

1985 – 2010 NYSDEC Lake Ontario Fishing Boat Survey Preliminary Monthly Summary for April and May 2010

Note: Results are preliminary. A final report of the 2010 April-September survey will be available in spring 2011.

April

The Lake Ontario fishing boat survey began on April 15, 2010. Prior to the survey start, angler reports indicated good brown trout fishing, and better than typical catches of Atlantic salmon. Creel survey data collected April 15 – April 30 indicated relatively good brown trout fishing, and Atlantic salmon catch rates similar to April 2009, which were well above average.

May

Trout and salmon fishing effort and quality were good during early May; however, both declined after the second week and remained low through the remainder of the month. During May 2010, there were an estimated 11,111 fishing boat trips, which was a 27.7% decrease compared to 2009 but was comparable to (-2.7%) the previous 5-year average (2005-09; Table 1, Fig. 1). Boats targeting trout and salmon accounted for 9,401 boat trips (84.6% of the total May effort and the lowest percentage among all years surveyed). This is the fourth year of the pre-season smallmouth bass catch and release period covered by the creel survey. During May 2010 there were an estimated 237 boat trips targeting smallmouth bass which was within the range of estimates observed since the regulation change (43 trips in May 2007 - 319 trips in May 2009).

Estimated total numbers of trout and salmon caught (20,573 fish) and harvested (11,638 fish) during May 2010 were 54.8% and 46.3% decreases compared to previous 5-year averages, respectively (Table 1, Fig. 2). For the third consecutive year Chinook salmon was the most commonly caught and harvested species (5,866 and 3,932 fish,

respectively; Fig. 3). For the first May since 1993, lake trout was the second most commonly caught species. Estimated catch (5,660 fish) was the highest since 1998 (Table 1, Fig. 4). This increase is primarily attributed to an increase in the number of anglers targeting lake trout in the east/central and eastern portion of the lake during the second half of the month. Typically, during May many eastern anglers specifically target brown trout; however, this May many of those anglers began targeting lake trout when brown trout fishing slowed mid-month. For the second consecutive year, numerous anecdotal reports from anglers indicated that Atlantic salmon catch was higher than is typically observed. May creel survey data confirmed these reports with the highest May 2009 and 2010 Atlantic salmon catch estimates since 1994 (2009: 430 fish; 2010: 223 fish; Table 1).

The quality of trout and salmon fishing during May 2010, as measured by catch rate, declined from the highs observed in recent years to an estimated 2.2 fish per boat trip (Table 1, Fig. 2). May catch rate was a 46.1% decrease compared to the previous 5-year average. May 2010 catch rates were above their respective 2005-09 averages for lake trout (+158.7%, highest since 1998) and Atlantic salmon (+137.3%, the highest since 1994), and were below their respective averages for coho salmon (-63.1%, but comparable to the long-term average; Fig. 5), Chinook salmon (-62.0%, lowest since 2002), brown trout (-59.0%, lowest since 1992; Fig. 6), and rainbow trout (-45.8%; Fig. 7).

Nearly 57% of all trout and salmon caught were harvested, resulting in an estimated total trout and salmon harvest rate of 1.2 fish per boat trip. This was the fifth lowest harvest rate among the 26 years surveyed and a 37.4% decrease compared to the previous 5-year average. May 2010 harvest rates were above their respective 2005-09 averages for lake trout (+345.5%, highest since 1998) and Atlantic salmon (+122.0%), and were below their respective averages for brown trout (-64.3%), coho salmon (-55.2%), Chinook salmon (-41.1%), and rainbow trout (-20.1%).

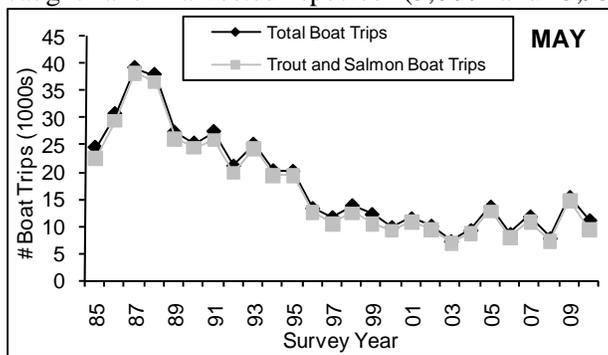


Figure 1. May fishing effort, 1985-2010.

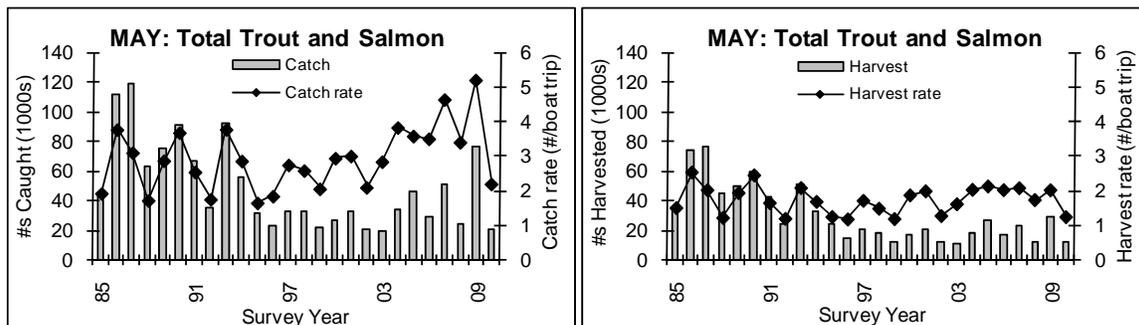


Figure 2. Total trout and salmon catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2010.

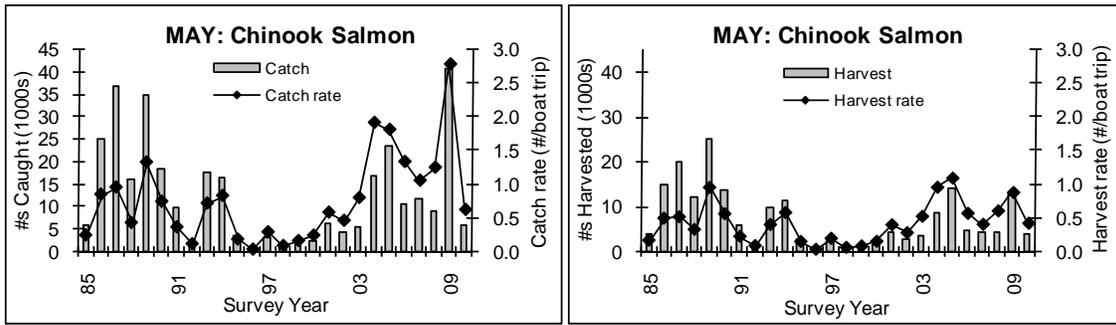


Figure 3. Chinook salmon catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2010.

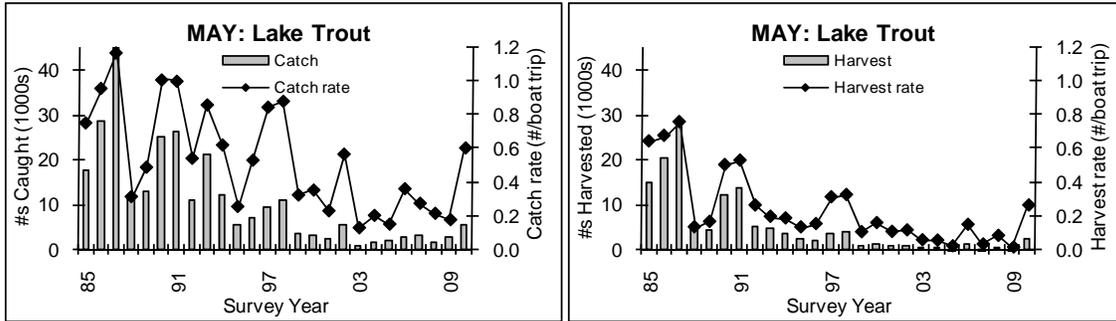


Figure 4. Lake trout catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2010.

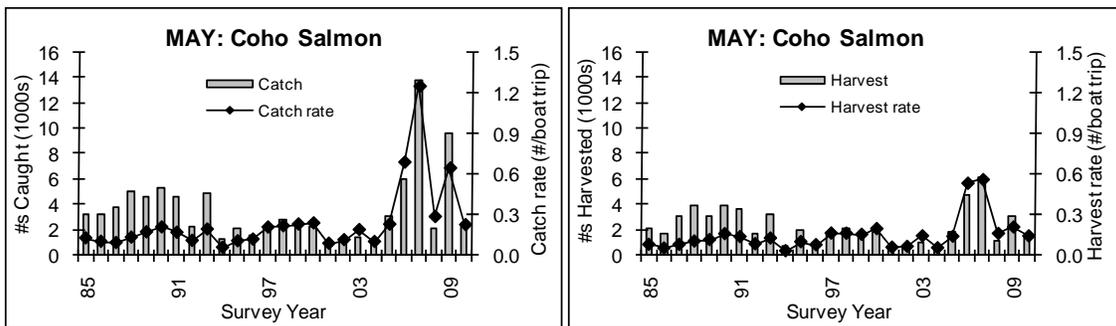


Figure 5. Coho salmon catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2010.

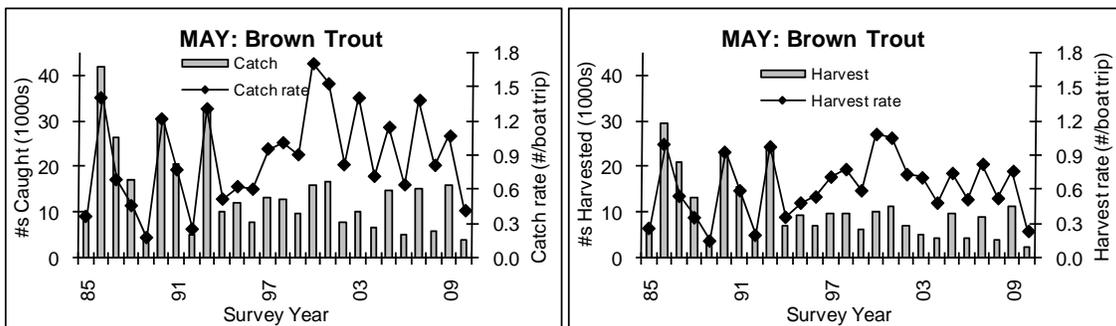


Figure 6. Brown trout catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2010.

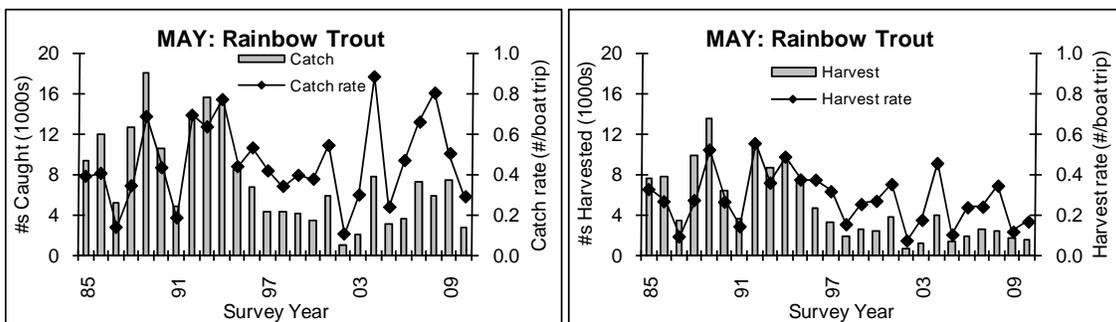


Figure 7. Rainbow trout catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2010.

Table 1. Preliminary summary of May fishing boat trips, fish caught and harvested, and catch rates and harvest rates per boat trip for trout and salmon among boats seeking these species, from the 1985-2010 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Lake Ontario fishing boat survey.

MAY

| | 15yr avg 85-99 | 5yr avg 00-04 | prev 5yr 05-09 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Fishing Boat Trips | 23,363 | 9,576 | 11,416 | 8,558 | 11,796 | 7,784 | 15,360 | 11,111 |
| Number of Fish Harvested: | | | | | | | | |
| Coho Salmon | 2,350 | 922 | 3,402 | 4,759 | 6,168 | 1,176 | 3,087 | 1,353 |
| Chinook Salmon | 8,314 | 4,073 | 8,101 | 4,513 | 4,422 | 4,385 | 12,978 | 3,932 |
| Rainbow Trout | 6,781 | 2,424 | 1,998 | 1,872 | 2,619 | 2,481 | 1,698 | 1,548 |
| Atlantic Salmon | 198 | 21 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 28 | 222 | 79 |
| Brown Trout | 12,692 | 7,593 | 7,588 | 4,117 | 9,083 | 3,828 | 11,256 | 2,266 |
| Lake Trout | 8,456 | 912 | 513 | 1,173 | 345 | 594 | 190 | 2,461 |
| Total Trout and Salmon | 38,792 | 15,945 | 21,653 | 16,436 | 22,638 | 12,493 | 29,432 | 11,638 |
| Smallmouth Bass | 81 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Yellow Perch | 1,200 | 359 | 833 | 0 | 1,220 | 1,357 | 0 | 7,656 |
| Walleye | 128 | 34 | 44 | 73 | 0 | 28 | 14 | 0 |
| Number of Fish Caught: | | | | | | | | |
| Coho Salmon | 3,285 | 1,347 | 6,902 | 6,022 | 13,798 | 2,107 | 9,559 | 2,164 |
| Chinook Salmon | 12,861 | 7,081 | 19,095 | 10,597 | 11,611 | 9,057 | 40,831 | 5,866 |
| Rainbow Trout | 9,706 | 4,053 | 5,472 | 3,736 | 7,264 | 5,840 | 7,418 | 2,724 |
| Atlantic Salmon | 538 | 85 | 121 | 17 | 72 | 88 | 430 | 223 |
| Brown Trout | 16,874 | 11,372 | 11,442 | 5,181 | 15,302 | 5,983 | 15,838 | 3,913 |
| Lake Trout | 16,438 | 2,770 | 2,371 | 2,855 | 2,993 | 1,539 | 2,558 | 5,660 |
| Total Trout and Salmon | 59,838 | 26,715 | 45,476 | 28,660 | 51,039 | 24,727 | 76,635 | 20,573 |
| Smallmouth bass | 6,610 | 6,645 | 1,987 | 691 | 915 | 1,180 | 1,264 | 483 |
| Yellow Perch | 1,826 | 786 | 3,226 | 462 | 5,980 | 3,443 | 95 | 37,864 |
| Walleye | 136 | 78 | 98 | 286 | 0 | 28 | 28 | 0 |
| Harvest Rates Per Boat Trip Among Boats Fishing for Trout & Salmon | | | | | | | | |
| Coho | 0.110 | 0.105 | 0.321 | 0.533 | 0.560 | 0.162 | 0.210 | 0.144 |
| Chinook | 0.320 | 0.460 | 0.710 | 0.567 | 0.402 | 0.604 | 0.881 | 0.418 |
| Rainbow | 0.315 | 0.263 | 0.206 | 0.235 | 0.238 | 0.342 | 0.115 | 0.165 |
| Atlantic | 0.008 | 0.002 | 0.004 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.004 | 0.015 | 0.008 |
| Brown | 0.568 | 0.814 | 0.676 | 0.517 | 0.825 | 0.527 | 0.764 | 0.241 |
| Lake Trout | 0.337 | 0.098 | 0.059 | 0.147 | 0.031 | 0.082 | 0.013 | 0.262 |
| Total Trout and Salmon | 1.658 | 1.741 | 1.976 | 2.001 | 2.056 | 1.720 | 1.998 | 1.238 |
| Catch Rates Per Boat Trip Among Boats Fishing for Trout & Salmon | | | | | | | | |
| Coho | 0.154 | 0.151 | 0.624 | 0.692 | 1.253 | 0.290 | 0.649 | 0.230 |
| Chinook | 0.491 | 0.800 | 1.642 | 1.331 | 1.055 | 1.247 | 2.772 | 0.624 |
| Rainbow | 0.454 | 0.442 | 0.535 | 0.469 | 0.660 | 0.804 | 0.504 | 0.290 |
| Atlantic | 0.022 | 0.009 | 0.010 | 0.002 | 0.007 | 0.012 | 0.029 | 0.024 |
| Brown | 0.755 | 1.240 | 1.015 | 0.644 | 1.390 | 0.816 | 1.074 | 0.416 |
| Lake Trout | 0.702 | 0.294 | 0.233 | 0.359 | 0.272 | 0.212 | 0.174 | 0.602 |
| Total Trout and Salmon | 2.584 | 2.936 | 4.062 | 3.498 | 4.636 | 3.397 | 5.201 | 2.188 |