

Ecology, Management, and Status of Walleye, Sauger, and Yellow Perch in Michigan

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Introduction

Walleye *Sander vitreus*, sauger *Sander canadensis*, and yellow perch *Perca flavescens* are related species in the fish family Percidae. Walleyes are common throughout most of Michigan and the Upper Midwest. They attain the largest size of all the species in this family and are highly valued for their food, recreation, and trophy qualities. Saugers, which are similar to but smaller than walleyes, are also potentially valuable, but they have a very limited presence in Michigan and are officially listed as “threatened” by the state. The yellow perch is a ubiquitous and very important panfish and forage fish that likewise commands a high price at fish markets when available. Also belonging to the percid family are many species of darters, small fishes that grow to only a few inches in length. The darters have no sport or commercial value and are not endangered in Michigan; they will not be discussed further in this report.

A survey of Michigan anglers in 1983 (Latta 1990), found walleyes and yellow perch were among the top three species of fish sought (47% and 65%, respectively), and were the most preferred species for eating (26% each). In 2001, an estimated \$838,558,000 and 19,320,000 angler-days were spent fishing for all species in Michigan (USFWS and USBOC 2002). An estimated 8,114,000 angler-days were spent fishing for panfish (this includes yellow perch) in Michigan with an economic value of approximately \$349 million. There were an estimated 3,383,000 angler-days spent fishing for walleyes, with an economic value of approximately \$145 million.