

## *Lake Fish Forecast April 2015*

Lent is behind us and if you were like most, there was not enough yellow lake perch or walleye to go around. This is just a precursor to what is coming again for next season. As this is being published, Lake Erie is 87% ice covered per NOAA satellite imagery. But as the days are getting longer and warmer (yeah I know it is still cool), the ice is breaking up. The Canadian fishermen on the north shore of Lake Erie have limited areas to set nets and thus far are only finding jumbo walleye and white perch.

Here is what lead us to shortages. Lake Erie's quota has been cut over the last decade from 12.2 million to 5.05 million. Record wind, early freeze up and late thaws limit the time fisherman can get product out of the lake. They have to do in 7 months what they used to do in 10 months.

The Out East fishery (Eastern Lake Ontario, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Upstate New York) is a winter fishery. Those folks got clobbered with snow and cold. It proves the old adage you cannot beat Mother Nature!

Our fishery from the province of Manitoba's largest lakes (Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg) is being eaten away by hungry northern pike. Lake Manitoba flows into Lake Winnipeg via swamps and estuaries. The Army Corp of Canada, in an effort to prevent flooding, cut channels between the 2 lakes. As the water flowed through these channels it allowed the northern pike to move from Lake Winnipeg to Lake Manitoba. These pike have decimated the good population of perch. This author does not see this being corrected in a decade or two.

With no inventory being carried over, we will all be in the same place of looking for perch next year. Good catches will come and this will be forgotten until January arrives. Lent is 2 weeks earlier next year.

What to do??? Make alliances with established suppliers. When the product is available, get some ahead. Look at the European cousins to perch. They taste good, take less funds, and so far are available.

Walleye is also out of stock in many sizes due to poor fishing, wind and weather. Look to mid-June for this product to be readily available.

Sure wish I had a crystal ball!

Captain Paul Becker

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