



USFWS new proposal for management of cormorants

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to establish a new permit system for state and federally recognized tribal wildlife agencies for the management of double-crested cormorants. The new permit would authorize specific take activities that are intended to relieve or prevent impacts from cormorants on lands within state or tribal jurisdictions to address conflicts with:

- Wild and publicly stocked fish stocked by State or Tribal agencies
- Tribal and State-owned or operated aquaculture facilities including hatcheries
- Human health and safety
- State or Tribal-owned property and assets
- Threatened and endangered species

You must submit written comments on this proposed rule by July 20, 2020. They will not accept emails or faxes.

The rule proposes to establish a new special permit for state and federally recognized tribal wildlife agencies to undertake additional cormorant control activities when permissible. States and tribes must first attempt control using nonlethal methods and determine that those methods are ineffective before resorting to lethal control. The activities allowed under the special permit would include controlling cormorants to help reduce conflicts with wild and publicly stocked fisheries on state or tribal-owned lands. In addition, states will have additional flexibility to manage cormorants at state or tribal-owned hatcheries and release sites.

Under this new proposal, a new special permit for interested states and tribes would complement existing measures to address conflicts with cormorants to protect human health and safety, personal property and threatened and endangered species.

The Service would retain ultimate authority for regulating the take of cormorants. The States and Tribes would have the discretion to determine whether, when, where, and for which of the above purposes they would conduct the lethal take within limits and allocations set by the Service.

Written comments will be accepted until July 20, 2020 at the following [link https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=FWS-HQ-MB-2019-0103-1411](https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=FWS-HQ-MB-2019-0103-1411).

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Stick to the fight when you're hardest hit. It's when things seem worst that you musn't quit. ...Piggott, ODB

Planned Mille Lacs walleye closure implemented to protect fall fishing

Mille Lacs Lake is closed to walleye fishing for the month of July, with the anticipation of a fall walleye season ahead.

Working with local anglers and the community in March, the Department of Natural Resources determined a July closure would provide the best chance for walleye fishing this fall by reducing walleye mortality when water temperatures are the warmest.

“Even with the good walleye fishing Mille Lacs anglers have experienced this year, we have not exceeded our allocation and we don’t expect to,” said Brad Parsons, the DNR’s fisheries section manager. “We know many people really enjoy fall walleye fishing and we heard from folks that this was their priority. So we made plans this spring for the July closure to reduce the potential

for an unplanned closure in the fall.”

In addition to not targeting walleye, Mille Lacs Lake anglers cannot use most live baits for any species in July. The exceptions are sucker minnows greater than 8 inches in length for targeting northern pike and muskellunge and wax worms for panfish and perch.

The closure and live bait ban is the result of record ice fishing pressure this past winter that resulted in a harvest of almost 30,000 pounds of walleye. July was selected for the closure because it’s generally the period when warm water temperatures cause the highest rates of hooking mortality.

An unplanned closure would be triggered if the state reaches its share
Mille Lacs walleye closure

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DEC launches new fishing, hunting, and trapping licensing system

New York announced the launch of the State's new system for the sale of fishing, hunting, and trapping licenses. The new **DEC Automated Licensing System (DECALS)** includes user-friendly information to help users locate vendors, receive instant copies of a license, enter and view harvest information, and more.

Commissioner Seggos said, "The new automated DECALS licensing system makes it simpler than ever before for New Yorkers to purchase fishing, hunting, and trapping licenses from the comfort of their homes, either over the phone or online."

As the system's new features are updated, additional functionality launching on DECALS will include:

- Events calendar with upcoming season dates, youth hunts, free fishing days and clinics, and more;
- Full integration with DEC's Hunter Education Program enabling users to more easily register for courses and automatically update certifications; and
- Auto-renewal options for all annual licenses.

Users can access DECALS by phone and online. New York State's 1,100 license issuing agents are expected to be up and running on the new DECALS system soon, so contact local agents before heading out to purchase licenses in person. Call DEC's customer service hotline (866-933-2257) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or go to the **DECALS website and buy licenses online**.

Please note that previous DECALS logins will not work in the new system. To access current accounts, click on the 'Sign Up' link on the new DECALS website and use date of birth and DEC customer ID number or a driver's license number to locate existing files and create a new login. Please call DEC's customer service line at 866-933-2257 with any questions.

The new system is developed and supported by Kalkomey, a company that specializes in outdoor recreation

and education web applications. Kalkomey currently provides hunter education classes for 46 states, including New York, as well as in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. DEC recently **announced the success of Kalkomey's online hunter and bowhunter safety courses for New York State**, which allow new hunters to take classes online during the State's response to COVID-19. Nearly 28,000 men, women, and children have taken the course to date, which was extended through August 31, 2020.

Students who successfully complete the online courses and pass the final exam will receive their hunter education certificate or bowhunter education certificate. The courses are available to individuals 11 and older, but only those 12 or older may purchase a hunting license. Students can complete the courses from a computer, tablet, or smart phone at any time. Visit DEC's **Hunter Education Program** page to learn more or to sign up.

To take and receive a certificate through the online course, participants must be New York State residents. The cost of the hunter education course is \$19.95 and the bowhunter education course is \$30. Both courses can be accessed at DEC's website. The online courses will be available through August 31, 2020.

For more **information on recreational opportunities available in New York State** visit DEC's website. New Yorkers are encouraged to engage in responsible recreation close to home during the State's ongoing response to COVID-19. DEC recommendations incorporate guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New York State Department of Health for reducing the spread of infectious diseases and encourage New Yorkers to recreate locally, practice physical distancing, show respect, and use common sense to protect themselves and others. **For more information, go to DEC's website.** ✧



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Position Statement

Representing a major interest in the aquatic resources of the Great Lakes states and the province of Ontario, the Great Lakes Sport Fishing Council is a confederation of organizations and individuals with a concern for the present and future of sport fishing, our natural resources and the ecosystem in which we live. We encourage the wise use of our resources and a search for the truth about the issues confronting us.

Inland Seas Angler

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A message from the national Asian Carp Committee

As the COVID-19 emergency continues, the health and safety of ACRCC partners and the citizens we serve remain our highest priority. The member agencies of the ACRCC continue to follow the most current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and public health authorities at the federal, tribal, provincial, state and local levels.

We remain fully committed to our mission of preventing the movement of Asian carp into the Great Lakes. ACRCC partners continue to work together to assess our ability to safely conduct monitoring and control actions across the Great Lakes region. We want to assure you that the defenses and response protocols we have built throughout the past decade continue to be operational.

During the current COVID-19 emergency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will continue to operate the

electric dispersal barriers in Romeoville, Illinois within the constraints of maintaining a safe working environment. No outages or reductions of the in-water electric fields are expected. Should a situation arise, the Illinois DNR, in cooperation with the ACRCC, have response plans in place and will be ready to act accordingly.

The Illinois DNR has developed modified operating protocols to complete priority Asian carp work in the Illinois Waterway. The modified operating protocols were crafted in accordance with the State of Illinois, Illinois Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control guidelines. Work began in May and will expand as practicable throughout the summer to fully meet all scheduled sampling activities. Ongoing field efforts will (1) inform the ACRCC of Asian carp population

densities and occurrences in each of the navigation pools below the electric dispersal barriers, (2) provide intense seasonal fish surveillance in the Chicago Area Waterway System above the electric dispersal barriers, and (3) continue harvest efforts to further reduce Asian carp population numbers in the upper Illinois Waterway below the electric dispersal barriers.

To date, there has been no change detected in Asian carp occurrences in the areas being monitored, which run north from Starved Rock Pool to the electric dispersal barriers. In the near term, efforts on the water may be constrained by sampling environments, safety, or future COVID-19 concerns. However, contingency response measures remain a component of the ACRCC plan and will be utilized if necessary.

Ohio Wildlife Council proposals on walleye, catfish and deer regulations

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Ohio Wildlife Council received regulation proposals for fishing and white-tailed deer processing at its regularly scheduled meeting Wednesday, July 8. If approved, these regulations will take effect **January 1, 2021**.

Hunting and fishing season dates, bag limits and other wildlife regulations are proposed by the Division of Wildlife to the Ohio Wildlife Council. Included in the proposals are aligning the walleye daily bag limit on all of Ohio's portion of Lake Erie, removing restrictions on channel catfish on small inland lakes as well as updating how white-tailed deer are handled by processors and taxidermists.

"We are proud of our work protecting fish and wildlife through our inclusive regulations process," said Wildlife Chief Kendra Wecker. "These proposals are designed to make it easier for people to enjoy our wildlife resources while ensuring these populations remain healthy and sustainable."

Wildlife fisheries biologists recommended removing the daily bag limit restriction of four walleye in the Sandusky River and Sandusky Bay from March 1 to April 30, annually. The proposal would change the daily bag limit to six walleye, aligning the Sandusky River and Sandusky Bay with the rest of Ohio's Lake Erie regulations.

Fisheries biologists also recommended removing the daily bag limit of six channel catfish at inland lakes and reservoirs less than 700 acres in surface area. The proposal includes no daily bag limit on channel catfish less than 28 inches statewide, and one channel catfish 28 inches or larger. Separate regulations for Hoover Reservoir channel catfish are not included in this proposed rule change. Removing the statewide channel catfish bag limit increases angler opportunities, promotes harvest, increases the growth rates of the remaining fish and improves the overall health of these populations.

A third regulation proposal updates how white-tailed deer and other cervids are handled by Ohio taxidermists and processors. This rule was proposed to provide certified Ohio taxidermists and processors the ability to accept out-of-state cervid carcasses legally harvested by Ohio hunters. This proposal was designed to ensure certified processors and taxidermists receive information about properly handling cervid carcasses to limit the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), a debilitating disease that affects deer and other cervids.

A [complete list of proposals](#) is available at wildohio.gov. A statewide public hearing on the proposed rules will be held on **Thursday, Sept. 17**, at 9 a.m. For those unable to attend the hearing, comments will also be accepted via email. Comment submission information will be available in August at wildohio.gov.

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There is a comment button on the upper right hand side of the page. If you want to view the over 2,000 comments that have already been submitted on this issue you may click the following link, <https://www.regulations.gov/docketBrowser?rpp=25&po=0&dct=PS&D=FWS-HQ-MB-2019-0103&refD=FWS-HQ-MB-2019-0103-1411>

The current proposal is very strong on cormorant protections but it does not clearly demonstrate how the fishery impacts will be comprehensively addressed in Michigan. In addition, under the proposal there would be no control implemented on federal properties.

It is recommended that individuals and organizations submit comments on the proposal stressing the importance of protecting free swimming fish and pointing out your experiences dealing with the cormorants.

To read the full 10 page federal register document:
[file:///C:/Users/Dan/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/NEAXQCOA/Proposed%20US%20Fish%20and%20Wildlife%20Service%20Proposed%20Cormorant%20Rule%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Dan/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/NEAXQCOA/Proposed%20US%20Fish%20and%20Wildlife%20Service%20Proposed%20Cormorant%20Rule%20(2).pdf) ✧

Mille Lacs walleye closure

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of the safe harvest amount agreed upon by the state and eight Ojibwe nations that have treaty fishing rights on Mille Lacs. Through May 31, state-licensed anglers had harvested 34,718 pounds of their 87,800-pound walleye allocation for the 2020 season.

Catch-and-release walleye fishing is scheduled to re-open on Saturday, Aug. 1, and continue through Monday, Nov. 30. Mille Lacs continues to offer anglers excellent northern pike, bass and muskellunge fishing. More information on Mille Lacs Lake is available on the Minnesota DNR website at mndnr.gov/millelacslake. ✧

Striped Bass Cooperative Anglers Program

New York State would like your help!

Do you want to have a more active role in the conservation and management of striped bass? By joining the NYS DEC Striped Bass Cooperative Anglers Program (SBCA), you can take part in an effort to help manage and maintain a healthy striped bass population.

New York State is required by the [Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission \(ASMFC\)](#) (link leaves DEC website) to supplement the [Marine Recreational Information Program \(MRIP\)](#) (link leaves DEC website) with additional information from our recreational fishery. We satisfy this requirement with the help of New York State volunteer recreational anglers.

We provide volunteer anglers with logbooks to record information about their fishing trips, scale envelopes to take scales from striped bass, and instructions on what information is needed and how to properly collect it. The logbook information helps us determine the catch per unit effort (CPUE= fish caught/hours spent fishing) or fishing success for striped bass in New York waters. Scale samples are used to determine the age of the fish. At the end of the year, all of the data is analyzed and presented in an [annual newsletter \(PDF\)](#) giving you an inside look into how striped bass fishing was that year. In addition to the newsletter, all anglers that send in scale samples will receive a report documenting the ages of those fish.

By providing information about your fishing trips and the fish you catch, we can better understand and manage the striped bass fishery.

If you would like to participate in the Striped Bass Cooperative Angler Program and fish for striped bass in New York waters south of the George Washington Bridge, please contact the Diadromous Fish Unit at sbcaprogram@dec.ny.gov or (631) 380-3308.

New state forest maps help Minnesotans find summer fun

Eight new state forest maps from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources feature recreation highlights to help Minnesotans find their perfect adventure. The maps in print and mobile formats, are available for [Bear Island](#), [Big Fork](#), [Burntside](#), [Golden Anniversary](#), [Remer](#), [Koochiching](#), [Smokey Bear](#), and [White Earth](#) state forests.

State forest maps can lead the way to summer hiking, mountain biking, birding, berry picking, horseback and ATV riding, fishing, camping and more.

“Whether you prefer a wilderness canoe paddle or an ATV ride, there’s a summer state forest experience for everyone—and our new state forest maps will make the experience even better,” said Laura Duffey, state forest map coordinator. Users have two ways to get the new maps:

- The free Avenza App provides access to Minnesota state forest maps. Before you go, download the app and navigate to the desired map by searching MNDNR + state forest name in their store. Never get lost in the woods. Your phone’s GPS will allow you to see your location, track distance and more.
- Fresh, redesigned paper maps with site-specific details are available from the [DNR Info Center](#) (link sends email) / 888-646-6367. A PDF version of the paper map can also be downloaded and printed from the state forest webpage.

In addition to the maps for these eight forests, DNR has recently updated maps for an additional 23 state forests. See the [growing list](#) of state forests with updated maps. ✧

Note: If you primarily fish for striped bass north of the George Washington Bridge, the DEC has a separate [Hudson River Cooperative Anglers Program](#). ✧

Illinois DNR Five-Year Waterfowl Seasons Plan for 2021-2025 - 7/8/2020

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – The Illinois DNR has selected season dates and submitted waterfowl hunting zone lines for 2021-2025 to the USFWS. The 2021-2025 hunting seasons regulations were developed based on a thorough review of scientific information and input from waterfowl hunters and are intended to provide the most opportunity for hunters while protecting waterfowl resources.

“Illinois is a large and diverse state that is 400 miles long from north to south and is home to waterfowl hunters with diverse opinions who pursue many different species of waterfowl in different habitats using a variety of methods,” said Randy Smith, program manager, IDNR Wetland Wildlife. “Federal rules on waterfowl season structures and the variable nature of waterfowl migration patterns necessitate Illinois regulations represent a compromise among hunter opinions and hunting styles. Selected regulations may not represent exactly what individual hunters or groups of hunters prefer, but hopefully offer some opportunity for all hunters and hunting styles.”

USFWS regulations require states to establish zone lines for a five-year time period, and the USFWS establishes the frameworks within which states must select their regulations. (The Illinois 2021-2025 zone lines submitted to the USFWS can be found below).

Illinois’ dates for the upcoming 2020-21 waterfowl seasons, established in 2015, can be found on the IDNR website at: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/waterfowl/Documents/WaterfowlZonesDatesFinal20162020.pdf>

For the 2021-2025 seasons in Illinois, waterfowl hunting zone lines have not changed from previous years. In reviewing biological data including waterfowl abundance and hunter harvest, as well as preferences expressed in hunter surveys, IDNR opted to make no changes to zone boundaries. More than 88 percent of hunters surveyed indicated the county they hunted most was in the correct

Indiana Natural Resources Commission Public Hearing **July 30**

During this hearing, the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) will accept public comments on proposed fish and wildlife rule changes. For a complete list of proposed amendments with additional information about each proposal, see wildlife.IN.gov/2362.htm.

If you are unable to attend, public comments can be submitted online at nrc.IN.gov/2377.htm. Locate the "comment on this rule" link in the Rulemaking Docket for the FW Biennial Fisheries Amendments or the FW Biennial Wildlife Amendments, whichever rule package the comment applies to.

Comments can also be mailed to: Natural Resources Commission, Indiana Gov’t Center North, 100 N Senate Ave., Room N103, Indianapolis, IN 46204. The deadline for public comments is **July 30, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. ET.**

The NRC will review the public comments before voting on final adoption of the changes later in 2020. Rule changes that are given final adoption must still be approved by the Attorney General's office and Governor's office, and filed with the Indiana Register before taking effect.

Location Information: [McCormick's Creek State Park - Canyon Inn](#), 451 McCormick Creek Park Rd, Spencer, IN 47460

Phone: (812) 829-4881 **Contact Information:** Linnea Petercheff, 317-233-6527, LPetercheff@dnr.IN.gov ✧

waterfowl zone, and hunter attitudes regarding two proposed zone line changes were divided. IDNR also did not adopt the use of a split season due to USFWS frameworks that would require Illinois to reduce the number of zones used from four to three. For more info: [Illinois DNR Five-Year Waterfowl Seasons Plan for 2021-2025 - 7/8/2020](#) ✧

New online portal for buying licenses and more from Indiana

Indiana is offering a new online license portal called Access Indiana. It is a safe, secure and easy to use way for citizens to interact with all facets of state government through a single login instead of many. There are 18 services that users can enter from Access Indiana. For a full list: <https://www.in.gov/access/available-services.html>.

Individuals who already have an Indiana DNR account to purchase licenses should watch for an email from the DNR that will provide helpful login information. New DNR customers will be directed to create an Access Indiana account first, before supplying additional DNR-specific account information.

Customers can create an Access Indiana account today at <https://access.IN.gov>. For help getting started with Access Indiana, go to: <https://www.in.gov/access/getting-started.html>. For more assistance with a username or password, call 800-457-8283, for Access Indiana customer support. The DNR is unable to assist with usernames and passwords.

<https://www.in.gov/access/faqs-help.html> ✧

Antlerless deer licenses now on sale

HARRISBURG, PA – If you haven’t yet purchased your 2020-21 Pennsylvania hunting license, now might be the time.

The new license year began July 1, meaning new licenses are required when hunting. And without a 2020-21 general license, hunters are unable to apply for 2020-21 antlerless deer licenses, which will go on sale soon. PA residents are given preference in applying for antlerless deer licenses, and resident hunters may apply for their first antlerless licenses beginning Monday, **July 13**. Nonresidents may submit their first applications a week later, beginning Monday, **July 20**. ✧

2nd annual Aquatic Invasive Species Landing Blitz

New York State DEC, in cooperation with seven Great Lakes states and two Canadian provinces, announced the second annual Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Landing Blitz, a regional campaign to inform boaters and others about the risks of introducing and spreading these invasive pests. During this coordinated outreach effort, partners throughout the Great Lakes region educated the public at hundreds of water access sites from June 28 to July 5.

“DEC is committed to preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species and the second annual Aquatic Invasive Species Landing Blitz bolstered New York’s ongoing efforts with educational events across the Great Lakes region,” said DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos. “It’s a chance to work directly with water recreationists and deliver a coordinated, regional message about

the importance of AIS spread prevention during the busiest boating weekends of the year. Direct and meaningful engagement is essential to reducing the economic and ecological impacts of AIS in the Great Lakes.”

AIS are non-native aquatic plants and animals that can cause environmental and economic harm and harm to human health. Many AIS have been found in the lakes, ponds, and rivers of New York, and can be transported from waterbody to waterbody on watercraft and equipment. Boat stewards are paid members of the community or volunteers that provide boaters and other water recreationists with important information about precautions to reduce the likelihood of spreading AIS. The stewards helped people learn how to inspect, clean, drain, and treat watercraft and equipment. For the direct link to the map to help locate these services, visit.

the [NYS Public Boat Launches with Boat Stewards or Decontamination Services Map](#). Local communities and volunteers were key partners in the success of this event. DEC also worked with state Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs) and lake associations to reach out to boaters and anglers and foster stewardship of New York’s waters. Boaters had the opportunity to engage directly with stewards in their community during the Blitz and learn how to clean, drain, and dry their boats as part of this collective effort to help protect New York’s rivers and lakes, including the Great Lakes, from the unwanted impacts of invasive species.

For [more information on the AIS Landing Blitz](#), including educational materials, visit the Great Lakes AIS Landing Blitz website. To learn more about the [AIS Boat Steward Program](#), visit DEC’s website. ✧

Spotted lanternfly could be the next invasive species to threaten Michigan

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural



Development (MDARD) is asking the public to be on the lookout for spotted lanternfly, an invasive insect with the potential to seriously affect Michigan’s agriculture and natural resources. This insect could damage or kill more than 70 varieties of crops and plants including grapes, apples, hops and hardwood trees. To date, spotted lanternfly has not been detected in Michigan.

First found in the United States in 2014 in southeastern Pennsylvania, spotted lanternfly has been spreading rapidly across the nation. Infestations have been confirmed in Delaware,

Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland and West Virginia.

“Spotted lanternfly could negatively impact our grape industry,” said Robert Miller, invasive species prevention and response specialist for MDARD. “But it also has the potential to damage stone fruits, apples and other crops in Michigan’s fruit belt as well as important timber species statewide.”

Spotted lanternfly egg masses resemble old chewing gum, with a gray, waxy, putty-like coating. Hatched eggs appear as brownish, seed-like deposits. Spotted lanternfly nymphs are wingless, beetle-like and black with white spots, developing red patches as they mature. Adults are roughly 1 inch long. Their folded wings are gray to brown with black spots. Open wings reveal a yellow and black abdomen and bright



red hind wings with black spots transitioning to black and white bands at the edge.

“Prevention and early detection are vital to limiting the spread of spotted lanternfly,” said Miller. “Spotted lanternfly cannot fly long distances, but they lay eggs on nearly any surface, including cars, trailers, firewood and outdoor furniture. Before leaving an area where a quarantine is present, check vehicles, firewood and outdoor equipment for unwanted hitchhikers.”

If you find a spotted lanternfly egg mass, nymph or adult, take one or more photos, make note of the date, time and location of the sighting, and report to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, MDA-Info@Michigan.gov or phone the MDARD Customer Service Center, 800-292-3939. If possible, collect a specimen in a container for verification. For more info: Michigan.gov/SpottedLanternfly. ✧

2019 Winnebago System lake sturgeon spawning stock assessment report

The Winnebago System is home to one of the largest lake sturgeon populations in North America with an estimated adult population consisting of roughly 42,500 fish. Annual spawning migrations occur within four main rivers (Wolf, Embarrass, Little Wolf and upper Fox), but spawning has also been periodically observed in other smaller tributaries.

There are more than 60 known spawning sites within the Winnebago System. Most sites are “man-made” with sturgeon spawning on large riprap (12-36”) placed on outside river bends to prevent bank erosion. The use of these spawning sites varies annually with site use ranging from a handful to hundreds or thousands of fish. The annual sturgeon spawning run receives extensive interest from the media and general public, particularly at publicly accessible sites like the Sturgeon Trail (New London), Bamboo Bend (Shiocton), and Sturgeon Park below the Shawano Paper Mill Dam (Shawano).

These sites provide a rare opportunity for the public to view large numbers of sturgeon spawning in shallow water. Peak spawning typically occurs when water temperatures are 52-58 degrees Fahrenheit. In most years, spawning occurs somewhere between April 10 and May 5. The average spawning run lasts 7 days, but duration is heavily impacted by weather. Cooler temperatures tend to result in longer spawning runs, while warm temperatures result in more condensed runs.

Each spring, WDNR crews capture spawning lake sturgeon and collect critical biological data that are used to assess the population and manage the winter spear harvest. The first spawning stock assessment was conducted in 1953, with annual assessments occurring from 1953-1964. Assessments were discontinued for roughly a decade as biologists at

the time believed they had a good understanding of the driving forces affecting the sturgeon population and, therefore, allocated effort towards other fish species.

Stock assessments resumed in 1975 and have occurred each spring since. Lake sturgeon spawning commenced at the Sturgeon Trail on the Wolf River in New London on April 22, 2019. Two large dips nets are used to capture spawning lake sturgeon, typically with multiple dippers working together to corral fish. Electrofishing has also been used in recent years as a gear to capture pre-spawn lake sturgeon in the upper Fox River. All captured fish are measured to the nearest 0.1” total length (TL; measured to longest point of the caudal fin), and sex and spawning stage (green, ripe, or spent) is assigned based on extrusion of gametes (eggs or milt).

Fish are then inspected for Monel (external metal tags placed on the dorsal fin) and passive integrated transponders (PIT; internal microchip tags). Monel tags were used to mark fish for much of the 1950s through 2004, while PIT tags have been used to mark fish since 1999. Fish were marked with both tag types from 1999- 2004, but the use of Monel tags was discontinued midway through 2004 due to poor observed retention rates relative to PIT tags. Tag number is documented for each recaptured fish and PIT tags are inserted into all unmarked fish. All fish are then released back into the river.

DNR fisheries staff work the duration of the spawning run and handle as many fish as possible. A normal spring typically consists of 1,000-2,000 fish being handled, with males comprising >80% of the catch. Males reach sexual maturity at younger ages (males = 14-20 years; females = 20-35 years) and have a shorter spawning periodicity relative to females (males spawn every 1-2

years), females spawn every 3-5 years). Therefore, males heavily outnumber females in a spawning run. Males are also targeted by dippers, to some degree, as the female is what holds a group of spawning fish together. If the female is removed or spooked, then sampling efficiency decreases.

Data collected during lake sturgeon stock assessments have provided managers with a better understanding of the factors that affect population trends. Most notably, mark data collected during spring stock assessments DNR fisheries staff use dip nets to capture a lake sturgeon during a past stock assessment conducted on the Winnebago System.

Therefore, the spawning stock assessment has historically been, and continues to be, critical for effective management of the sturgeon population.

The primary objectives of the 2019 spawning stock assessment were to:

- 1) mark fish for estimates of abundance and exploitation,
- 2) monitor size structure of the adult population,
- 3) evaluate growth and mortality through collection of mark-recapture data,
- 4) evaluate movement, and
- 5) determine river and spawning site fidelity of adult lake sturgeon.

In addition to these core objectives, there are several hatcheries that request gametes (eggs and sperm) to be collected from Wolf River strain lake sturgeon as part of their respective stocking and restoration program. The egg requests are met during the spawning stock assessment.

For more info: [2019 Winnebago System lake sturgeon spawning stock assessment report final.pdf](#) ✧

RBFF fishing license study shows strong gains, opportunities

ALEXANDRIA, VA (July 9, 2020) – The Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) announced the findings of a new fishing license mystery shopper study, which shows promising gains made by states in their online license purchase process. Each year, more and more consumers are purchasing a broader range of goods and services online, as well as from mobile devices. The [Online Fishing License Assessment](#) was conducted to gain a better understanding of the current digital licensing landscape and track improvement and progress over time since the last research study in 2012.

In the seven years since RBFF first conducted a study in the realm of online fishing license transactions, significant progress has been made, most notably:

- **Mobile Friendly** – All licenses were purchased successfully from a mobile device in 2019.
 - Only five states offered a mobile experience in 2012 (10x growth).
- **Email Collection** – 40 states require email collection at the point of purchase.
 - Up from 25 states in 2012.

However, while the community has taken giant leaps forward in some areas, opportunity exists to create a more streamlined experience for customers:

- **Number of Steps** – The license purchase process takes 10+ clicks/steps to complete in 17 states.
 - Minimizing these steps could lead to less abandonment and more licensed anglers.
 - Consider the internet greats with 1-2 clicks to purchase an item.
- **Language** – Only four states offered Spanish translation for license purchase pages in 2019.
 - With 4.4 million Hispanics currently participating in fishing—a historic high for this population segment—there’s a tremendous opportunity to foster relationships with this audience.
- **Auto-Renew** – 13 states offered the option of auto-renewing licenses in 2019.
 - Auto-renewing licenses can be a win-win for customers and agencies alike. Auto-renew can provide convenience and ease for both the customer and agency, and helps agencies gain loyal customers and annual revenue.
- **Thank You & Follow-Up** – Only eight states did not provide a follow-up message to customers upon completing the license purchase process in 2019, down from 25 states in 2012.
 - Personalized thank you messages are standard procedure

in today’s digital marketplace, leading to a more connected experience for shoppers, and provide a bridge towards a continued positive relationship.

“Over the last decade, RBFF has been advising state agencies on the future of e-commerce in a world that’s becoming more digital by the day,” said RBFF President & CEO Frank Peterson. “We are pleased to see so many of our recommendations implemented; however there is still more work to be done. RBFF will be here to help states as they continue to improve the customer experience and reap the rewards along the way.”

The RBFF Online Fishing License Assessment was conducted with [MarketViewpoint](#), a mystery shopping company and is a follow-up to the original [Online Fishing License Assessment](#) of 2012. MarketViewpoint directed mystery shoppers to search for and purchase an annual fishing license in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia via a mobile device. The full report, including comparisons to the original assessment, is [available in the RBFF Resource Center](#).

[TakeMeFishing.org](#) and [TakeMeFishing.org/es](#), feature how-to videos, info on how to get a fishing license and boat registration, and an interactive state-by-state map to find local boating and fishing spots. ✧

Other Breaking News Items: (Click on title or URL to read full article)

[Bigheaded carp pose big threat, new model suggests](#)

In a model developed by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Cooperative Institute for Great Lakes Research, Bigheaded carp were shown as a big threat to yellow perch if bighead and silver carp made it into Lake Huron’s Saginaw Bay.

[Pilot project underway to fight algal blooms on Lake Erie](#)

A pilot project with Ohio Department of Natural Resource staff is using inexpensive sensor technology used in everyday products such as dishwashers and cell phones to help monitor water quality to improve the health and safety of Lake Erie. [Read the full story by Water World.](#)

[Protecting your watercraft, and our lakes, from quagga mussels](#)

Quagga mussels are invasive shellfish that arrived in Utah in the boats of privately-owned watercraft trailered from the Great Lakes; Sgt. Krystal Tucker with the Dept. of Wildlife Resources Aquatic Invasive Species Operations discusses their program involving boat inspections for the mussels at some of the larger lakes.

[Heat wave helping lower Great Lakes levels](#)

While it has been dangerously hot, the heat has helped prevent Great Lakes water levels from rising.