



# Lake Erie Committee

REPRESENTING THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT AGENCIES OF LAKE ERIE AND LAKE ST. CLAIR

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## Lake Erie Committee Sets Yellow Perch and Walleye Allowable Catches for 2021

**Ann Arbor, MI**—The binational Lake Erie Committee (LEC), composed of fishery managers from Michigan, New York, Ohio, Ontario and Pennsylvania—the five jurisdictions that manage the Lake Erie fishery—set a total allowable catch (TAC) for 2021 of 6.238 million pounds of yellow perch and 12.284 million walleye. Yellow perch are allocated in pounds and walleye are allocated by number of fish. These TACs represent a decrease for yellow perch from 7.805 million pounds of fish last year and an increase in walleye from 10.237 million fish. Specific allocations of both species are presented below by jurisdiction.

TAC decisions are made by consensus of the LEC. These decisions are reflective of the status of Lake Erie's fish populations and consider the goal of sustainable harvest each year. The allocations are determined by the LEC after extensive, lakewide biological assessments, analyses, discussions, and consultations with stakeholders. The individual state and provincial governments implement the TAC in their jurisdiction in accordance with their respective regulations and management objectives.

**WALLEYE:** Guided by the Walleye Management Plan, the LEC set a 2021 lakewide walleye TAC of 12.284 million fish, a 20% increase over the 2020 TAC of 10.237 million fish. The increased TAC reflects strong recruitment during the previous few years and expected increases in population size. The Province of Ontario and the states of Ohio and Michigan share the TAC based on a formula of walleye habitat within each jurisdiction in the western and central basins of the lake. Under the 2021 TAC, Ohio will be entitled to 6.278 million fish, Ontario 5.290 million fish, and Michigan 0.716 million fish. Jurisdictions in eastern Lake Erie are outside of the TAC area, but harvest limits are set consistent with lakewide objectives.

**YELLOW PERCH:** The yellow perch fishery is divided into four management units, which generally correspond to the western, west-central, east-central, and eastern basins of Lake Erie. The LEC has strived to maintain sustainable harvest while responding to changing abundance. Guided by the yellow perch management plan (YPMP), the LEC has finalized TAC decisions for each management unit as follows. The TAC in MU 1 will be 2.532 million pounds, an increase of 20%. The TAC in MU 2 will be 0.615 million pounds, a decrease of 70%. The TAC in MU 3 will be 2.568 million pounds, a decrease of 15%. The TAC in MU 4 will be 0.523 million pounds, a decrease of 20%.

The LEC acknowledges the significance of the substantial cut in the MU 2 TAC and utilized additional resources from the Yellow Perch Task Group to project harvest scenarios which helped consider expected outcomes of various TAC levels. Poor recruitment in 6 of the past 8 years has reduced the population and triggered harvest policy actions leading to low TAC recommendations. Reducing harvest helps ensure sustainable spawning stock levels that will allow the best opportunity for recovery while following the Lake Erie Committee's YPMP. The YPMP was designed to ensure fishery sustainability and quality to satisfy conservation and maintain socio-economic benefits.

The five jurisdictions on the lake share Lake Erie's yellow perch under an area-based formula. Pursuant to the 2021 TAC, Ontario will receive 2.955 million pounds, Ohio 2.440 million pounds, Michigan 0.230 million pounds, New York 0.162 million pounds, and Pennsylvania 0.451 million pounds. As with walleye, each Lake Erie jurisdiction is responsible for allocating its portion of the TAC.

**THE LAKE ERIE PERCID MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP (LEPMAG):** Since 2010, the LEPMAG has served as the primary method to incorporate stakeholder needs and objectives into the decision-making process regarding harvest of walleye and yellow perch. The LEPMAG consists of senior representatives from all provincial and state jurisdictions on the lake, recreational fishers, commercial fishers, and other interested organizations. Through the LEPMAG, fishery managers and stakeholders work together to identify the harvest policies for Lake Erie percid that meet the needs of all stakeholders while maintaining stability in the percid fishery. Michigan State University's Quantitative Fisheries Center facilitates the LEPMAG process. Walleye are now being managed under the walleye management plan, which was developed through the LEPMAG and formally adopted by the LEC in December, 2015. The LEPMAG's advice was greatly appreciated by the LEC as it finalized its yellow perch management plan in 2020.

**THE LAKE ERIE COMMITTEE (LEC) AND TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH (TAC):** The LEC's work is facilitated by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, a Canada and U.S. agency on the Great Lakes. Each year the committee reaches consensus TAC decisions for walleye and yellow perch. The TAC represents what the committee considers as a sustainable level of harvest, as guided by recommendations from the Yellow Perch and Walleye Task groups. The individual agencies allocate the TAC through setting commercial fishing quotas and recreational fishing daily limits intended to maintain annual harvest levels within the TAC.

The table below reflects the distribution of the 2021 yellow perch TAC within each management unit for each agency. Units are expressed in millions of pounds.

<b>Management Unit</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>2021 TAC</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Ontario</b>	<b>1.028</b>
	<b>Michigan</b>	<b>0.230</b>
	<b>Ohio</b>	<b>1.274</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.532</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Ontario</b>	<b>0.280</b>
	<b>Ohio</b>	<b>0.335</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0.615</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Ontario</b>	<b>1.343</b>
	<b>Ohio</b>	<b>0.832</b>
	<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>0.393</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.568</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Ontario</b>	<b>0.303</b>
	<b>Pennsylvania</b>	<b>0.058</b>
	<b>New York</b>	<b>0.162</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0.523</b>
	<b>Lakewide</b>	<b>6.238</b>

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