

# Lake Erie

## Pennsylvania's Great Lake

Lake Erie is Pennsylvania's most unique waterway, not only because of its size, but because of the abundance of gamefish. An average of 1.5 million fish are caught by anglers each year in the lake, bay, and tributaries.

Erie's latest claim to fame has been its run of steelhead and its walleye fishing, but Lake Erie is much more. It offers a wide variety of fishing opportunities for anglers.



*Yellow Perch*

**Yellow perch**—The yellow perch is the most sought-after species in the lake. Yellow perch can be caught all year, through the ice and from piers, shoreline, and boats. Fish near the bottom with emerald shiners rigged with spreaders, especially in July and August. In winter, use jigs and maggots or minnows while fishing through the ice in the bay. Yellow perch are Lake Erie's most popular ice-fishing quarry.

**Walleyes**—Walleye catch rates in Lake Erie vary with abundance. The highest rates coincide with the appearance of the occasional strong year class. These year classes are produced about once every 10 years. Serious anglers can expect catch rates of four to six walleyes per trip after fish from these large hatches reach legal size. Strong walleye year classes can sustain good fishing for five or more years.

Trolling plugs and spoons account for the majority of walleyes taken from early June through October. Planer boards, flatlines, downriggers, and metallic and weighted lines are all effective. Walleyes suspend in 20 to 30 feet



*Walleye*

of water during the summer, and the key to catching them is using weighted lines and heavier spoons to get your lure deep enough.

During the remainder of the season when walleyes are close to shore, they can be taken by trolling or drifting live bait, spoons and spinners. Walleyes average 5 pounds and 7-pounders to 10-pounders are not unusual.

### Smallmouth and largemouth bass

Largemouth bass are primarily confined to Presque Isle Bay. They are most available in the spring and again in late autumn when they congregate along the shallows of the lagoons and shoreline where they can be taken on practically any suitable lure or bait.

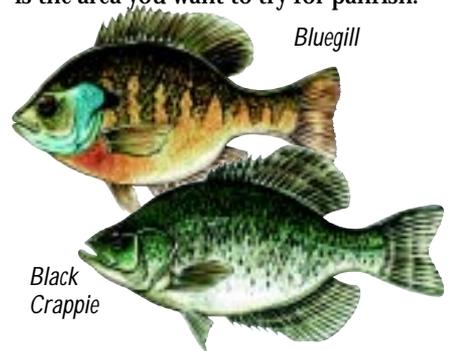
*Smallmouth Bass*



*Largemouth Bass*

Smallmouth bass fishing here is rated as some of the best in the state. Fish can be found along the rocky lake bottom shorelines. Tube jigs and spoons seem to work best in the spring. Crayfish and minnows are most effective when the bass seek deeper water during the summer. Anglers can expect to hook big smallmouth bass at a rate of one or two per hour.

**Panfish**—With the exception of rock bass, which are numerous throughout Lake Erie, Presque Isle Bay is the area you want to try for panfish.



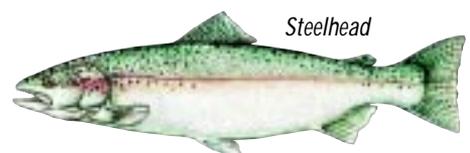
*Bluegill*

*Black Crappie*

There's good fishing for bluegills and crappies in winter, spring, and early summer with minnows, and with jigs tipped with grubs and worms.

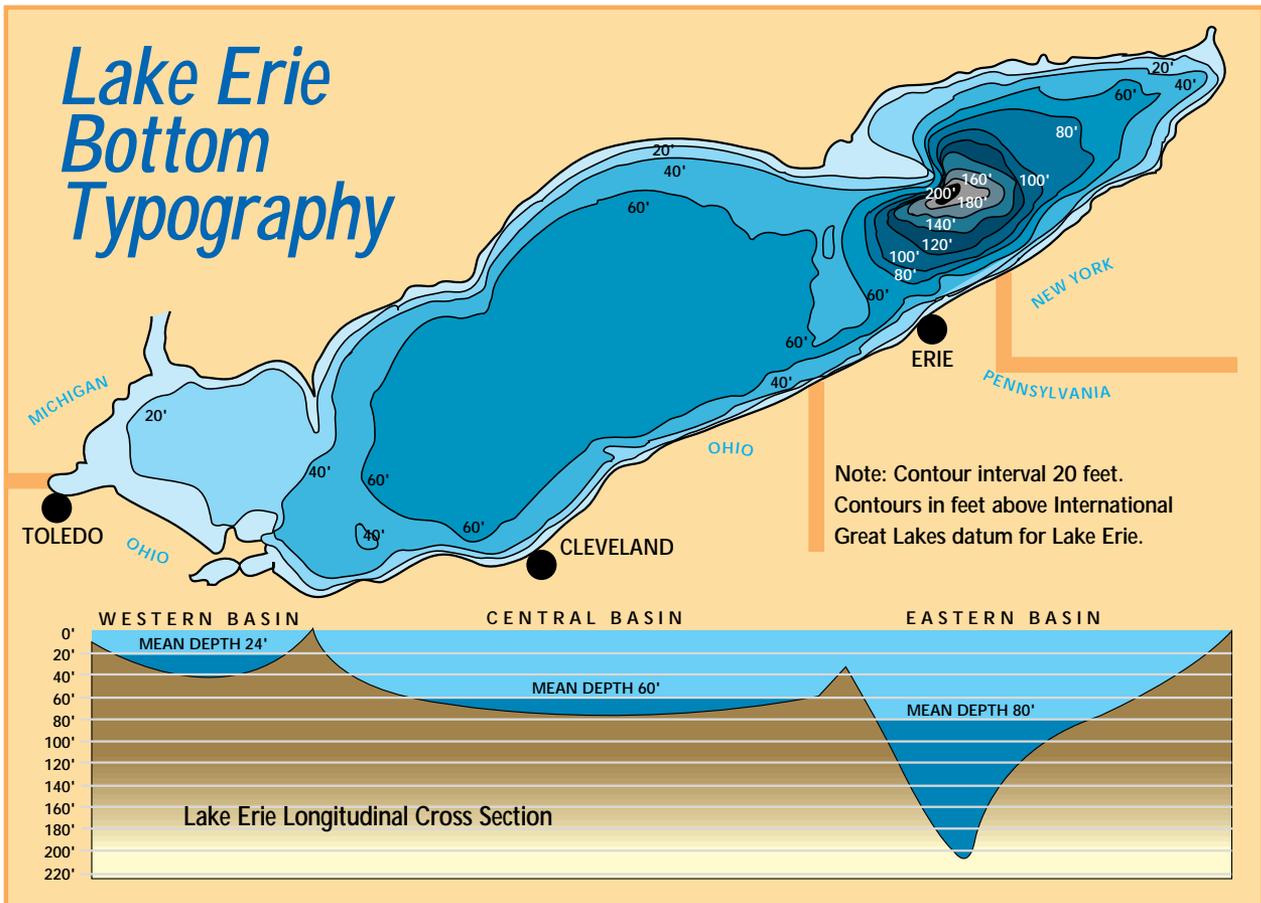
**Steelhead**—The best time to fish for steelhead and lake-run rainbows is fall through spring. In fact, winter steelhead fishing can be so outstanding that the average catch is one steelhead per hour spent on the stream. Fishing takes place in the small tributaries and at lake's edge. The most productive baits are egg sacks, nightcrawlers, minnows, and small jigs (1/32-ounce), as well as small spinners (sizes 0 and 1). Anglers favor black as a color for spinners and chartreuse as a color for jig tails. Fly fishing can also be productive. A black Woolly Bugger worked at mid-stream depth or deeper is one productive method.

During the summer, steelhead can be caught in the lake in 18 to 20 feet of water by trolling spoons, plugs, and flies with flashers. Steelhead average 5 to 6 pounds with 10-pounders and larger fish always a possibility.



*Steelhead*

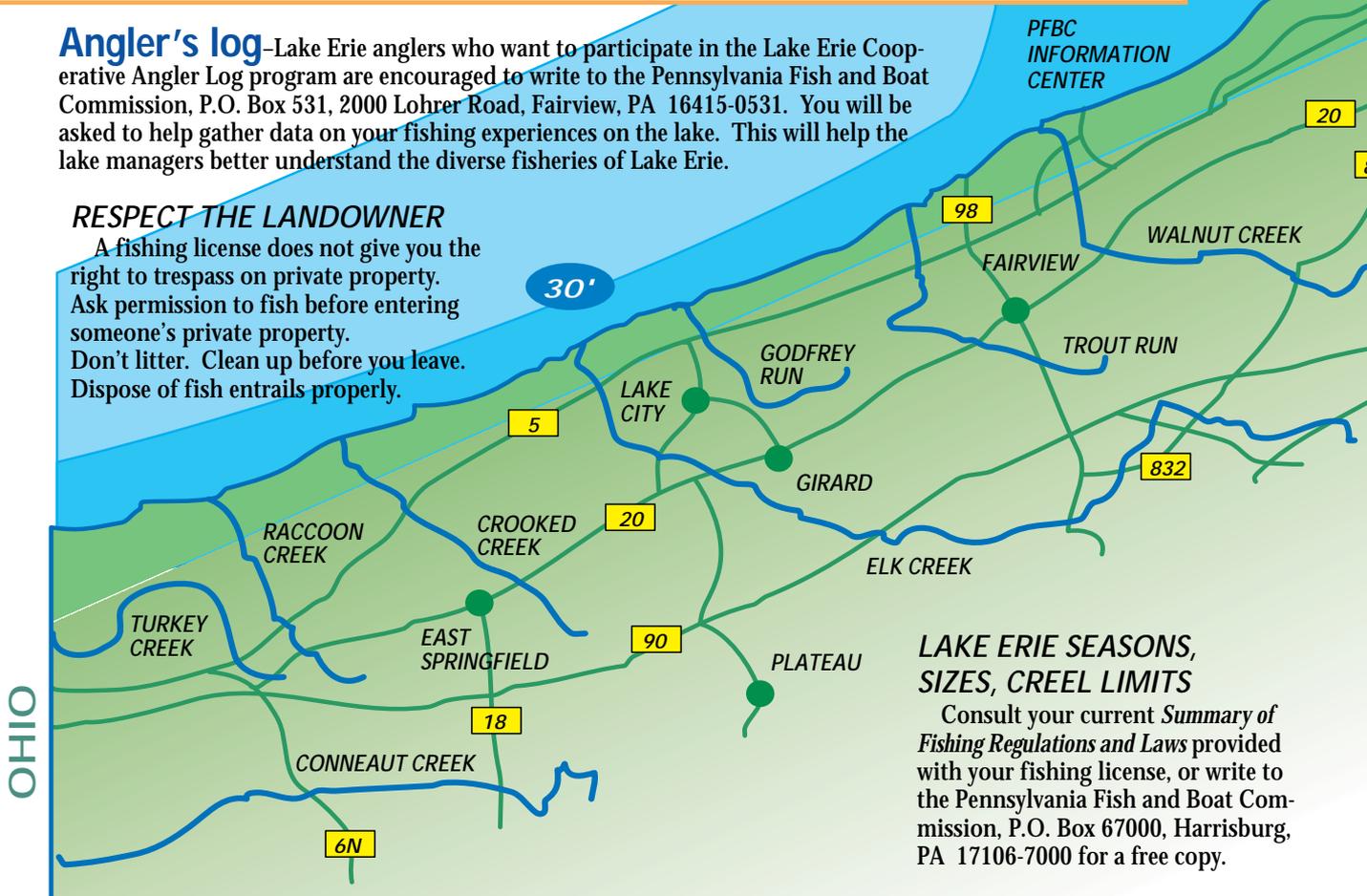
# Lake Erie Bottom Topography



**Angler's log**—Lake Erie anglers who want to participate in the Lake Erie Cooperative Angler Log program are encouraged to write to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 531, 2000 Lohrer Road, Fairview, PA 16415-0531. You will be asked to help gather data on your fishing experiences on the lake. This will help the lake managers better understand the diverse fisheries of Lake Erie.

## RESPECT THE LANDOWNER

A fishing license does not give you the right to trespass on private property. Ask permission to fish before entering someone's private property. Don't litter. Clean up before you leave. Dispose of fish entrails properly.

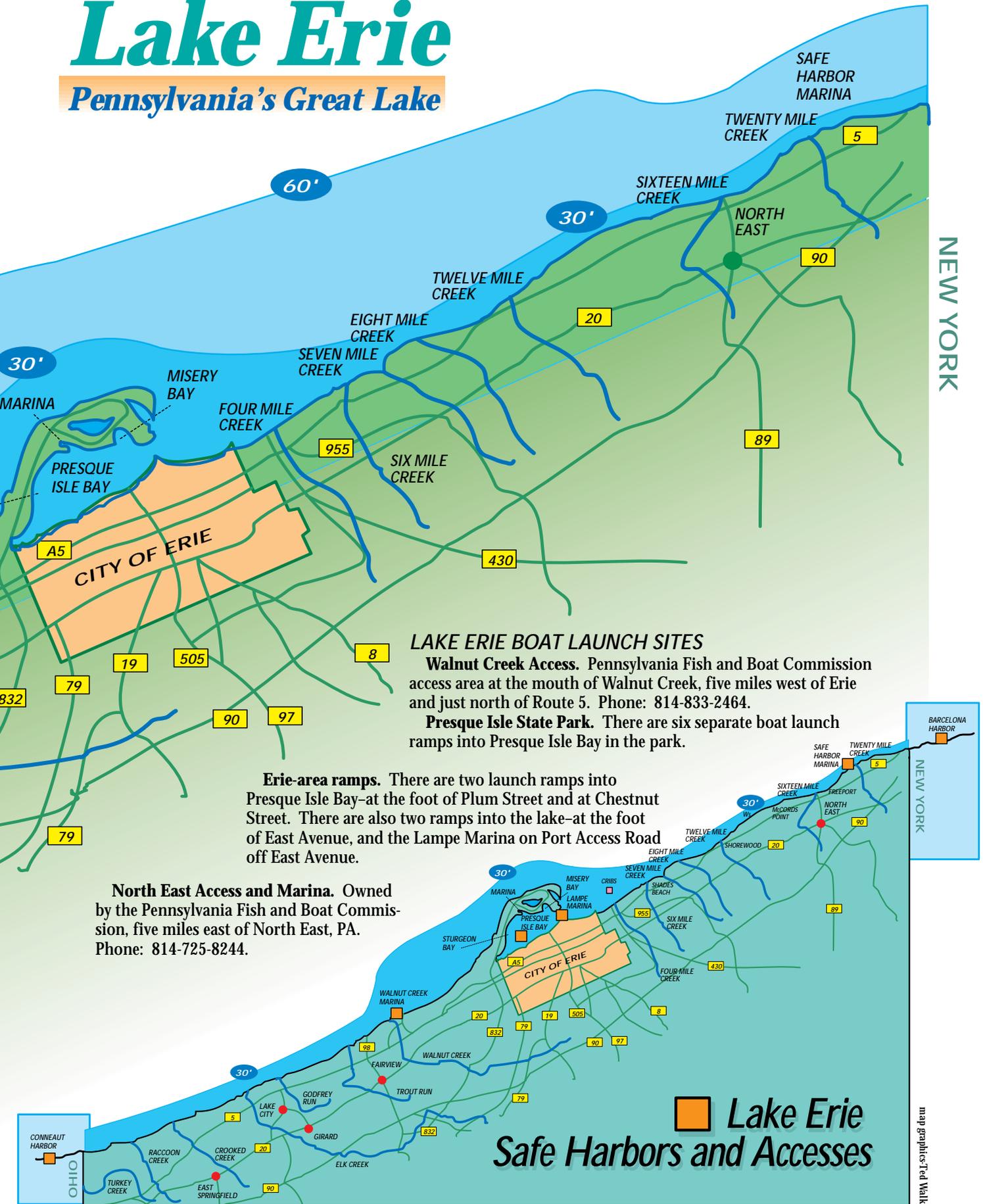


## LAKE ERIE SEASONS, SIZES, CREEL LIMITS

Consult your current *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* provided with your fishing license, or write to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000 for a free copy.

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NEW YORK

NEW YORK

map graphics: Ted Walker

**Coho salmon**—For coho the most popular time of year is the fall. Boat anglers pursue salmon as they congregate off the mouths of lake tributaries. Both coho and steelhead are caught by slowly trolling near the mouths of the tributaries, using diving plugs and spoons. Favored plugs are black. Spoons are silver or silver and blue. Shore fishermen cast spoons, egg sacs, and nightcrawlers to the salmon. Once the coho enter the streams, egg sacks and nightcrawlers are the top baits.

**Brown trout**—Brown trout are not the target of most people who fish Lake Erie, but annually large browns show up in angler coolers as do chinook salmon that have been part of a cooperative nursery stocking program. Methods for steelhead and coho also work well for browns, but this species is less abundant than the others.



Brown Trout

**Muskellunge and northern pike**—Both muskies and northern pike reside in and around the waters of Presque Isle Bay. Large plugs, spoons, and streamers take these fish. Muskies and northern pike are often found in shallow water during spring and fall when water temperatures are cool. During the summer, muskies and northern pike usually find deeper holding water where baitfish and smaller gamefish are abundant.



Muskellunge



Northern Pike



**BOATING ON LAKE ERIE**

Like all large waterways, Lake Erie can get rough, and it often does in the fall. Squalls, storms, and high winds hit Lake Erie without much warning, and boaters can find themselves in trouble very quickly. Watch the wind, which determines lake conditions. A quick shift in wind direction can change lake conditions in a matter of minutes. If you're in doubt, get off or stay off the lake. Remember that small boats and motors are not recommended on Lake Erie.

**FINDING YOUR WAY**

The following Loran TDs and other information may be helpful to boaters. This information is approximate and is not exact. It should not be used for navigation.

- Walnut Creek Access Channel**  
28872.9/58390.7  
lat. 42° 04'64" N long. 80° 14'33" W
- North East Marina channel**  
28890.4/58666.6  
lat. 42° 15'60" N long. 79° 45'70" W
- Erie channel (outermost buoys)**  
28880/58510  
lat. 42° 09'78" long. 80° 03'27"
- Ohio state line** long. 80° 31'10"
- New York state line** long. 79° 45'70"

**REMEMBER THESE IMPORTANT POINTS...**

- Be sure to have Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices on board for each person. Boats 16 feet and longer must also have one throwable device on board.
- On Lake Erie, boats must have on board Coast Guard-approved visual distress signals in the number and type required.
- Head for shore at the first sign of rough water.
- Don't boat alone. Be sure to file a float plan before you leave.
- Don't overload your boat.
- Make sure your fire extinguisher is the right type and in good condition.
- Carry a VHF radio for up-to-the-minute weather information and emergency and distress calling.