

# Family Fishing

by Keith Edwards

# in Erie

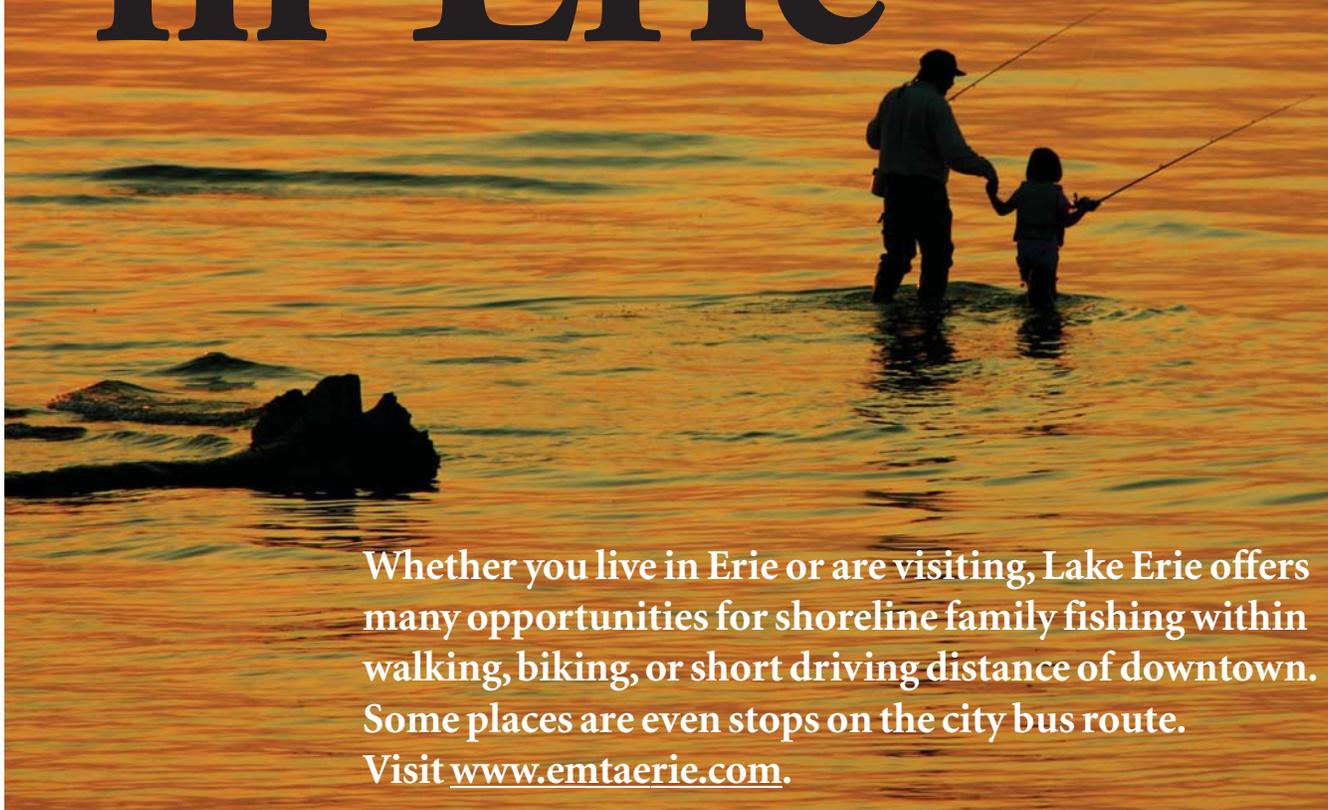


Photo: Jerry Skaypanak

Whether you live in Erie or are visiting, Lake Erie offers many opportunities for shoreline family fishing within walking, biking, or short driving distance of downtown. Some places are even stops on the city bus route. Visit [www.emtaerie.com](http://www.emtaerie.com).

With the exception of one small section still under construction at the Frontier Park area, a paved bike path now connects the entire bayfront with Presque Isle peninsula. A short walk from the nearest access road may be required to reach certain areas, and some have limited vehicle parking. Some areas also have access for ice fishing opportunities.

This information can help you find good fishing, or use it to plan your trips next season.

## Variety of fish

The fish species you can catch depend on the water temperature of the bay, and, of course, water temperature depends on the time of year. As soon

as the ice melts and the water warms to around 40 degrees, try walking shoreline areas for northern pike, bowfin, early largemouth bass, and even steelhead in some areas. Crappies, yellow perch, and bluegills can be found hovering in weed beds close to shore. These fish are light biters, so use pencil floats. When the water warms to around 60 degrees, you can expect to catch yellow perch, walleyes, smallmouth bass, rock bass, and sunfish. Don't forget that Presque Isle Bay and Pennsylvania's portion of Lake Erie are nationally known for their smallmouth bass population. When the bay water temperature approaches 70 degrees, you can expect bites by largemouth bass, bluegills, channel catfish, yellow perch, bullhead, and carp.

## Where to fish

State Street, which runs through the heart of downtown Erie, is the dividing line between east and west family fishing areas. Start at Dobbins Landing as the center point of reference and proceed east from there. Location numbers are keyed to the map on pages 24-25.

**#1—Dobbins Landing Public Dock (pier):** Look for the tall observation tower at the end of the pier near the water's edge. Public parking is available, and the city buses stop here. Fishing is permitted on either side and along the front of the pier. This area is ADA-accessible (Americans with Disabilities Act) and has a food concession and restrooms inside the base of the tower.

**#2—East Canal Basin:** Located west of the Erie Maritime Museum on the east side of State Street after turning off Bayfront Parkway, you'll find the Harold (Smitty) Smith Fishing Pier. The construction of this pier was a cooperative effort among the PA Fish & Boat Commission, the Erie Western Port Authority/PA Coastal Zone Management in cooperation with the SONS (Save Our Native Species) of Lake Erie, and the Bayfront Center for Maritime Studies. Bayfront Center for Maritime Studies students and SONS of Lake Erie volunteers built 18 fish condominiums (fish habitat structures). The SONS of Lake Erie provided the materials and equipment needed to complete this task. Lakeshore Towing, which also donated time and equipment for this project, placed the structures under this pier.

**#3—Holland Street Pier:** The Bayfront Center for Maritime Studies is located at the foot of Holland Street. The Center is also a location where anglers can borrow fishing gear supplied by the SONS of Lake Erie. Call 814-453-2270 for arrangements. You can fish anywhere around this facility.

**#4—Metro Machine:** This port authority property is located off of Bayfront Parkway. Fishing, mainly for yellow perch, bass, and rock bass, is allowed on the east side of the building, and picnic shelters are available for public use.

**#5—Ore Dock Road:** Located off of Bayfront Parkway, this area has limited parking, and walking is required to reach the water. The mouth of Mill Creek is great for springtime steelhead but gets shallow during warmer months.

**#6—South Pier:** Accessible from the port access road, this half-mile-long pier goes right along the Lake Erie channel and extends out into Lake Erie. The SONS of Lake Erie and Carrera Steel Company, which supplied the steel and fabricated the ramp, provided the ADA access features. You may fish here around the clock, and portable toilets are available.

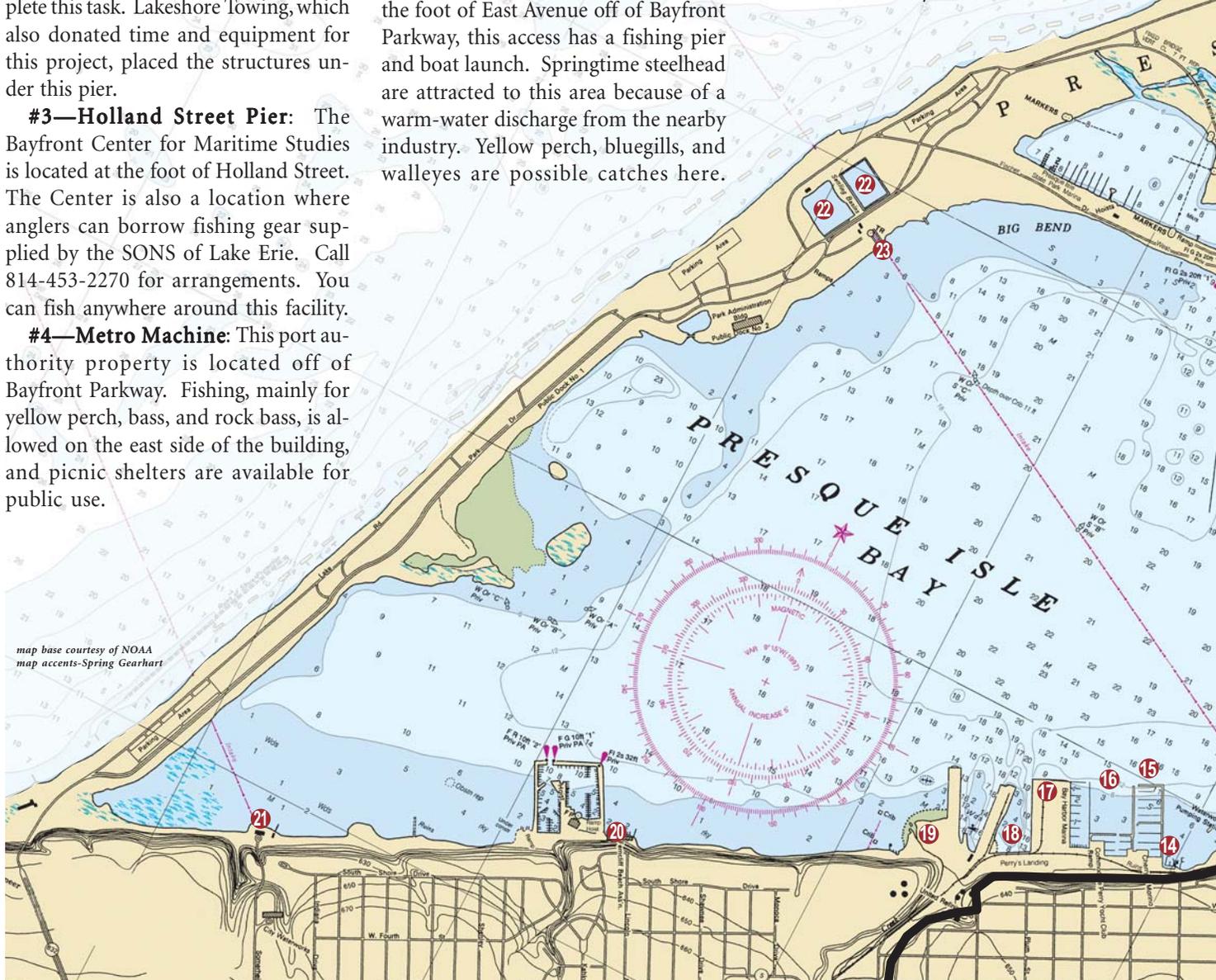
**#7—East Avenue Pier:** Located at the foot of East Avenue off of Bayfront Parkway, this access has a fishing pier and boat launch. Springtime steelhead are attracted to this area because of a warm-water discharge from the nearby industry. Yellow perch, bluegills, and walleyes are possible catches here.

There are plans to build a bait stand and restrooms here.

## Areas off the map's east edge

**#8—Chautauqua Park:** Located at the foot of Chautauqua Boulevard (last road on the map's east edge) off of PA Route 5, this public park area has a beach that is accessible by climbing a path from the bluff. There's a little creek here with a waterfall (called "Bass Falls" by the locals) where anglers enjoy frequent bass catches.

**#9—Lawrence Park:** Although this location is off of the east edge of the map, you can find it off of PA Route 5 and Halley Street. Look for a



blue boat ramp sign when you first see the General Electric plant. This Lawrence Park Township facility offers shoreline fishing and a boat launch. Parking is limited.

**#10—Four Mile Creek:** This area off the east side of the map is off of PA Route 5 past the Water Street intersection. Turn north on Gulf Club Road, go to the lake, and take the path to the beach behind the Lawrence Park Fishing Club. Steelhead and smallmouth bass are possible catches. There are plans to improve this creek in the future, including fish ladders, all the way south to I-90.

## Areas west of Dobbins Landing

**#11—West Canal Basin:** Located on the west side of State Street after turning off of Bayfront Parkway. Fish from sunrise to sunset where access is provided inside Wolverine Park Marina, and from the public walkways north of the parking area located west of Dobbins Landing.

**#12—Sassafras Pier:** Located across the West Canal Basin channel. Access is from the west side of RCR Yachts or on the east side of the GAF Corporation. Fishing is allowed from sunrise to sunset in this large area of shoreline

access. This area will soon be developed as a convention center. Shoreline family fishing access will remain as it is presently and free parking will be available on days when there are no events at the convention center. Plans for this area also include 10 parking spots, dedicated to anglers, with a ramp for ice fishing access. This area is under construction and will be available when it's completed.

**#13—Erie Water Authority:** Located off of Bayfront Parkway, this seawall area is open to fishing from sunrise to sunset on weekdays only and is ADA-accessible.

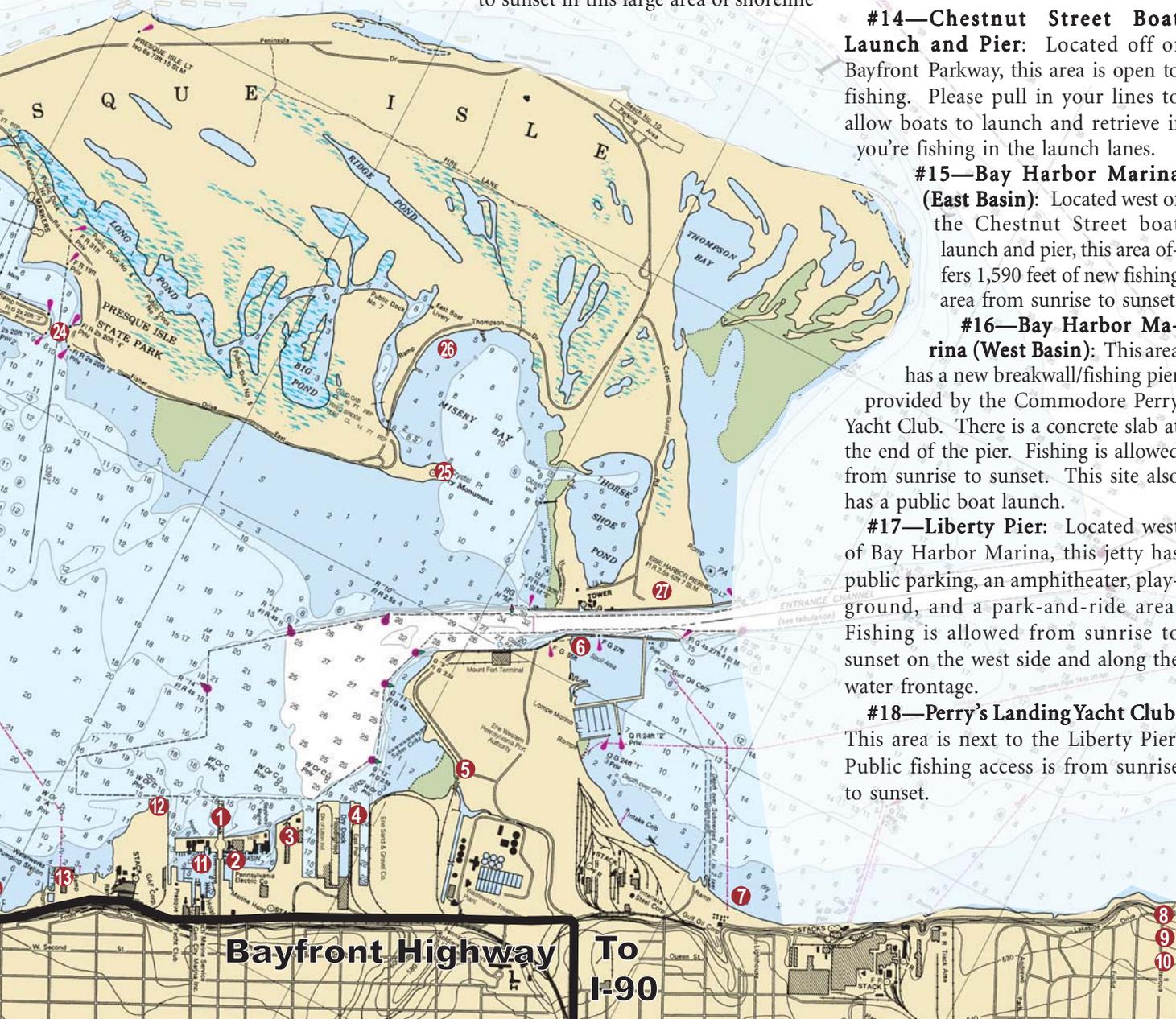
**#14—Chestnut Street Boat Launch and Pier:** Located off of Bayfront Parkway, this area is open to fishing. Please pull in your lines to allow boats to launch and retrieve if you're fishing in the launch lanes.

**#15—Bay Harbor Marina (East Basin):** Located west of the Chestnut Street boat launch and pier, this area offers 1,590 feet of new fishing area from sunrise to sunset.

**#16—Bay Harbor Marina (West Basin):** This area has a new breakwall/fishing pier provided by the Commodore Perry Yacht Club. There is a concrete slab at the end of the pier. Fishing is allowed from sunrise to sunset. This site also has a public boat launch.

**#17—Liberty Pier:** Located west of Bay Harbor Marina, this jetty has public parking, an amphitheater, playground, and a park-and-ride area. Fishing is allowed from sunrise to sunset on the west side and along the water frontage.

**#18—Perry's Landing Yacht Club:** This area is next to the Liberty Pier. Public fishing access is from sunrise to sunset.



**#19—Cascade Creek:** Although not shown on the map, if you continue west, this creek is stocked with brown trout by the PA Fish & Boat Commission. It can be fished from the mouth at the bay up to Frontier Park. This park also has a bike path and playground.

**#20—Erie Yacht Club:** Although a little difficult to find or get to (off of PA Route 5, take Virginia Avenue to Ravine Drive), the area that is open to the public is located on the east side of the yacht club and is great for crappies and perch from springtime to around Memorial Day. Ice anglers use this area to reach Presque Isle Bay.

**#21—Sommerheim:** This property belongs to the city of Erie Water Authority. Turn north at Tracy School, located at the intersection of PA Route 5 and Sommerheim Drive. It can be fished for bass, bluegills, and crappies from sunrise to sunset. You may be able to launch a small boat or canoe here, but there is no ramp. Either end of the property is accessible and wading is allowed. This area is a popular ice fishing spot.

**#22-27—Presque Isle State Park ([www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us)):** Popular shoreline family fishing locations in the park are Waterworks ponds (#22), Ferry Dock (#23), East and West piers (#24), Perry Monument (#25), Lagoons (#26), North Pier (#27), and all boat launches. Stop at the park office and pick up a park map for more details on these areas. Depending on where you fish, expect to catch bluegills, crappies, perch, bass, walleyes, trout, steelhead, muskellunge, and northern pike.

## Visiting Erie

If you're arriving from points south, east, or west, you're just minutes away when you reach the intersection of I-90 and I-79. I-79 north ends and becomes Bayfront Parkway. Many of these family fishing areas are located just off of this highway. Other areas are accessible not far from it.

## No fishing gear?

Take advantage of the Fishing Tackle

Loaner Program at Presque Isle State Park, or through the SONS of Lake Erie loaner program in downtown areas at the Erie Library just south of the East Canal Basin, or the Bayfront Center for Maritime Studies, at the foot of Holland Street. There is a baitshop very near these two loaner sites.

## People who care

Thanks to efforts of concerned organizations like the SONS of Lake Erie, the number of family fishing access areas continues to increase. These dedicated individuals also accomplish much to improve the quality of fishing by placing fish-habitat structures under piers and in other areas of Presque Isle Bay. Fish-habitat structures increase the survival rate of younger fish so that they can grow big enough for all to catch and enjoy.

The SONS of Lake Erie also operate and maintain a fish hatchery that produces steelhead, yellow perch, and walleyes through the PA Fish & Boat Commission's Cooperative Nursery Program. The walleyes and perch are stocked in Presque Isle Bay.

This fishing club has also provided funds to Presque Isle State Park for the construction of ADA-accessible fishing areas.

The organization is well-known in Erie as a champion of public access. **You may reach the SONS at 814-453-2270 or email [sonslakerie@aol.com](mailto:sonslakerie@aol.com).**

## Ice fishing

Some of the areas listed are suitable for ice fishing access. Sites that have boat launch areas provide easy access to the bay, whether you are pulling an ice shanty behind you or just walking out to your favorite spot with a bucket to sit on. These areas are: East Avenue Pier (boat launch), Chestnut Street Boat Launch and Pier, Bay Harbor Marina (boat launch), Sassafras Pier, Erie Yacht Club, Sommerheim, and the Lagoons and boat launch areas in Presque Isle State Park.

## Rules

A current fishing license is required of persons age 16 and over and must be

displayed on an outer garment. Positive proof of identification is also required.

You will receive a current Pennsylvania *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* when you purchase your license. Be sure to become familiar with the regulations. For inquiries, contact the Fish & Boat Commission's Northwest Region Office at 11528 SH 98, Meadville, PA 16335; phone, 814-337-0444.

## Lake Erie Permit

All anglers fishing Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie, Presque Isle Bay, and their tributaries are required to possess a valid Lake Erie permit.

The main tributaries where a permit is required are: Cascade Creek, Crooked Creek, Eightmile Creek, Elk Creek, Fourmile Creek, Mill Creek, Raccoon Creek, Sevenmile Creek, Sixmile Creek, Sixteenmile Creek, Twelvemile Creek, Twentymile Creek, and Walnut Creek.

Conneaut Creek, although partially in the Commonwealth, does actually enter into Lake Erie within the border of the state of Ohio. Therefore, anglers are *not* required to possess a Lake Erie Permit.

Anglers fishing the East and West Basin ponds (Waterworks Ponds, Presque Isle State Park) are *not* required to possess a Lake Erie Permit. Note that the East and West Basin ponds are approved trout waters, and fishing there requires a trout stamp.

Anglers fishing inland ponds, lakes and reservoirs in Erie County are *not* required to possess a Lake Erie Permit.

In many cases an angler may need both a trout/salmon permit and a Lake Erie permit to fish in waters in the Erie area. Rather than purchasing these individually, a Combination Trout-Salmon/Lake Erie permit may be purchased. ☐

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