ODNR - Division of Wildlife



Preliminary Trawl Survey Results: 2026 Walleye Hatch

Lake Erie Walleye Hatch Predictions

- Each year since 1988, Ohio and Ontario have completed trawl surveys in their respective waters of the west basin and combined results to provide one index of hatch success for Lake Erie walleye.
- West basin trawl surveys of young-of-year (YOY) walleye in 2026 will be used to predict how many walleye will enter the adult population as 2-year-old fish in 2028.
- August results from the Ohio survey were reported at Wildlife Council in the past to provide an early look at hatch success; however, providing these details often led to confusion when these results differed from the combined interagency (Ohio and Ontario) hatch index reported later in the year.
- In 2022, the Division of Wildlife began announcing only final interagency results for west basin walleye and yellow perch, along with central basin survey results, in December to reduce confusion.
- Although we no longer announce Ohio's August trawl index individually, the Ohio portion of the survey has sufficient information to provide early insights that can be compared to past years before interagency results are finalized.
- Ohio trawl surveys completed in the west basin in August predict, in a general way, the future abundance of 2-year-old walleye, falling into one of four categories:
  - Low- less than 10 million fish
  - Moderate- 10 to 20 million fish
  - Large- more than 20 million fish
  - Exceptional- more than 20 million fish with the potential to be extremely large

	Hatch Year									
Predicted Abundance at Age 2	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Low								X		
Moderate	✓									
Large				☺		☺				
Exceptional		✸	✸		✸		✸		✸	✸

Ohio's 2026 trawl survey results suggest that we will have another above average year class entering the fishery as 2-year-olds in 2028. In 2025 the Ohio angler walleye harvest rate was 0.93 fish per hour, a new record for 46 survey years. We expect exceptional walleye fishing to continue for the foreseeable future.

Contacts - Sandusky:(419) 625-8062 Fairport Harbor:(440) 352-4199 Wildlife.ohiodnr.gov

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