Wisconsin’s 2016 open water sportfishing effort and harvest from Lake Michigan and Green Bay

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Abstract – The sport fishery in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay was documented from March 1, 2016 through November 20, 2016. Fishing effort, harvest and harvest-rates were determined from 1) a stratified-random creel survey of launched-boat, pier, shore and stream anglers; 2) a randomized mail survey of moored-boat anglers; and 3) mandatory charter-boat reporting. For a detailed description of methods see Eggold 1995.

Anglers spent an estimated 2,628,353 hours fishing on Lake Michigan and Green Bay during 2016 with boat-angler effort at 2,091,422 hours, or 80% of the total hours. Fishing effort during 2016 was slightly lower than effort in 2015, but was on track with the ten-year average.

The estimated harvest of 557,478 fish was dominated by Chinook salmon (139,082) followed by Coho salmon (125,964). The boat fishery, comprised of launched-boat, moored-boat, and charter-boat anglers, dominated the fishery by harvesting an estimated 507,769 fish, which was 91% of the total harvest and was led by Chinook salmon (126,448) and Coho salmon (117,941). Pier anglers harvested primarily Coho salmon, followed by Chinook salmon and yellow perch. Stream anglers harvested primarily walleye, followed by Chinook salmon and rainbow trout. Shore anglers harvested primarily brown trout, followed by Coho salmon and Chinook salmon. Overall harvest-rates were highest for Chinook salmon at 0.0529 fish/hour, followed by Coho salmon at 0.0479 fish/hour.

The 2016 Chinook harvest of 139,082 fish was higher than the record-low 2015 harvest of 113,973 fish. The 2016 harvest was also higher than 2014 harvest (130,698), but remained 40% below the ten-year average. A mild winter and spring led to a better fishing season than the previous two years, despite a weak 2013 year-class for Chinook.

Coho harvest in 2016 was 125,964, which was 69% above the ten-year average Coho harvest. The 2016 rainbow trout harvest of 76,846 was 24% above the ten-year
average. Brown trout harvest in 2016 was 23,879, which was 15% above the ten-year average. A total of 19,137 lake trout were harvested in 2016, which was 3% below the ten-year average. The 2016 harvest-rate for all salmonids combined was 0.1464 fish/hour.

The 2016 harvest of yellow perch in Green Bay was 72,223, which was 64% below the ten-year average. The Lake Michigan yellow perch harvest in 2016 was 2,132; the lowest on record and 91% below the ten-year average. Perch harvest in Lake Michigan has been on a downward trend since 1993. The sport catch is now mainly comprised of the 2012 year-class followed by the 2010 year-class. Age was assigned using the anal spines of 100 Lake Michigan angler-caught yellow perch during 2016. The 2012 year-class represented 74% of the total. The 2010 year-class contributed 13% to the fishery.

In 2016, the standard weight of a 28-inch Chinook was 10.3 pounds, which was 7.3% above the ten-year average. The standard weight for a 22-inch Coho was 3.92 pounds, which was on track with the ten-year average. The standard weight for a 25-inch rainbow was 4.28 pounds, which was 2.6% above the ten-year average. The standard weight of a 25-inch lake trout was 5.83 pounds which was 3.4% above the ten-year average. The standard weight of a 21-inch brown trout was 3.96 pounds, which was within 1% of the ten-year average.

REFERENCES

Table 1. Estimated angler effort (hours) by location in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay during March through December of 2007 through 2016. Standard deviations are in Italics.

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Table 2. Estimated harvest and total harvest-rate (number per hour, all anglers combined) of salmonids in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay during March through December of 2007 through 2016. Standard deviations are in Italics.

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Table 3. Estimated harvest and total harvest-rate (number per hour, all anglers combined) of yellow perch in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay during March through December of 2007 through 2016. Standard deviations (estimates) are in Italics.

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Note: Table 3 reflects that some Door County sites represent Green Bay for yellow perch harvest statistics.
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Table 5. Estimated harvest-rate (harvest per hour), harvest and effort for the BOAT FISHERY with all surveys combined for Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay during 2016. Standard deviations are in Italics.

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<th>August</th>
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Table 7. Estimated harvest-rate (harvest per hour), harvest and effort for the **SHORE FISHERY** with all survey areas combined for Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay during 2016. Standard deviations are in Italics.

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<th>June</th>
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Table 8. Estimated harvest-rate (harvest per hour), harvest, and effort for the STREAM FISHERY with all survey areas combined for Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay during 2016. Standard deviations are in Italics.

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<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
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Table 9. Average weight, average length and standard weight of salmonids from Wisconsin’s Lake Michigan creel survey during 2007 through 2016, all areas and fishery types combined. std = standard deviation.

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<th>Average length (in.)</th>
<th>± 1 std</th>
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Figure 1. Fishing effort (angler hours) in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay from 2007 through 2016.

Figure 2. Trout and salmon harvest and harvest-rate from Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and Green Bay from 2007 through 2016.
Figure 3. Yellow perch angler-harvest and harvest-rate from Wisconsin waters of Green Bay and Lake Michigan from 2007 through 2016. Note: Figure 3 reflects that some Door County sites represent Green Bay for yellow perch harvest statistics.