 to 2" long): saugeye (4.8 million), walleye (2.9 million), yellow perch (1.9 million), triploid saugeye (214,403), and hybrid-striped bass (119,256).
- Advanced fingerlings (6-12" long): blue catfish (133,940), channel cats (112,036), and muskellunge (12,949).
- Yearling fish (7-12" long): brown trout (19,913), channel catfish (9,389), & steelhead trout (464,538).

• Catchable size fish (6" or longer): channel catfish (7,275), bluegill (7,371), and rainbow trout (103,296).

In 2025, saugeye were stocked in Grand Lake St. Marys. These specific saugeye are sterile and unable to reproduce. The saugeye in Grand Lake St. Marys will increase angling opportunities and are incapable of breeding with wild walleye.



Millions of saugeye are stocked annually in Ohio as fry and fingerlings. They soon grow to catchable sizes.

The DNR's fish stocking records can be viewed via the [DataOhio portal](#) in the [Fish Stocking Database](#). Use the dataset to explore stocking locations and plan your next outing. Anglers 16 and older are required to hold a valid Ohio fishing license on all public waters. Check the current [fishing regulations booklet](#) before your next trip.

Ohio's [state fish hatcheries](#) are open to the public and offer activities such as birding, hiking, and archery. Each fish hatchery will host an open house in 2026: March 28 (St. Marys), April 4 (Hebron and Senecaville), April 11 (Castalia), April 18 (Kincaid), and April 25 (London). Each open house runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Since 1950, the [Sport Fish Restoration](#) program has dedicated permanent funding to fishery conservation through federal excise taxes on sport fishing equipment, import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure boats, and the portion of the gasoline fuel tax

attributable to small engines and motorboats. The USFWS annually apportions these funds that the Division of Wildlife uses to produce and stock fish, acquire habitat, conduct research and assessment surveys, provide aquatic education, and secure fishing access. ✧

What do you want to see in the next Mi-HUNT?

We're reaching out to gather your thoughts on the next iteration of Michigan's hunting and outdoor mapping support tool, Mi-HUNT.

For years, hunters and outdoor enthusiasts across the state have relied on a web based interactive mapping application that helped plan trips, explore public lands and land cover information, and locate areas open to hunting. The tool offered detailed map layers including state game and wildlife areas, federal lands, cooperating private lands, vegetation cover and topography.

As we begin development of the next-generation hunting locator tool for Michigan, we want to hear from you! Your insights will help shape a tool that's intuitive and useful. We're asking passionate hunters, trappers and outdoor recreationists like you to take a short survey to share how you use mapping and land location tools—and what features you'd love to see in the future.

Your experience and input will directly influence decisions about features, usability and priorities for this resource. Whether you use mapping tools often—or only occasionally—your voice matters! ✧

[TAKE THE SURVEY ►](#)

Michigan State of the Great Lakes Report

builds on decades of policy leadership, programs, stewardship

Annual publication delves into major accomplishments and challenges in Michigan waters

LANSING, Michigan – The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) released the [2025 Michigan State of the Great Lakes Report](#). The annual report explores major accomplishments, issues, initiatives, and challenges related to the health and sustainability of our Great Lakes—the world’s greatest surface freshwater system.

The 2025 report focuses on how individuals, communities, organizations, universities, tribes, and governments unite around the waters, ecology, and economy of Michigan’s Great Lakes.

“Michiganders share a remarkable privilege – and responsibility – to protect and sustain our water resources great and small. Our lakes, rivers, and groundwater drive our economy and shape our way of life,” said EGLE Director Phil Roos. “The 2025 State of the Great Lakes Report underscores the progress we’ve made, the challenges that remain, and the power of collective action. I believe it will inspire continued commitment and innovation.”

By statute, EGLE’s [Office of the Great Lakes](#) (OGL) prepares and submits the report each calendar year to the state Legislature on behalf of the Governor. The report is also posted online along with recent years’ editions.

“This year marks the 40th anniversary of the office created in statute by former U.S. Ambassador and Michigan Governor James Blanchard with the recognition that the Great Lakes are central to our way of life, our communities, Michigan’s economy, and our heritage,” said EGLE Great Lakes Senior Advisor and Strategist Emily Finnell, who leads the OGL. “Our work to develop state and regional policies, implement programs, collaborate with partners,

and steward our Great Lakes today shapes the health, resilience, and sustainability of these waters for generations to come. This work is our greatest challenge and our greatest opportunity.”

This year’s report highlights activities affecting numerous communities and every Great Lake bordering Michigan. It addresses topics including environmental cleanup, waterfront restoration and revitalization, invasive species, Michigan’s flora and fauna, and growing Michigan’s blue economy. Here’s a cover-to-cover list:

- **Michigan’s OGL** and its mission to lead policy development and strategic implementation of programs to protect, restore, and sustain the Great Lakes and grow the next generation of water stewards at home and abroad after 40 years.
- **The former Muskegon Lake Area of Concern** and its successful comeback after decades of cleanups and restoration.
- **Detroit’s Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park** and the community partnerships behind the newest park on the city’s riverfront.
- **Michigan groundwater management** and how new software will improve the process for large-quantity water withdrawal requests.
- **Lake Erie harmful algal blooms** and the challenge of reducing agricultural phosphorus runoff in the Western Lake Erie Basin.
- **The Michigan Maritime Strategy** and opportunities for collective action, collaboration, and investment in sustainable maritime innovation and environmental stewardship in commercial and recreational marine sectors.

- **Manoomin, or wild rice**, and tribal perspectives on honoring and protecting this traditional staple and cultural touchstone.
- **Innovative river plastics cleanup technology** and a study exploring it as an option for Michigan’s Grand River.
- **Understanding microplastics** and EGLE’s efforts to address the growing environmental and health concerns they pose.
- **The challenges of PFAS**, the many ways these “forever chemicals” affect Michiganders and our environment, and the work of EGLE and other agencies to address the problem.
- **Protecting piping plovers** in northern Michigan and rebuilding the population of this endangered shorebird.
- **Threats to lake whitefish** from invasive mussels undermining this iconic Great Lakes species.
- **Sea lamprey control** and the proven need to continue our work to manage this fishery-destroying invader.
- **Dam safety** and the risks and costs of neglecting Michigan’s vital infrastructure.

About EGLE’s Office of the Great Lakes

The OGL develops policy and implements strategic programs to protect, restore, and sustain the Great Lakes watershed. The office collaborates with partner organizations to support sustainable water use and development of Great Lakes maritime resources; support vibrant and resilient communities; foster water stewardship; and advance science, research, and policy to solve the next generation of water challenges. Its mission is to ensure a healthy environment, strong water-focused blue economy, and high quality of life for Michiganders. ✧

An end to landfiling: Great Lakes area hits historic milestone for commercial fish waste

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – Waste not, want not.

By way of a promise made by companies across the Great Lakes region, the practice of dumping commercial fish waste into landfills has effectively been ended, according to the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers (GSGP).

In January, the intergovernmental group that includes the state of Michigan announced the historic milestone in a press [release](#). For the past three years, GSGP has recruited companies to sign the Great Lake Fish Pledge, which stands as a commitment to "productively use all parts of the fish they handle" so their heads, guts, skin and scales do not go to waste.

Forty-four companies have now signed the pledge—including Great Lakes Tinned Fish in Grand Rapids and Big O' Smokehouse in Caledonia—together accounting for more than 30 million pounds of fish annually or around 90% of the Great Lakes commercial catch by volume.

Great Lakes Fish Pledge

There's more to a fish than a filet, says the GSGP, and making good use of all of its parts has both an economic and environmental benefit. "It's a waste not, want not story," said John Schmidt, the program manager for the GSGP's 100% Great Lakes Fish Initiative, which includes the Great Lakes Fish Pledge.

"If we can find a way to get more from less, take waste material and turn it into revenue streams, that's a win," he said.

Schmidt says, typically, only around 40% of a commercially-caught fish is used productively, which means the other 60% winds up in a landfill. "Those materials aren't trash," he said. "They are raw materials that can be used to create new products, new revenue streams that have environmental and economic benefits throughout the region."

For Big O' Smokehouse, the responsible use of their Great Lakes-

caught fish has meant turning salmon skin and meat into pet snacks. Meanwhile, others companies have turned to fish leather, fertilizer, composting, collagen programs and more. The initiative draws from Iceland's successful transformation of its cod fishery emphasized utilizing all parts of the fish in the 1980s. Populations were in decline, so the country.

"It's interesting," Schmidt said. "They're making more money than ever off their cod fishery and catching fewer fish." In the Great Lakes, whitefish, a species "on the brink of collapse" in Lakes Michigan and Huron, according to a [report](#) from Bridge Michigan, could follow the same path. "We're not reinventing the wheel," Schmidt said. "We're taking proven models, great ideas from around the world and adapting that to our own ecosystem and situation."

Great Lakes Tinned Fish

For Marissa Fellows, founder and owner of Great Lakes Tinned Fish, the Great Lakes Fish Pledge fits with her brand's three principles: celebrating local flavor and culinary innovation, supporting sustainable fishing practices and the region's commercial fishing industries and embodying the Pure Michigan and Midwest spirit of hospitality.

"You're just seeing within a year's time—or just over—how many people in the industry are really committed to seeing this waste reduction happen," Fellows said about the effective end to the land filling of commercial fish waste. As Fellows' business model, the canning, packaging and selling of smoked whitefish fillets, doesn't directly deal with the less desirable parts of the fish, her commitment to the pledge comes through her partnership with VanLandschoot & Sons Fish Market, a fishery on Lake Superior that's also a signatory. She also promotes creative and innovative ways to utilize fish.

"I think it's so important to look holistically when it comes to supporting our commercial fisheries and the people behind them and the good they're trying to bring," Fellows said. "A lot of these are very complex issues, but there are people that are really deeply committed to it, and I think those things go hand in hand."

Great Lakes Tinned Fish sells three flavors of smoked whitefish available in nearly 180 stores across 29 states, including several locally-owned grocery stores in the Grand Rapids area. ✧



Fed Order

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Anglers are more likely to participate when rules are clear, consistent, and based on sound science. This order helps ensure that fishing restrictions are targeted and scientifically justified, which ultimately benefits conservation and participation.

The nation's 58 million recreational fishermen support 1.1 million jobs and generate \$230 billion in economic activity nationwide, while providing a primary funding source for fisheries conservation through excise taxes and license revenues. Expanding access and reducing unnecessary regulatory barriers helps sustain that conservation model and strengthens the connection between anglers and public waters.

ASA looks forward to working with Secretary Burgum, Interior agencies and state and tribal partners to support effective implementation of the order and advance opportunities for anglers across the country ✧

Midwinter River Walleyes

Take advantage of winter thaws to get out and catch fish

Muskegon, MI – There's a hardcore group of river rats who eschew fishing on hardwater to put the boat into rivers and take advantage of excellent midwinter walleye bites. In some places, anglers have been known to chainsaw icy launches to make it possible to put boats into running water.

Across the Walleye Belt there are opportunities during mid- and late-winter to do just that. Take the Mississippi River for example, where some areas stay open year 'round due to dams, and in some places, heated water discharges near power plants.

Preparation

Ideally, your boat is in a heated garage and ready to fish when a few days of above-freezing weather coincides. To do that, you'll want to make sure all your batteries are fully charged. Also, make sure you dress for success. Ice fishing suits or mega-layering beneath raingear are a must; even on days that reach into the 40s, the breeze off the water can make it feel sub-zero. The Whitewater Great Lakes Pro (Jacket and Bib) with heated Torque vest underneath and wool fingerless gloves are a great combo.

Prepare for icy launches. To that end, carry a bag of sand or kitty litter to provide traction should you have any trouble. Common knowledge with river rats is to make sure you drain your boat at the end of the day at the water's edge to prevent launches from becoming even icier for others.

Where to Fish

In winter, walleyes aren't fighting heavy current. They want to sit in off-current areas where food drifts by and they don't have to swim hard to eat. Their metabolism has slowed and they are prone to stack up in slack areas or areas of the river with low flow.

Dams and tailwaters are classic winter spots. Fish eddies and seams where fast water meets slow water. Deep holes are other high-probability spots. The deepest bends in the river

typically hold fish, too, just resting from any metabolic drain of having to fight current or go far for food.

Bridge pilings are another area to investigate. The slack water current breaks directly behind pilings often hold fish.

Areas of warm water discharge are also a walleye magnet. If there is a power plant or industrial outlet nearby, walleyes will be there. Lastly, look for areas with your electronics that contain underwater dunes that walleyes can position behind. Troughs in seemingly straight river runs also hold fish.

How to Catch 'Em

Winter is not the time for aggressive fishing. You want to slow down to match the energy of the fish. If you think you're moving slowly enough, slow down some more. That's the rule with vertical jigging, the golden standard for fishing winter walleyes. By staying vertical, you keep your lure in the strike zone longer and avoid snags.

Jigging

As far as gear, ¼- to 1-ounce jigs are requisite, specific weight being depth and current-speed dependent, typically paired with a medium-light or medium power spinning rod with fast action and a 2500 or 3000 size spinning reel. When it comes to line, monofilament has its place because it has more loft in the water and presents naturally. Braids, however, deliver superior sensitivity, but beware of freezing line if it's exceptionally cold.

To that end, carry a can of PAM or RAINX with you and spray down your guides; this helps prevent rod ice-up. Whether you opt for monofilament or braid, a foot to three-foot long fluorocarbon leader is recommended, attached to your main line with the tiniest barrel swivel you can tie; this also prevents jig spin, which can turn off potential biters. Hi-vis line is also recommended, which reveals when

you hit bottom and can also reveal the slightest of bites.

While plastics will catch fish in winter, there's really no substitute for fresh, lively local run minnows hooked into the mouth and out the back of the head—again, to prevent jig spin. In cold water, the scent and wiggle of live bait is sometimes mandatory to get bit. As far as jig movement, lift the jig two to six inches off bottom and let it thump back down, which creates a sound walleye can hear and locate with their lateral line in turbid waters.

And here's a must-have—short-shank jigs with stinger treble hooks. Winter walleyes are notorious short-biters. Having that extra treble will boat countless fish more than a jig without.

Bladebaits

If several days cooperate and you get warmer weather, fish may turn on and become more aggressive. If the bite turns aggressive vertical jigging, you might want to try a metal bladebait, which creates high-frequency vibrations that trigger reaction bites. The same vertical jigging gear will work for bladebaits.

As far as technique, you don't want to overwork a bladebait, whether presented vertically or pitched cross current or to slack water. Use your wrist and make short, sharp hops. You want to feel the vibration for a split second, then let it flutter down on a semi-tight line to avoid the bait snagging on itself. The bite itself is typically on the drop after the wrist-pulse. You'll lift the rod and feel weight. Even though the baits are metal, walleyes literally inhale them off bottom, thinking they're live forage.

There are numerous bladebaits on bait shop pegs from which to choose. The important thing is that you carry a selection of weights (1/8-, ¼-, and 3/8-ounce) to match different depths you may be targeting. Colors, too, come

Midwinter River Walleyes

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Midwinter River Walleyes

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into play. Bright chartreuse, orange, and firetiger patterns are a must-have, as well as standards in silver and gold. B FISH TACKLE B3 bladebaits are long-time river rat favorites. ACME and Berkley also make recommended bladebaits in a multiple sizes and colors.

Dragging Jigs

If walleyes are spread out over a flat or in slackish main channel areas, consider crawling a jig and minnow or jig and plastic just slow enough on a forward troll that you're puffing up the bottom silt. Just make sure your jig is heavy enough to maintain bottom contact.

In areas where more than one rod are allowed—as well as multiple lure rigs—consider doing the same with a Dubuque Rig, a rig with one heavier jig and plastic on a short leader attached to a three-ring swivel and a longer leader off the back with a super-light jig and plastic, hook and minnow, or walleye fly off the back.

Safety First

When fishing midwinter river walleyes, always make safety a priority. Water temps in the 30s and 40s can quickly cause hypothermia. Fish with a buddy, always keep your PFD on, and drive slow from spot to spot, keeping an eye out for floating shelf ice, which can do damage to outboard lower units and props, besides create a disruption that could throw someone out of the boat. Carrying a portable ski-boat ladder is a good idea, too, should someone fall out of the boat.

And again, make sure you have plenty of gas, fully charged batteries, and a jump-starter pack should your outboard motor fail to start.

Take Home

Midwinter walleyes are known to group up in the areas mentioned, so bites can be notoriously good—if you're willing to brave the cold. Never tried it? Investigate walleye-holding rivers near you prior to the next warm spell and give it a shot. You might just be surprised with the results! ✧

Gov Whitmer releases 10-year Michigan Maritime Strategy

LANSING, MI – Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced the Michigan Maritime Strategy, a 10-year plan with the goal to boost the State's maritime industry, create jobs, and protect the great lakes.

Michigan ports support 17,000 jobs and generate \$3.3 billion annually with water-based tourism adding 45,000 jobs and \$12 billion in revenue. The plan focuses on modernizing ports, advancing clean energy, expanding workforce training, and improving sustainability.

“Michigan is prepared to lead the future of maritime innovation while protecting the waters that define us,” said Governor Whitmer. “The Michigan Maritime Strategy is a long-term plan for us to create good-paying local jobs and attract cutting-edge investments while protecting our Great Lakes, which contain 21% of the world's fresh surface water. Because of our unique natural resources, we have an incredible opportunity to harness them to grow our economy and an awesome responsibility to safeguard them for future generations of Michiganders. With this new strategy, we will do both, ensuring our waters remain a source of pride and prosperity for generations to come.”

Multiple Michigan departments are involved in the plan including: the Michigan departments of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), Transportation (MDOT), Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), and Natural Resources (DNR), along with the Office of Future Mobility and Electrification (OFME) in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), and the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO).

The strategy's six goals include: port modernization, maritime manufacturing, low-emission technology, workforce development, innovation, and sustainable marinas.

The draft plan is open for comment at [Michigan.gov/maritime](https://www.michigan.gov/maritime) through [February 27](#). ✧

Mille Lacs Lake yellow perch limit will change to five

Starting Monday, Feb. 9, the daily and possession limit for yellow perch on Mille Lacs Lake was reduced from 10 to five. This regulation will be in place through November 30, 2026.

The Minnesota DNR is adjusting the limit to help maintain a healthy perch population for the future and to stay within the state's share of the harvestable surplus. In addition to being prized by anglers for the dinner table, the fish are a key species in the Mille Lacs Lake ecosystem and are a primary food source for predators, especially walleye.

“Many anglers have enjoyed good perch fishing this winter on Mille Lacs Lake, even better than last winter,” said Brad Parsons, Minnesota DNR fisheries section manager. “Our perch harvest each of the last two years has been more than double what it was in earlier years going back to 2012. The perch population being high enough to draw significant angler interest is a positive sign for the health of the lake.”

State-licensed anglers share the perch harvest on Mille Lacs Lake with Ojibwe Tribes that retain fishing rights by treaty. To conserve the fishery, the state and the Tribes cooperatively establish an annual safe harvest level through a government-to-government, co-management process. Each party then sets fishing regulations to stay within their share of the harvest. This year, the state's share of the perch harvest is 36,500 pounds. As of January 18, the state had harvested more than 17,000 pounds of perch.

Anglers can find Mille Lacs Lake fishing regulations and regularly updated data on state-licensed angler catches of walleye, northern pike and yellow perch on the [Minnesota DNR website](https://www.mndnr.gov/millelacslake) (www.mndnr.gov/millelacslake). ✧

Waterways Safety Council Meeting **March 25** Open to Public

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Waterways Safety Council (WSC) invites the public to attend its next quarterly virtual meeting on **March 25** at 9 a.m. online. The WSC, a citizen advisory council, provides crucial input on boating issues to the Ohio DNR.

WHEN: Wednesday, March 25, from 9 to 11:30 a.m.

WHERE: Virtually via Microsoft Teams Live at: <https://rebrand.ly/wscouncil>

The ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft will brief council members on ongoing projects and current issues affecting recreational boating in Ohio. This virtual meeting is open to the public and can be attended via Microsoft Teams Live. For more info: Cindy Bellar, ODNR Division of Parks and Watercraft, at (614) 265-6504. ✧

Muskegon Lake removed from list of Most Degraded Great Lakes Sites

Muskegon Lake was officially removed from the USEPA's Areas of Concern list. It was originally designated one of the most environmentally degraded sites in the Great Lakes 40 years ago. NOAA Fisheries' Office of Habitat Conservation, the EPA, and other partners worked for decades to restore the area. This milestone marks a major achievement for the Muskegon community and for Great Lakes restoration efforts. ✧

2026 Lake Committee Meetings

The Great Lakes Fisheries Commission Lake Committee Meetings will be held in Ypsilanti, MI March 23-27, 2026. Attending the meetings this year is especially informative since representatives from all five of the Great Lakes will be participating at this location. ✧

Steelhead trout collected to keep fish population bountiful in Lake Erie tribs

Employees with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission collected steelhead trout in the cold waters of Trout Run early last month. One fish culturist said the trout species doesn't reproduce enough to keep up with the demand of fishing, and their efforts keep the population steady.

Steelhead trout draw hundreds of fishermen to Lake Erie tributaries every year. Workers separated the fish by male and female, harvested their eggs, and then fertilized those eggs to be raised into the next generation of steelhead trout.

"We do this about five to six times a year, so we have one more time, and one if needed after this, so the weather doesn't really play a big part in this," said Scott Fedei, a fish culturist.

"It's cold, but we're prepared. We like to dress in neoprene waders; they're very warm. We stay dry, and I love being out here," said Davis Fray, a fishery biologist. ✧

Great Lakes Fishery Commission & USFWS seek comments on assessment for a seasonal sea lamprey barrier

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (Commission), in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is seeking public comment on a draft environmental assessment regarding the construction of a seasonal sea lamprey barrier in Alger County, Michigan

The proposed action considered in this environmental assessment is to construct and operate a seasonal in-stream sea lamprey barrier on the Sucker River in Alger County, Michigan. This would restrict invasive sea lamprey to the lower part of the river, where their offspring can be more effectively treated with lampricides. The barrier would consist of an adjustable crest weir design, allowing it to be raised during the sea lamprey spawning migration (approximately March through June) and lowered the rest of the year.

Installing this seasonal barrier approximately 20 miles upstream of the H-58 river crossing would enable effective, temporary blockage of sea lamprey during their spawning run, while preserving stream connectivity and function for non-target fish and other aquatic species throughout the watershed for the rest of the year. By reducing the area infested by sea lamprey, resources can be redirected to manage lamprey populations in other Great Lakes tributaries. This approach would also improve stream health and connectivity, supporting state, federal, and tribal fishery management goals. Once the new barrier is in place, lampricide treatments would no longer be needed for 95 miles of upstream spawning habitat. The Commission, with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, would oversee the barrier's maintenance and operation throughout its lifespan.

This draft environmental assessment has been prepared to inform the Commission, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the public about the potential environmental consequences of the proposed construction and operation of a sea lamprey in-stream seasonal barrier on the Sucker River, as well as the alternative of taking no action. This draft environmental assessment will also help determine whether an Environmental Impact Statement should be prepared or a Finding of No Significant Impact issued.

Learn more about the Sucker River seasonal sea lamprey barrier draft environmental assessment on the Great Lakes Fishery Commission website at www.glfc.org/temp/2025_SeaLampreyBarrier_EA.pdf

Comments must be received by **February 22, 2026**. ✧

UToledo ecologists lend research support to sturgeon reintroduction efforts

An incidental catch of a lake sturgeon is rare. But it's less of an angler's tall tale than it once was, thanks to a collaborative effort to bring this legendary species back to the waters where it once swam abundantly in the eastern and central United States and Canada.

The University of Toledo is a key collaborator in this effort in the Maumee River and western Lake Erie, with faculty and students lending research support to a multi-agency initiative to reestablish a self-sustaining population of lake sturgeon — hopefully — before 2040. “Sturgeon are an iconic species of the Great Lakes,” said Dr. William Hintz, an associate professor of ecology who leads this effort at UToledo. “The recreational and economic advantage is just one of the reasons we’re making this effort to bring them back.”

Lake sturgeon, easily recognizable by their torpedo-shaped bodies covered in bony plates called scutes, are a fascinating species that has changed very little since the days when they shared waters with prehistoric dinosaurs. Today, they’re one of the largest and longest-lived fish species in the world, routinely reaching 4 to 6 feet and 50-plus years.

Once so plentiful that historical accounts described settlers crossing rivers on their backs, they’ve faced significant population declines due to habitat loss, overfishing and pollution since the 1800s, including extirpation from the Maumee River.

Enter the USFWS, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Ohio DNR, the Toledo Zoo and Aquarium, Michigan State U and UToledo, which came together in an ambitious two-decade reintroduction plan beginning in 2018. The collaborative effort has resulted in the release of annual cohorts of approximately 3,000 palm-sized juveniles, a subsample of which are equipped with acoustic transmitters that allow UToledo researchers to

track their movements through receivers that are strategically positioned throughout the Maumee River and Lake Erie under the Great Lakes Acoustic Telemetry Observation System.

Their most recent analysis of this telemetry data is promising. While it remains too early to declare success when dealing with a species that doesn’t reach sexual maturity until 12 to 15, they calculated promising first-year survival rates for cohorts introduced in 2018, 2019 and 2021 as published in the peer-reviewed [North American Journal of Fisheries Management](#).

“If they survive at this age, it’s a really good sign,” Hintz said. “Once they grow beyond the first-year stage, their survival rates are high. At that point, it becomes likely they will become adults and hopefully stick around and reproduce in the Maumee River.”

The Maumee River initiative informs and supports more recent sturgeon reintroduction initiatives in other Lake Erie tributaries like the Cuyahoga River and Sandusky River, where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife have released lake sturgeon. Hintz is one of nine faculty ecologists affiliated with UToledo’s Lake Erie Center, a research facility situated approximately 15 miles from Main Campus on the shores of western Lake Erie. Its researchers study algal blooms, invasive species, salt pollution and more, exploring the local environmental conditions for insights applicable throughout the Great Lakes and worldwide.

The Lake Erie Center also offers hands-on research opportunities to students ranging from first-semester undergraduates to ecology and organismal biology doctoral students like Mikayla Kindler. She began working as a research technician at the Lake Erie Center in 2023, leading

crews in efforts to remove invasive grass carp from local waterways under the direction Bob Mapes in the laboratory of Dr. Christine Mayer, before enrolling as a graduate student with Hintz in 2024.

Today she primarily focuses on sturgeon. “It’s a lot of data analysis,” she said. “I work on some of the modeling, trying to provide insights to the managers and other biologist so they have a better understanding of what the fish are doing, what factors are relevant to their survival and what steps we may be able to take as a collaborative team to help this reintroduction effort overall.” As a recreational angler since her childhood on Lake Michigan, Kindler can appreciate the economic benefits of returning sturgeon to the Great Lakes. For now, she can only imagine the excitement of catching a sturgeon—let alone one of the tagged specimens she’s personally released as recently as this fall into Maumee River.

But it’s their legacy that really excites her about her work. “Sturgeon have been around for so long, and we’re directly responsible for decreasing their population since the 1800s,” she said. “I feel so honored that I get to be a part of this project to bring this icon back to the Great Lakes. ✧

Great Lakes report card

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Lake Erie's successful Walleye hatches from previous years continue to support excellent recreational and commercial fisheries. However, elevated nutrient concentrations and algal blooms are persistent problems – Lake Erie is assessed as Poor and No Trend.

Lake Ontario shows improvements in Lake Trout and Lake Sturgeon populations, but nuisance algae like *Cladophora* is distributed across broad regions of the lake’s nearshore zones – Lake Ontario is assessed as Fair and Unchanging. ✧

Great Lakes report card outlines wins, losses. But what's missing?

As the Great Lakes face mounting pressures, a new binational assessment offers a mixed report card on the health of the world's largest surface freshwater system. But whether it gives a complete picture is another story.

The U.S. EPA and Canada released the [2025 State of the Great Lakes](#) on January 20, outlining successes and ongoing threats to the Great Lakes. The report, which has been released every three years, scores each lake based on indicators established in the Great Lakes Water Quality agreement, a commitment between the two countries to protect and restore the Great Lakes.

In the new report, each of the five Great Lakes gets a score—good, fair or poor—as well as an indicator showing if the lake is improving, deteriorating, unchanging or shows no trend. These scores are based on nine factors that assess ecosystem health: drinking water, beaches, fish consumption, toxic chemicals, habitat and species, invasive species, nutrients and algae, groundwater, and watershed impacts.

But there were also key missing pieces, one of which was climate change. Climate change [was an important theme](#) in the 2022 report, described as an emerging threat exacerbating other challenges. The term wasn't included in the latest report.

Here's what to know about how the Great Lakes are faring.

Great Lakes drinking water, beaches are bright spots

The status of treated drinking water from the Great Lakes continues to be good and unchanging for the past decade, according to the report. More than 40 million people rely on the Great Lakes for drinking water, with about half of those being U.S. residents. In 2023, 97% were serviced

with drinking water that met all health standards, the report says.

Beachgoers began enjoying the new South Shore beach along Lake Michigan on July 18, 2025. The popular beach in Milwaukee's Bay View neighborhood was moved farther south due to consistent closures from bacteria contamination.

Beaches, which are enjoyed by millions of people each year and contribute significantly to local economies, also were listed as good and unchanging for the past decade. However, some beaches are still listed as unsafe, largely due to bacteria contamination.

Specifically, Lake Michigan beaches were listed as good and improving. Efforts like [moving and rehabilitating Milwaukee's South Shore](#) beach, which has been considered one of the worst beaches in the country, play a big role in improving access to the water.

Invasive species impact has more than doubled

Invasive species were scored based on prevention and impact, which were good and poor, respectively. According to the report, prevention efforts are working as the number of new invasive species that have entered the Great Lakes has been significantly reduced. However, the ones already in the Great Lakes, like zebra and quagga mussels and the emerald ash borer, are still causing substantial ecological and economic harm.

In fact, the report says that since 1950, the cumulative impact—which considers increase in numbers, spread and magnitude of impacts—has more than doubled. Zebra and quagga mussels, which are considered [the worst invaders](#) in the Great Lakes, are native to eastern Europe, and arrived in the U.S. via ballast water in the late 1980s.

Invasive mussels eat up all the plankton, which form the base of the food web, causing fish populations to decline. They also have taken over reefs used as spawning habitat by fish and have pushed lake whitefish to the brink of collapse in lakes Michigan and Huron.

According to the report, invasive mussel populations are increasing in deeper waters in Lake Michigan. In Lake Superior, invasive mussel populations [remain low and localized](#) to coastal areas.

Efforts to control sea lamprey, a lethal parasite of many fish species, have successfully suppressed populations by 90% compared with before these efforts began. However, the report notes that due to restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the three-year average population exceeds targets, highlighting [the need for constant management](#) of the parasite.

The report said the emerald ash borer continues to have devastating impacts on forests around the region. The invasive beetle [bores into wood](#) and kills ash trees by eating tissues under the bark. First detected in the U.S. in 2002, the emerald ash borer has killed hundreds of millions of trees, more than 50 million in the Midwest alone.

High nutrient loads, harmful algae blooms degrade water quality

Across the Great Lakes, nutrients and algae blooms were scored poor to fair as they continue to degrade water quality throughout the region, the report said. High nutrient loads continue to drive increases in blue-green algae blooms as well as Cladophora, a kind of algae that grows on the bottom of the lakes. Some blue-green algae blooms – which are actually caused by bacteria called cyanobacteria – can be harmful because they release a toxin known as microcystin.

Great Lakes report card

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Harmful algae blooms continue to be a significant problem in western Lake Erie, largely driven by nutrients from agricultural fertilizers that make their way into the lake via the Maumee River. These blooms also continue to negatively impact recreation and ecosystem health in more localized areas throughout the Great Lakes, like the bay of Green Bay in Lake Michigan, Saginaw Bay in Lake Huron and Lake St. Clair, between lakes Erie and Huron.

Algae blooms [have even been forming](#) in nearshore areas around Lake Superior, which scientists say is likely due to climate change warming the largest of the Great Lakes. Cladophora grow to nuisance levels in nearshore areas of lakes Michigan, Erie and Ontario. Invasive mussels have even promoted the growth of Cladophora by clearing up the water and allowing more light to shine to the bottom.

The Great Lakes are evolving. Why not say the reason?

According to the 2025 report, long-term datasets show the Great Lakes are experiencing many physical changes, like more annual precipitation, warmer water temperatures and declining ice cover.

For instance, from 1973 to 2023, annual maximum ice cover has declined across all five lakes. Lake Superior has experienced the largest drop, with a 34% decline in maximum

water temperatures have warmed ice cover. And since 1980, surface about 1 degree Fahrenheit per decade in lakes Superior, Michigan and Huron.

Changes by the Trump administration will make it harder to track climate change impacts to the Great Lakes. For example, the administration [has scrubbed](#) mentions of climate change from government websites; [began dismantling](#) the leading climate and weather research center; [stopped updating](#) the website that keeps track of billion dollar climate and weather disasters; and [cut jobs and grants](#) to many federal agencies that collect these data.

The data doesn't tell the whole story
Efforts around the region to clean up legacy pollution from industry and restore habitat have allowed many of the improvements noted in this report to happen. Many communities are on the upswing, he said, able to move forward with development and improve their local economies.

In a statement on January 23, the EPA touted those improvements. "An independent study found every dollar of federal spending on Great Lakes Restoration Initiative projects will produce \$3.35 in additional economic activity in the Great Lakes region," said a statement emailed by David Shark, press officer for the EPA Region 5. The statement went on to say, "Great Lakes Restoration Initiative-funded projects implemented since the program's

inception have prevented more than 2.6 million pounds of phosphorus from leaving agricultural watersheds and entering the Great Lakes, including more than 450,000 pounds of phosphorus in the last three years."

But there is a story the report isn't telling, and the indicators are disconnected from what people are experiencing on the ground. For instance, there are many communities throughout the region that can't rely on their drinking water supplies because of lead pipes or affordability challenges.

Lake Superior's forested watershed and coastal wetlands help maintain water quality and a healthy aquatic ecosystem – Lake Superior is assessed as Good and Unchanging.

Lake Michigan's habitats support a diverse array of plant and animal species and its waters provide opportunities for swimming and recreational use. However, invasive species and other stressors affect water quality and the lake's food web – Lake Michigan is assessed as Fair and Unchanging.

Lake Huron provides opportunities for swimming and recreational use. It remains healthy despite algal blooms in some nearshore areas – Lake Huron is assessed as Fair to Good and Unchanging.

Great Lakes report card*Continued on page 11***Other Breaking News Items:****(Click on title or URL to read full article)****[New ice cover data offers insight into whitefish declines, climate change](#)**

Using historical temperature records from weather stations around the region, researchers improved their understanding of where ice might have formed and for how long it lasted spanning

[PFAS levels in Great Lakes fish are dropping, study finds](#)

A new study published last month in the Journal of Great Lakes Research shows that PFAS levels in Great Lakes fish are on the decline as manufacturers have phased out some chemicals in recent decades.

[Lake Ontario is the least likely of all five Great Lakes to freeze over. Why?](#)

Due to such factors as its depth, climate, and orientation, Lake Ontario is not nearly as susceptible to freezing over as the other four Great Lakes.

[How this river keeps unwanted fish away](#)

As dams come down around the world, native fish are returning to their home waters. But invasive species are taking advantage of that same access. In Traverse City, Michigan, a fish obstacle course is keeping unwanted species out of a river.

[How thick is the ice on the Great Lakes? Scientists want your help.](#)

Scientists in the Midwest are asking for help from the public this winter to measure ice thickness on the Great Lakes and other inland lakes in the region, which they plan to use to improve ice-forecasting models.

[Ice coverage surges across Great Lakes; Lake Erie over 95% covered in ice](#)

As of Tuesday afternoon, total ice coverage on the Great Lakes stands at 48.42%. It's a significant jump

[Lake Erie report card shows poor grades](#)

The recently released binational "State of the Great Lakes 2025 Report" produced by the U.S. EPA and Environment Canada shows the condition of the Great Lakes

[Stricter ballast rules on freighters demanded to protect Great Lakes from invasive species](#)

To prevent further spread of potentially catastrophic invasive species in the Great Lakes, the Canadian government is moving forward with tighter restrictions on all freighters.

[Thick ice at long last for winter anglers: NE Ohio fishing report](#)

Arctic temperatures have anglers cutting holes in thick ice to go fishing, a welcome change after the warmer than usual winters in recent years. From ponds and lakes to the broad, ice-covered waters of Lake Erie, there are reports anglers are already finding success

[Construction of Asian carp barrier in Illinois hits another snag](#)

Despite a presidential memorandum nine months ago that called for "maximum speed and efficiency" in moving to block Asian carp from reaching the Great Lakes, the Brandon road project remains under

[Great Lakes cruise announced with starting price of \\$8,675](#)

American Cruise Lines announced a nine-day Great Lakes and Thousand Islands cruise starting at \$8,675 per person, traveling from Syracuse to Buffalo, New York.

[Report shows present extent, future impact of data centers in Great Lakes, including 77 in Ohio](#)

A multi-year report on data centers in the Great Lakes region outlines the economic and energy impacts of data centers, which support purposes such as cloud-based computing and artificial intelligence.

[PFAS levels are declining in Great Lakes fish, new research shows](#)

A new study shows that PFAS levels in Great Lakes fish such as lake trout and walleye have significantly declined since peaking in the late 2000s, likely because manufacturers phased out some harmful compounds.

[Wisconsin DNR releases 2026 sturgeon spearing regulations](#)

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has released the 2026 sturgeon spearing regulations, outlining season dates, harvest caps, and licensing requirements. The sturgeon spearing season will open February 14 and run for up to 16 days, or until any harvest cap is met

End