



Lake Ontario Committee

REPRESENTING THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT AGENCIES OF LAKE ONTARIO

2200 Commonwealth Blvd.
Suite 100
Ann Arbor MI 48105-1563
Tel: 734-662-3209

NEW YORK DEC

ONTARIO MNRF

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Contacts:

Marc Gaden, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, 734-669-3012
Steve LaPan, Lake Ontario Committee Chairman, New York State, 315-654-2147
Andy Todd, Ontario, 613-476-3255

LAKE ONTARIO FISHERY AGENCIES FURTHER ADJUST LAKEWIDE STOCKING OF CHINOOK SALMON AND LAKE TROUT TO MAINTAIN THE WORLD CLASS FISHERY

Agencies seek to sustain diverse, high quality salmon and trout fishing opportunities into the future

Ann Arbor, MI—In response to an adult alewife population that continues to decline, the Lake Ontario Committee (LOC) today announced Chinook salmon and lake trout stocking reductions in 2020 designed to maintain future recreational and economic benefits of Lake Ontario's sport fisheries. The stocking reductions will help balance the predatory demand on alewife to help maintain Lake Ontario's world-class salmon and trout fishery. Today's actions represent a consensus decision by the two-member LOC, composed of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (OMNRF). The bi-national Great Lakes Fishery Commission facilitates the LOC's work.

To help balance predator demand on alewife, the LOC reduced Chinook salmon and lake trout stocking in 2017 and 2018 by 20%. Chinook salmon stocking was reduced by an additional 20% in 2019. For 2020, the LOC has agreed to reduce Chinook salmon and lake trout stocking by an additional 20% from 2019 levels. Adult lake trout abundance is currently stable, and reduced stocking should not compromise restoration efforts of this important native predator. In 2020, DEC and OMNRF plan to stock approximately 1.1 million Chinook Salmon, 602,000 lake trout, 756,000 steelhead/rainbow trout, 557,000 brown trout, 325,000 coho salmon and 200,000 yearling Atlantic salmon into Lake Ontario in 2020. In addition, many Lake Ontario tributaries produce "wild" Chinook salmon each year. "Wild" Chinook salmon comprise an average of 50% of the adult salmon population.

These 2020 stocking adjustments emphasize the LOC's shared commitment to the Lake Ontario Fish Community Objectives including restoring lake trout and sustaining Lake Ontario's diverse salmon and trout fishery, with Chinook salmon as the top predator. Maintaining sufficient alewife abundance to support the sport fishery is key to long term success, and these stocking reductions will help achieve that goal.

Scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey, OMNRF and DEC forecasted declines in the adult alewife population following the relatively severe winters of 2013/14 and 2014/15 that contributed to poor alewife reproductive success. Alewife produced in 2016 contributed substantially to the population initially, but their numbers are declining rapidly due to high

predatory demand on the remaining adults. Alewife population survey results indicate below average alewife production in 2017 and 2018 and higher than expected predator demand, and scientists are predicting a continued adult alewife decline in 2020. The LOC is concerned that projected alewife declines combined with high predator demand by trout and salmon will intensify an imbalance between predators and available prey, and these stocking reductions are necessary to restore predator-prey balance and maintain high-quality Chinook salmon fisheries.

The LOC is optimistic that Lake Ontario will remain a premier sport fishing destination and anglers should expect continued high-quality fishing opportunities. The LOC will continue to monitor Lake Ontario's alewife population, predator growth rates, fish condition factors, and the effects of the 2017-2020 stocking adjustments. This collaborative process represents the best available science to promote sustainable and diverse fisheries for Lake Ontario. The LOC will continue to engage organized angler groups, tourism interests, and the public when future survey results become available.

For more information, visit the Lake Ontario Committee online at www.glfc.org/lakecom/loc/lochome.php.