

Science and Research Branch
Biodiversity and Monitoring
Section

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Direction des sciences et de la
recherche
Section de la biodiversité et de
la surveillance

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May 2026

SUBJECT: 2026 Inland Lakes Monitoring & Recreational Angler Survey

Greetings,

I'm writing to provide you with information about Inland Lakes Monitoring the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Science and Research Branch, Biodiversity and Monitoring Section will be conducting in 2026 (please see attached map).

From June to September, MNR science crews will be setting nets on approximately 130 lakes in Fisheries Management Zones across the province. Inland Lakes Monitoring is designed to monitor the current and changing state of inland fisheries in Ontario. MNR science field crews will collect information on fish species, take water samples, and check for invasive species. Netting on each lake will take five to eight days to complete. While the lake is being assessed, nets are checked and moved daily to new locations. All nets are clearly marked with a yellow buoy and the Ontario logo. Please do not lift the nets or buoys and avoid recreational activities between and around the buoys. Notices will be posted at various locations on the lake, such as public boat launches and retail stores, while netting is underway.

In addition, MNR science crews will be conducting other fisheries monitoring activities on specific lakes. This includes:

- Rice Lake: summer netting
- Lake Scugog: summer netting
- Lake Simcoe: summer and winter recreational angler surveys (creel), summer netting
- Ottawa River (Lac Coulonge and Lac Du Rocher-Fendu): summer netting
- Lake Nipissing: summer and winter recreational angler surveys (creel), fall walleye index netting
- Rainy Lake: summer recreational angler survey (creel)

During recreational angler surveys MNR science crews will be counting and interviewing anglers (by boat in summer and by snowmobile or at access points in winter), recording

the number of fish kept and released and hours fished. Biological information will also be collected from fish that anglers keep, including lengths and weights. This allows biologists to determine the average size of fish harvested. The information collected from this survey will be used to estimate the harvest of sportfish and angling pressure and compare the results to historical angler surveys. While participation is voluntary, MNR appreciates all information that is shared with our field staff during the summer angler survey.

I've attached a fact sheet with more information about Inland Lakes Monitoring, and lake-specific survey results are available on the [Fish ON-line](#) website.

For more information about our 2026 fisheries monitoring activities, as well as other MNR fish and wildlife related initiatives, follow our fish and wildlife social media feeds: <https://www.facebook.com/FishWildlifeON> ; <https://twitter.com/FishWildlifeON> ; <https://www.instagram.com/fishwildlifeon> .

If you have any questions about the fieldwork, please contact Blair Wasylenko, Provincial Aquatics Monitoring Program Lead, at blair.wasylenko@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,



Darren Elder

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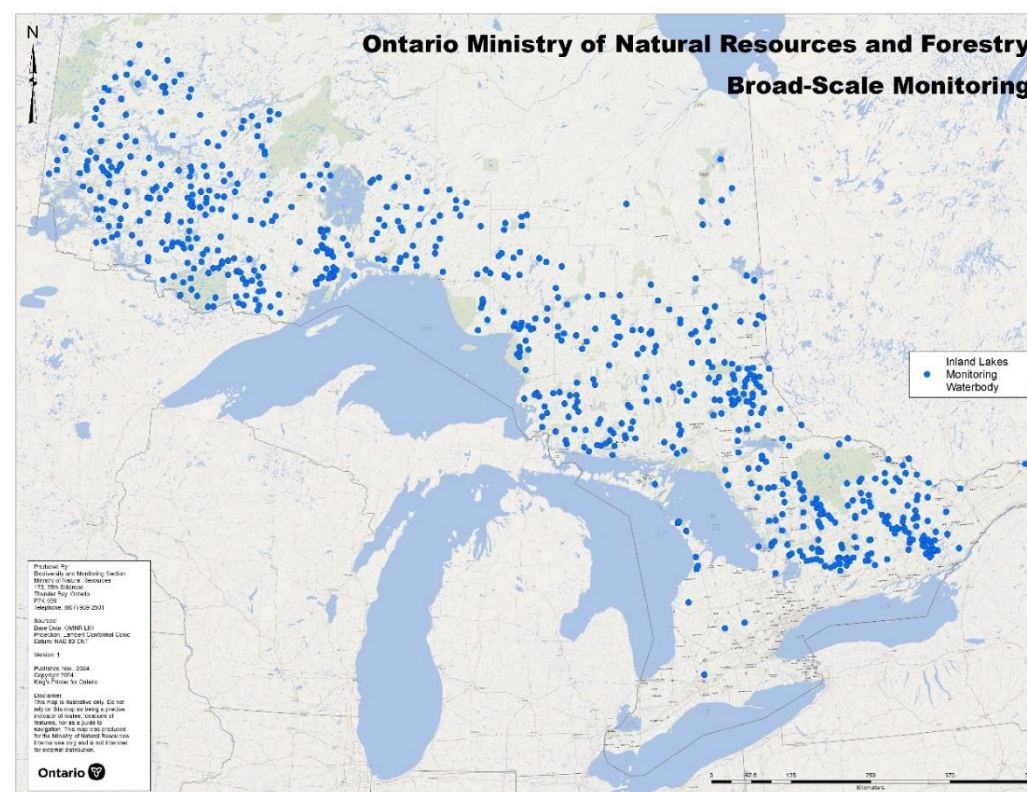


Monitoring the health of Ontario's inland lakes

Ontario is home to more than 250,000 inland lakes, containing about one-fifth of the world's fresh water and representing one of the largest and densest jurisdictions of fisheries resources to monitor and manage on this planet.

Along with rivers, streams, and the Great Lakes, Ontario's inland lakes support important recreational, commercial, and tourist fisheries worth nearly \$2.5 billion annually. Each year more than one million Ontario anglers enjoy both economic and social benefits and the greatest fish diversity in Canada, with 145 species.

To help sustain these world-class angling opportunities and commercial fisheries, we lead long-term monitoring on select inland lakes called Broad-scale monitoring (BSM) and Provincially Significant Inland Fisheries (PSIFs) – high value fisheries which require more intensive monitoring and management.



Broad-scale monitoring lakes (dots) Cycle 3

Ministry of Natural Resources

Our focus

We collect data to report on the state of aquatic resources and determine stressors affecting fisheries in Ontario, including:

- trends in fish populations, such as species abundance (number of each species), species richness (number of different species in an area), and size
- habitat features, lake characteristics, and indicators of aquatic resource conditions, such as temperature, dissolved oxygen levels, water clarity and water chemistry
- links between natural and human-caused stresses, such as climate change, angling effort, and invasive species

The collected information supports landscape scale management in Fisheries Management Zones across Ontario.

Science development

MNR annually tests and develops the monitoring techniques used in Inland Lakes Monitoring. Science development includes gear calibration, mark/recapture studies, and calibrating survey effort.

Monitoring highlights

We monitor inland lakes and PSIFs on a 5-year cycle using internationally recognized methods that allow us to compare data among lakes and FMZs.

Each cycle, we sample about 650 inland lakes that are selected using a randomized approach and conduct monitoring activities on the 12 PSIFs. We classify selected lakes as fixed lakes – lakes that contain brook trout, lake trout, or walleye – or variable lakes – lakes larger than 50 hectares, regardless of fish species present. Fixed lakes are monitored once per cycle while variable may or may not be monitored in future cycles.

Fish netting results for individual lakes are summarized as lake bulletins and are available at Fish ON-Line (www.ontario.ca/page/fishing).

Contaminant sampling results are included in the Guide to Eating Ontario Fish (www.ontario.ca/fishguide) published by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

In addition to collecting information on common fish species, Inland Lakes Monitoring increases our knowledge about the distribution of rare native species in Ontario including pygmy whitefish, northern sunfish, and deepwater sculpin by netting lakes that may have never been sampled before. It also allows us to track the distribution of non-native species such as rusty crayfish and spiny waterflea.



Ministry staff record length, weight, and other measures that are used to evaluate the health of Ontario's inland lakes.

For more information, or to request an alternate format, contact info.mnrscience@ontario.ca.

Ministry of Natural Resources
Inland Lakes Monitoring
Northeast Region

● 2026 Monitoring Lake
 □ Fisheries Management Zone

Ontario

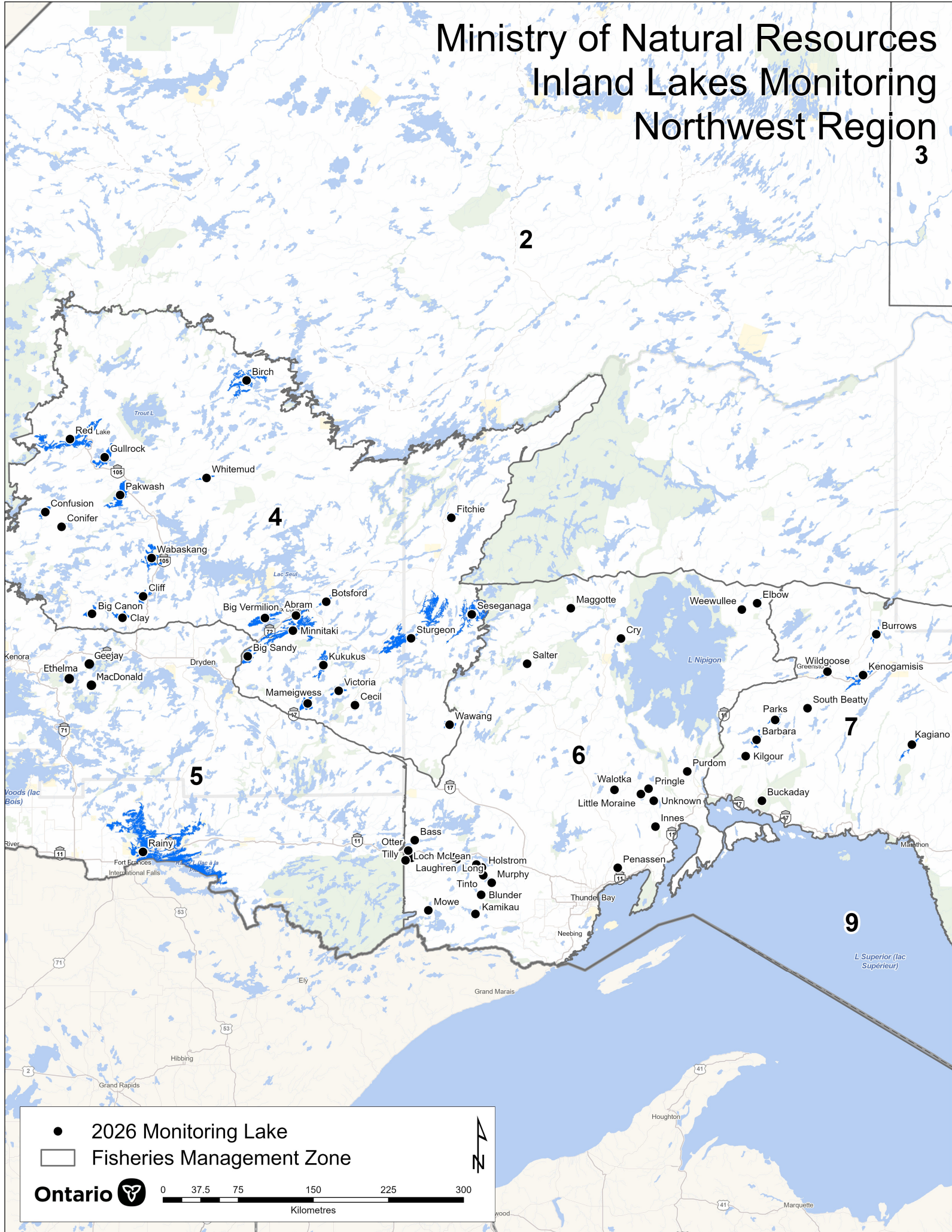
0 30 60 120 180 240
 Kilometres

Map showing 17 numbered Fisheries Management Zones (3-17) and 226 monitoring lakes (black dots) in the Northeast Region of Ontario. Major cities and towns labeled include Wasicho, Timmins, Temiskaming, Nipissing, and Nipissing Bay. The map also shows major roads and water bodies.



Ministry of Natural Resources Inland Lakes Monitoring Northwest Region

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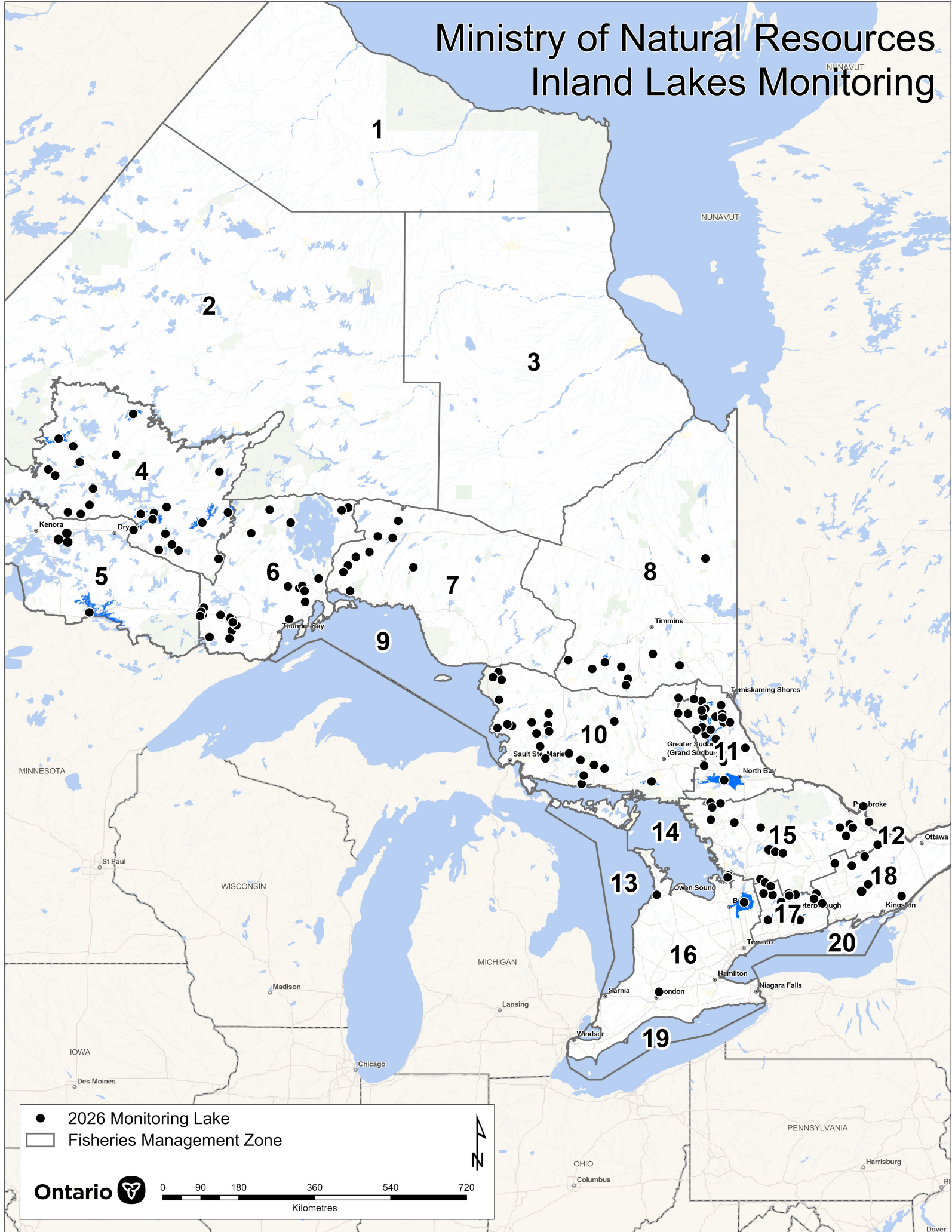


- 2026 Monitoring Lake
- Fisheries Management Zone

Ontario



Ministry of Natural Resources Inland Lakes Monitoring



Ministry of Natural Resources Inland Lakes Monitoring South Region

