



What's Happening with **WALLEYE?**

Walleye are one of the most popular sport fish in Lake Erie. Annually, the walleye fishing economy nets millions of dollars. They are also top predators in the food chain and good indicators of ecosystem health. Success of walleye populations depends heavily on spawning success.

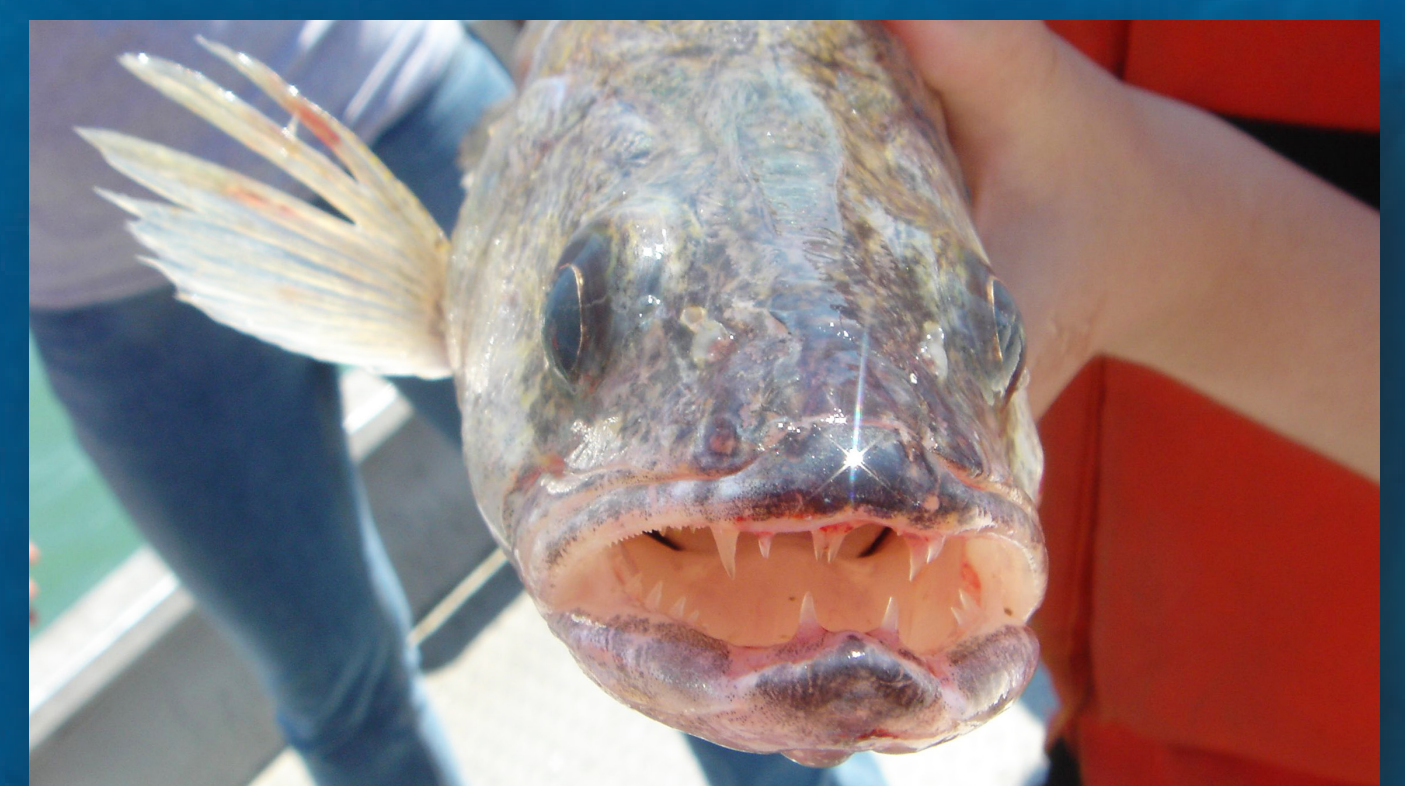
Where Do They Spawn?

Walleye from the Sandusky River and Bay significantly contribute to Lake Erie walleye harvest, but stock has declined in recent years. Is there a lack of good spawning habitat? Limitations like Ballville Dam in the Sandusky River may be causing walleye to lay eggs on less suitable substrate in Sandusky Bay.

Tracking Technologies

ODNR-Division of Wildlife researchers are using PIT and jaw tags to monitor the number of walleye harvested each year. Proper monitoring will reveal the appropriate number of fish that can be taken out of the lake each year without over-harvesting the population.

The scientists are also using radio telemetry to track the movement and spawning patterns of walleye in the Sandusky River and Bay. This may help determine why the population has declined.



Radio Telemetry



Radio transmitters can be surgically placed into the bodies of walleye, and the fish are released back into the lake after a healthy recovery.

In early 2006, the ODNR-Division of Wildlife caught, tagged, and released 50 mature walleye from Sandusky Bay. Since then, fish with transmitters have been located each spring during spawning to examine movement patterns, spawning locations, and habitat.

Data so far suggest that more walleye spawn in Sandusky Bay than in the Sandusky River, despite the availability of better spawning habitat in the river.



PIT Tags

Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags, also known as microchips, mark animals internally, giving them permanent, unique identification, somewhat like a barcode. Though invisible externally, researchers can read the tags using a special scanner.



Jaw Tags

Jaw tags are clamped on to the upper or lower jaw of the fish and contain a unique identification number, similar to a bird band or deer tag. Anglers are asked to report jaw tagged fish that are caught to the ODNR-Division of Wildlife.