



Lake Michigan Committee

REPRESENTING THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT AGENCIES OF LAKE MICHIGAN

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2100 Commonwealth Blvd.
Suite 100
Ann Arbor MI 48105-1563
Tel: 734-662-3209

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FISHERY AGENCIES IDENTIFY MULTI-SPECIES PREDATOR STOCKING REDUCTION TARGETS FOR LAKE MICHIGAN

ANN ARBOR, MI—The Lake Michigan Committee (LMC) has identified specific predator reductions for each Lake Michigan jurisdiction following its recently announced goal to reduce lakewide predator demand by the equivalent of 900,000 Chinook salmon by 2018. The five-member Lake Michigan Committee comprises all state management agencies that border Lake Michigan and the Chippewa-Ottawa Resource Authority. Recommendations from the committee represent the consensus of its members.

In working toward the 2018 goal, after much analysis and discussion, the Lake Michigan Committee has agreed to reduce stocking levels of a mix of predator species by 1.77 million. This number represents a 17% reduction from the 2013-2015 average lakewide stocking based on each jurisdiction's targets. Consistent with these lakewide goals, plans released by the individual jurisdictions show that:

- For 2018, Michigan would reduce by 639,570 Chinook salmon, coho salmon, and lake trout (11% of all Michigan stocking);
- Illinois would reduce by 83,824 Chinook salmon (15% of all Illinois stocking); and
- Indiana would reduce by 225,371 Chinook salmon and lake trout (21% of all Indiana stocking).
- For 2017, Wisconsin would reduce by 818,626 lake trout and brown trout (25% of all Wisconsin stocking). The state will continue to work with stakeholders to develop 2018 stocking plans.

During the next year, the LMC will continue to evaluate lakewide data and discuss implementation options that will reduce the equivalent of an additional 50,000 Chinook salmon to meet the overall predator reduction target of 900,000 Chinook salmon-equivalents by 2018. Each jurisdiction has agreed in good faith to meet the intent of the two-year stocking reduction target.

“Since fish populations regularly migrate throughout Lake Michigan, it’s essential to achieve collaborative lake-wide management recommendations that can inform management plans for each cooperating jurisdiction to contribute to the common goal of sustaining our diverse fishery now and into the future. Real predator reductions are necessary to address the current predator and prey imbalance,” said Keith Creagh, Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. “Each management agency must do their part for collaborative management to be successful in the Great Lakes.”

“The Lake Michigan Committee has made great progress in a very short period of time to identify specific reductions of Chinook salmon, brown trout, and lake trout to achieve its common goal of reducing predators in the lake”, said Jay Wesley, Chair of the LMC. “I am confident that the LMC members will work productively to ensure achievement of our overall predator reduction goal by 2018.”

Reducing predators underscores the committee's shared commitment to sustain Lake Michigan's highly valuable salmon and trout fishery as the lake's ecosystem shifts. Extensive changes to the lake's food web, driven primarily by invasive species such as quagga mussels, have reduced the amount of food available for pelagic prey fish like alewife and rainbow smelt. Other ecosystem changes include enhanced natural reproduction of key predators, especially Chinook salmon, and increasingly lake trout, which also increase the pressure on a declining pelagic prey fish community.

Captain Denny Grinold, sport fishing advisor (of Michigan) and chair of the bi-national Committee of Advisors to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, emphasized the importance of the collaborative management process. "Jurisdictions must work together to manage this lake cooperatively, as a whole. Decisions made must be based on science. The one thing we do know is the fishery will suffer tremendously if each agency does its own thing." Al House, citizen advisor (of Wisconsin) and vice-chair of the Committee of Advisors added: "The diverse fishery is an important economic component to not only Wisconsin businesses but to anglers and businesses throughout Lake Michigan. Agencies need to respond quickly with meaningful cooperative action to sustain this vital resource now and for generations to come."

The Lake Michigan Committee comprises fishery managers from the Chippewa-Ottawa Resource Authority, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. The Lake Michigan Committee's work is facilitated by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, a Canadian and U.S. agency on the Great Lakes. The committee meets regularly to share information and develop shared fishery management plans, objectives and policies.

For more information, visit the Lake Michigan Committee online at www.glfc.org/lakecom/lmc/lmchome.php.

CONTACTS:

Marc Gaden, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, 734-669-3012

Jay Wesley, Lake Michigan Committee Chairman, Michigan, 269-685-6851

Brad Eggold, Wisconsin, 414-382-7921

Tom Gorenflo, Chippewa-Ottawa Resource Authority, 906-632-0072

Jeremy Price, Indiana, 260-244-6805

Vic Santucci, Illinois, 847-294-4134