U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Great Lakes Fisheries

Region 3 - Great Lakes/Big Rivers

Leadership in Conserving, Enhancing, and Restoring Aquatic Ecosystems

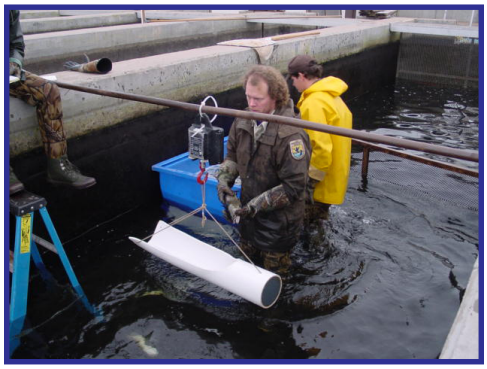
The Great Lakes Fisheries Program supports the conservation of nationally significant species by building partnerships through interagency planning, by providing leadership in fisheries science and aquatic habitat restoration, by controlling invasive aquatic species and by providing high quality trout for restoration programs.

GLFC

Sea lampreys are attached to this native lake trout. Each parasitic phase sea lamprey is capable of killing upwards of 40 pounds of lake trout during its year long life in the Great Lakes.

-GLFC

Stream treatments with the highly selective chemical TFM destroys young sea lampreys before they enter the Great Lakes and become parasites on native fish such as lake trout.



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Staff at the Iron River National Fish Hatchery inventory our brood stock. Federal hatcheries stock more than 4 million lake trout annually into the Great Lakes.

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Combating Aquatic Nuisance Species

Sea lamprey control – The Fish and Wildlife Service, through an agreement with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, serves as the United States agent for sea lamprey control. Our integrated pest management program includes mechanical and electrical barriers that deny access to spawning grounds; capture, sterilization and release of male sea lampreys at spawning sites; removal of adult sea lamprey by trapping; and application of two highly selective chemicals (TFM and Bayluscide) to streams to kill young lamprey. Control methods are carefully combined and locally targeted for maximum effectiveness. Some sea lamprey populations are adequately controlled by a single low-head barrier, some through chemical treatment, while several methods may be employed together in more complex situations.

Our methods have proven to be highly effective. Sea lamprey populations have been reduced more than 90% from peak levels observed during the 1960s and this is in part responsible for the remarkable recovery of fisheries across the Great Lakes, including the restoration of self-sustaining lake trout stocks in Lake Superior. In an April, 2003 report, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) cited sea lamprey control as one of the few programs in the Great Lakes with significant outcomes and accomplishments.

Eurasian ruffe – The Fish and Wildlife Service chairs the Ruffe Control Committee, monitors the status and trends of ruffe populations in the Great Lakes, and works with the shipping industry and other partners to prevent the spread of ruffe to new locations.

Restoring Declining Fisheries

Lake trout – Our National Fish Hatcheries played an important role in bringing back self-sustaining populations of lake trout in Lake Superior. Our hatcheries stock more than 4 million lake trout each year into Lakes Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario and are a primary reason that populations are building in these waters. Stocking lake trout into depleted waters of the Great Lakes was also among the programs recognized by the GAO as having significant outcomes and accomplishments.

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Coaster brook trout were once abundant along the Lake Superior shoreline. Partners are working together to restore populations.

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The R/V Chub is a new fisheries assessment vessel based out of the Ashland Fishery Resources Office in Ashland, Wisconsin. This vessel supports the requirements contained in the Consent Decree.

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Rob Elliott, Fish and Wildlife Service, Tom Meronek, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and Greg Bunker, Stockbridge Munsee Indian Community, examine an adult lake sturgeon.

Coaster brook trout – We are working with federal, state, tribal, provincial and non-governmental partners to restore native brook trout populations to Lake Superior waters including Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, Isle Royale National Park, the Grand Portage reservation and Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge.

Managing Interjurisdictional Fisheries

Consent Decree – The 1836 Treaty waters of Lakes Superior, Huron and Michigan, support major sport and commercial fisheries targeting lake whitefish, lake trout, walleye and other species. These fisheries, managed by the state of Michigan and five Chippewa and Ottawa tribes, are guided by principles included in an August 7, 2000, Consent Decree issued by the United States District Court of Western Michigan.

Fish and Wildlife Service fishery biologists provide technical assistance to state and tribal parties to the Consent Decree in managing fisheries in the 1836 Treaty waters, provide an independent source of information on the status of lake trout and whitefish, and stock lake trout onto historically important spawning reefs within the 1836 Treaty waters. Our technical assistance, independent stock assessment activities and lake trout stocking program have been recognized in letters from Governor Granholm of Michigan and from the Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Fish Passage Program – Since 1999, we have been working with state, tribal and local partners to restore access to habitat through activities such as replacing inadequately sized or poorly designed culverts at road crossings with improved structures such as timber bridges.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program – Our Great Lakes fisheries stations are responsible for implementing this important habitat restoration program in 8 counties in northern Wisconsin and 23 counties in Michigan. We have identified hundreds of degraded sites on streams such as the Bad River in Wisconsin and the Thunder Bay River in Michigan, and provide technical and financial assistance to private land owners who wish to restore habitat on their properties.

Public Use

Recreational fishing – Our Fishery Resources Offices and National Fish Hatcheries host annual fishing day events during National Fishing and Boating Week, provide visitor services, participate in public events such as the Michigan Lighthouse Festival, and work closely with National Wildlife Refuges and other Federal partners to improve fisheries on Federal lands.

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