

Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources, Region 7
Bureau of Fisheries
1285 Fisher Avenue, Cortland, New York 13045-1090
Phone: (607) 753-3095 ext 213 • **Fax:** (607) 753-8532
Website: www.dec.ny.gov



March 10, 2015

To: Skaneateles Lake Angler Cooperators

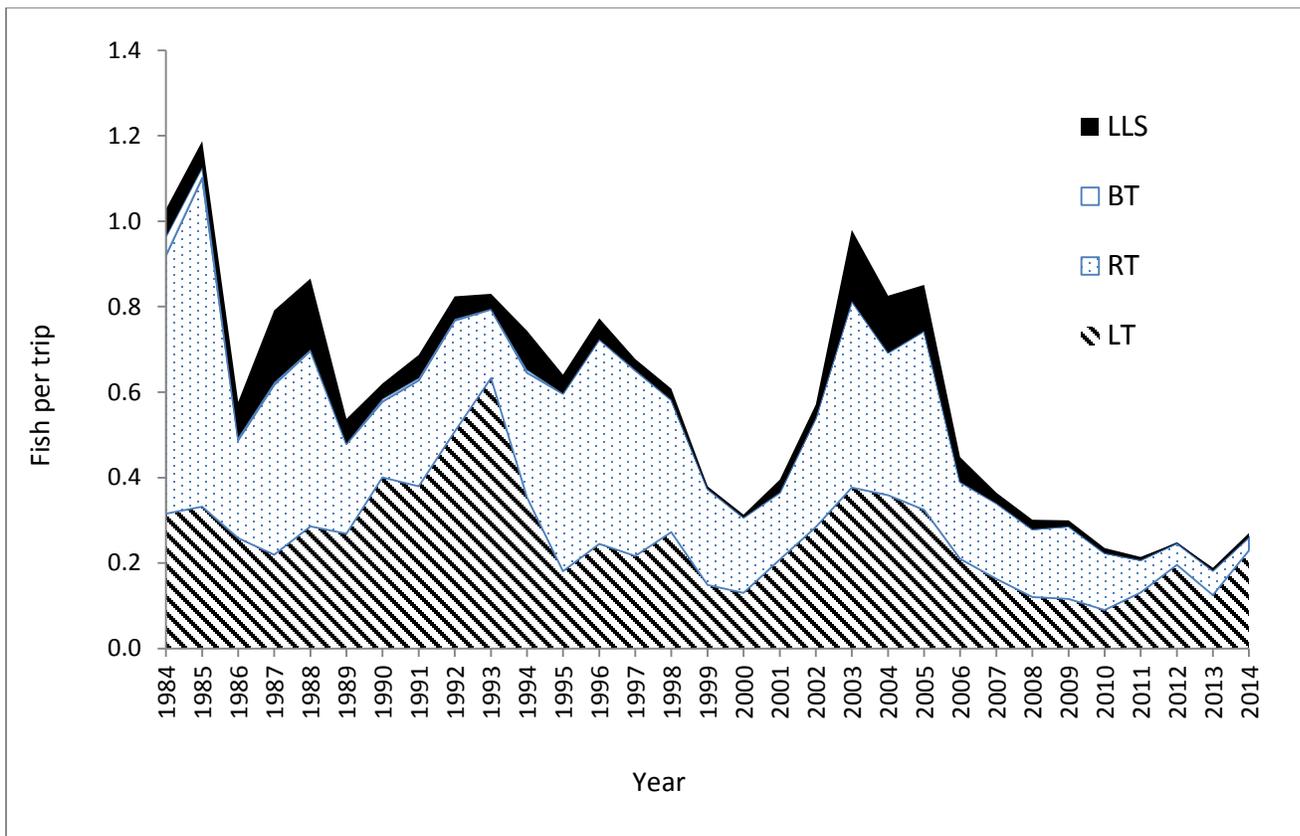
Dear Fellow Anglers:

We have compiled the data from the 2014 diaries and are sending you the summary information, your 2014 diary and additional diaries for 2015 if needed. Thank you for your cooperation.

Open Water Trout and Salmon Fishing

In 2014, 23 Skaneateles Lake open water cooperators caught 414 legal salmonids in 266 trips (cooperator and party members combined) for an average catch of 1.6 legal fish per trip. Open water cooperators had a legal salmonid catch rate of 2.0 hours per fish, which is a noticeable improvement from 3.7 hours per fish in 2013. Anglers were successful in catching at least one legal salmonid in 70 percent of their trips which is 10% better than the previous year.

Skaneateles Lake receives annual stockings of thousands of rainbow trout and landlocked salmon as part of a largely put, grow, and take fishery. There is some level of rainbow trout natural reproduction from the tributaries, but its contribution to the lake population is unknown. In addition to these stocked species, native lake trout, yellow perch, and smallmouth bass are also popular and self-sustaining game fish regularly caught by Skaneateles anglers. Recent angler diary reports indicate that over the past few years Skaneateles Lake has not produced as many trout and salmon as it did in the past. Ecological and biological changes in the lake may be having a negative impact on the survival of both stocked and wild salmonids. Recent Skaneateles Lake warmwater angler diary reports show a substantial increase in the average size of smallmouth bass kept by our angler cooperators. This increase in smallmouth bass size is likely a result of an increasing food supply provided indirectly by the establishment of zebra mussels and increased stands of aquatic vegetation. Larger smallmouth bass are more likely to prey on young trout and salmon and also compete with those same trout and salmon for food. This would slow their growth rate, leaving them at a vulnerable size for a longer period of time. The older, larger trout and salmon growth rates appear to be very good relative to the past results. So the lucky salmonids that survive being eaten at an early age appear to be doing quite well once they grow out of the predation window.



The graph above shows the catch rates (catch/trip) of legal salmonids caught by our Skaneateles Lake open water cooperators from 1985 through 2014 and the relative contribution of each species in the catch over time. Catch rates are used to remove the effects of having varying numbers of cooperators and trips from year to year. Note that the actual data are still provided in the attached summary as usual.

Lake Trout

Skaneateles Lake open water cooperators caught 351 legal lake trout, of which 110 were kept. This was the highest number of legal lake trout caught since 2005. Lake trout comprised 85 percent of the total legal salmonid lake catch. An additional 66 sub-legal lake trout were caught and released. The lake trout kept by our open water cooperators averaged 19.3 inches, which is among the highest average sizes on record, and the largest one caught was 41.5 inches. The average weight of kept lake trout in 2014 (6.4 lbs.) was more than twice what has been the typical result, although relatively few fish are actually weighed so it may not be a true representation. Trolling off Five Mile Point in June and then August through October produced the best catches of lake trout. Mandana was also a good location in June and July.

Rainbow Trout

In 2014, Skaneateles Lake open water cooperators caught 48 legal rainbow trout, of which 38 were kept. Rainbow trout comprised 12 percent of the legal salmonid lake catch. An additional 19 sub-legal rainbow trout were caught and released. The fish kept by open water cooperators averaged 20.4 inches and the largest rainbow trout caught was 29.5 inches. Trolling off Five Mile Point in August and October produced the best catches of rainbows. The Mandana area had consistent catches through the season yielding a total of one less fish than the Five Mile Point region.

Rainbow trout numbers in 2014 were the lowest since the mid-1970's, however the average fish size was from four to as many as seven inches larger than those caught when the catch rates (and presumably the population size) were higher. This is likely due to reduced forage competition resulting from the smaller rainbow trout population.

Landlocked Atlantic Salmon

Our open water cooperators caught 15 legal landlocked salmon, of which six were kept. Landlocked salmon comprised less than four percent of the legal salmonid lake catch. One additional sub-legal salmon was caught and released. The landlocked salmon kept by our open water cooperators averaged 19.0 inches and the largest salmon caught was 19.5 inches. As with the excellent lake trout growth, the average weight of kept landlocked salmon was among the highest on record, but the same data limitations exist of few fish being weighed. Fishing near Lourdes in October produced the best catches.

The switch over to the “Sebago” strain of landlocked salmon in the DEC hatchery that has been described in previous cooperator letters is now complete. It is hoped that the improved returns to the fishery that have been seen in other lakes changing to this strain will also be the case for Skaneateles Lake.

Skaneateles Lake Tributary Fishing

In 2014, four Skaneateles Lake tributary cooperators recorded 22 trips and caught four legal rainbow trout and one legal brown trout. The number of trips was down from the 39 recorded in 2013, the decline may have been at least partially affected by the weather. Of the five legal fish caught, one rainbow trout and the brown trout were released. Additionally there were 10 rainbow trout and two brown trout that were sub-legal and released. The average legal rainbow trout kept was 18.7 inches with the largest being 26.0 inches. The brown trout averaged 9.0 inches with a maximum of 11.0 inches for all the fish caught. Grout Brook accounted for 12 of the 14 rainbow trout caught by our cooperators. The remaining two rainbows came from Bear Swamp Creek. Grout Brook also produced the only three brown trout caught. The late and unusually cold spring of 2014 may have contributed to the lower rainbow catches. Anglers that fished the traditional April 1st opener experienced unfavorable conditions and this likely affected their catches. The cold water likely caused the run to be later than anglers have been used to which also may have affected the catches. On a more positive note we did receive reports of nice rainbows being caught from Grout Brook through the season.

Skaneateles Lake Warmwater Fishing

In 2014, our Skaneateles Lake warmwater cooperators had another excellent year of smallmouth bass fishing. Six cooperators caught 221 legal smallmouth bass, of which 24 were kept. An additional 239 sub-legal smallmouth bass were caught and released. Six legal largemouth bass were caught and released and 15 legal chain pickerel was caught and released along with four sub-legal fish. The largest smallmouth bass, largemouth bass and chain pickerel caught by our warmwater cooperators were 20.0, 18.0 and 23.0 inches, respectively.

Overall, our warmwater cooperators expended 500.5 hours of effort in 86 trips to catch a total of 466 bass, of which 227 were legal size. Our warmwater cooperators indicated they targeted bass (smallmouth and largemouth bass combined) during 56 of their 86 trips which accounted for 328 hours of targeted effort. The catch rates for anglers targeting bass were 1.13 fish per hour for all smallmouth bass and 0.60 fish per hour for legal size fish. The few largemouth bass caught produced both an overall and legal fish catch rate of 0.02 fish per hour. These targeted bass catch rates were compared to the 2014 Owasco and Otisco lakes angler cooperator targeted bass catch rates and the average targeted bass catch rates in the 1977-1980 New York State Bass Study. The Bass Study collected smallmouth and largemouth bass information from 12 popular bass fishing waters across the state through the use of an angler diary program. The nearest bass study water to Skaneateles Lake was Tully Lake in Preble. The 2014 Owasco and Otisco lakes targeted catch rates were 0.32

and 0.21 legal smallmouth bass per hour, respectively, approximately ½ of the Skaneateles Lake catch rate. The 1977-1980 statewide bass study targeted catch rates were 0.26 legal bass per hour (=> 12 inches), again well below the 2014 Skaneateles Lake diary cooperator results.

The information provided by our warmwater cooperators suggests that Skaneateles Lake smallmouth bass spawning and recruitment to the fishery is very successful with many bass surviving and growing to sizes approaching 20 inches. As with the adult salmonids, growth of smallmouth bass appears to be increasing.

Our warmwater angler diary cooperators have provided us with a valuable history of bass fishing since 1978 and indications are that Skaneateles Lake is currently evolving into one of the best smallmouth bass fisheries in New York State.

Again, thank you and good fishing in 2015.

Sincerely,

Scott Prindle
Aquatic Biologist

Skaneateles Lake Angler Diary Cooperator Response Results

Year	Total # Angler Trips	% Trips Successful	Avg Hours/Trip	Legal Salmonids Caught				Average Length of Legal Fish Kept (in.)				Average Weight of Legal Fish Kept (lbs)				# hours to catch 1 legal salmonid	# of coop.
				LT	RT	BT	LLS	LT	RT	BT	LLS	LT	RT	BT	LLS		
1966	273	66	4.1	220	69	--	--	17.9	16.2	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.9	18
1967	155	69	4.0	51	83	--	--	19.4	16.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.4	16
1968	171	74	4.4	92	109	--	--	18.3	16.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.6	17
1969	302	71	4.1	234	115	--	--	17.7	15.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.2	25
1970	406	80	4.2	171	237	--	--	17.9	14.7	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.1	28
1971	133	61	3.2	69	102	--	--	17.4	15.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.5	16
1972	217	64	4.0	51	134	--	--	17.5	16.2	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.9	16
1973	159	73	5.0	115	57	--	--	18.6	16.4	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.6	16
1974	119	90	3.5	123	57	--	--	17.7	16.4	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.2	8
1975	101	90	3.8	40	70	--	--	19.0	16.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.4	7
1976	94	63	6.9	60	29	--	--	18.3	18.5	--	--	1.8	3.3	--	--	7.2	9
1977	114	58	5.5	91	81	--	--	18.2	15.3	--	--	1.7	1.7	--	--	3.6	12
1978	534	75	3.4	506	503	1	--	17.5	14.5	18.5	--	1.6	1.5	2.3	--	2.7	33
1979	474	83	3.0	253	619	1	--	17.7	14.2	10.0	--	1.3	1.4	--	--	2.1	35
1980	640	76	3.1	459	759	--	--	17.5	14.5	--	--	1.7	1.3	--	--	1.9	38
1981	1018	71	3.9	607	1103	--	--	17.5	14.7	--	--	1.6	1.5	--	--	3.0	77
1982	967	73	3.7	503	1198	4	--	17.7	13.8	11.8	--	1.7	1.3	0.8	--	2.7	72
1983	977	71	3.7	699	1074	18	19	17.4	14.5	13.3	17.8	2.0	1.2	1.5	1.6	2.8	67
1984	1532	86	3.8	483	925	68	99	17.5	14.0	14.4	16.4	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	3.2	70
1985	1596	73	3.4	508	1179	38	94	17.5	13.9	15.1	16.9	1.9	1.0	1.5	1.5	2.7	64
1986	1252	62	3.7	396	351	10	127	17.2	13.6	15.9	16.3	1.8	0.9	2.5	1.4	4.1	51
1987	1169	68	3.6	336	609	9	258	17.4	14.5	17.4	16.5	1.8	1.1	2.2	1.4	3.0	42
1988	1090	72	4.1	438	630	4	254	17.3	15.9	18.5	17.5	2.0	1.5	2.5	1.6	3.1	50
1989	1127	61	4.1	411	322	3	87	17.1	16.9	18.7	17.7	1.9	2.5	3.0	2.1	4.8	43
1990	1100	70	4.8	614	271	10	55	17.5	15.7	18.1	18.5	1.9	2.1	1.3	1.9	2.7	43
1991	1109	68	3.2	581	380	9	83	17.6	16.0	18.7	17.9	2.2	1.8	--	1.8	2.7	48
1992	1069	70	3.2	778	398	5	82	17.5	16.0	19.2	17.6	1.9	1.5	--	1.6	2.2	64
1993	1101	78	3.0	969	247	2	54	17.6	16.4	18.5	17.9	1.7	1.7	--	2.3	2.1	57
1994	1026	76	3.4	542	447	11	139	17.7	15.6	19.7	17.5	2.0	1.9	2.8	1.8	2.2	57

Skaneateles Lake Angler Diary Cooperator Response Results

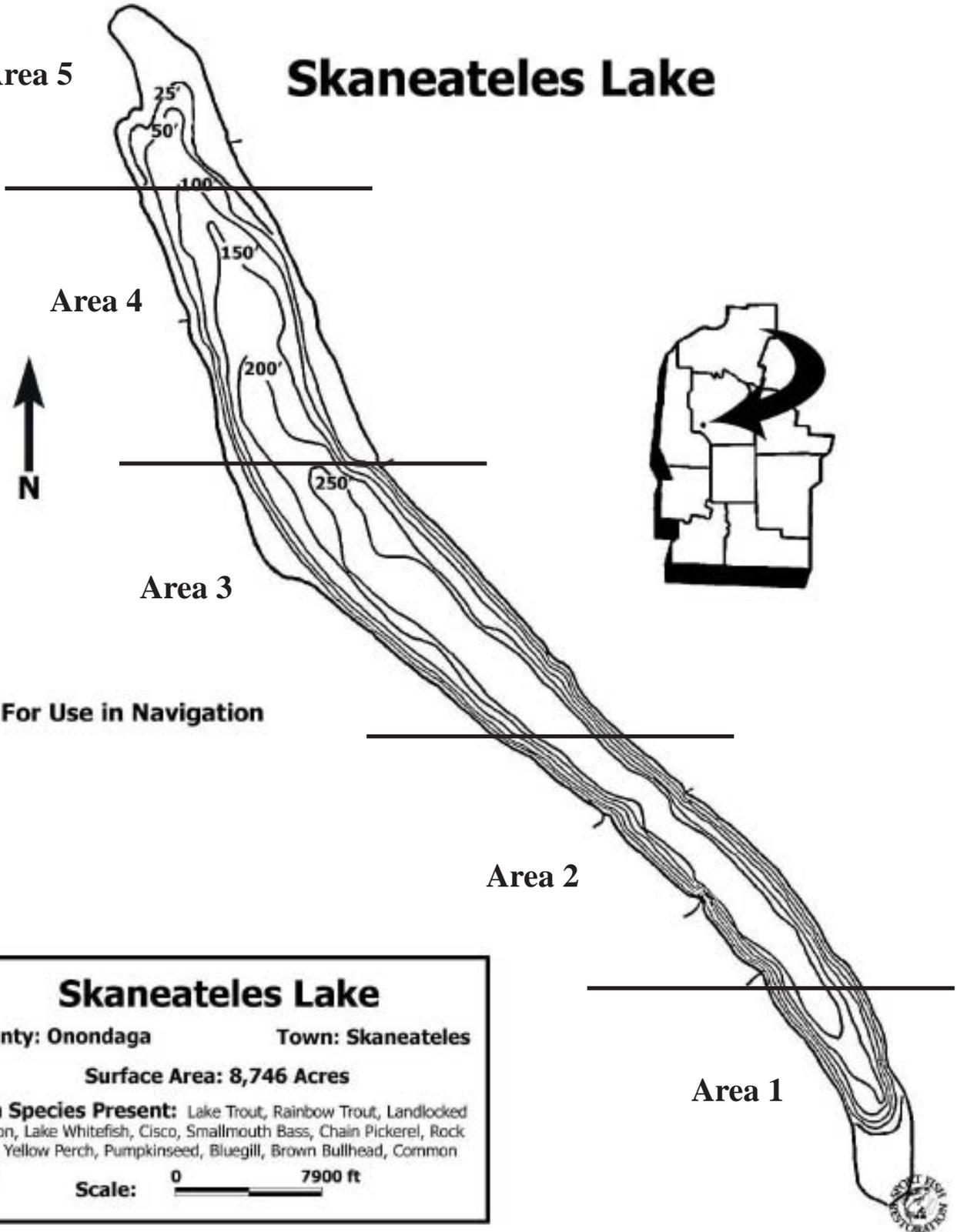
Year	Total # Angler Trips	% Trips Successful	Avg Hours/Trip	Legal Salmonids Caught				Average Length of Legal Fish Kept (in.)				Average Weight of Legal Fish Kept (lbs)				# hours to catch 1 legal salmonid	# of coop.
				LT	RT	BT	LLS	LT	RT	BT	LLS	LT	RT	BT	LLS		
1995	951	67	3.3	277	636	2	67	17.9	15.1	19.5	17.7	2.0	1.3	--	1.8	2.2	60
1996	849	73	3.1	375	734	0	75	17.6	15.2	--	16.7	2.0	1.4	--	1.5	1.5	48
1997	877	74	3.5	332	665	2	39	17.4	16.2	20.0	17.5	1.7	1.5	--	1.8	2.3	41
1998	812	76	3.3	417	475	0	40	17.5	16.3	--	17.7	1.5	1.6	--	1.7	1.8	44
1999	485	72	3.1	228	344	0	9	17.3	16.3	--	18.7	1.4	1.5	--	2.2	1.8	33
2000	424	72	3.1	199	271	0	10	17.7	16.0	--	17.8	1.8	1.7	--	1.5	2.1	26
2001	537	72	3.2	319	240	1	46	17.2	16.7	20.0	17.6	1.6	1.7	2.0	2.1	2.2	32
2002	418	76	3.6	435	392	0	48	17.7	16.1	--	18.0	1.5	1.7	--	--	1.7	27
2003	762	79	3.2	577	669	0	255	17.1	16.6	--	18.0	1.4	2.0	--	2.1	1.6	36
2004	646	76	3.1	550	511	0	204	17.6	16.6	--	18.9	1.7	1.8	--	2.3	1.6	33
2005	597	78	3.5	497	641	0	166.0	17.8	16.5	--	19.2	1.6	1.9	--	2.3	1.6	43
2006	519	66	3.8	321	276	1	88	17.7	17.4	--	19.0	1.7	2.3	--	2.6	2.9	36
2007	375	72	4.2	249	272	0	38	17.3	17.8	--	19.9	1.5	2.6	--	2.5	2.8	31
2008	402	64	4.1	184	243	1	34	17.7	17.9	--	20.0	2.0	2.3	--	2.5	3.5	31
2009	390	61	4.0	178	260	0	21	18.4	19.0	--	18.9	2.1	2.7	--	--	3.4	27
2010	321	67	3.7	138	204	0	18	19.2	19.2	--	20.2	2.9	3.2	--	3.4	3.3	22
2011	314	57	3.6	201	116	0	11	18.2	20.0	--	21.8	3.4	3.3	--	4.1	3.4	24
2012	227	68	3.4	300	77	0	3	18.8	20.7	--	25.0	2.0	3.6	--	6.0	2.0	19
2013	256	60	3.9	191	88	0	11	18.1	18.8		20.0	2.3	2.8		1.1	3.4	24
2014	266	70	3.2	351	48	0	15	19.3	20.4		19.0	6.4	3.3		3.4	2.0	23



Region 7

Area 5

Skaneateles Lake



Area 4



Area 3

Not For Use in Navigation

Area 2

Skaneateles Lake

County: Onondaga

Town: Skaneateles

Surface Area: 8,746 Acres

Fish Species Present: Lake Trout, Rainbow Trout, Landlocked Salmon, Lake Whitefish, Cisco, Smallmouth Bass, Chain Pickerel, Rock Bass, Yellow Perch, Pumpkinseed, Bluegill, Brown Bullhead, Common Carp

Scale: 0  7900 ft

