

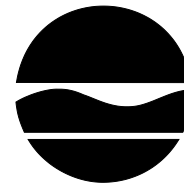
**New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources, Region 7**

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March 8, 2007

To: **Otisco Lake Volunteer Angler Diary Cooperators**

Dear Fellow Anglers:

In 2006, 16 cooperators recorded 172 outings at Otisco Lake. These outings provided data for 315 angler trips totaling 1,119 hours of fishing effort. This is by far the highest participation by cooperators since 1994. Overall, catch rates were up and the catch rate for legal gamefish was the best we have seen in the 28 years of the program (see following table).

Walleye

The total diary catch of 180 walleyes in 2006 is one of the highest totals to date. However, it is noteworthy to mention that one cooperator, fishing with as many as four other anglers, accounted for 127 of these walleye (121 legal). Overall, 160 legal length walleye were captured and 107 were harvested. Two of the harvested fish were smaller than the 18 inch minimum size limit and 12 other walleye less than 18 long were also recorded. Six walleye were caught and released without being measured. The largest walleye caught was 27.3 inches, and it was released.

Walleye were the most sought after species totaling 100 trips and 301 hours of targeted effort. Of the walleye recorded, 77% were caught by anglers specifically targeting walleye. Anglers who targeted walleye also accounted for most of the harvest as well (94%). The targeted catch rate (0.46 walleye/hour) was much higher than last year's rate and well into the range considered a "quality" fishery for walleye. The presence of a fair number of sub-legal length fish in the tally is another positive sign for the future walleye fishing in the lake. The presence of many (37) fish less than 19 inches in length indicates that we are now beginning to realize the benefits of the stocking program which resumed in 2002.

In October 2006 we again conducted shoreline night electrofishing to assess growth and survival of recently stocked walleye. A total of 171 young-of-year (YOY) and 16 yearling (2005 stocking) walleye were captured along with several adults. The number of YOY walleye captured is by far the highest we have seen in any of our fall survey work. All of the walleye captured, including adults, were caught south of the causeway which is where the walleye have been stocked since stocking resumed. Based on the amount of shoreline sampled and the number of walleyes caught we can estimate that nearly 6,000 YOY and 450 yearling walleye were in the southern end of the lake (south of the causeway) at the time of our sampling effort. The population estimate for YOY walleye represents a 13% survival rate of stocked fish which, although it sounds low, is actually outstanding. The yearling estimate is a lot less meaningful because the likelihood that some of those fish have moved into the main lake is high. In the big picture it appears that walleye recruitment the past two years has been very good which bodes well for future fishing. The stocking of 45,000 pond fingerling walleye is expected to continue on an annual basis for the foreseeable future.

Tiger muskellunge

Diary cooperators caught 27 tiger muskies in 2006 of which eight were legal length. Lengths ranged from 11 to 36 inches. The presence of a wide size range of fish continues to support the notion that survival of stocked tiger musky in recent years has improved. We also captured more large tiger muskies (five) in our electrofishing effort than we have in any survey over the past decade. Three of the fish we captured were in the 25-inch size range and the two others were around 39 inches. It will be telling to see whether the incidence of tiger muskies in both the diary catch and our future electrofishing efforts begins to decline in the coming years as the population of adult walleyes increases. I'm sure some anglers are hoping for this while others would love to see tiger numbers return to the level we saw in the mid-1990's when fishing for them was fantastic.

Black bass

Overall, a total of 142 smallmouth and 214 largemouth bass were caught by cooperators. Legal length bass made up 87% of the total. The longest largemouth caught was 20.5 inches while the longest smallmouth was 20 inches. Bass were the second most commonly targeted species in 2006 accounting for 68 trips and 201 hours of effort. Anglers targeting bass accounted for 53 and 60 of the smallmouth and largemouth caught, respectively. Interestingly, the percentage of legal fish caught by anglers targeting bass was substantially lower (70%) than the total recorded by all of the other cooperators. Targeted catch rates for bass (0.56 total bass/hour and 0.39 legal bass/hour) were similar to last year but still not as good as we have seen in the past. Nonetheless, these catch rates are about average when compared to other waters in New York State.

Brown trout

The catch of and effort for brown trout was up dramatically in 2006. The majority of brown trout reported in the diaries were caught by anglers specifically targeting trout. Overall, 60 trips totaling 213 hours were recorded by anglers pursuing trout. Anglers targeting trout accounted for 61 of the 68 brown trout caught and 10 of the 16 harvested. A total of 35 legal length brown trout were recorded in the diaries, of which 28 were captured by anglers targeting trout. The longest brown trout kept was 24 inches while the longest released was 22 inches.

Other

It has been a number of years since we reported on the "how, when, and where" information that is part of the data you supply so I thought I would quickly touch on some of it this year. First, looking at "how", anglers fishing from boats accounted for 730 hours of effort while shore anglers accounted for 320 hours. Shore anglers caught the vast majority of walleye (134) while boat anglers caught the bulk of the bass, brown trout, and tiger musky reported. As for the "when", cooperators recorded trips in every month except December but nearly 85% of the effort occurred from May-September. May and June were the peak months for walleye fishing but anglers pursuing trout in August also accounted for a good number as well. June and July were the peak months for bass but substantial numbers were also caught in August and September. Sixty percent of the tiger muskies recorded were caught in July while the month of September had the second highest total. As for brown trout, half were caught in June but July was also productive. Finally, with regard to the "where", nearly all of the walleye and brown trout came from the main lake between Turtle Bay and the causeway (Area 2 and 3). The bulk

of the tiger muskies came from Turtle Bay northward (Area 4) while bass were most commonly caught in the northern half of the lake (Area 3 and 4).

A last piece of information I wanted to point out is the record of fin clips observed on walleyes. From 1993 to 1996 just over 81,000 “advanced fingerling” (4.5-inch) walleye were stocked with either a left or right ventral fin clip, depending on the year. In addition 1,000 adult walleye were stocked with a left ventral clip in 1990. Over 209,000 un-clipped “pond fingerling” (1.5-inch) walleye were also stocked in the 1990's to compare relative survival of the two sizes of stocked walleye. Early returns of clipped fish were lower than expected in both the cooperator catch and in our own assessments, thus the reason why we switched to stocking only the more cheaply produced pond fingerlings. However, survival of the advanced fingerlings was apparently better than we thought because the percentage of clipped fish in the diary catch in the last few years has generally been high. From 2000 to 2006 clipped fish have comprised 10%, 7%, 18%, 28%, 41%, 47% and 29%, respectively of the reported legal catch. It's not likely that we will change the policy on Otisco as a result, but this information will aid us in our decision making process in other waters where walleye may be stocked.

As always we appreciate all that you do to maintain the diaries for us. The significant increase in participation in 2006 obviously provided us with much better information than we have had in a number of years. We hope that you will continue to contribute to the program in the coming years. Because of your effort we know a lot more about the status of the Otisco Lake fishery.

Thanks again and good luck fishing in 2007!

Sincerely,

David K. Lemon
Biologist 1 (Aquatic)

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Otisco Lake

Fishing Diary Summary

Year	Total # Fishing Trips	% of Successful Outings ³	Ave. Hours/ Angler Trip	Total Legal ¹ Gamefish Caught ²					Average Length (in.) of Fish Kept (# kept in parentheses)					# Hours to Catch 1 Legal Gamefish	# of Cooperators
				BT	WAE	SMB	LMB	TGR	BT	WAE	SMB	LMB	TGR		
				1979	174	63	4.0	2	165	26	--	--	16.8 (2)		
1980	43	32	4.6	--	17	18	--	--	--	22.4 (17)	13.3 (18)	--	--	11.8	4
1981	40	43	4.2	--	--	17	5	--	--	--	14.5 (17)	14.9 (5)	--	9.1	7
1982	27	33	3.1	--	3	13	--	--	--	24.0 (3)	13.0 (13)	--	--	8.1	4
1983	36	55	7.3	7	13	9	1	--	13.9 (7)	24.0 (13)	13.2 (9)	14.0 (1)	--	7.3	9
1984	40	18	4.0	5	1	8	--	--	19.9 (5)	26.0 (1)	13.1 (8)	--	--	29.6	8
1985	18	22	4.9	5	--	--	--	--	19.1 (5)	--	--	--	--	20.6	5
1986	6	84	5.6	1	--	3	--	--	23.3 (1)	--	13.7 (3)	--	--	14.2	2
1987	21	38	2.8	--	9	--	--	--	--	23.6 (9)	--	--	--	4.5	4
1988	10	29	3.4	--	2	--	--	--	--	24.4 (2)	--	--	--	6.3	2
1989	9	50	3.3	--	2	1	--	--	--	25.8 (2)	16.5 (1)	--	--	7.4	2
1990	96	21	5.8	11	2	--	--	1	20.7 (11)	26.3 (2)	--	--	32.0 (1)	30.1	7
1991	506	27	4.1	19	6	19	15	6	20.0 (19)	25.8 (6)	15.1 (19)	14.7 (15)	35.0 (6)	24.0	15
1992	434	49	3.1	80	2	9	8	7	18.4 (80)	20.8 (2)	16.4 (9)	14.1 (8)	35.0 (7)	5.5	21
1993	328	45	3.9	27	13	12	13	10	20.2 (27)	24.9 (13)	17.2 (12)	15.5 (13)	33.8 (10)	9.6	19
1994	397	34	4.0	35	7	14	7	3	14.9 (35)	24.7 (7)	17.0 (14)	15.6 (7)	33.7 (3)	11.9	27
1995	277	45	3.7	26	6	13	9	3	17.1 (26)	23.8 (6)	14.6 (13)	15.5 (9)	33.0 (3)	4.9	23
1996	213	48	4.0	11	59	47	65	31	17.5 (10)	22.4 (15)	14.2 (8)	--	37.2 (2)	4.0	15
1997	149	50	4.5	11	36	39	52	15	19.8 (9)	22.1 (8)	--	15.5 (1)	34.7 (3)	4.4	11
1998	179	62	4.9	12	71	41	64	38	19.0 (4)	21.2 (31)	13.2 (2)	--	43.5 (3)	3.9	11
1999	139	71	5.0	14	71	40	66	14	20.4 (10)	21.0 (34)	15.3 (15)	17.0 (2)	37.4 (3)	3.3	14
2000	113	71	5.0	7	142	17	8	1	17.6 (6)	21.3 (131)	15.8 (6)	17.0 (1)	36.0 (1)	3.3	6
2001	94	65	5.4	23	30	33	1	1	18.8 (8)	20.3 (12)	17.5 (1)	--	--	5.7	10
2002	61	53	4.6	3	17	19	11	1	20.5 (2)	21.5 (16)	--	16.0 (1)	--	5.5	8
2003	123	71	3.9	16	58	32	54	1	16.1 (4)	20.7 (51)	13.1 (6)	14.8 (3)	--	3.0	11
2004	107	72	4.3	16	51	36	42	2	22.8 (2)	21.6 (39)	14.7 (7)	12.0 (1)	--	3.0	11
2005	92	63	4.2	1	15	38	51	1	--	21.3 (13)	14.7 (15)	14.9 (6)	--	3.6	11
2006	316	69	3.5	12	160	99	175	8	18.4 (16)	21.6 (107)	15.4 (14)	14.3 (6)	31.7 (1)	2.3	16

1979 was the first year for this summary.

1 - Gamefish = BT-Brown Trout, WAE-Walleye, SMB-Smallmouth Bass, LMB-Largemouth Bass, TGR-Tiger Musky

2 - Beginning with 1996, the record includes all legal fish caught. Prior years data include only those legal fish that were kept.

3 - Success = One or more legal target fish caught. An outing can include more than one "trip"(i.e., two anglers fishing and one legal fish caught between them).