The Wallop-Breaux Fund

A new era in funding fishery management began on July 17, 1984 when President Reagan signed into law the Tax Reform Act of 1984. Included in the new law was a revision and expansion of the 34-year-old Dingell-Johnson Act. The result will be to provide to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources an estimated additional $2.5 million annually, beginning October 1, 1985. This money is to be shared between the Division of Wildlife and the Division of Watercraft. This will be an increase of about $1.75 million annually to the Division of Wildlife. Nationally it is expected that over $1 billion will be raised over the next 10 years for the management of recreational boating and fishing.

Increasing fishing access will be a major use of the new monies in Ohio. Tom Wasson, executive administrator of Fish Management and Research, Division of Wildlife stated there is a "definite need for additional access and improved access to the Ohio River, Lake Erie, and inland waters."

"With the Lake Erie access study completed, and the Ohio River access study in progress, we will be in good shape to move on the recommendations once the additional monies become available," he added.

Additionally, new Division of Wildlife fisheries research on the Ohio River is envisioned. Expansion of fisheries research on Lake Erie is not a planned use of the additional monies at this time by the Division of Wildlife.

The new legislation replacing the decades old Dingell-Johnson (D-J) Act is formally called the Boating Safety and Sport Fish Restoration Act.

Passage of the legislation was due to the support and hard work of many people and organizations. Additional support was generated in mid-1983 when the sport fishing and boating industries joined forces to support legislation to improve boating safety, access, and sport fish restoration.

Important congressional leadership was provided by Senator Malcolm Wallop (R-WY) and Congressman John B. Breaux (D-LA). A key provision of the law, the Aquatic Resources Fund, has been named the Wallop-Breaux fund in their honor.

The Wallop-Breaux fund is a good example of a user pay tax that will help provide a strong national support for sport fisheries restoration. Taxes paid by fifty-four million sport anglers will be used to improve boating and fishing in the USA. Most of the Wallo-Breaux monies originate from the angler and boater. It is administered by the federal government and used by state fisheries agencies. The fund is not a handout but a user pay tax that returns federal taxes paid on fuel used in recreational boats plus excise taxes on fishing tackle and related products to recreational boating and sport fishing programs.

No federal debt increase will result from this legislation as the monies are collected from "users" such as boaters and anglers in advance of their being spent on programs to enhance boating and fishing.

The major portions of the Boater Safety and Sport Fish Restoration Act include:

- Establishment of an Aquatic Resources Fund (Wallop-Breaux Fund) that consists of two accounts: (1) Sport Fish Restoration Account, and (2) Boat Safety Account. The Sport Fish Restoration Account will receive funds from:
  - manufacturers' excise tax on fishing tackle and accessories (estimate $30 to $50 million/year);
  - import duties on fishing tackle, yachts and pleasure craft ($15 to $20 million/year),
  - and the excess funds over the first $46 million from the 9¢ per gallon motor boat fuel tax ($30 to $45 million/year).
- The Boat Safety Account will receive the first $45 million from the fuel tax and the Land and Water Conservation Fund will receive $1 million.

- Coastal states, for the first time, must allocate their sport fish restoration monies equitably between freshwater and saltwater fishery projects based on the number of freshwater and saltwater anglers within the coastal states.
- Each state must allocate 10% of its apportionment to provide 75% funding for the improvement on acquisition and development of public access facilities for boaters and anglers.
- Allows states to spend up to 10% of its apportionment to provide 75% of the funding of an aquatic resources education program.

The Wallop-Breaux Fund is a significant piece of legislation that will provide a major portion of the funding for improvement of boating and angling during the next decade.

Sources: Sport Fishing Institute, National Marine Manufacturers Association, and Ohio Chapter American Fisheries Society Newsletter.

Artificial Reef Development

The Wallop-Breaux Legislation is the most significant legislation ever to affect recreational fisheries and will increase opportunities for artificial reef development. Over the last ten years researchers have shown the biological, social, and economic benefits of artificial reefs. Reef projects which build on this work and effectively utilize Wallop-Breaux funds can provide a broader base of awareness and support among anglers, fishery managers, and funding sources. Such projects should be well received by the angler and boater since much of the Wallop-Breaux monies will originate from this group.

A well planned state project could utilize the funds raising efforts of private boating and fishing groups to contribute to the required matching funds.

The complementary nature of this legislation and artificial reef habitat enhancement provides a new avenue for reef development. Creation of artificial reef fisheries through Wallop-Breaux can help bring reef construction into the mainstream of fishery management techniques, and encourage further public and private investment.

Source: Artificial Reef Development Center

Locally

Tom Wasson, executive administrator of Fish Management and Research, Division of Wildlife, ODNR reports that the ODNR has applied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for permits to build artificial fishing reefs in Lake Erie near Fairport Harbor and Ashtabula Harbor.

The application by the ODNR was based in part upon data supplied by the Northeast Sea Grant Extension Advisory Committee. It appears that the 1984 walleye catch in the Central Basin of Lake Erie may approach and even exceed the 1 million fish mark.
Forensic Identification Of Commercial Fish Fillets

Federal, state, and Ontario provincial law enforcement officials have been cooperatively monitoring certain illegal fishing practices in the Great Lakes more intensively during the last few years. One of these practices is the marketing of such high value percid species as undersized sauger (Stizostedion canadense) and walleye (S黑白fele smutnema) as yellow perch (Perca flavescens), which is currently the highest priced Great Lakes commercial species. A Michigan-based wholesale/retail seafood company operating in the Detroit area was suspected of this practice, prompting the seizure of alleged fraudulently labeled and undersized fish fillets by state and federal law enforcement agents.

At the request of the USFWS senior resident law enforcement agent in Ann Arbor, 3 boxes of breaded and battered frozen fish fillets, allegedly perch or walleye, that had been confiscated were treated using the biochemical genetic technique of horizontal starch gell electrophoresis to discriminate proteins in the muscle tissue.

Traditional Divers Flag Still Permissable

The June 1984 issue of TWINE LINE contained an article titled “Look Out For Flags While Boating” which discussed the requirements of the United States Coast Guard’s (USCG) new Unified Rules of the Road for vessels engaged in diving operations. Unfortunately, the information was misleading.

The new rules state that a vessel conducting diving operations and restricted in ability to maneuver (generally when divers are attached to the vessel) must display by day the ALPHA flag signal. By night, that vessel must display three lights in a vertical line, with the highest and lowest being red and the middle one white. All these signals must be displayed if the vessel operator feels he is restricted in ability to maneuver.

For vessels tending free-swimming divers, if the vessel operator feels that the diving itself does not interfere with the maneuverability of the vessel, then the ALPHA flag signal is not required and the traditional divers flag (red with white diagonal stripe) should be used. The traditional divers flag should not be considered obsolete and may be displayed with the ALPHA flag or used alone when the ALPHA flag is not required. It cannot, however, be used in place of the ALPHA flag because it is not a navigational signal and does not indicate that a vessel is restricted in ability to maneuver.

Sea Grant wishes to thank Commander G. R. Siddall, Chief of Marine Information and Rules Branch, U.S. Coast Guard for calling this error to our attention and providing correct requirements.

DO SOMETHING WILD for wildlife by checking line 20 on your state income tax form. In 1984 Ohioans contributed nearly $5 million for the conservation of the state’s nongame and endangered wildlife through this fund administered by the Division of Wildlife, ODNR.

New Charter Captain’s Association Formed

Opportunities for Central Basin anglers are good for walleye, yellow perch, smallmouth bass, white bass, salmon, and trout. A number of charter captains also feel the opportunities are good.

During 1984, Lake Erie’s Central Basin (Huron to Conneaut) became home to members of a new association of charter boat captains. The feeling among many of these individuals is that the fishing is just as good in the Central Basin as it is in the Western Basin but the west end seems to receive all the publicity.

Three charter boat associations presently exist: the Lake Erie Charter Boat Association (LEBCA), the Western Basin Charter Boat Association (WBCBA) and the West Sister Island Charter Boat Association. A new association, composed of Central Basin charter boat captains, has now formed with the title of Central Basin Charter Boat Association (CBBCA). CBBCA’s membership is open to all charter captains on Lake Erie, regardless of where they are docked.” stated Association President Captain Bob Jaycox, skipper of the Miss Majestic (Lorain) “however, all of our present members are docked in the Central Basin.”

Jaycox stated the purpose of CBBCA is the promotion of safe boating, safe, and legal fishing, comradeship among fellow captains and, most of all, promoting the Central Basin sport fishery.

Although CBBCA is not affiliated with LECBA the organizations have agreed to work together on common goals and efforts regarding the Lake Erie sportfishing and charter boat affairs. Newly elected officials include President Jaycox, Captain Robert Nelson Jr. (Elyria) skipper of the Water Buffalo as vice president, and Captain Mark Katerba (Lorain) of Bay Dog charters as secretary-treasurer. A Walleye Hotline has been established at Lakeside Bait and Tackle (216/288-9746) in Lorain for information regarding fishing and charters. The association is presently over 20 strong and invites new members. Annual dues for captains are $25.00 per year with associate memberships offered at $10.00 per year. Those interested in joining should contact Captain Mark Katerba at (216) 282-6264.

Twine Line is published six times a year by the Advisory Service of the Ohio Sea Grant Program which functions as a component of the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service. The Ohio Sea Grant Program is administered by the Center for Lake Erie Area Research (CLEAR) within the College of Biological Sciences. It is partially supported by funds from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Department of Commerce. It includes information about the Great Lakes fishing industry, Lake Erie fish stocks and markets, Ohio Sea Grant research, education and advisory service efforts, and other information of interest to Ohio fishermen, fish processors, and the general public. All educational programs and activities conducted by the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service are available to all potential clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, or religious affiliation.

Invitation to Specialist

Frank Lichtkoppler, District Extension Specialist, Sea Grant, has been invited to participate on the Lake County Overall Economic Development Program Committee by the Lake County Board of Commissioners, Daniel J. Supanick, President.

The OEDP Committee will work to develop an Economic Development Plan for the county. The committee will coordinate various local activities to stimulate new private and public investment in order to provide permanent employment and growth opportunities in Lake County.
New Freezing Process May Help Commercial Fishery

Although at the time of this writing all tests have not yet been completed, questionnaire results definitely reflect the superior quality found in the fillets using Gould's dip solution. These 10-month-old fillets appeared to be freshly caught. They had maintained good flesh texture before and after cooking, and did not have the strong fishy taste exhibited by many fish after 10 months in the freezer.

Many positive benefits may occur if Lake Erie's commercial fishery processors adapt this new technique. First, it will allow fishermen to catch and sell more of these species than before. Second, the commercial fish houses will be able to freezer store a product and market that product successfully during the off-season. These two factors may help to salvage the rapidly deteriorating commercial fishery, which has suffered many harsh set-backs during the last four years. Finally, the Lake Erie fishery may benefit by increased numbers of freshwater drum and white perch being caught because white perch negatively interact with economically important native species through egg predation, hybridization and sharing of common food resources.

—Dave Kelch

MAREP

MAREP had a “real good beginning,” National Weather Service Cleveland Area Manager Marvin Miller stated. MAREP, the acronym for the Mariner Report Program conducted on Lake Erie this summer, was designed to provide the National Weather Service with accurate and timely on-the-water observations of Lake Erie’s weather and wave conditions.

“We had almost 150 MAREP reports this season. They were very, very helpful in providing more timely information,” Miller added.

The National Weather Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Ohio Sea Grant Extension sponsored MAREP as a cooperative program. The program information was received by Sea Grant Extension volunteer boaters who were selected and trained. During the boating season, they reported on-the-water Lake Erie weather and wave conditions to a shore station via marine radio. The reports were then relayed on the National Weather Service (NWS) in Cleveland. The NWS utilized the reports in preparing its Lake Erie forecasts, or in issuing weather updates.

The data were useful in improving the forecasting and storm warning ability of the NWS. The weather reports were improved, thereby helping increase boater safety and aiding in wiser recreational use of Lake Erie.

The most frequent reporters were Captain Robert A. Jaycox of the charter fishing boat Miss Majestic and Captain William Mason of the charter fishing boat Roll-N-Rock, both from Lorain. Ohio Sea Grant thanks both of these captains for providing this useful service.

Mr. Miller indicated that the NWS is interested in working with Ohio Sea Grant Extension again next year to continue providing Lake Erie MAREP reports.

—Frank Lichtkoppler
New Market Established For Gizzard Shad

For years gizzard shad (*Dorosoma cepedianum*) have loaded the nets of Lake Erie shore seines and trapnetters during the spring and late fall months with only a very small percentage being kept for use as fertilizer or pet food. The demand for shad in these products has dropped and the shad has become a nuisance to commercial fishermen. Commercial fisheries, however, have not been the only ones plagued by gizzard shad. Many power plants along Lake Erie must shut down during peak periods of gizzard shad concentrations because the shad clog intakes for generator cooling water. Then power must be purchased from other sources creating an additional expense. Shad die-off periods during the fall, winter and spring leave tons of shad littering shorelines, beaches and launch ramps of rivers and harbors.

Gizzard shad are the most abundant fish species in Lake Erie yet have been the least utilized. They do serve a purpose for their existence, however, by providing some of the forage base (food source) for more popular species such as the walleye. Yet the tremendous die-offs represent a waste of the resource as some use could be made from these destined-for-doom fish. One telephone call from Louisiana changed all of this.

During the fall of 1981, Louisiana State University Sea Grant Agent Jerald Horst contacted Ohio Sea Grant with a request for potential source of baitfish for use in Louisiana's crawfish industry. Louisiana produces over 90% of the crawfish in the United States with the industry valued in excess of $100 million. Crawfish are raised and trapped not only commercially but also in the wild. Crawfish traps consist of wire mesh cylinders which are baited with fish as an attractor. Fish with a high fat or oil content and red flesh are preferred by the industry as bait. Lake Erie's gizzard shad fits that description. The Louisiana commercial fishery is not able to supply the demand for bait fish throughout the entire season, which generally runs from December through May, therefore requiring baitfish from out of state.

Sea Grant specialists Dave Kelch and Fred Snyder pursued the request. Questionnaires were sent to Louisiana crawfish bait dealers and fishermen to determine quantity, seasonal demand, price, and preferred species for bait. Meetings were held with Ohio commercial fishermen and a trip was planned to Louisiana in cooperation with LSU Sea Grant to establish a market.

During February of 1982, Dave Kelch and Fred Snyder accompanied Port Clinton Fish Company Owners Jim Van Hoose and Lee Stinson to Louisiana in order to develop the market. All expenses were paid by Ohio's commercial fishery. Meetings were planned with the assistance of LSU Sea Grant agents with groups of crawfish industry people, as well as one-on-one meetings with individual producers, fishermen, and bait dealers.

Gizzard shad are the most abundant but least utilized fish species in Lake Erie. Lake Erie's commercial fishery now has a viable market for the underutilized gizzard shad.
Workers cut baitfish for crawfish traps at a commercial crawfish operation.

The results? Since Spring 1982, Ohio's commercial fishery has shipped over 3 million pounds of gizzard shad to Louisiana. This includes fish caught by Ohio's fishery and fish that were brokered through Ohio fish houses from other states. The price per pound has averaged 13¢ with new dollars coming into Ohio for commercial fishermen, fish houses, fish house workers, and the trucking industry. Presently, other markets are in the process of being developed by Ohio Sea Grant for Lake Erie's underutilized species, all leading to a wise yet maximum use of our Lake Erie resources.

—Dave Kelch
The Central Basin Fishery: How Much Is It Worth?

The catch of walleye in the Central Basin of Lake Erie has increased dramatically in the past two years, from an estimated 56,000 fish in 1982 to an estimated 1,000,000 fish in 1984. Limit catches of jumbo yellow perch averaging 10 inches in length have been reported in the Central Basin in 1984. This is good news for the Lake Erie sport angler in north central and northeast Ohio.

With the dramatic increase in the sport catch of walleye in the Central Basin over the past two years, it is logical to think that there has been an increase in fishing effort, dollars spent on fishing, and value of the Central Basin sport fishery.

Businessmen, sport anglers, researchers, and resource allocators should be asking the following questions: What is the economic value in the Central Basin? Will the present increase in sport fishing in the Central Basin continue in the future? What information do we have on the Central Basin sport fishery?

Estimating the economic value of the expanded Central Basin sport fishery is an important step if resource allocators and managers are to have the information needed to make informed decisions.

A few of these questions are addressed in this article. Specifically, what is the potential economic value of the Central Basin walleye and yellow perch fishery at the 1984 harvest if this harvest generates economic activity comparable to the Western Basin? That is, what if the Central Basin fishery begins to draw sport anglers from outside the region and becomes an export fishery?

An Ohio Sea Grant research project addressed these same questions. The findings are summarized in a 1984 Ohio Sea Grant Technical Summary (OHSG-TS-11, ESS-611) by the investigators of the project, Dr. Leroy J. Hushak, Ms. Jane M. Winslow, and Ms. Nilima Dutta, all of The Ohio State University.

Three economic valuation studies of Lake Erie were conducted. They were: Western Basin Walleye in 1977, Western Basin Yellow Perch in 1981, and the Central Basin in 1982.

Table 1 presents information detailing how much sport anglers have paid and are willing to pay for a day of fishing. Three estimates of the value of human time were made. They are zero, 25 and 50 percent of the participant's wage rate on his or her job. These are values accessed to human time used for travel and for fishing. The zero percent column includes only money spent for travel and at the site since personal time is assessed at no value.

In the Central Basin study, we included recreational boating as well as fishing. As an example, in the 25 percent column, we estimate that the typical Central Basin respondent in 1982 spent $5.35 for travel costs and $38.13 for fishing (including the charge for time) and valued the experience at $4.05 over and above costs (not consumer surplus) for a total willingness to pay $47.53 per day. When these per day estimates are multiplied by total fishing days, the aggregate Central Basin willingness to pay is estimated at $7.4 million to $30.4 million dollars depending upon which value of human time is used. Our "best" estimate is the 25 percent estimate or $18.8 million.

Table 2 presents estimated potential values of the Central Basin. Because estimates for walleye and yellow perch in 1981 were very similar, in this table we have only used walleye as an example. In the 25 percent column, the cost of travel to and from the Western Basin site is $11.64, the on-site cost of the fishing trip is $63.98 and the value over and above costs (net consumer surplus) is $21.18 for a total willingness to pay $96.80 per day. The aggregate estimates are obtained through conversion of preliminary harvest data to angler days based on Western Basin harvest rates. The estimated 1984 Central Basin walleye harvest of 950,000 divided by the 1981 Western Basin sample harvest rate of 2.3 walleye per day yields an estimated 413,000 walleye angler days (number of days available to fish). Similarly, the yellow perch harvest of 2.9 million divided by the Western Basin harvest rate of 21.1 yields an estimated 137,000 angler days for yellow perch. The sum is 550,000 angler days in 1984.

Mulitplication of 550,000 Central Basin angler days by the per day estimates in Table 3 yields the aggregate potential for the Central Basin results. Using the 25 percent column again, total travel costs are estimated at $6.4 million, on-site costs at $35.2 million and net consumer surplus at $11.6 million for total willingness to pay of $53.2 million. Depending on how human time is valued, willingness to pay varies from $35.2 million to $78.5 million.

How realistic are these estimates? First, they contain two negative biases. They include only walleye and yellow perch fishing and exclude recreational boating and all other fishing. Second, they are based on 1981 data and inflation has increased the 1984 values as compared to 1981. There may be other negative biases, but these are unknown. The major question is to what extent Central Basin sport anglers were similar to Western Basin sport anglers. Further, will this increase in walleye harvest in the Central Basin continue? Finally, we do not know whether this increase in Central Basin activity represents net increases in Ohio Lake Erie activity or has substituted for Western Basin activity. Additional research is necessary to address these questions.
Table 2.
Estimated Expenditures, Net Consumer Surplus and Total Willingness to Pay, Central Basin, 1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Basin Values Per Day, 1982</th>
<th>Human Time As % Of Wage Rate</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Travel Costs ($)</td>
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<td>On-Site Costs ($)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Consumer Surplus ($)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to Pay ($)</td>
<td>18.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aggregate Central Basin, 1982

|                                   |        |          |          |
| Travel Costs ($ Mil)              | 1.19   | 2.12     | 3.05     |
| On-Site Costs ($ Mil)             | 5.28   | 15.13    | 24.97    |
| Net Consumer Surplus ($ Mil)      | 0.94   | 1.60     | 2.38     |
| Willingness to Pay ($ Mil)        | 7.41   | 18.85    | 30.40    |

*From Table 4 of Hushak, Winslow and Dutta

Table 3.
Potential Expenditures, Net Consumer Surplus and Total Willingness to Pay, for Central Basin Walleye and Yellow Perch Fishing, 1984

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Basin Walleye Values per Day, 1981</th>
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<tr>
<td>Travel Costs ($)</td>
<td>8.22</td>
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<td>On-Site Costs ($)</td>
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<td>Net Consumer Surplus ($)</td>
<td>18.29</td>
<td>21.18</td>
<td>33.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willingness to Pay ($)</td>
<td>63.97</td>
<td>96.80</td>
<td>142.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aggregate Central Basin Walleye and Yellow Perch, 1984

|                                   |        |          |          |
| Travel Costs ($ Mil)              | 4.52   | 6.40    | 10.32    |
| On-Site Costs ($ Mil)             | 20.60  | 35.19   | 49.77    |
| Net Consumer Surplus ($ Mil)      | 10.06  | 11.65   | 18.37    |
| Willingness to Pay ($ Mil)        | 35.18  | 53.24   | 78.46    |

*From Table 2 of Hushak, Winslow and Dutta

What Is A Saugeye?

The saugeye is a hybrid member of the perch family and closely resembles its parent species, sauger and walleye. Though the saugeye seldom occurs in nature, it is now being raised in several Ohio hatcheries because of its promise as a new sport fish for Ohio fishermen.

The hybrid so closely resembles its parents that it was described by one author as having a “walleye-like head and sauger-like body.” Often the saugeye is confused with its father species, the sauger, because of the occurrence of dark saddle bars or blotches across its back. Usually the sauger will have three or four prominent saddle bars and the saugeye will have only two. Also, like the sauger, the saugeye will have rows of dark spots on both dorsal fins, but with the spiny dorsal fin spots being more irregular.

The saugeye also gets several distinguishing features from its mother, the walleye. One of the most walleye-like characteristics of the saugeye is that the cheeks have few or no scales. Walleye-like coloration includes a conspicuous dark blotch in the webbing of the last spines of the spiny dorsal fin, and often the lower tip of the caudal fin (tail) is white. Ohio Sea Grant Fact Sheet No. 2, “Is It A Walleye Or A Sauger?” compares the characteristics of walleye and sauger, and is a useful reference for this article.

Walleye and saugeye occur naturally in Lake Erie and in many Ohio rivers. Stocking programs at some reservoirs and lakes have met with limited success, since both species prefer deeper water with rocky, gravelly or sandy bottoms. Researchers believe the saugeye’s more diverse feeding habits and greater tolerance for shallow, pond-like conditions may make the hybrid a top game fish in many small impoundments.

The major difficulty in maintaining a saugeye fishery is that they are “mules,” they cannot reproduce naturally. Therefore, lakes and impoundments which are developed for saugeye fishing will require continual stocking. But since the walleye populations of many reservoirs have low reproductive rates and require stocking for maintenance, this is not an unusual problem.

Fishing techniques for saugeye are much the same as for the parent species. In rivers, tail-races below dams, lakes or reservoirs, medium to large jigs or jig-spinner combinations are favorites. Work the lures on straight or jigged retrieves. Weight-forward spinners and deep-diving minnow lures are also good in lakes and reservoirs. As when fishing for any large predatory fish, remember to fish the structure where they feed. As with walleye and sauger, look for saugeye along drop-offs and rock walls, the edges of moving and still waters, and the heads and tails of pools. Studies have shown saugeye to be efficient predators in rooted water weeds so don’t forget to fish the weeds.

Stocking programs with saugeye in Ohio are relatively new. There is much that is not yet known about the fish, but with the higher survival rates and broader tolerances the saugeye have shown so far, their place in Ohio sport fishing seems guaranteed.

Characteristics of the Saugeye include:

1. Cheeks are naked, with few or no scales; 2. Two distinct, dark saddle bars (sometimes a third fainter saddle bar between the two); 3. A dark blotch in the webbing between the last spines of the spiny dorsal fin; 4. Rows of dark spots on both dorsal fins, with the spots on the spiny dorsal fin irregular in size and arrangement, and 5. A white tip on lower lobe of caudal fin.

—William S. Snyder, Graduate Research Associate at OSU with The Ohio Sea Grant Program
Let’s Turn The Corner On Boating Fatalities

We do not like to think about them but boating fatalities occur so frequently they cannot be ignored. As of mid-October 1984, Ohio registered 35 boating related fatalities for the year, 11 of them on Lake Erie or its tributaries. According to Officer Cheryl Kimberline of the Ohio Division of Watercraft, 20 of these fatalities occurred either while fishing or traveling to or from a fishing location. “These fishermen don’t seem to consider themselves as conventional boaters,” Kimberline said. “They just need the boat to help them get out there to fish. Therefore, they don’t seem to practice safe boating techniques.”

An Ohio Division of Watercraft profile of a typical boating fatality sets the scene at 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. on a calm, clear, sunny day in June or July. The typical boat size is small — 14 or 15 feet in length — usually with an open hull and carrying two people. The average victim is a 33 year old male who is not wearing a personal flotation device (PFD). Most have received no boating safety education.

“Overloaded boats seem to be one of the main causes of drowning,” said Kimberline. “Most boats have PFDs in them but the fishermen don’t wear them. Once the boats capsize, the victims usually don’t get to the PFDs in time.” Overloaded or improperly loaded boats are the main cause of accidents 80% of the time.

To some it comes as no surprise that 75% of these fatalities involved alcohol or drug abuse. The effects of cold water and alcohol may contribute to the fact that most victims drown within 10 feet of safety and have only 10 seconds to make a life-or-death decision. In nearly every case the fatal plunge into the water could have been avoided.

If there is a bright spot to be found in this account it is that as of 1982 Ohio was ranked second in the United States in terms of the number of students trained in boating education (75,000 persons). If we are to turn the corner on boating fatalities, it is this sort of personal effort that will make the difference. Safe boating cannot be legislated by lawmakers any more effectively than can safe driving. There’s no better time than the present to take one of the free boating and seamanship courses from the Division of Watercraft, U.S. Power Squadron, or U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

In the meantime, the Division of Watercraft recommends: 1) keep your personal flotation devices easily accessible, in good condition, and make sure they are the correct size; 2) check your capacity plates and don’t overload your boat, and 3) make sure everyone stays seated in order to prevent unexpected shifts in your load.

—Fred L. Snyder

Information on boating and seamanship courses is provided by BOAT/US and Division of Watercraft of Ohio Department of Natural Resources. BOAT/US, a non-profit organization, provides the service of informing the public on specifics of courses offered by Power Squadron, Coast Guard Auxiliary and Red Cross. For more information, call:

1-800-336-BOAT.

Division of Wildlife is also a primary sponsor of boating education courses offered within Ohio. Call or write one of the six offices:

— 1500 Dublin Road — 211 South Fountain Ave
Columbus 43215 Springfield 45506
614/265-7018 513/323-1582
— 1225 Woodlawn Ave — 4183 Melton Ave
Cambridge 43725 Akron 44319
614/439-4076 216/664-2265
— Burke Lakefront Airport —
1501 North Marginal Road, Cleveland 44114
216/566-7229
— Battery Park Marina
P.O. Box 1231, Sandusky 44870-1231
419/625-6511

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