



Freshwater drum: The overlooked native fish that has been crushing trillions of invasive mussels in Lake Erie

The invasion of zebra and quagga mussels dealt a heavy blow to many Great Lakes fisheries, but new research suggests that the humble sheephead has been a key player in the recent decline of invasive mussels in western Lake Erie.

The zebra mussel and its close cousin the quagga mussel are two of the most destructive Great Lakes invaders. Collectively known as dreissenid mussels, these filter-feeding pests remove microscopic algae and other suspended material from the water. This led to dramatic increases in water clarity in Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, and Lake Michigan after the dreissenid invasion. While clear water may look inviting, it is not very productive and can't support much life.

Invasive mussels have been implicated in the decline of native invertebrates like *Diporeia* (a scud), *Mysis* (a small shrimp) and *Daphnia* (a water flea) from Lake Michigan. This, in turn, means less food available for prey fish and the young of many gamefish. Lake Michigan has seen declines in the harvest of yellow perch, lake whitefish, and most trout and salmon species since the 1980s, and food web changes following the mussel invasion are one of the major contributing factors.

Soon after the initial invasion of zebra mussels, biologists realized that only a handful of native fish species were [well-equipped to feed on invasive mussels](#). Some fish species have teeth in the back of their throats that are built for crushing shells. These molar-like pharyngeal teeth are only

found in a few North American fish. Pumpkinseed and redear sunfish have them, but they also have small mouths that are not suitable for eating large mussels. River redhorse and copper redhorse also have molar-like pharyngeal teeth, but they are only found in a few high-quality rivers in the Great Lakes region.

The only other native fish with potential to prey heavily on these shelled invaders is the freshwater drum. Drum, also known as sheephead, are fairly abundant in warm, shallow waters of the Great Lakes and connected waterways. The West Basin of Lake Erie, Saginaw Bay, and drowned river mouth lakes of West Michigan provide good habitat

Freshwater Drum

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Great Lakes Aquarium expansion to boost lake sturgeon restoration

DULUTH, Minn. – The Great Lakes Aquarium is expanding its lake sturgeon restoration efforts into a new building and exhibit set to open in fall 2027. This past spring, the aquarium borrowed a trailer to start its conservation work. Inside, staff have been raising lake sturgeon directly from eggs.

“We were looking for opportunities where we could do some more tangible conservation work—and this seemed to be aligned perfectly with our mission and our vision to work with the lake sturgeon,” said Jay Walker the Aquarium’s Executive Director. The young sturgeon will soon be released into the St. Louis River, with the hope they will eventually reproduce and rebuild the population.

The new facility will work alongside the new exhibit. “We’ve built this specifically in mind where we could have school groups or tour groups come through,” said Walker. “To be able to show the public all the way from the egg of a sturgeon to their juvenile and adult phases is going to be really cool,” said Aquarist Angela Piket.

Aquarium leaders said the project would not be possible without their partners and donors.

“The amazing work that’s been done for restoration of the habitat and the restoration of the fish I mean, these stories are phenomenal, and it’s just a lot of people working together to make it happen,” Walker said.

More information and its partners and its sponsors can be found on the Great Lakes Aquarium [Website](#). ✧

NOAA publishes historical recreational fishing estimates

NOAA Fisheries has published updated recreational fishing effort and catch estimates for hundreds of species dating back to 1981, reflecting the improved Fishing Effort Survey (FES) design.

Bottom Line: This data revision does not trigger immediate fisheries management changes or adjustments to catch limits. NOAA Fisheries and regional partners will begin integrating the improved data into prioritized stock assessments to help determine the health of stocks and provide new management advice, if warranted, through standard public processes.

The revised estimates will be used in stock assessments in late 2026 going forward. Of note, an assessment for South Atlantic red snapper is scheduled in late 2026, and assessments for striped bass and Gulf of America vermillion snapper are scheduled in 2027. Management advice from these assessments will be made in 2027 and 2028. For more information on regional fishery assessment schedules, visit [the Northeast Region Coordinating Council schedule](#); [Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission schedule](#); [Southeast Data Assessment, and Review schedule](#) and the [West Pacific Stock Assessment and Review schedule](#) for the full list of species and timelines.

Key takeaways:

- The historical trends in recreational fishing activity remain largely the same, but the updated historical total catch estimates are systematically lower with smaller margins of error. This is because the improved FES design addresses over reporting of private boat and shore fishing trips and produces lower effort estimates.
- The magnitude of the reduction in total catch estimates varies by species since the updated effort estimates differ by state, fishing mode (shore vs. private boat), and time of year.
- Reductions are most pronounced for fisheries occurring in low-activity months via private boat.

- Data outliers across the time series are reduced.

Note: The FES effort estimates are multiplied by the catch-per-trip estimates from in-person dockside interviews to calculate total catch. For-hire effort estimates come from the [For-Hire Survey](#), not FES, and are unaffected by this revision. Highly Migratory Species estimates in the Northeast region are derived primarily from the [Large Pelagics Survey](#). This revision does update information for Southeast HMS species as well as Atlantic and Gulf of America coastal shark species.

Why we made this change: Implementing the updated FES in 2026 and revising the historical estimates is a result of listening to partner and industry feedback, conducting thorough research, and aiming to continuously improve our survey methods and data. The calibration model used to rescale the historical estimates was also favorably independently peer reviewed. More detail on the improved FES and calibration model is available [here](#). Each improvement we make to our survey program helps strengthen our scientific understanding of the health of our fisheries, aligning directly with the Gold Standard Science Executive Order (EO) in ensuring our federal decision-making is rooted in the most rigorous and objective science available.

Improving the FES and resulting data also supports the [Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive](#) (RAPID), which aims to build a new, modernized state-federal recreational fisheries data collection enterprise. This enterprise will combine all available and approved recreational catch and effort data collection programs to help reduce uncertainty in fishery management decisions. RAPID aims to increase data precision, accuracy, usability, and credibility for all surveys across the partnership. ✧



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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

GREAT LAKES BASIN REPORT

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Dr Howard Tanner 1923 – 2026

Dr. Howard Allen Tanner, a pioneering fisheries biologist, educator and conservation leader whose work forever changed the Great Lakes, passed away on August 16, 2026, at the age of 102.

Howard served in the United States Army during World War II before returning home and pursuing his education. He attended Michigan State College, now Michigan State University, and went on to earn his Ph.D. in Fisheries Science from Michigan State University in 1952. His career took him to Colorado, where he worked as a professor at Colorado State University and in fisheries research and management for the Colorado Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

In 1964, Howard returned to Michigan to become chief of the Fisheries Division of the Michigan Department of Conservation, which later became the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. He arrived at a

challenging time for the Great Lakes. Lake trout populations had declined dramatically, invasive alewives had multiplied in enormous numbers, and massive fish die-offs were creating serious ecological and recreational problems.



Howard championed the introduction of Pacific salmon to the Great Lakes. In 1966, Michigan began releasing coho salmon into tributaries of Lake Michigan. The program was extraordinarily successful, with the salmon thriving on the abundant alewife population and creating a

recreational fishery that attracted anglers from throughout the country.

Howard's vision helped transform the ecology, recreation and economy of the Great Lakes region and earned him recognition as the "father of the Great Lakes salmon fishery." What began as an innovative and, at the time, uncertain experiment became one of the most significant fisheries management achievements in North America.

His career of public service extended well beyond the salmon program. Howard served as Director of Natural Resources at Michigan State University's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and later returned to state government as Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, serving from 1975 until 1983. Throughout his career, he helped guide generations of fisheries professionals and advocated for thoughtful stewardship of Michigan's lands and waters. ✧

DFO launches 2026 Sea Lamprey control season across Great Lakes

Fisheries and Oceans Canada has launched its 2026 field season to manage invasive Sea Lamprey in the Great Lakes, aiming to protect native fish populations and support the ecosystem's overall health.

Sea Lamprey are an invasive species that attach to and feed on most fish, posing a serious threat to fish populations in a region vital to Canada's economic and conservation goals. Canada and the United States work together through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to manage the species, with DFO acting as the Canadian delivery agent alongside the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Between April and November 2026, crews will apply regulated lampricides, TFM and Bayluscide, to streams and still-water areas across the Great Lakes where young Sea Lamprey are present. DFO says the treatments are highly effective in reducing larval Sea Lamprey numbers before they migrate to lakes, where they can kill fish important to

recreational, commercial and Indigenous fisheries.

The department says the lampricides do not pose a risk to human health or the environment, do not remain after application, and are registered by the U.S. EPA and Health Canada's Pesticides Regulatory Directorate. In Ontario, lampricide application is authorized by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks under the Ontario Pesticides Act.

Residents and boaters may notice crews working in and around certain tributaries this season, and communities drawing water from those areas for drinking or irrigation will be notified in advance. DFO says water may appear yellowish during treatment, which is normal, and that swimming, fishing and boating remain safe, with fish caught during this time safe to eat.

This year's program includes tributaries and lentic areas on Lakes Superior, Huron and Lake Ontario in

Canada, along with several tributaries on the U.S. side of Lake Ontario. DFO also maintains 31 barriers on Canadian tributaries to prevent migrating adult Sea Lamprey from reaching spawning areas, many equipped with traps to monitor the species during spring spawning season. Crews also conduct surveys using electrofishing and other tools on more than 150 tributaries to evaluate control efforts.

Spawning runs are monitored on rivers and creeks across all four lakes, including the Big Carp, Neebing and McIntyre rivers on Lake Superior, the St. Marys and Echo rivers on Lake Huron, Big Creek and Big Otter Creek on Lake Erie, and the Humber River, Duffins Creek, Bowmanville Creek, Cobourg Brook and Salmon River on Lake Ontario.

DFO notes that under the Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations, it is illegal to introduce an aquatic species into a body of water where it is not native, unless authorized by federal, provincial or territorial law. ✧

The 2026 Hook & Line Sturgeon Season opened Sept. 5

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin DNR reminds anglers that the 2026 hook and line season for lake sturgeon will be opened on [certain waters](#) from September 5 through September 30, 2026. All anglers looking to harvest a lake sturgeon must have their general 2026 fishing license and a valid hook and line lake sturgeon tag. Licenses and tags may be purchased online through [Go Wild](#) or from one of our [license vendors](#). [All license requirements and regulations apply.](#)



Anglers are reminded that only one sturgeon with a minimum length measurement of 60" may be harvested

during the season. Anglers who have harvested a lake sturgeon must validate their tag immediately upon harvesting and before moving it.

All harvested sturgeon must be registered at a [designated registration station](#). Please note that most registration stations are not open 24/7, so if anglers plan on harvesting a lake sturgeon outside registration station hours, they must be prepared to keep their fish on ice.

A hook and line sturgeon tag is not required if an angler plans to release the sturgeon they catch in the open season. The DNR urges anglers to [practice responsible catch-and-release](#) when releasing any fish they do not wish to keep. Please note that it is illegal to fish by snagging, foul hooking and attempting to hook fish other than in the mouth. Sturgeon may only be targeted in waters with an

open hook and line season, even if anglers intend to release their catch.

Some sturgeon may be tagged near their dorsal fin. Please leave the tag attached to the fish if you release it. Tags provide the DNR with information about movement and growth of lake sturgeon.

If a tagged sturgeon is caught, please submit the following information to the [county's fisheries biologist](#) to help the DNR in future management practices:

- Where the fish was caught (county, waterbody and location)
- The date of the catch
- Tag number, color and material composition of the tag (i.e., metal or plastic)
- Overall fish length

Anglers can find additional information on the DNR's [Inland Hook and Line Sturgeon webpage](#). ✧

The Importance of Catch-and-Release

Fishing purely for fun is a significant shift from the attitudes of our forefathers, who historically spent their fishing time working to fill limits. In today's world, a growing segment of anglers are more concerned with preserving catchable fish populations than filling a freezer with fillets.

While many anglers can grasp how important it is to release large walleyes, bass, or other gamefish, panfish are often of major concern. Unfortunately, panfish species like crappies, bluegills, and perch are often looked at as a readily renewable resource. It's not uncommon for fishermen to keep limits of panfish day after day. Furthermore, anglers often underestimate the importance of large panfish, such as bluegills and crappies, and how their removal can negatively impact a fishery.

Most areas of the country do not have size limits that protect larger panfish. It is often up to the discretion of

anglers, and as a result can have some adverse effects. The removal of large bluegills or crappies from a population has the potential to be far more detrimental than removing a larger amount of small panfish. Catching trophy panfish is getting more and more difficult with each season.

If catch-and-release is important to you, follow some simple steps to ensure that fish are released unharmed.

1. Use the proper gear for the target species. You don't want to end up in a high stake's poker game with a handful of pennies. If you plan to target larger fish, then make sure you're properly equipped. The goal is to land the fish as quickly as possible and not leave them over-exhausted.

2. Keep the fish in the water as much as possible. Rely on nets, livewells, ice wells, or other tools in order to prevent fish from being out of water too long.

3. Wet your hands prior to handling fish. This is a good practice for all fish species, but it's particularly important with species like trout. Handling fish with dry hands or gloves can remove their protective slime coating—and in turn, make them susceptible to harm.

4. If necessary, cut your line. Often, you're better off cutting the line on a deeply hooked fish rather than overhandling or causing damage just to get a hook out.

5. If you plan to take pictures, have your camera gear handy. Don't keep it stashed away where you can't access it quickly when you need it. You want to release fish as quickly as possible.

6. Last, but definitely not least, remember to use a gentle release. We've all seen way too many videos of fish being tossed in the air only to come down crashing on the water. Let's change that. ✧

Wis Conservation Congress & DNR align on mission to protect Wisconsin's resources

MADISON, Wis. – Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) and Wisconsin DNR leaders met in July to discuss their shared commitment to conserving the state's natural resources and how to continue providing excellent opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The WCC is the only statutory body in the state where residents elect delegates to advise the Natural Resources Board and the DNR on how to responsibly manage Wisconsin's natural resources for present and future generations. For more than 90 years, the WCC and DNR have worked collaboratively to provide a forum for the public to advise policy decisions related to our shared resources.

This meeting was another milestone in that long-standing relationship to broaden the reach and impact of the WCC, improve communications and relations with the DNR and leverage the partnership to inspire creative solutions to natural resource challenges. The intention of the meeting was set by WCC Chairman Paul Reith of Dane County.

"As leaders in conservation, it is important that we seek to find understanding, work across the aisle on all issues under the jurisdiction of the department and produce defensible solutions that best represent the interests and ideals of the great people of Wisconsin," Reith said.

"One of my priorities has been to strengthen the DNR's partnerships in conservation," said DNR Secretary Hyun. "I appreciated the opportunity to strategize about important topics like fish and wildlife funding, stewardship of land and youth participation in outdoor recreation. We did strengthen our partnership, and I am looking forward to doing even more."

During this meeting, the leadership of the WCC and DNR covered a variety of topics, including the state budget,

priorities of the secretary's office, strategies to support a mission-oriented partnership between the WCC and state agency, opportunities to use their shared influence to connect Wisconsinites to the outdoors and more. The group left feeling hopeful for the future of their relationship and empowered to work together to carry out their shared mission.

Kevin Schanning, an at-large executive committee member from Bayfield County, said, "The most significant takeaway from this meeting was the willingness between the Conservation Congress and the agency to collaborate to address conservation challenges faced by the state."

Kevin Smaby of La Crosse County echoed these sentiments and shared similar optimism in promoting "open and respectful communication," and going into this new chapter with the agency with "positive intentions to best represent the citizenry of the state, whether we agree on an issue or not."

When discussing the influence of the WCC and DNR, the group gave careful consideration to the ripple effects this meeting and future collaboration will have on the next generation. Reed Kabelowsky of Manitowoc County praised DNR Secretary Hyun's prioritization of the recreationists and conservation leaders of tomorrow. Secretary Hyun expressed gratitude to the work done by the Conservation Congress's [Youth Conservation Congress](#) (YCC) to connect youth to the outdoors and introduce them to conservation careers, public service and volunteerism.

"I am motivated by the passion I saw today in support of the perpetuation and advancement of the YCC. Our youth are our greatest resource for the future of conservation and the Wisconsin Conservation Congress. Losing sight of this when building the roadmap of our partnership, would be a disservice to our shared future," Kabelowsky said.

Looking ahead, the WCC and DNR have expressed their commitment to working together respectfully to broaden the influence of Wisconsinites' voices in natural resource decision-making.

"I could not be more excited to work with this team for the betterment and protection of our natural resources," said WCC Vice-Chair Mike Britton of Barron County.

"Our successes are [also] strongest when we work together," Reith said. "As chairman for the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, I am excited to lead the congress moving forward and support strong communication with the department to ensure your ideas are heard and valued."

Learn more about the work of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress on the DNR's [Wisconsin Conservation Congress webpage](#). ✧

Indiana announces LARE grants to benefit 21 lake, river, and stream projects

Governor Mike Braun and the Indiana DNR announced organizations in 18 Indiana counties will receive \$1,297,500 in grants to fund 21 lake, river, and watershed land treatment projects through DNR's Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) program.

Counties receiving grants are Benton, Daviess, Fulton, Gibson, Hamilton, Johnson, Kosciusko, LaGrange, LaPorte, Marshall, Noble, Porter, Starke, Steuben, Sullivan, Vanderburgh, and White.

This round of grant-funded projects will benefit four lakes and 15 rivers and streams, with some projects benefiting more than one lake. In addition, two land-based projects associated with watershed land treatment practices have been funded in coordination with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. ✧

PA announces start of fall hunting seasons

HARRISBURG, Pa – The Pennsylvania Game Commission reminded hunters that opening day for Pennsylvania's 2026-27 hunting seasons was Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026, marking the beginning of statewide seasons for both Canada goose and mourning doves. The agency has also upgraded its online [mapping center](#) to enhance user experience for hunters and outdoor enthusiasts.

"For hunters, we're entering the best time of the year," said Game Commission E.D. Stephen Smith. "The early season is upon us, marking the beginning of the new license year, a time when hunters across the state are making plans and preparing for all our exciting seasons ahead. On behalf of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, we wish all hunters a safe and successful year ahead."

The upgraded mapping center offers a cleaner, more user-friendly interface; faster access to maps and information; live data from authoritative agency sources; improved search, navigation, and overall performance. This [platform](#) is available on the agency's website and will continue to grow as new features and datasets become available.

The Canada goose season runs Sept. 1-25 in both the Resident Population Zone and the Atlantic Population Zone. Hunters are reminded that in western Crawford Co. and northwestern Mercer Co., the season runs from Sept. 1-12, with a daily limit of one and a possession limit of three. In the Atlantic Population Zone, the daily limit is eight, with a possession limit of 24.

The mourning dove season begins September 1 and continues through November 27, 2026. The daily bag limit is 15 doves, with a possession limit of 45. The Game Commission has prepared more than 80 managed dove fields on state game lands to enhance hunting opportunities.

As a reminder, Sunday hunting is prohibited for migratory game birds, including waterfowl, doves, and woodcock, throughout the 2026-27 license year. *Continued column 2*

Canada-U.S. GLFC selects Commissioner Earl Provost as Chair

ANN ARBOR, MI – The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (Commission), during its recent annual meeting in Windsor, Ontario, selected Earl Provost as the new chair of the Commission. Provost is Ontario's first agent-general in Chicago—appointed in 2019 by Premier Doug Ford—representing Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. As Commission chair, Provost will convene and run meetings and work with his fellow commissioners to develop the program to implement the Canada-U.S. Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries.

Provost was appointed as a Commissioner in November 2022, during which he served both as Commission vice-chair and as chair of the Canadian Section. Provost also previously served as senior policy advisor for intergovernmental affairs in the Office of the Premier for the Government of Ontario, where he provided strategic guidance on various issues, including interprovincial trade.

"Commissioner Provost has spent his career at the crossroads of intergovernmental policy and binational relationships," said Dr. Marc Gaden, the Commission's executive secretary. "As Ontario's first agent general in Chicago and as chair of the Canadian Section, he knows the fishery, he knows the politics, and he knows the value of cross-border relationships. The Commission is in good hands." ✧

Continued from column 1

Those seeking information – including license requirements, laws, regulations, and more – pertaining to the upcoming hunting seasons can reference the 2026-27 Hunting & Trapping Digest or visit www.pa.gov/pgc. ✧

Minnesota hunting regulations available for 2026 seasons

Hunters will find major updates to electronic licensing, deer seasons and waterfowl regulations

Hunters can now review a variety of significant updates made in the 2026 Minnesota hunting and trapping regulations. Hunting and trapping licenses will be available to purchase starting Saturday, Aug. 1.

"We're excited about fall being around the corner and we are asking hunters to carefully check the updated regulations as they prepare for upcoming seasons," said David Trauba, wildlife section manager with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. "What's new this year will affect every hunter, and deer hunters in particular need to pay close attention because there are many significant changes applicable to them."

Some key changes include:

- A four-year statewide rotational surveillance plan for chronic wasting disease.
- A new rule to make it easier to handle deer carcasses from CWD zones.
- Elimination of the state's shotgun zone for deer hunting, with some county-enacted exceptions.
- Merging of the waterfowl hunting regulations book into the main hunting and trapping regulations book.
- A modernized electronic licensing system that changes how hunters buy licenses and validate harvests.

A law change in 2025 resulted in changes to the state's former shotgun zone. Counties may adopt an ordinance to restrict weapon type and remain shotgun-only for deer hunting.

Changes in how hunters buy licenses, and validate and register harvests will be in place for all hunters in all seasons with the new electronic licensing system that the Minnesota DNR launched in June. ✧

Initiative diverts 24 million lbs. of fish waste from landfills

(Editor's Note: Your editor has been in touch with project manager John Schmidt of the Great Lakes Governors and Premiers organization regarding this Great Lakes initiative. We are of the opinion this program will save millions in communities that have a waste disposal program that winds up in sewage dumps.

In addition, benefits will accrue to the local environments as well.

In the near future we will be sending out a special report by the Chicago based Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers.)

A regional initiative has diverted 24.3 million pounds of fish byproducts from landfills in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence region, according to a recent report from the Conference of Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers. The materials are being converted into fish meal and oil, pet food and treats, fertilizer, compost, bait and fish leather. The byproducts kept out of landfills—including fish skin, scales, viscera, heads and tails—are generating about \$3.4 million in economic value and avoiding about 9.6 million pounds of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions, the report found.

The report measures the collective impact of 48 organizations participating in the group's 100% Great Lakes Fish Pledge, which commits participants to productively use all fish byproducts rather than sending them to landfills. Together, the organizations represent about 53% of estimated fish volume across the region's commercial, aquaculture and recreational fisheries. "This report demonstrates the major strides our region has taken toward full fish utilization," said David Naftzger, executive director of the conference.

Pledge participants represent

about 90% of commercial fishery volume, 55% of aquaculture production and 1% of recreational fish harvest in the region.

The conference has begun working with fish cleaning stations and fisheries agencies to improve systems for collecting and productively using material generated by recreational anglers.

Traditionally, only about 40% of each fish is consumed by people, with much of the remaining material discarded or relegated to low-value uses. ✧

Freshwater Drum

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for drum, while the offshore waters of lakes Superior, Michigan, and Huron are too deep and cold. [Early research](#) suggested that drum might be able to control zebra mussels in certain areas, but hopes were not high for anything beyond localized effects.

A new [scientific paper](#) by Kevin Keretz and other researchers shows that drum have been having a much larger impact than we thought. Keretz and crew conduct annual bottom trawl surveys in the West Basin of Lake Erie. Large trawl nets are dragged through the water, and they do a good job of catching whatever fish species happen to be present. In 2014, this meant a whole lot of freshwater drum.

When researchers started to put numbers on the prevalence of invasive mussels in drum diet together with the biomass of drum in the West Basin of Lake Erie from their trawl surveys, they realized that drum consume far

more mussels than originally assumed. Drum are somewhat opportunistic feeders. They can and do consume a variety of invertebrates and small fish, which is one reason that there was some initial skepticism regarding their ability to control invasives.

Keretz and coauthors calculated the total biomass of mussels consumed by drum on an annual basis from 2013 to 2023. The results were eye-opening. On average, drum consumed over 512,602 pounds of dreissenid mussels per square mile in western Lake Erie. Consumption was highest in 2013, the first year of the study, at 1.2 million pounds per square mile. This equated to 1.31 trillion mussels consumed by drum in the West Basin alone in 2013.

[Other studies](#) have shown a steady decline in dreissenid biomass in the West Basin, dropping from 125,619 lbs/mi² in 2004 to as low as 6,852 lbs/mi² in 2019. This suggests that drum predation has been able to exert considerable influence on mussel populations in Lake Erie, outdoing

even the invasive round goby. The round goby was an accidental import native to the same waters as dreissenid mussels, which also has crushing pharyngeal teeth adapted to eating mussels. Estimates of peak round goby consumption in the Central Basin of Lake Erie were only about 25% of peak drum consumption, though.

The standing stock of dreissenid mussels present in the West Basin actually appears to be lower than the amount of mussels consumed on an annual basis. At first, this sounds unlikely – but dreissenid mussels also reproduce at a very high rate. This suggests that drum are consuming enough mussels to not only keep up with their high annual production, but also to reduce their standing biomass. While other factors like low oxygen levels and high temperatures may also have had a role in the decline of dreissenid mussels in Lake Erie's West Basin, the evidence points to our native freshwater drum as an unlikely hero in the fight against Great Lakes invaders. ✧

Gaden to receive American Fisheries Society Fisheries Conservation Award

COLUMBUS, OH – The American Fisheries Society (AFS) will honor Dr. Marc Gaden, Executive Secretary of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC), with the 2026 AFS President's Fisheries Conservation Award, recognizing his outstanding contributions to fisheries conservation through leadership, scientific advancement, policy development, education, and international collaboration.

Dr. Gaden has dedicated more than three decades to protecting and restoring Great Lakes fisheries and aquatic ecosystems. As Executive Secretary of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission—a binational organization established by treaty between Canada and the United States in 1955—he works at the intersection of science, policy, and international governance to advance sustainable fisheries management and conservation.

A Michigan native, Dr. Gaden earned his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 2007 and is widely recognized as a leader in transboundary freshwater fisheries governance. His research and professional work have advanced environmental policy, collaborative management, invasive species control, water governance, and the human dimensions of natural resource management.

Among his many accomplishments, Dr. Gaden advanced understanding of the treaties and agreements that enable cooperative fisheries management among Great Lakes states, Ontario, and Tribal governments and has helped secure more than \$43 million in infrastructure investments that supported fish habitat restoration and aquatic connectivity projects throughout the Great Lakes basin. He also supported development of the innovative FishPass project in Traverse City, Michigan, initiated a

long-running collaborative research program on Lake Champlain, and helped establish the African Center for Aquatic Research and Education (ACARE).

Beyond his scientific and policy achievements, Dr. Gaden has demonstrated a deep commitment to education, outreach, and mentorship. He serves as an adjunct faculty member at both Michigan State University and the University of Michigan, teaches environmental and water policy, and has championed public engagement efforts that connect communities to Great Lakes fisheries conservation.

The award also recognizes Dr. Gaden's leadership in fostering stronger partnerships with Indigenous Peoples and advancing more inclusive approaches to fisheries management and stewardship across the Great Lakes region.

"Dr. Gaden's career exemplifies the collaborative spirit, scientific excellence, and conservation leadership that this award celebrates," said the nominators. "His contributions have strengthened fisheries management, restored critical habitats, and improved the stewardship of aquatic resources for current and future generations."

The American Fisheries Society President's Fisheries Conservation Award, presented during the Society's annual meeting on September 1, 2026, recognizes individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the conservation of fishery resources through scientific, educational, managerial, legal, or policy accomplishments. Dr. Gaden's lifelong commitment to Great Lakes conservation and international fisheries cooperation has made him a deserving recipient of this prestigious honor. ✧

Tribe plants 1 million+ fish into the Great Lakes to save culturally sacred species

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians has completed its spring fish stocking season, releasing more than 1 million fish into Upper Great Lakes waters to strengthen regional fisheries and support culturally significant species.

The tribe's Natural Resources Division Fisheries Program distributed



901,995 walleye fingerlings and 278,819 lake whitefish across the Upper Peninsula and

Northern Lower Michigan. Staff collected the walleye from the tribe's Barbeau Hatchery, while the whitefish came from rearing facilities at Barbeau and Odenaang.

The Barbeau Hatchery has been central to the tribe's fisheries management work since 1999, when the program began stocking walleye throughout the region. Over 25 years, the program has released more than 22 million walleye. The facility's rearing process helps young fish navigate a vulnerable stage of development before they enter open waters.

The fisheries program has pioneered pond-based rearing techniques for lake whitefish, a method rarely used in North America. The tribe launched this initiative in 2020 and has continued to develop the approach to address declining whitefish populations in the Great Lakes.

The annual stocking efforts aim to maintain healthy fisheries while preserving species that hold cultural, ecological and economic value for the Sault Tribe and surrounding communities. ✧

2026 Special Report on Fishing shows first decline in fishing since 2021

American Sportfishing Association released its 2026 Special Report on Fishing, showing 57 million Americans fished in 2025, about 18% of the population. Participation fell from 57.9 million in 2024, the first year-over-year decline since 2021, with 19 million anglers lapsing. Saltwater fishing hit a record 15.5 million anglers, while total outings grew 3 percent to 918 million. A pause in Dingell-Johnson Act federal funding for angler recruitment and retention programs in early 2025 was cited as a contributing factor. Dingell-Johnson excise tax revenue has generated more than \$12 billion for fisheries conservation since 1950.

“In 2025, fishing continued to bring Americans together, connecting people to the outdoors, sustaining families and strengthening the communities and economies that depend on it,” said ASA President and CEO, Glenn Hughes. “While trendline data still shows growth in the past decade, keeping anglers engaged in fishing continues to be a struggle, with 19 million people dropping from the sport in 2025 – the highest rate of ‘churn’ on record.”

According to the report, catching fish was not the only reason Americans went fishing. They also fished to enjoy nature, escape everyday stress and spend time with family and friends. Conversely, dissatisfaction with time on the water stemmed from crowded fishing spots and the discomfort of being outdoors, not catching fish, unclear waters, and the cost of gear.

While these barriers undoubtedly contribute to the decline in participation and high churn rate, the abrupt pause in early 2025 of federal funding authorized under the Dingell-Johnson Act’s National Outreach and Communications Program that supports introductory fishing programs, angler recruitment, retention and reactivation (R3) campaigns, and fishing specific marketing efforts left many new or returning anglers without access to

critical resources needed to get on the water.

Through fishing license sales and the excise tax on sportfishing equipment authorized by the previously mentioned Dingell-Johnson Act, anglers and boaters fund most fisheries conservation and waterways access efforts nationwide. Since 1950, Dingell-Johnson has generated more than \$12 billion for fisheries conservation, and sportfishing manufacturers proudly pay the 10% excise tax to support the resources our industry depends on.

“Bringing new folks into our community and slowing the churn rate are top priorities for ASA and the entire sportfishing industry,” added Hughes. “Decreased participation doesn’t just result in lower tackle sales, it also leads to reduced public access, fewer fish stocked in lakes and rivers, less habitat improvement projects and so much more. As competition from technology and other activities for time and resources grows, investments in angler recruitment and retention has never been more important.”

Even with 2025’s setbacks, the opportunities for sustained growth in recreational fishing are unmistakable. Millions of new anglers tried fishing for the first time in 2025, youth participation remains the strongest predictor of lifelong involvement, and Black, Hispanic and female participation continued to grow

ADDITIONAL KEY FINDINGS

- Total fishing outings grew by 3 percent to 918 million in 2025.
- 3 million Americans tried fishing for the first time in 2025, representing 11 percent of total participants, up from 9 percent in 2024.
- 6 million Americans ages 6 and over went freshwater fishing in 2025, holding steady for the fourth consecutive year.
- Saltwater fishing reached a record 15.5 million, up 400,000 from the

year prior and the fourth consecutive record high.

- Fly fishing decreased slightly in 2025 to 7.9 million, still representing nearly 2 million more fly anglers vs. a decade earlier.
- Youth participation (ages 6-12) is down slightly in 2025, however participation among ages 13-17 rose from 5.2 million to 5.4 million, and the participation rate ticked up from 24% to 25%.
- Nearly 6 million Black Americans fished in 2025, the highest number since tracking began in 2007 and an increase of 400,000 from the prior year.
- Hispanic anglers doubled over the past decade, climbing from 3.4 million in 2015 to an all-time high of 6.9 million in 2025.
- Female participation dipped slightly in 2025 to 21.1 million, however the long-term trajectory remains strong as female anglers grew by 5.4 million (a 34% increase) over the past decade. ✧

Mix Fun and Learning in Outdoor Skills Academy, MI BOW Classes

Napping in the hammock, diving into the latest beach read, tubing down a lazy river — all of these are wonderful ways to spend a summer day. If you're interested in something a bit more lively, though, the DNR's Outdoor Skills Academy and Becoming an Outdoors Woman classes and clinics may be just the ticket!

Both the OSA and BOW offer programs covering a variety of topics and a range of experience levels. You'll enjoy expert instruction, a supportive environment and hands-on learning whether you're scouting a site, identifying mushrooms, flushing out birds, sighting a gun or discovering many other outdoor skills, tips and tricks.

<https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/education/public/bow> ✧

Trump signs order renaming Lake Ontario as 'Lake America'

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said on August 27 he is [renaming Lake Ontario](#) to be known as “Lake America” in the United States as he escalates his trade war with Canada. The Republican president signed an [executive order](#) directing the Interior Department to update the lake’s name in the U.S. geographic naming service. Trump cannot force Canada to follow along, however.

Trump has been floating the idea of the name change in recent days as the U.S. announced it was imposing [50% tariffs](#) on \$20 billion worth of Canadian goods after talks between the countries broke down. Trump has been needling America’s northern neighbor since he returned to the White House last year, suggesting the ally with whom the U.S. once had warm relations should instead be absorbed as the [51st state](#).

Canada responded to Trump’s import taxes this week by imposing retaliatory tariffs on \$20 billion worth of American goods, including steel, dairy products, appliances and farm equipment. Trump, who signed the order as he was sitting at the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office, had a large sign behind him propped on a stand with a map of the Great Lakes. Over Lake Ontario, in big red letters, the map read “Lake America.”

Trump said as he was signing the order that he’d “notified all of the various people that we have to notify.” “And this is official, effective immediately,” he added. But the executive order Trump signed shows that the changes are supposed to be made within 30 days.

Canadian officials dismissed Trump’s move.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney rejected the move, invoking the lake’s Indigenous roots and noting that the name predates both Canadian Confederation and the U.S. Declaration of Independence. “Canadians also know that naming reality means calling it Lake Ontario—then, now and always,” he wrote. ✧

Recreational fishing provides food, fun, and funding for conservation

Recreational fishing means many things to many people. For some, casting a line evokes fond memories of quality time spent with family and friends. For others, wading down a remote stream provides a break from screens and a respite from the rhythm of modern life. The thrill of catching a big one is the draw for some, while others are more motivated by the thought of fresh fillets sizzling in hot oil.

In Michigan, [resident recreational fishing license sales](#) rose from 1.1 million in 2015 to 1.2 million in 2025. The Great Lakes State offers anglers over 3,200 miles of coastline, over 11,000 inland lakes, and tens of thousands of miles of streams and rivers to explore. This makes Michigan a popular destination for out-of-state travel, as well. Although tourism is often the focus when demonstrating the value of recreational fishing, the food value of fish caught and the cultural, social, nutritional, and mental health benefits of fishing are often overlooked.

The term “sport fishing” is sometimes used interchangeably with “recreational fishing,” but the motivations of many anglers do not align strictly with sporting or competition-based activities. Some types of fishing are more focused on harvesting fish for food. Think of smelt dipping, where small, tasty fish are harvested with long-handled nets. Although it does not require much skill, it is a popular pastime that puts food on the table. At the other end of the spectrum, think of competitive events like catch-and-release bass tournaments where fish are not harvested at all. ✧



SAF files opening brief with Supreme Court in 'Assault Weapons' Ban Lawsuit

The Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) filed an opening brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in cases *Viramontes v. Cook County* and *Grant v. Higgins*, challenging assault weapons bans in Illinois and Connecticut. SAF Executive Director Adam Kraut and founder Alan M. Gottlieb argue that AR-15s and similar semi-automatic rifles are commonly possessed for lawful purposes and protected by the Second Amendment.



Assault weapons bans represent one of the largest and most pernicious gun rights issues facing Americans,” said SAF Executive Director Adam Kraut. “The Second Amendment demands that it is ‘the People’ who get to choose what firearm is best suited to their lawful needs, not an ideologue legislator. Modern semi-automatic rifles are the overwhelming choice of Americans for all sorts of reasons—they are easy to shoot, mechanically accurate, modular and ergonomically adaptable. ✧

WARNING
Due to Price
Increase of Ammo,
Do NOT Expect a
Warning Shot!

Long live the sturgeon!

Lake sturgeon lifespans may be even longer than we thought

They've earned this moniker not only because they first appeared in the fossil record at least 100 million years ago or because their bony scutes give them a dino-like appearance, but because of their long lives. According to previous research, [lake sturgeon](#) (*Acipenser fulvescens*) have a lifespan of up to 150 years.



But a new study published by researchers from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan State University, Michigan Technological University and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources suggests that lake sturgeon may live longer than previously thought—much longer.

Fish age can be estimated using several structures, such as fin spines or otoliths (an ear bone). Like trees, these structures show annual growth rings. The [oldest lake trout discovered in the Great Lakes](#), for example, was estimated to be 62 years old by counting the growth rings in its otolith.

But for fish that grow slowly and live a very long time, like lake sturgeon, estimating their age using growth rings can be difficult—the rings can be so numerous, thin and close together as to be impossible to accurately count. This results in underestimation of the true age of lake sturgeon. Unlike people, who stop growing taller after reaching maturity, fish continue to grow throughout their lives.

Given that fish will continue to get bigger as they age, scientists can use information about the growth rate and

fish size to estimate how old a fish might be, depending on its environmental conditions. Fish in areas with a lot of food available will grow faster (and therefore, often larger) than fish in nutrient-poor environments.

For five populations of Great Lakes lake sturgeon—Black Lake, Michigan (Cheboygan and Presque Isle counties); Sturgeon River, Michigan (Baraga County); Menominee River, Michigan/Wisconsin; St. Clair River (St. Clair County) and Lake Winnebago, Wisconsin—our research team used a novel approach to estimate growth rates using capture-mark-recapture data and used growth rate data to estimate longevity.

Essentially, the research team would capture fish, measure them, determine the sex, mark the fish with a tag and release them. Then, in future years, the research team would survey again, capturing and marking some new fish, but also recapturing some of the previously tagged fish. The recaptured fish were measured, as well.

With this information, we could look at how much fish grew between the time we first captured them and the subsequent recaptures. This was done over a period of 44 years, giving us ample opportunity to recapture sturgeon we'd measured before, some many years later.

Simply stated, we used this data to estimate lake sturgeon longevity by asking "If a lake sturgeon grows X centimeters per year, then how many years does it take for a lake sturgeon to get to a particular size?"

Using equations that related sturgeon growth rate to the size of the fish, we estimated expected longevity for 160-centimeter (approximately 63-inch) male and 180-centimeter (approximately 71-inch) female lake sturgeon across those five populations.



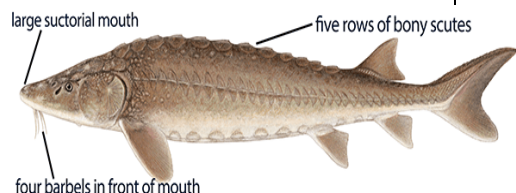
Longevity ranged from 90 to 279 years for males and from 99 to 427 years for females. That's up to 277 years older than the oldest lake sturgeon previously recorded! It's also nearly as long a lifespan as the longest-lived vertebrate on Earth, the Greenland shark, whose longevity has been estimated at 272 to 512 years.

"When I began studying lake sturgeon in the late 1980s, I never thought I'd live to see their success and persistence after being listed as threatened," said Nancy Auer, emeritus research professor of biological sciences at Michigan Technological University. "Let alone actually handle fish much older than I was—or am now, 30 years later—and that will be here after I am gone." Why does it matter how old lake sturgeon live to be?

Understanding how long these fish live can provide biologists insight into survival rates and reproductive opportunities for the species. For a species like lake sturgeon, which is still recovering in Michigan and elsewhere, this information can inform restoration efforts.

According to Michael Donofrio, retired fisheries supervisor at the Peshtigo office of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, this project "brought together a great partnership with very groundbreaking research, which should aid with other North American sturgeon population management."

A notable characteristic is the five rows of bony plates (scutes) that are well developed in young fish but less distinguishable in adults. Lake sturgeon have a large protrusible, suctorial mouth on the bottom side of the head with four barbels in front of the mouth and beneath the snout. The



barbels are sensory organs that assist the sturgeon in finding prey on the river and lake bottoms. Lake sturgeon have a single dorsal fin located far back near the caudal (tail) fin. The tail upper lobe is much larger than the rounded lower lobe. Lake sturgeon have scales but not the cycloid scales associated with most bony fishes, rather they are covered by the much stronger ganoid scales. Juvenile lake sturgeon are a sandy brown color with black mottling and spots, while adults are olive-brown to grey with white underneath.

Lake sturgeon annual survival (that is, the probability of surviving from one year into the next) needs to be very high for fish to reach these advanced ages. For many other fish, annual survival probability can be close to 50 percent, but for lake sturgeon it is very high – at least 97%.

This is important for management. In addition to high annual survival and extreme longevity, lake sturgeon are late to mature and produce few offspring per year, all of which means harvest regulations should be very conservative to protect populations from overharvest.

The [famous Black Lake sturgeon harvest season](#), which can last mere minutes, is limited in precisely this way. Last year, the harvest limit was six lake sturgeon—not per angler, total.

Fisheries managers from state and tribal natural resource agencies gather annually to review data on the sturgeon population and determine the

sustainable harvest limit for the season.

“One could assume that there’s a contradiction between restoring a threatened lake sturgeon population while allowing for a small annual winter harvest in Black Lake. I’ve been asked this question quite often during my career,” said Tim Cwalinski, Northern Lake Huron Unit manager for the DNR.

“However, without the publicity that the brief, limited harvest season provides, the public wouldn’t know as much about all the ongoing restoration efforts for Black Lake sturgeon, like research, stocking, the sturgeon guard program, fundraising, and education and outreach. Not only is the harvest important to the anglers and the local community, but these are also the same people investing in ongoing and successful restoration



programs.” Lake sturgeon are truly unique among Michigan fishes for many reasons, including their extreme longevity. Having better, more accurate, estimates of how long these fish live can help us to conserve and restore this ecologically and culturally important species. [Read the full study](#) in the *Journal of Fish Biology*. ✧

September 1 marks beginning of Ohio’s fall hunting seasons

Ohio’s hunting seasons for squirrel, dove, Canada goose, and teal open in early September, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. White-tailed deer archery hunting season follows later in the month.

Squirrel season is open from Tuesday, Sept. 1, until Sunday, Jan. 31, 2027. Squirrels are plentiful statewide, with fox squirrels more abundant in western Ohio and gray squirrels more prevalent in eastern counties. They are most often found in forests and woodlands featuring beech, oak, and hickory trees.

Dove season is open from Tuesday, Sept. 1, to Sunday, Nov. 8, with a second season open from December 12 to January 1, 2027. Doves have been a popular game bird in Ohio since 1995. They are abundant at the start of the season, especially in agricultural areas and open fields, and migrate to southern habitats for the winter.

Early Canada goose and early teal (blue-winged and green-winged) hunting seasons run from Saturday, Sept. 5, to Sunday, Sept. 13. Canada geese, blue-winged teal, and green-winged teal are among the earliest migratory waterfowl to arrive in Ohio’s wetlands. Waterfowl hunting is best in agricultural fields, from the shores of wetlands or ponds, or from a boat. It is suggested to review an [identification guide](#) before an early season hunt, especially since waterfowl can be mistaken for similar species that are not legal game. ✧



Other Breaking News Items:**(Click on title or URL to read full article)****[In the fight against Lake Erie algal blooms, improved farming practices are turning the tide](#)**

The tide is turning against harmful algal blooms on Lake Erie thanks in part to an Ohio program called H2Ohio that encourages farmers to restrict their use of fertilizers.

[Trump lifts stoppage on Great Lakes carp barrier after Whitmer call](#)

The Trump administration lifted an unexplained stop-work order on the \$1.15 billion invasive carp barrier project following a direct appeal from Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer and mounting pressure from Illinois officials and Great Lakes groups

[Communities and agencies celebrate delisting of Nipigon Bay as an Area of Concern](#)

After nearly four decades of restoration efforts, around 20,000 hectares of western Nipigon Bay, located at Lake Superior's northernmost point in Ontario, and part of the Nipigon River were removed as an Area of Concern in the Great Lakes on Friday

[Michigan fisheries get one-time funding for whitefish restoration](#)

Michigan's Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division has received one-time funding of \$350,000 for whitefish recovery

[Gun Lake Tribe to release 21 lake sturgeon into Kalamazoo River during celebration](#)

The Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi (Gun Lake Tribe) released 21 lake sturgeon into the Kalamazoo River in Michigan on September 1. The release took place during the annual Nmé Celebration where hundreds of community members gather for the release of the fish, known as nmé in the Pottawatomi language, which were raised through the tribe's lake sturgeon rehabilitation program ✧

End