



Great Lakes Fishery Commission

**For Immediate Release
March 11, 2020**

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2020 UPPER AND LOWER LAKE COMMITTEE MEETINGS CANCELLED DUE TO CONCERNS ABOUT SPREAD OF COVID-19 VIRUS

ANN ARBOR, MI—After thorough consideration and consultation with partners, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission announced today that the 2020 Upper and Lower Lake Committee meetings have been cancelled. This action is due to concerns about the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The Upper Lake Committee meetings were scheduled to take place March 16-19 in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. The Lower Lake Committee meetings were scheduled to take place March 23-26 in Hamilton, Ontario. These meetings will not be re-scheduled. This is the first time lake committee meetings have been cancelled since the committees were formed in 1965.

Great Lakes fishery management is a cooperative process carried out by eight states, the Province of Ontario, and several U.S. tribes. To facilitate cross-border management, each of the five Great Lakes has a “lake committee,” where scientists and managers gather to share data, identify their shared fishery objectives, and pledge to collaborate to reach their shared goals. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission, under the 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries, facilitates the implementation of the lake committee process.

Many agencies who are part of the lake committee process have restricted or prohibited travel at this time to reduce the risk of further spreading the novel coronavirus. Face-to-face interactions among biologists, policy-makers, managers, and administrators are the foundation of successful Great Lakes fishery management. The Commission looks forward to continuing these critical meetings in the future and will ensure that essential lake committee business—for example the recommendation of total allowable catch for walleye and yellow perch in Lake Erie—will occur.

“We put the safety of our staff and partners above all else” said Jim McKane, Commission chair. “While having to cancel the annual lake committee meetings is unprecedented and unfortunate, it is the responsible decision to make. This is not a practice we want to repeat, and we are already looking forward to the Commission’s annual meeting in May.”

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