

**Additional Information for Anglers
2020 Lake Ontario Stocking Decision**

Q: How will this stocking reduction impact fishing in 2020?

A: The reductions being implemented in 2020 will have little impact on fishing in the near term as the fish that anglers will catch next year have already been stocked in the system. In addition, about 50% of the adult Chinook salmon in Lake Ontario are naturally reproduced or “wild” fish.

Q: How will this impact fishing in the future?

A: If alewife abundance continues to decline, the size of Chinook may decline, but angler success (i.e. catch rate) may remain high as Chinook salmon become more vulnerable to angling.

Q: Are other fish species slated for reductions?

A: Not at this time.

Q: What are the actual numbers of fish being stocked?

A: *Even with these reductions, lake-wide salmon and trout stocking in Lake Ontario in 2020 will exceed 3.6 million fish, including approximately 1.1 million Chinook salmon, 755,000 rainbow trout/steelhead, 556,000 brown trout, 601,000 lake trout, 325,000 coho salmon and 200,000 yearling Atlantic salmon.*

Q: Why isn't the stocking of other species of trout and salmon being reduced?

A: While other trout and salmon species eat alewife, Chinook salmon consume the largest amount in the shortest timespan. Reducing Chinook salmon numbers provides the greatest reduction of alewife consumption in the short-term. Further reducing lake trout stocking is intended to provide more long-term relief, since they grow slower and live longer than Chinook salmon. Lake Ontario's diversity of trout and salmon supports a world-class fishery, and managers want to maintain that diversity to the extent possible.

Q: Will lake trout stocking cuts affect the lake trout fishery?

A: No; these cuts will not result in measurable changes, if any, to the adult lake trout population or angler success for 4 - 6 years. The adult lake trout population is currently healthy.

Q: Is the Province of Ontario also cutting stocking?

A: The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry continues to make stocking reductions commensurate with New York's.

Q: Do naturally produced fish contribute to the fishery?

A: All trout and salmon species in Lake Ontario reproduce naturally to varying degrees, with Chinook salmon being the most successful. Fish produced via natural reproduction can contribute significantly to the overall population of Chinooks in the lake.

Q: When will stocking numbers be increased?

A: It is not possible to forecast when that might occur. Scientists from the US Geological Survey, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the DEC will continue to monitor the status of the alewife population, sportfisheries, and Chinook salmon growth to assess the balance between

predators and available alewife. Fisheries managers are currently managing in an adaptive fashion, hence future stocking will increase or decrease based on the amount of prey available.

Q: Will there be a negative economic impact from these stocking reductions?

A: As we anticipate that fishing quality will remain high, angler participation and associated economic benefits are not expected to decline.

Q: Three successive stocking reductions seems extreme?

A: A binational science committee called for deeper stocking cuts including other trout and salmon species, however, managers chose to continue with a more measured approach.

Q: What caused the alewife population to decline?

A: The severe winters of 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 likely contributed to poor alewife reproduction in both years. Alewife reproduction was excellent in 2016, but likely due to the relative absence of fish produced in 2013 and 2014, the 2016 fish are being eaten faster than anticipated. Relatively low alewife reproduction in both 2017 and 2018 has exacerbated the situation, making these additional stocking cuts critical in maintaining the world-class fishery.

Q: Why not stock alewife?

A: It is not logistically and economically feasible to stock Alewife. Even if DEC was could devote all of its current hatchery production to alewife, no trout and salmon would be available for stocking, and the amount of alewife stocked would feed Lake Ontario predators for less than 1 month