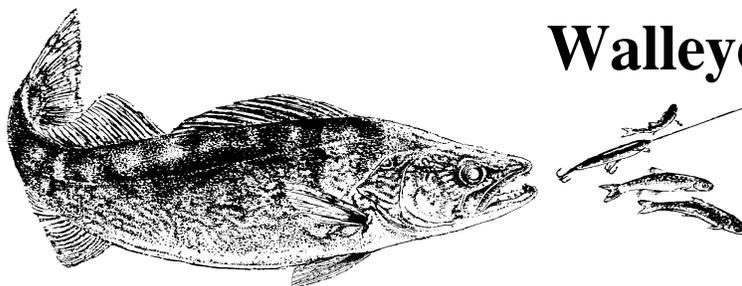


# Lake Ronkonkoma and Fort Pond Walleye Stocking Program Fact Sheet



## FISHERIES MANAGEMENT GOALS FOR LAKE RONKONKOMA AND FORT POND:

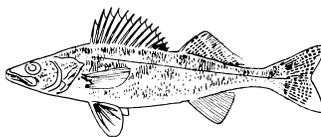
**Restore and maintain balanced and stable fish communities in both lakes with size structures that afford desirable fishing opportunities for largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, yellow perch, white perch and sunfish. The development of a secondary fishery for walleye would be desirable, but not necessary if the primary goals are met.**

**BACKGROUND:** Lake Ronkonkoma, at 240 acres, is the largest lake on Long Island. The lake formerly had a reputation as a good largemouth bass lake, with good fishing for yellow perch and sunfish as well. The quality of fishing in the lake has declined substantially over the past 20 years. Fort Pond, a 173 acre pond in the village of Montauk, has a similar history. The trends observed are likely the product of multiple, interrelated changes within the lakes and their watersheds. Of particular importance is the dramatic expansion of the white perch population. Presently, the fish communities of both lakes are dominated by small white perch and yellow perch. How does this situation affect fishing and water quality?

When perch dominate a fish community, they compete intensely with young largemouth bass and

each other for food. Their primary food source is zooplankton, small animals that live in the water. The zooplankton feed primarily on algae, the single celled plants that drift in the water and give it a green or brown color. If the algae is not controlled it can be responsible for "blooms" that make the water look like pea soup.

A dense perch population can over graze zooplankton, eliminating the primary food source for young bass and the main means of algae control. The result is small perch, low numbers of game fish and algae blooms. Algae blooms reduce water clarity, thereby shading out and eliminating rooted aquatic plants. Largemouth bass, especially young ones, depend on rooted aquatic plants for cover.



## WHY WALLEYE?

Walleye are popular freshwater game fish native to New York State. Walleye are voracious predators that prefer spiny rayed forage fish, such as yellow perch and white perch. In many waters, walleye have demonstrated the ability to control over abundant yellow perch populations without adversely affecting largemouth bass or smallmouth bass populations.

**DESCRIPTION:** Walleye are the largest members of the perch family. Mature fish commonly exceed 2 feet in length and can approach a weight of 20 pounds.

The walleye's most striking physical characteristics are its large glassy eyes. These eyes, with their reflective linings, allow the walleye to see and hunt effectively in dim light. Sharp, well-defined teeth are another characteristic of this predator.

Walleye are olive green in color with gold flecks on the side, darker green on the back and white on the belly. The spiny dorsal fin lacks spots, but has a black blotch at its rear end. The lower lobe of the tail fin has a white tip (see box on the back of this page).



New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
Long Island Freshwater Fisheries Management Unit  
Building 40, SUNY, Stony Brook, NY 11790-2356



## SPORTING QUALITIES:

Walleye are one of the most popular game fish species in New York State. They strike hard and can put up a solid fight on light tackle. Walleye prefer low light conditions because their specialized eyes are sensitive to bright light. Therefore, walleye fishing is best at dawn or dusk or on cloudy days. Walleye also prefer cool water, so they will be offshore in the cooler water in the summer. As the water cools in the fall they move inshore and can be easily caught from the shore. Walleye are also active in the winter and can be caught through the ice. Night crawlers are probably the most popular bait used for walleye, but minnows and leeches are also effective. Popular lures include jigs, spinners and plugs. Swimming plugs that imitate the forage fish available are especially effective at provoking an aggressive strike. The current New York State record for walleye is 16 pounds 7 ounces. This fish was caught on May 22, 1994 in Kinzua Reservoir in western New York.

Because their flesh is white, flaky, and mild in flavor, walleye are popular table fare. Also, they grow large enough to yield boneless fillets of generous proportions.

**WALLEYE STOCKING:** The walleye stocking program began in 1994 in Lake Ronkonkoma. In 1997, Fort Pond was added and stocking rates were boosted. Since 1997, Lake Ronkonkoma has received 10,000 fingerlings per year and Fort Pond has received 8,000. If program goals are realized, stocking will continue as necessary to maintain the walleye populations.

**REGULATIONS:** The walleye season runs from the first Saturday in May through March 15. A special 18 inch minimum size limit and a 3 fish daily limit are in effect for

### For More Information Contact:

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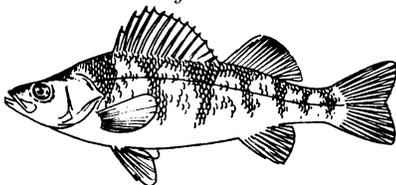
Lake Ronkonkoma and Fort Pond. This will encourage the establishment of walleye populations of sufficient size to effectively control the yellow perch and white perch populations in the lakes. Anglers can help by properly identifying their catch and gently releasing walleye under 18 inches. Remember that walleye, unlike yellow perch, have sharp teeth and lack vertical stripes (see box below).

Anglers began catching walleye of legal size on both Lake Ronkonkoma and Fort Pond in the year 2000. The largest fish caught was 24 inches. Growth rates have been excellent with walleye reaching legal size in under four years. With an established population of mature walleye present, we anticipate more anglers hooking up with these toothy predators over the next few years. More importantly, we expect to observe reductions in perch abundance in these waters. It is this criteria, and its associated benefits, by which we will measure the success of the program.

## KNOW YOUR CATCH

### Yellow perch

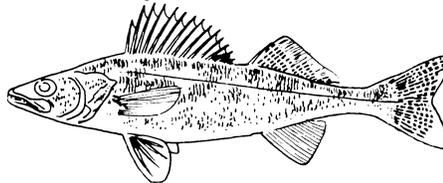
*Perca flavescens*



- Eyes normal size
- No sharp teeth
- Distinct vertical bands
- Usually green bands on a yellow background
- No minimum size
- Daily Limit: 15 fish
- No closed season
- Anglers are encouraged to keep yellow perch from Lake Ronkonkoma

### Walleye

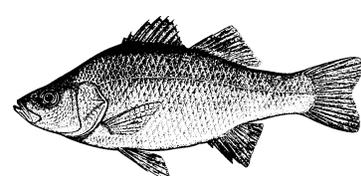
*Stizostedion vitreum*



- Large glassy eyes
- Numerous sharp teeth
- Irregular or saddle shaped blotches
- Usually olive green in color
- Lower lobe of tail has white tip
- Minimum length: 18 inches
- Daily limit: 3 fish
- Open Season: first Saturday in May to March 15

### White perch

*Morone americana*



- Eyes normal size
- No sharp teeth
- No vertical bands
- Uniform silver or grey color, can have horizontal bands
- No minimum size
- No daily limit
- No closed season
- Anglers are encouraged to keep white perch from Lake Ronkonkoma and Fort Pond