



Great Lakes researchers worry about federal cuts to NOAA

Great Lakes researchers are facing existential threats due to proposed federal budget cuts to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The administration has proposed slashing NOAA’s funding, specifically targeting its research offices, which could severely degrade water-quality monitoring, weather forecasting, and critical data collection.

A proposed budget request from President Trump would zero out programs that scientists say are the foundation of weather observations, water quality, maritime safety and recreation on the Great Lakes. The President wants to cut NOAA’s budget by \$1.3 billion, or one-third of current funding to better match priorities related to halting climate research.

“The investment that we make pays off in terms of safer water, public safety, public health, as well as economic activity,” said Gregory Dick, director of the Cooperative Institute Lakes Research (CIGLR), a partnership between the University of Michigan and NOAA.

Researchers at CIGLR work closely with NOAA to conduct work on lake water levels, ice dynamics and harmful algal blooms on Lake Erie. Data is used by state managers, fishermen, boaters and the regional shipping industry. “That’s the kind of data that you want at your fingertips,” Dick said. “That’s what’s at risk with cuts like the ones we’re talking about.”

Beyond this data, Dick is worried about long-term research on how climate change is affecting the Great

Lakes. Water levels are fluctuating and Dick said understanding those dynamics is important for future planning around development and the economy.

Another at-risk program is the Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS), a regional network collecting data on wave heights, water temperatures, ice, wind and more. The network makes real-time data available to the public, and it’s often used by boaters, fishermen and people who recreate on the lakes.

Measuring ice thickness in December 2025 on an inland lake in Madison, WI. (Courtesy of Sam Johnson)

Worry about federal cuts to NOAA

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Watch for orange flags and buoys when boating on the Great Lakes

Commercial fishing is an active industry in Michigan waters, providing consumers throughout the Great Lakes region with a local, healthy and sustainable food source. That’s why it’s critical that recreational boaters do their part to avoid areas marked by orange flags and buoys, which indicate commercial fishing nets are below the water’s surface.

Nets can cover more than an acre on the lake bottom. If snagged by a boat, a net can be damaged or cause damage to the boat and other equipment. If you see an orange a flag or buoy while boating, turn the other way and maintain a distance of at least 500 feet. Avoid navigating between flags and pull in any fishing gear. Also, additional flags may be difficult to see

due to waves, glare, fog, low light or reduced visibility.

If your boat does get tangled in a net, do the following:

- Turn off the engine or put the boat in neutral.
- Cut yourself free using wire cutters, then label any gear left behind that should be returned to you.
- Attach a buoy or jug to mark the net and leave it in the water.
- Use GPS to mark the location.
- Report the net to the DNR hotline by calling or texting 800-292-7800.

For more information, check out Michigan Sea Grant’s [Nets of the Great Lakes webpage](#). ✨

Try a river this summer

Wherever you live, there's probably a place very close by where you can go fishing. Lakes, rivers, ponds, and reservoirs are everywhere. Some fortunate folks are closer to outstanding fishing opportunities than others, but most of us can find a place to go fishing where we'll have a reasonable chance to get bit.

Rivers can provide some outstanding fishing action throughout the summer. Actually, rivers can be good year 'round, especially the larger rivers. However, in the summer, small, medium, and large rivers can provide anglers with action from a wide variety of fish species.

Sometimes, in the heat of the summer and with weather systems going through regularly, lakes can get tough to fish. The fish in rivers aren't as affected by the weather that lake fish find offensive. River fish just keep eating. Rivers have current, so fish in rivers are constantly expending energy. To sustain their energy, they need to eat more often. Because river fish are almost always fighting the current, they become stronger than their lake-dwelling cousins. They also usually don't grow as fast, although there are still plenty of big fish to be found in most rivers.

Because of the current, it's a good idea to remember that most of the time a fish that wants to eat will be facing upstream. Therefore, it works well to present your bait so it's working downstream or cross current. By doing so, the fish will be able to see it better. Also, any wounded minnow or bug or crawdad will be moving downstream, so this is a very natural presentation.

There are times when working upstream is better. This is most noticeable when trolling crankbaits. Troll crankbaits upstream, going faster as the water warms.

A jig/plastic combination is a very good way to go about catching river fish. In the summer, river fish have a

hard time passing up a jig tipped with a three to four-inch Rage Swimmer. Another river fish producer is a Mini King Spinnerbait. The flash of the spinner is especially helpful if there is some color in the water.

When a river fish is hungry, and they're hungry much of the time, they'll eat just about anything regardless of color. However, it's hard to go wrong with a bait in a crawdad color.

You don't need to have a boat to fish rivers, although a boat certainly provides access to areas that the shore angler doesn't have. Nonetheless, anyone that wants to go fishing can catch river fish.

If you're a shore or wading angler, look for areas that have deeper water nearby. In small rivers, deep water might be only four or five feet deep. Concentrate your efforts on cover near deep water. Walleyes, bass, pike, and any other river predators will hang out around logs, rocks, or anything that provides relief from the current, waiting for something that looks good to eat to go by.

The rivers that many of us grew up with aren't the same rivers today. As has everything else, they've aged. There aren't as many deeper holes or deeper stretches. The species of fish has changed also. Rivers that were home to walleyes years ago are now occupied more by smallmouth bass. Fishing isn't better or worse in those rivers today, it's just different. And different is okay.

Rivers are abundant across North America. Their inhabitants are willing eaters and strong fighters. That should be enough to encourage anyone who wants to go fishing to try a river this summer. ✧

God doesn't call the qualified;
He qualifies the called.



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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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U.S. Coast Guard launches new sail drones on Lake Erie for first time

Autonomous drones are designed to assist with rescues, environmental spills and law enforcement

Two bright orange autonomous sail drones are floating on Lake Erie right now, part of a new U.S. Coast Guard program. The drones launched in May for the first time in the Great Lakes and are equipped with 360-degree cameras.

The U.S. Coast Guard said they serve a variety of functions, which include helping with search & rescues, environmental spills and law enforcement activities.

Cameras are monitored 24/7 by U.S. Coast Guard staff, who can also manually move the drones when necessary. But the footage isn't recorded, officials say. "The drones themselves are not meant to surveil or anything like that. They're just out there for awareness," said Lt. Junior



Grade Samuel Rodriguez Garcia with the U.S. Coast Guard.

"Think of them as mobile cameras that kind of help us gain a better insight into what's going on live on scene."

Both U.S. and Canadian agencies, including law enforcement, could have access to the drone technology after going through the proper channels, according to Garcia.

"Helping secure the border and protect and prevent cross-border criminality," Garcia said is one of the drone's functions. Although the Canadian Coast Guard tells CBC News that it has no involvement with the drone sail program in the U.S., a spokesperson said the two agencies work closely together.

The sail drones stay "well within the U.S." waters on the Great Lakes, according to Garcia. "They are equipped with collision prevention, so they will self-navigate away from vessels," said Garcia. Still, he recommends boaters stay roughly 100-metres away from the sail drones. It's also a seasonal initiative as the drones are pulled from the water once ice starts to form on the water. ✧

Magnuson-Stevens Act at 50: Charting a course to sustainable fisheries

In April, the U.S. [celebrated the 50 years](#) since the United States signed the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This landmark law set the United States on a course toward sustainably and cooperatively managed marine resources. But in order to appreciate how far we've ventured, it helps to understand why we embarked.

The Act introduced two major changes to U.S. federal fisheries management. First, it created a 200-mile "fishery conservation zone"—later redesignated an "[Exclusive Economic Zone](#)" — around our coasts. American fishermen have the first right to fish marine species in this area.

Second, the Act created [eight regional fishery management councils](#). They established a collaborative and tailored approach to managing the domestic fishing industry in the newly claimed federal waters. These councils would bring together representatives from state governments, industry, and other interests to develop fishery management plans for the stocks in their regions, adhering to [national standards](#). They would solicit public

input and allow everyone an opportunity to be heard during the plans' development. Advised by scientific committees, the councils' goal was to manage each fishery for its "optimum yield." Optimum yield takes into account the amount of fish that can be harvested sustainably and that will provide the greatest overall benefit to the nation. The councils' recommended measures were then forwarded to NOAA Fisheries for implementation.

Once the Act cleared U.S. waters of foreign fishing fleets, American fishermen flocked toward the increased opportunities. Many invested in larger, more advanced boats with help from federal loan programs. But soon, too many fishermen were competing for too few fish. Some of the most productive fisheries in the world—including sea scallops, [cod](#), and [haddock in New England](#), and [red snapper in the Gulf of America](#)—collapsed.

In 1996, Congress reauthorized and strengthened the law with the passage of the Sustainable Fisheries Act. This

update marked a more concerted attempt to end overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks. The new legislation included several key changes:

- Fishery management plans must define objective criteria for identifying when a stock is overfished (i.e., its abundance or biomass is too low) and when it is subject to overfishing (i.e., the catch rate is too high)
- Management plans must adhere to expanded national standards and consider "essential fish habitat"
- Rebuilding plans are required for overfished stocks

Today, U.S. fishermen and seafood farmers adhere to some of the most robust and transparent standards in the world. Our system is built on rigorous science, robust monitoring, strong enforcement, and the daily commitment of our dedicated fishermen. American fishermen are responsible stewards of our ocean resources, working to ensure the long-term health of fish stocks and marine ecosystems. U.S. seafood is sustainable seafood. But sustainable management is a continuous journey, not a destination. ✧

Ohio officials work to restore sauger population in Maumee, Sandusky rivers

The DNR said it stocked 130,000 sauger in the Maumee and Sandusky rivers as part of a pilot project to restore the population. Officials explained sauger were once abundant and were an integral part of tributaries, bays and other areas of Lake Erie's western basin, but the population began to fall apart in the 1950s, mainly due to poor water quality and overfishing.

Fast forward to today, sauger are plentiful in the Ohio River and its tributaries, and officials are now working to restore the population in northwest Ohio rivers.

According to a [report in January 2026](#), the DNR plans to stock 500,000 fingerling sauger over 10 years between the Maumee and Sandusky rivers.

The Ohio DNR said recent water quality improvements, as well as expanded access to habitats, have helped to create a strong foundation for the population to thrive. The sauger released into the rivers were 1-2 inches long, and they were hatched and raised in central Ohio fish hatcheries.

"The goal of the DNR's stocking program is to add enough fingerlings annually to re-establish a self-sustaining sauger population in Lake Erie," the DNR said. According to a [report in January 2026](#), the DNR plans to stock 500,000 fingerling sauger over 10 years — starting in just a few years — between the Maumee and Sandusky rivers. The dept will then monitor their survival and movement in the rivers, and strategies will be adjusted as necessary. ✧

Great Lakes report card gives fair rating

The State of the Great Lakes Report 2026, a bi-national rating by U.S. and Canadian government agencies, has given the lakes a "fair" rating, with a trend that is categorized as "unchanging." Overall, Lake Erie fared the worst, receiving a poor rating. Lakes Ontario and Huron were graded fair, while Lake Superior was rated good.

"The suite of Great Lakes indicators focuses on the basin-wide assessments that include offshore or open water conditions, with some nearshore or land-based stresses included where they have an impact on the offshore water quality of the Great Lakes. The indicators are not designed to assess regional or local conditions," the report states.

These indicators assist governments in identifying challenges to Great Lakes water quality and ecosystem health. A variety of factors were assessed, including drinking water, habitats and species, toxic chemicals, beaches, invasive species, and fish quality.

For anglers, fish quality is the largest concern. Contaminants are assessed in walleye, Chinook and coho salmon, lake trout, and whitefish. Overall, the rating is fair and is improving, with PCBs and mercury being the main culprits.

Where Erie was rated poor—mostly because of its algae and nutrient levels—it shone in the fish consumption assessment, being rated good with Huron and Superior. Ontario and Michigan were rated fair. Erie was also the only lake rated good for toxic chemicals in whole fish, while the others were tabbed as fair.

Erie, however, was rated poor for land cover, hardened shorelines, and water quality in tributaries under the watershed impacts assessment.

Ontario's hardened shorelines were the only other poor rating in this category. ✧

Wisconsin NRB Meeting June 24

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (NRB) will meet in-person for the June meeting to consider proposed rulemaking documents and other matters. The meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, June 24 at the Comfort Inn and Suites, N6295 Holiday Drive, Black River Falls, Wisconsin. [The Board will act on items 1-4 and 7 as listed on the agenda.](#)

[The public is encouraged to watch the June meeting on the DNR's YouTube channel.](#)

The deadline to register for public testimony and/or submit written comments for board consideration is 11 a.m. on June 17, 2026. Remote testimony from the public via Zoom may be accepted. In-person public appearances are also welcome.

During the June meeting, the Board will be considering:

- Request approval of the 2026 Deer Season Recommendations

The Board will also receive reports covering the results of the 2026 Wildlife Management Spring Hearing agenda of advisory questions, the Fisheries Management portion of the 2026 Spring Hearings agenda and a summary and report on 2026 WCC Spring Hearing Advisory Questions and Convention. Additionally, the board will receive a presentation titled "The Wisconsin Youth Conservation Congress: Past, Present and Future." [The complete June NRB meeting agenda is available on the DNR website.](#)

In addition to being encouraged to watch the upcoming meeting, there are opportunities for the public to testify and to submit written comments about issues that come before the NRB. [More information regarding public participation at Board meetings is available on the DNR website.](#) ✧

Jigging for Summer Walleyes

The jig is perhaps the most versatile method of presenting either live or artificial bait to help catch just about anything that swims. I'm talking shark, wahoo, barracuda, permit, bass, sunfish, crappies, walleyes, northern pike, muskies, trout, perch... you get the drift. And yes, I've caught them all on a lead head jig of some kind!

The funny thing is, most anglers just do not understand the basics of jigging. Perhaps the most important factor in the effectiveness of a jig is its drop rate. If you want to bag a bunch of spring walleyes, then pay attention!

The drop rate of a jig is the speed at which it falls to the bottom. Fast rates can trigger negative fish, while slow rates can trigger neutral fish. The drop speed and its effectiveness are directly related to the activity levels of the fish.

The weight of the jig obviously has a lot to do with drop rate, but so does the resistance of the jig due to its physical size, head shape, the live or artificial bait attached to it, and even the diameter of the fishing line the jig is tied to. Now throw in hair jigs; confused yet?

There's usually a reason why one or two anglers in the boat are out-fishing the others—even if everyone has a 1/8-ounce, green jig tied on the line. Perhaps the drop rate of the successful anglers is a bit slower than the others. The basic rule of thumb is to use the lightest jig possible to maintain bottom contact, given the depth and speed of the bait. So, in other words, I don't recommend a 1/4-ounce jig in 10 feet of water—unless we are talking snap jigging or power jigging—which is a whole different article.

Boat control is key. When trolling or drifting, the boat presents the jig, not the fishing rod. I can easily fish a 1/8-ounce jig tipped with a minnow on the bottom in 10 to 20 feet of water—moving slowly, of course. A 1/16-ounce jig is good from 5 to 10 feet deep, while a 1/32-ounce jig will cover

1 to 5 feet nicely. These basic jig weights are for a “naked” jig (no plastics, but maybe a medium-sized minnow).

I like to aim for a jig/line combo where the jig sinks at around 1 foot per second. This makes for a great “base line” and makes it easier to use the countdown method when fishing for suspended fish. For example, I know that a 1/8-ounce jig fished on 6-pound-test monofilament line will sink at 1-foot-per-second. So, say that I mark fish on my electronics suspended 10 feet below the surface, which means that I have to count to “10” as the jig sinks to hit the “zone.” The minute I start to alter my “base line,” the drop rate will change.

For example, let's say that I switch from 6- to 17-pound line on the same jig. Guess what? The jig is going to fall at half the speed because of the resistance (like a parachute) the thick line has on the water or current. The opposite is true if I switch to 2- or 3-pound-test line; the drop rate will increase dramatically. Now throw in some more resistance like a plastic grub body or a minnow; it's going to slow the drop rate even more. I would simply take all of your jigs to the local public swimming pool (wait till dark) and play with different combinations and start counting to determine drop rates.

So, let's say its midsummer and the fish are looking for bigger bait profiles, but are not that aggressive due to a front passing or something like that. I'm thinking of slamming on the brakes by adding resistance to the jig by adding a plastic tail on the collar of the jig to slow it down enough so the lazy fish can catch it easier as it falls to the bottom. If I use a smaller jig of less weight to slow the drop rate instead, the bait profile shrinks, too, and the fish may not take it. Hence the first example. There is a fine line between heavy and fast, small and fast, small and slow, or big and slow. There are thousands of combinations that will

alter the jigs action or drop rate. Let observation and experience be your teacher.

Another point to consider is the size of the live bait on the jig. A big minnow (or whatever) equals a slower drop rate, while a small minnow equals fast drop rate. Throw a plastic body on the jig with the small minnow, and now the drop rate of that combination is the same as the heavier jig tipped with a larger minnow with no plastics. It's all in the details that most anglers don't recognize. Even if everyone in the group has the same size and color jig on the line—that's not good enough—everything has to be *exact*: line size, minnow/bait size, jig weight, jig head shape (round vs. flat) to create equal success for all. ✧

State of Illinois Free Fishing Days

On June 19, 20, 21, and 22, 2026, it shall be legal for any person to fish in waters wholly or in part within the jurisdiction of the State, including the Illinois portion of Lake Michigan, without possessing a sport fishing license, salmon stamp or inland trout stamp. <https://ifishillinois.org/> ✧

America250 in Michigan

Independence Day might be just around the corner, but destinations across Michigan have already begun celebrating the nation's 250th birthday with special exhibits, events and more. So far, more than 100 events are featured on the [America250 landing page](#) on michigan.org, as well as historic and multi-cultural experiences and educational resources for travelers. While the big day is July 4th, this is a yearlong celebration. If you have any experiences or events planned for America250 that can be featured on michigan.org, please contact Bonnie Fink at finkb2@michigan.org. ✧

Federal judge prevents Wisconsin tribe from restricting fishing on 20 lakes

A federal judge has temporarily prevented the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa from restricting musky and walleye fishing on lakes within its reservation in northern Wisconsin.

Ahead of the inland fishing opener, U.S. District Court Judge William Conley issued a [temporary restraining order](#) against the tribe after the [state sued tribal officials](#) Wednesday to prevent enforcement of the fishing restrictions. Conley cited “likely conflicts” and the denial of fishing rights to state-licensed anglers among factors in his decision.

The state’s [federal lawsuit](#) came after the tribe passed resolutions seeking to bar musky and walleye fishing by anyone except tribal members on 19 lakes, citing “critically low” populations. In a statement Friday, the tribe said it would comply with the court order and scheduled a meeting Tuesday to update tribal members on the case.

“The tribe’s resolutions were adopted under the tribe’s inherent sovereign authority to protect critically threatened walleye and muskellunge populations on reservation lakes, populations on which the tribe and its members have relied since time immemorial,” the tribe said.

Leaders at the Wisconsin DNR, including DNR Secretary Karen Hyun, met with the tribal council last week to convey concerns raised by Gov. Tony Evers about public safety related to the tribe’s restrictions. In a statement, Evers said his administration spent weeks trying to obtain more information from the tribe, saying the state was left with no other choice but to take legal action.

“Unfortunately, the lack of communication and transparency about this decision, coupled with outstanding safety concerns caused by generations of tension and violence that have surrounded Tribal rights and

fishing on these lands for centuries, has the potential to unnecessarily sow division, stoke tension, and further entrench animosity between neighbors where it need not and should not exist,” Evers said.

In a [news release](#), the DNR said it remains committed to collaborating with the tribe on “important conservation work to protect the walleye and musky fisheries.” The tribe moved to restrict fishing after data compiled by the tribe’s fish hatchery and natural resources department showed concerning levels of walleye and musky on multiple lakes.

A [2025 report](#) shows tribal officials collected 59.6 million walleye eggs, of which around 56 percent survived. The tribe’s hatchery manager Hunter Mayo added that crews collected only three adult muskies on Pokegama Lake and White Sand Lake, producing fewer than 2,000 young fish. Mayo also cited reduced stocking by the DNR in the last 20 years, including a 70 percent reduction in stocking muskies and 45 percent drop in stocking walleyes this year.

In its lawsuit, the state alleged the tribe violated the Treaty of 1854 that established the tribe’s homeland and federal law, saying it has sole authority to regulate fishing by non-tribal members.

This isn’t the first time the tribe has attempted to restrict fishing by state-licensed anglers. In 2022, the Band closed Flambeau Lake to nonmembers for walleye and musky fishing, and the state urged anglers to respect the tribe’s request.

The tribe’s hatchery manager said the walleye population has since improved, which he attributed to the closure. However, the state argued walleye and musky numbers began increasing prior to the closure and despite a lack of tribal enforcement on those restrictions.

In [court filings](#), Lac du Flambeau Tribal President John D. Johnson Sr. said the goal is “conservation of treaty-protected resources, not confrontation” with state-licensed anglers. Johnson told WPR that fishing pressure has taken its toll on reservation lakes. “We’re not getting brood stock that we need to replenish our lakes through our hatchery, and a lot of it has to do with climate change,” Johnson said.

A [study](#) by DNR researchers and others found that climate change may lead to fewer walleye surviving to adulthood on Wisconsin lakes by mid-century.

Jim Lund, a fishing guide in Vilas County, said that respect is lacking among anglers and tribal members. He feared relations may grow worse with the dispute over fishing restrictions. “One side blames the other,” Lund said. “If we’re going to continue to keep harvesting, we have to rehabilitate the habitat first.”

He urged the state to examine stocking strategies and the use of plastic liners at fish hatcheries. He noted that [DNR research](#) found the sex of walleyes in lined ponds favored females, but the ratio of male to female fish varied from year to year.

Meanwhile, Johnson added that the lakes that would be closed to state-licensed anglers make up a small portion of the reservation’s [260 lakes](#). The state wants the court to temporarily bar the tribe from enforcing the fishing restrictions and interfering with fishing by state anglers while the state’s legal challenge plays out. A hearing took place May 29 at 9am ✧

“He who kneels the most, stands the best.”

D.L. Moody

Minnesota DNR launches new, transformative electronic licensing system

The Minnesota DNR launched the first phase of its modernized electronic licensing system for anglers, hunters and trappers, replacing a system that has served the state for more than 25 years.

“The Minnesota DNR is thrilled to bring this modern licensing system to Minnesotans today,” said DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen. “This new system is a major step forward in how Minnesotans and visitors alike access hunting and fishing opportunities through flexible and convenient license purchase and storage options.”

The new ELS offers more flexibility than ever—three ways to buy a license (mobile app, online, or in-person from a license agent) and three ways to carry it (paper, PDF, or stored in the app). Customers can purchase and store licenses, and even register harvests from anywhere, including areas without cell service. Customers can access the new system on the [DNR website](http://DNRwebsite) (mndnr.gov/buyalicense) or by searching “Minnesota DNR Licensing” in the Apple or Google app stores.

Worry about federal cuts to NOAA

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In a memo released with the budget proposal, the White House stated that “President Trump is committed to eliminating funding for the globalist climate agenda while unleashing American energy production.” The proposed NOAA budget will cut climate research and save taxpayer money, according to the memo.

NOAA programs in the Great Lakes are already adapting to cuts from the previous year. The Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab (which houses CIGLR), for example, lost about 40% of its staff last year after rounds of layoffs and early retirements, according to Dick.

As before, every license sold helps support conservation and management efforts, ensuring Minnesota’s fish and wildlife resources are sustained for future generations to enjoy.

“In addition to improving customer service, this new system enhances our ability to manage and conserve natural resources by providing data and insights that support wildlife and fisheries management,” Strommen said. “License sales in Minnesota fund efforts, from habitat restoration and protection, fish and wildlife management, innovative lake management planning, stream restoration, invasive species prevention, and more.”

While the new system is intuitive and user-friendly, the DNR and its vendor partner PayIt have plenty of how-to resources available to assist people in making the transition. Users can find those documents and videos in the online system or in the digital app. There are also staff available to answer questions and help users at 888-646-6367 (MINNDNR) or 651-296-6157.

GLOS is also in a more vulnerable position this year, said Jennifer Boehme, CEO of GLOS. The program is up for a contract renewal with NOAA, which happens every five years. And the system hasn’t received all of its appropriated funds from last year. “Each lapse makes the next one worse, and rebuilding isn’t just a matter of writing another check. The relationships and the seasonal schedules that make the network function can take years to reconstruct.”

Still, the President’s budget is more a signal of priorities than binding, said Alex Eastman, the Great Lakes program manager at the Northeast-Midwest Institute, a nonprofit policy research group. Appropriations are ultimately decided by Congress, which is in the middle of that process.

“The new system brings a modern user experience to hunters and anglers in Minnesota, making it easy for everyone from newcomers to lifelong enthusiasts to enjoy the state’s natural resources,” said PayIt President and Chief Operating Officer Tom Nieto. “We’re incredibly proud of our partnership with the Minnesota DNR and look forward to supporting their conservation mission for years to come.”

Today’s launch is a major milestone, but not the finish line. The DNR will take feedback and make refinements as people adopt the system. Phase two of the launch will happen at a later date and will involve the addition of a recreational vehicle and watercraft titling and registration module to the new system. For now, the titling and registration process will remain the same, and the legacy system for those transactions will remain operational.

Once all phases have launched, the new ELS will support more than 3 million transactions across a catalog of more than 400 license and permit products each year, as well as watercraft and vehicle registrations. ✧

This year, the House Appropriations Committee has passed a bill that would fund NOAA at levels similar to last year, largely ignoring the President’s budget proposal. But the bill is \$300 million short of last year’s funding. The Senate hasn’t passed their version of the appropriations bill yet.

Congress funded these Great Lakes programs last year after the President proposed similar cuts, likely because they know the value they provide for the region and country, Eastman said. “I do think that the more that Congress pushes back, I think the more the executive branch and the President will see that they’re not gaining anything by continuing to try to impose draconian cuts,” he said ✧

USFWS to survey Great Lakes tributaries to search for invasive sea lampreys

LANSING – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will conduct work in Long Lake Outlet – Devils Lake, in Alpena County from June 16 – 25 to estimate the abundance of sea lampreys. The information gathered will be used to determine the need for control measures.

Sea lampreys are parasitic fish native to the Atlantic Ocean that invaded the Great Lakes via shipping canals in the early 1900s and remain a major threat to the fishery. They attach to fish with a suction-cup mouth lined with sharp teeth, feed on their body fluids and can kill up to 40 pounds of fish during their parasitic phase.

Sea lamprey larvae hatch from eggs deposited by adult lampreys in gravel nests, and drift into silty bottom areas where they burrow and grow for several years. In some areas, larvae will drift out of the tributaries and settle in the immediate offshore areas near the mouth of the system.

Failure to detect and eliminate larvae will allow the sea lampreys to transform into parasitic adults and prey on host fish in the Great Lakes.

A first step in the control of sea lampreys is to survey Great Lakes tributaries to determine if sea lamprey larvae are present. Fishery biologists and technicians conduct surveys for sea lamprey larvae in hundreds of Great Lakes tributaries each year. Most surveys are conducted by electrofishing, but in deep waters crews use Bayluscide 3.2% Granular Sea Lamprey Larvicide, a lampricide approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Health Canada Pest Management Regulatory Agency. This lampricide is specially formulated onto sand granules and covered with a time-release coating. The lampricide is sprayed over a measured surface area of water where it sinks to the bottom, rapidly dissolves, and causes larval sea lampreys to leave their burrows and

swim to the surface where they are collected.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Health Canada Pest Management Regulatory Agency have reviewed human health and environmental safety data for the lampricides and concluded that Bayluscide poses no unreasonable risk to the general population and the environment when applied at concentrations necessary to detect larval sea lampreys. Applications are conducted in accordance with State of Michigan permits.

The sea lamprey control program is contracted through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to the Service and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Established in 1955 by the U.S. and Canadian governments, the Commission began chemical control of sea lampreys in 1958 as a response to the catastrophic damage of their invasion. Since that time the highly successful program has contributed significantly to the maintenance of the \$5.1 billion Great Lakes sport and commercial fisheries. For more information on the Commission, visit www.glfc.org.

The Service works closely with the U.S. Geological Survey to support research, such as the development of supplemental control techniques to be used in areas where lampricides are particularly challenging to apply. In addition, the Service maintains a partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in developing a comprehensive barrier strategy for sea lamprey-producing streams, and is investigating barrier design, traps, attractants, and biological control as part of a robust research program administered by the Commission.

For additional information in Canada call 1-800-553-9091. To reach the Marquette Biological Station call 1-906-226-6571 or to reach the Ludington Biological Station call 1-231-843-7300.

Lake Huron Trends

- Lake Huron angling effort appears to be increasing overall.
- Lake Trout catch and harvest rates remain strong.
- Atlantic Salmon harvest appears lower relative to previous years.
- Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, Steelhead, Pink Salmon, and Splake trends were reviewed and generally remain within recent long-term ranges.

Current mass marking funding through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) is approximately \$2.7 million, with requests to increase funding to \$5 million. Bipartisan support for the request was noted.

2025 Saginaw Bay Creel Results

Walleye Trends

- Walleye harvest and angler effort have attained new highs.
- Open-water spawning appears to be contributing strongly to recruitment since about 2017.
- Open-water effort and catch rates continue to increase.
- June and July provided the highest Walleye harvest rates in 2025.
- Winter fisheries encountered large numbers of sublegal fish, many of which appear to have recruited into the legal-size range later in 2025.
- Consistent with recent strong recruitment, 2025 exhibited particularly high release rates of sublegal Walleye, especially early in the season.
- Across Michigan's waters of the Great Lakes, Lake Huron accounts for 52% of the total fishing effort; Saginaw Bay accounted for 79% of the Lake Huron effort and 42% of the Michigan Great Lakes effort in 2025.
- Using expense rates reported in the national hunting and fishing survey, recreational fishing trips on Saginaw Bay generated an estimated \$60 million in economic activity in 2025.

◇

Lake Huron Report

Lake Huron walleye: The new centerpiece of Michigan's Great Lakes fishery

LANSING — Walleye are now the most harvested species in the Michigan waters of the Great Lakes, followed by yellow perch. These findings are part of the [2025 Statewide Angler Survey Program \(also known as “creel survey”\)](#) estimates recently announced by the Michigan DNR Fisheries Division.

This trend has been developing due to shifts in the food web of Lake Huron, and to a lesser extent, Lake Michigan, with the invasion of dreissenid mussels, which are members of the family of small, freshwater, aquatic, bivalve mollusks.

Alewives disappeared from most of Lake Huron in 2003, after zebra and quagga mussels became established in the lake, where they consume much of the phytoplankton that is the base of the food chain. Since salmon and trout depend on alewives for food, their populations in Lake Huron have greatly contracted.

These changes have been beneficial to some species, however. In the absence of alewives, which prey on the eggs and fry of other species, some native fish species have seen substantial improvements in reproduction in Lake Huron, including lake trout and walleye.

With alewife predation on walleye fry no longer a constraint, natural reproduction of walleye has soared in Saginaw Bay. This, coupled with the importance of walleye in the Michigan waters of Lake Erie and of Green Bay in Lake Michigan, means that the Great Lakes now offer an even bigger variety of fishing opportunities – and walleye is the centerpiece.

“These new statistics are a reflection of the popularity of walleye in Michigan,” said Doug Schultz, Lake Huron Basin coordinator for the DNR. “The loss of invasive alewives in Lake

Huron ultimately paved the way for recovery of some key species which, per the recent creel survey report, our anglers have been taking full advantage of. These popular fisheries have immense value to the surrounding communities.”

One of these key species is lake trout, which are also approaching their recovery targets in Lake Huron. Lake trout, once devastated by sea lamprey predation and alewife effects, are now a mainstay feature of the open-water fishery on Lake Huron. The survey results indicate Lake Huron now accounts for more than half of all the fishing effort in the Michigan waters of the Great Lakes. This is largely driven by the recovery of the walleye population in Saginaw Bay, which is now estimated to number more than 14 million fish aged 2 years old and older.

“When weather conditions allow, such as in 2025, the popular ice fishery that takes place each year on Saginaw Bay can provide a noticeable increase in fishing effort and harvest, contributing up to half the year-round effort during good ice years,” said Dr. Jeff Jolley, Southern Lake Huron unit manager for the DNR. The bay also offers recreational opportunities for other popular species, including smallmouth bass, yellow perch, northern pike and others.

“Within Lake Huron, Saginaw Bay now accounts for nearly 80% of the fishing effort – 42% of all of Michigan’s Great Lakes recreational fishery,” Jolley said. “The U.S. Fish and Wildlife service estimates an average expenditure of \$155 per Great Lakes fishing trip. If we apply that estimate to fishing trips on Saginaw Bay, that means the fishery on the bay generated over \$60 million in economic activity in 2025.”

Overall, recreational fishing in Michigan is estimated to generate nearly \$4 billion in economic activity.

The annual Statewide Angler Survey Program generates estimates of harvest and fishing effort, focused primarily on the Great Lakes. DNR staffers known as creel clerks interview anglers at the end of fishing trips to find out what they caught.

“It’s an expensive program,” Schultz said. “But it gives us essential information to manage the fishery.”

The DNR manages over 38,000 square miles of Great Lakes waters, in addition to nearly 11,000 inland lakes and more than 52,000 miles of rivers and streams. Without the valuable data provided by the Statewide Angler Survey Program, it would be impossible to make informed management decisions for these extensive fisheries.

Guiding DNR decision-making on Saginaw Bay is the new [Walleye and Yellow Perch Recreational Management Plan for Saginaw Bay](#), developed in consultation with stakeholders and finalized in 2024. This plan, focused on the two most harvested species in Michigan’s Great Lakes waters, has informed management actions, such as [spawning reef restoration beneficial to walleye and lake whitefish](#).

Learn more about how Michigan manages walleye at [Michigan.gov/Walleye](#) or learn more about the Statewide Angler Survey Program at [Michigan.gov/FishResearch](#), under Institute for Fisheries Research.

Saginaw Bay, Michigan, reportedly generated more than \$60 million in economic activity last year via recreational angling; saw the harvest of 500,000-plus walleye; and accounted for 1.84 million angler hours, representing 42% of the total fishing effort in all Michigan waters of the Great Lakes. ✦

Lake Huron Committee Fishery Research Focus Areas

September 2025

Lake whitefish recruitment: Recruitment and abundance of Diporeia and lake whitefish have declined significantly following invasion and establishment of Dreissenid mussels in Lake Huron. The LHC recommends the following priorities:

1. What are the key drivers of spatial variation in Lake Whitefish recruitment in the Lake Huron basin or similar systems and considerations for stock conservation?
2. Research into invasive mussel control.

Upper trophic level demand and supply: Lake Huron supports a robust and diverse recreational fishery, including native species still

experiencing recovery (walleye, lake trout) and naturalized salmonids (salmon and trout species) managed with varying stocking contributions. A better understanding of predator-prey dynamics in Lake Huron's recreational fisheries will support management decisions aimed at balancing predator demand with prey supply.

1. What are the relative contributions of non-native naturalized and native predator fish to the total demand on prey fish supply and ecological function as top predators (via Ecopath with Ecosim, or other modeling approaches)?

Food web changes: Lake Huron has experienced significant food web changes following the invasion of

Dreissenid mussels, which has led to the benthification of energy pathways and the subsequent invasion and proliferation of round goby, a benthivore which has become a prominent prey for piscivores. Further foodweb changes including increased water clarity and declining nutrients have created a novel food web that has persisted for nearly two decades. The LHC recommends the following priorities to better describe the continuing impacts of system change on the Lake Huron food web:

1. Effects of invasive species and associated ecosystem changes on the abundance and distribution of keystone zooplankton, such as Mysis and Diporeia, and their interactions with higher trophic levels. ✧

Lake Huron Salmon and Trout Management Plan: The beginning of a new era

Major issues facing Lake Huron implementing actions that support the Mission Statement for the Salmon and Trout Management Plan in Lake Huron will need to address the major issues facing the fishery, ecosystem, and sustainable use.

As a precursor to establishing goals and actions, the major issues are articulated as follows:

- The lake has changed rapidly, and invasive species have had and are having a significant impact on it. Management has been unable to adapt quickly and effectively to promote system and fishery stability.
- Major spatial differences between the northern, mid, and southern parts of

the lake impact stocking success, prey fish production, and fishery dynamics. In general, dreissenid mussels appear to have impacted the mid-section the most.

- Diversification of the predator community is needed but can be limited by the survival of some species (e.g., Brown Trout), hatchery production (e.g., Atlantic Salmon), and social constraints (e.g., Coho Salmon).
- Supporting a diversification of the prey base is needed. However, there are questions about whether the Cisco reintroduction program will be adequate and able to help address this need in Lake Huron.

- Resources for managing Lake Huron have been declining, and stakeholders support a long-term funding plan for the basin that allocates resources for surveys, creel, fish production, and management at appropriate levels.
- Lake Huron management should include both a biological evaluation component as well as an economic evaluation to better link fishery changes with economic impacts.
- Cormorant management is necessary and should be balanced with prey fish production similar to salmon and trout stocking and harvest, also recognizing threats to local nearshore fisheries. ✧



Other Breaking News Items:**(Click on title or URL to read full article)****[Pa.'s most treasured ship is coming home after the most extensive restoration in its history](#)**

The *U.S. Brig Niagara* departed Maine on Saturday, embarking on a 2,000-nautical-mile journey to its Erie, Pennsylvania, homeport following a year-long, \$6.9 million restoration. The vessel is scheduled to arrive at the Erie Maritime Museum for a homecoming celebration July 2-5.

[Filmmakers capture the deepest part of Lake Superior as part of new documentary](#)

Filmmakers are preparing to dive to the deepest point of Lake Superior, known as the "Bottomless Pit," as part of a new documentary exploring the lake's mysteries, geology, and ecosystem. The project aims to capture rarely seen footage and highlight both the scientific and cultural significance of the Great Lakes

[Lake Superior anglers broke state record for lake trout twice in May](#)

Minnesota's state lake trout record was broken twice in May, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The latest record fish was set by a 45.5-inch lake trout caught in Lake Superior, which broke a record set just weeks before.

[Lake Superior explorers hope to find a fish that exists nowhere else on earth](#)

Freshwater explorers are preparing to send a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) down to the deepest part of Lake Superior to find some rare deepwater species, including one that may only exist now in Lake Superior. Onboard the ROV will be high-definition cameras that will broadcast the descent in real-time.

[Albert "Big Abe" LeBlanc changed fishing in the Great Lakes forever](#)

In 1976, one man triggered a legal fight that changed commercial fishing in the Great Lakes. Decades later, another legal battle is taking shape over the Great Lakes tribes' indigenous rights

[Twin Cities man catches record-breaking trout on Lake Superior](#)

There's a new catch-and-release state record for lake trout in Minnesota, a 44-inch lake trout from Lake Superior in April, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Fish and Wildlife Division.

[Study finds Lake Michigan, Chicago River, other Illinois waterways polluted with microplastics](#)

From Lake Michigan to the Chicago River to streams and creeks across the state, there are tiny bits of plastic in Illinois waterways, according to a new report from an environmental advocacy group

[Michigan lawmakers may fund last-ditch effort to save whitefish](#)

As lake whitefish teeter on the brink of collapse in the lower Great Lakes, Michigan lawmakers are considering investing in a last-ditch effort to save the iconic species before it's too late

[Michigan's ancient lake sturgeon are showing signs of a comeback](#)

A quarter century after scientists and tribal biologists began raising and releasing lake sturgeon into Michigan rivers, researchers are now documenting the first clear signs the restoration strategy is working

[Lawmakers say Brule hatchery must stay open as they approve \\$4M in spending authority](#)

The Brule State Fish Hatchery in northern Wisconsin must remain open after the Wisconsin state legislature's finance committee unanimously approved \$4 million in additional spending authority for the state's fish and wildlife account Tuesday

[DNR: Yellow perch continue to reproduce, but many fail to survive](#)

According to a Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) official, the pattern of declining yellow perch survival rates in Saginaw Bay appears to be continuing its downward trend

[Man who took Lake Michigan shoreline access to court shares where his case stands](#)

An ongoing legal challenge over public access to Lake Michigan shorelines is now moving through Milwaukee County Circuit Court and potentially toward the Wisconsin Supreme Court. It could ultimately determine whether the public has the right to walk along Wisconsin's Lake Michigan shoreline below the ordinary high-water mark, similar to rulings already made in Michigan and Indiana

Detroit River walleye anglers busted with more than double their limit

A group of anglers were caught with more than double their collective limit of walleye from the Detroit River on Friday, May 8. Michigan Department of Natural Resources says conservation officers seized 34 walleye from a group of five

Buoy network deployed on Lake Erie for summer season

A network of scientific buoys is being deployed across Lake Erie for the summer season to provide real-time data on wave conditions, water temperature, wind, and water quality for boaters, anglers, researchers, and weather forecasters. Officials say the buoy system improves safety and helps scientists monitor issues like harmful algal blooms and changing lake conditions throughout the region

Buckhorn Dam removal project begins in Michigan to restore fish habitat

In Michigan, a long-planned ecological restoration project will reconnect Buckhorn Creek to the Muskegon River, reopening miles of trout spawning habitat and improving aquatic biodiversity

What to know about the greatest threats to the Great Lakes

Some 180 non-native species now live in the Great Lakes, and about a third of them are considered invasive, the three biggest threats are zebra mussels, sea lamprey and invasive carp. Each one is quietly disrupting the ecosystem that millions of people and animals depend on every single day.

End