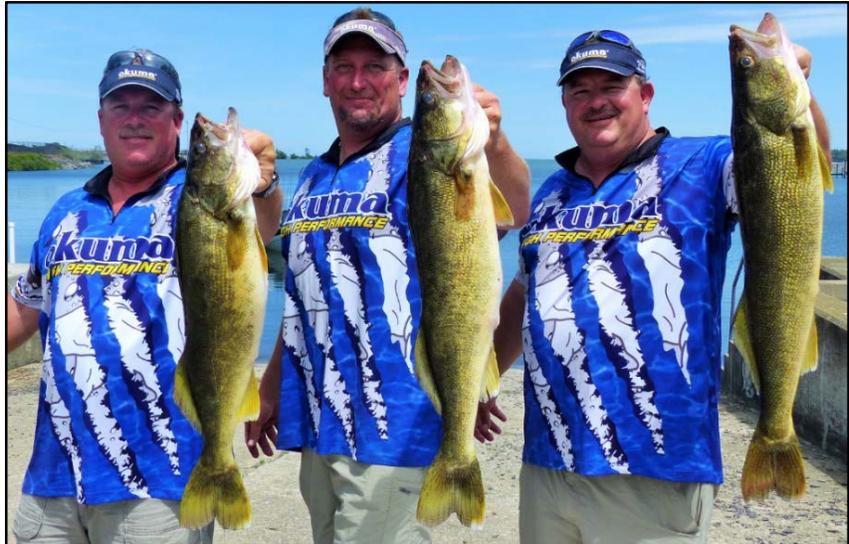


ECFS October 2015 Fish Report – Dave Barus

Is It Time for Eastern Basin Lake Erie Tournament Board of Regulations?

When top anglers fished eastern basin Lake Erie for walleye in the late 1980's, many fish were caught. It was not unusual to catch one or two 12-pound fish during two extended days of weekend fishing. In 1986, just fishing for fun with my senior Lake Erie mentor, Russ Johnson, we caught six 11-pounders, four 12-pounders and one 14-pounder, not mention several hundred fish from eight to 10 pounds while fishing the waters within five miles of Van Buren Point, not far from Dunkirk Harbor (New York). While limits of walleye are still the norm today (2015) for many anglers, not that many fish over 10-pounds are brought to net. This is confirmed by the final standings of multiple summer tournament walleye competition events. Some big fish are caught, but not many. So what has happened?



Captain Don Ruppert (center) with teammates Art Wind Jr. (left) and Scott Wind (right) had to settle for 8-pound and 9-pound fish to win the Northern Chautauqua County Conservation 3-day August walleye fishing contest in Dunkirk, NY.

Perhaps, there are too many non-native invasive species like the round goby? The eastern basin walleye have definitely been lighter in weight this year, but they were longer than ever before too. The deep water where these summer fish live is cleaner and clearer than ever before, with 25 to 40 foot Secchi disc readings, and there is no obvious algae issue in the deep eastern basin of Lake Erie. Add that this past summer, huge schools of walleye had moved from their usual thermocline zone at 60 to 70 feet from the surface, down into the schools of smelt to find forage and feed. The fish were in 117 feet of water, the temperature was 49 degrees down there!

Has it been the early season 10-day fishing contests that have removed a large number of heavy, resident (eastern basin homebody), female, walleye spawners from eastern basin waters before the migratory walleye arrive? Final standings in such early season contests has dozens of fish tipping the scales over 10 pounds, but not in the late summer contests. Have they all been caught in June? Are they gone? Seems impossible to escape 100's of boats with skilled anglers and gear all summer.

The migratory walleye schools swim all the way from western basin Lake Erie (Ohio) each June to escape the warm summer water and reduced oxygen levels suspected there (from algae blooms).

Is there a lack of forage? Emerald shiners are among the primary forage for walleye and yellow perch base, the once huge schools of these baitfish are missing this year.

Perhaps it is time to form an international Eastern Basin Lake Erie Tournament Regulations Board of Governors that would require the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to approve walleye tournament action for length, number of participants and time of year. Food for thought.

Transfer of 127-acre West Seneca Parcel to DEC Will Provide Fishing Access to Cazenovia Creek and Preserve Unique Habitat

Lands along Cazenovia Creek in West Seneca, Erie County that were recently transferred to the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will provide additional recreation opportunities for people who enjoy fishing and other outdoor activities, announced in June 2015.

DEC will designate the 127-acre tract as the Cazenovia Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and open the property to public use later this year. "This new Cazenovia Creek Wildlife Management Area builds on Governor Cuomo's efforts to create and expand outdoor recreation opportunities in New York, while also preserving natural resources and important wildlife habitats," Commissioner Martens said. "Providing access to the creek is great news for anglers, who will enjoy exceptional fishing, especially from fall through spring when migratory steelhead from Lake Erie enter this section of Cazenovia Creek."

The Cazenovia Creek WMA, located between East and West Road and Leydecker Road in West Seneca, will support a variety of native wildlife and also features several distinct floodplain habitats, as well as an upland forest located at the top of the creek ridge. People will be able to access trails throughout the parcel to view wildlife in the forest or fish the creek.

The parcel includes 16.9 acres transferred to DEC from state Office of Mental Health and 109.88 acres transferred from state Office for People with Developmental Disabilities. Over the next several months, DEC will post the property's boundaries, improve existing trails and perform general cleanup work to make the land and creek easily accessible.

Under Governor Cuomo's NY Open for Fishing and Hunting Initiative, the state is improving recreational activities for sportsmen and women and to boost tourism activities throughout the state. This includes streamlining fishing and hunting licenses, reducing license fees, improving access for fishing and increasing hunting opportunities in New York State. In support of this initiative, \$10 million in NY Works funding has been dedicated to fish hatchery repairs and 50 new land and water access projects such as boat launches, hunting blinds, trails and parking areas.

The enacted 2015-16 state budget raised the Environmental Protection Fund to \$177 million dollars, an increase of 32 percent since Governor Cuomo took office. The \$15 million increase will support 14 categories, including land conservation, stewardship, and invasive species control and prevention. The increase includes a new sub-allocation for capacity grants to State Parks friends' groups.

The enacted budget also adds an additional \$8 million for state land access projects and an additional \$4 million for the state's hatcheries in NY Works funding. The budget also creates a new capital account which along with federal Pittman-Robertson funds will be used to manage, protect and restore fish and wildlife habitat, and to improve and develop public access for fish and wildlife-related recreation. For more information about the Cazenovia Creek WMA, contact DEC's Allegany sub-office at 372-0645.

2014 Fishing Survey Shows Great Lakes Offers Excellent Angling Opportunities

New York's 2014 Great Lakes angler surveys indicate Lake Erie and Lake Ontario offer anglers excellent fishing opportunities, per NYSDEC reported. Survey results indicate Lake Erie experienced the greatest level of fishing participation in 12 years, while Lake Ontario anglers experienced another year of excellent trout and salmon fishing.

Anglers on Lakes Erie and Ontario in recent years have enjoyed exceptional fishing success, which is measured by the number of fish caught per hour of fishing.

The survey found on Lake Erie in 2014:

- Anglers spent approximately 370,000 hours fishing, the highest effort in over 12 years.
- The majority of anglers sought walleye (50 percent), yellow perch (21 percent) and bass (17 percent). Angling quality for walleye, smallmouth bass and yellow perch in 2014, as measured by angler catch rates, was at or near record levels. Walleye and yellow perch catch rates were the highest observed in the 27-year survey, while smallmouth bass catch rates were the second highest on record.
- Yellow perch anglers harvested approximately 212,000 fish, the highest observed in the survey, and walleye anglers harvested nearly 62,000 fish, the third highest on record.

DEC's annual Lake Ontario Fishing Boat Survey provides information essential for managing a diverse, world-class trout and salmon fishery that attracts anglers from across the U.S. (38 states in 2014). In recent years, Lake Ontario anglers have experienced the best trout and salmon fishing on record. That trend continued in 2014 despite colder than normal water temperature patterns. The Lake Ontario 2014 survey found:

- Trout and salmon anglers represented 94 percent of all anglers' hours on Lake Ontario.
- Availability of brown trout along New York's entire Lake Ontario shoreline resulted in above average (18 percent) angler success in 2014.
 - Six species of trout and salmon stocked by DEC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provide anglers diverse opportunities to target different species when needed, and anglers took advantage of this during 2014 with catch rates for all trout and salmon species combined was 20 percent above average.
 - Chinook salmon anglers experienced periods of both excellent and difficult fishing in 2014, but overall angling quality was up 34 percent above average, the 12th consecutive year of elevated catch rates.
 - Rainbow trout angling quality was 35 percent above average, maintaining near-record high levels for the 7th consecutive year.
 - Lake trout fishing quality improved in recent years, and Atlantic salmon angler success remained 11 percent above average.
 - Coho salmon fishing quality was slightly below average in 2014.

Angler surveys are conducted each year from May through October on Lake Erie and from mid-April through September on Lake Ontario. Anglers returning to ports from the open waters of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario are interviewed to gather information including numbers of anglers and the length of their fishing trip, which fish species were harvested or released, and biological data are collected from harvested fish to determine age and growth rates of various species. DEC extrapolates the data from those interviews to generate lake-wide estimates for the angling year. The surveys for lakes Erie and Ontario were initiated in 1988 and 1985, respectively. New York's Lake Erie angler effort and harvest data for walleye and yellow perch are combined with companion data from neighboring states and the Province of Ontario to produce annual lake-wide assessments of the status of these species, providing essential information for establishing sustainable recreational and commercial harvest limits across jurisdictional borders.

For further information on the [Lake Erie angler survey](#) and for [Lake Ontario Fisheries Unit Reports](#) visit DEC's website, or contact Steven LaPan, New York Great Lakes Section Leader at Cape Vincent Fisheries Research Station, (315) 654-2147.

Verizon Drops Outdoor Channel

In a recent press release, Verizon cable, mobile and internet provider, has dropped Outdoor Channel from its television carriage service. Verizon's latest action against the Outdoor Sportsman Group Networks – the world's largest content provider for outdoor lifestyle programming – has raised the ire of outdoor enthusiasts across the country including AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. This action comes on the heels of Verizon's recent drop of Outdoor Channel sister network Sportsman Channel in early September. More than 130 million Americans engage in some form of outdoor lifestyle activity and response to these actions does not sit well within this passionate and loyal group. "We have more than six and a half million members who make the outdoors an important part of their lives," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. "We are disappointed that Verizon has chosen to take these actions against Outdoor Channel and Sportsman Channel. Working people can't be silenced by big corporate interests, and will stand up to fight back against this unfair move by Verizon." "Our partners, advocates and viewers of outdoor lifestyle programming are very disappointed with Verizon's actions in the last month," said Jim Liberatore, CEO and President of Outdoor Sportsman Group Networks. "It should concern all Americans that one company can silence the only relevant voice of an entire industry with the flip of a switch." As a result of Verizon's drop of Outdoor Channel and Sportsman Channel, the television, phone and internet provider no longer offers any of the leading networks for outdoor enthusiasts. Consequently, the alternative Verizon is touting does not offer any similar top programming. Check local listings or visit www.OutdoorChannel.com/ChannelFinder to find the network and providers in your area.

About Outdoor Channel: Outdoor Channel has been taking viewers across America and around the world on unparalleled adventures since 1993. Dedicated to the outdoor lifestyle and conservation, the independent cable network is a division of Outdoor Sportsman Group and

provides a complete spectrum of riveting hunting, fishing, shooting and adventure entertainment. Outdoor Channel is received by more than 40 million U.S. households – the largest outdoor TV footprint in the country – and is available in more than 50 countries internationally. Outdoor Channel can be viewed in HD and is accessible by broadband and mobile platforms. For program times and other information, visit www.outdoorchannel.com. Follow us on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, and download our iPhone and iPad app. #WhatGetsYouOutdoors - See more at: <http://www.thefishingwire.com/story/357997#sthash.pTmDgLeT.dpuf>