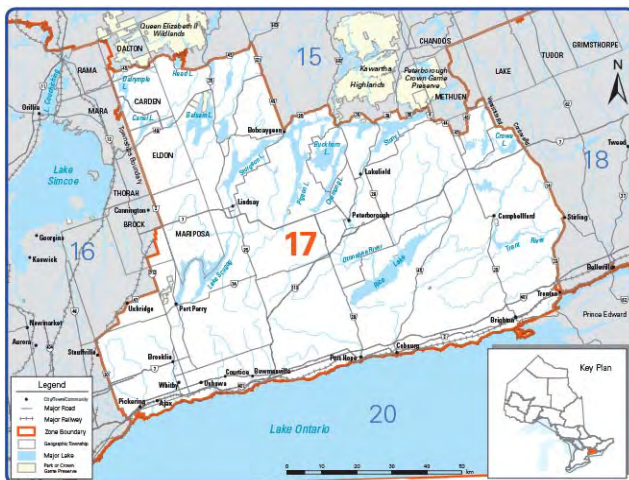


Natural. Valued. Protected.

Proposed walleye management in FMZ 17

The strategies and management options for walleye included in the draft Fisheries Management Plan for Fisheries Management Zone 17 (FMZ 17) were developed by the Ministry of Natural Resources with the help of the FMZ 17 Advisory Council. The council is a committee of volunteers who represent the public and a broad array of stakeholder groups that have an interest in the local fisheries resources. Further information and an opportunity to comment can be found at www.ontario.ca/zonecouncils or by contacting the ministry's Peterborough District Office.

Fisheries Management Zone 17



Map of Fisheries Management Zone 17

FMZ 17 is the smallest management zone in the province, consisting of the Kawartha Lakes, Trent and Crowe River watersheds, and the rivers and streams of the eastern portion of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Due to the angling opportunities available and its proximity to the Greater Toronto Area, FMZ 17 receives higher angling effort than most other management zones.

Walleye are the most sought after species in Ontario, with more anglers targeting walleye than any other species. In the past, the shallow lakes of FMZ 17 have been highly productive habitat, ideally suited to walleye. However, information collected through netting programs and communications with anglers has shown declines in local walleye populations.

As part of the FMZ 17 Fisheries Management Plan, the ministry has identified actions to **reverse declines and rebuild existing, self-sustaining walleye populations in order to maintain and enhance the benefits to the public.**

Challenges

The ministry has identified a number of factors responsible for the decline in walleye populations in FMZ 17.

Physical changes to the lakes have made them less suitable for walleye and more suitable for other species.

Since the introduction of zebra mussels, the lakes in FMZ 17 have changed. Water clarity has increased due to the filter-feeding nature of the zebra mussels. As water clarity increases, walleye lose their competitive advantage over other fish species. In addition, climate change is expected to favour warm water species, such as bass and sunfish, over cool water species, like walleye. Due to these changes, the lakes in FMZ 17 may no longer be able to support the number of walleye that they have in the past. The ministry will work to educate anglers about

the changes in the lakes and how these changes impact the fish communities.

Spring water level and flow fluctuations reduce spawning success.

The lakes in FMZ 17 are controlled by a series of dams and flow control structures, most of which are part of the Trent-Severn Waterway. Walleye spawn in the spring, a period commonly associated with rapidly changing water levels and flows. These changes in water level can reduce the number of juvenile walleye in a system. If flow levels are too high, the current may prevent spawning fish from accessing the best spawning locations. If water levels drop after spawning, the eggs can be left above the water line and die. The ministry is working with Parks Canada officials who operate the waterway to manage flow rates during spawning season. Volunteer programs are also monitoring walleye spawning sites to better understand the spawning areas and timing.

Changes in the fish community have decreased production of juvenile walleye.

The fish communities in FMZ 17 have changed during the past two decades. Introduced species such as bluegill and black crappie compete directly with young walleye for resources. Black crappie may also prey directly on juvenile walleye. These factors may lead to a reduction in the number of walleye that survive to adulthood. The proposed Fisheries Management Plan for FMZ 17 outlines a number of actions in response to these changes, including extended seasons for introduced species and encouraging their harvest.

Low populations of adult walleye limit the number of juveniles that can be produced.

During recent years, there has been a decline in the number of adult walleye in FMZ 17. The main pressure on adult walleye is harvest by anglers. The ministry can use a number of tools to protect adult walleye including seasons, sanctuaries, catch and possession limits, and size-based regulations.

Regulatory Options

In 2008, as an outcome of the Southern Region Walleye Regulation Review, the walleye catch limit for Sport Fishing Licence holders was reduced to four walleye, with only one walleye greater than 46 cm (18.1 inches). This regulation was implemented as an interim measure until specific regulations could be developed for each Fisheries Management Zone. Based on current walleye population levels, angler harvest and population modeling simulations, the current regulation will not stop the decline in walleye populations in FMZ 17. Feedback on these options will help the ministry determine which regulation will be implemented within FMZ 17.

Catch Limits

The limits in place until 2008 were six walleye for holders of a Sport Fishing Licence and two for the Conservation Licence. The new, interim limit for walleye in FMZ 17 is four for holders of a Sport Fishing Licence and two for holders of a Conservation Licence. To ensure all anglers share the responsibility of improving the quality of the fishery, the ministry is considering a lower limit for Conservation Licence holders.

The two options being considered for walleye limits in FMZ 17 are:

- 1) Four for Sport Fishing Licence holders and one for Conservation licence holders.**
- 2) Four for Sport Fishing Licence holders and two for Conservation Licence holders (current regulation).**

Size-based regulation

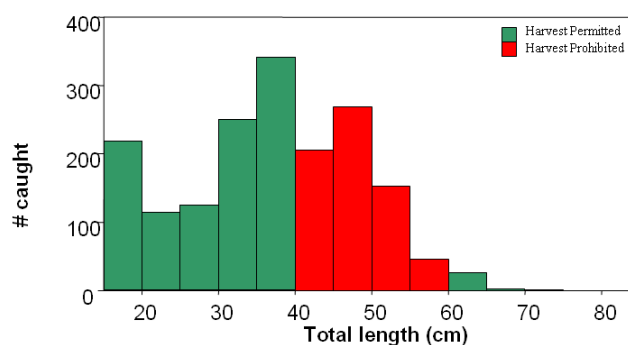
Female walleye reach maturity at approximately 45 cm (18 inches), and as they grow are able to produce more and better quality eggs. The protection of adult female walleye is critical to the recovery of walleye populations.

The ministry has developed three size-based regulations designed to achieve the goal of reversing declines and rebuilding existing, self-sustaining walleye populations.

Option 1: 40-60 cm (15.8-23.6 inches) protected slot. Sport Fishing Licence holders may keep one walleye over 60 cm (23.6 inches).

A protected slot means that anglers cannot harvest walleye between 40 and 60cm (15.8-23.6 inches) long. Any fish caught within that slot must be immediately released. Anglers would still be able to keep walleye less than 40 cm (15.8 inches), and holders of a Sport Fishing Licence would be allowed to harvest one “trophy walleye” over 60 cm (23.6 inches).

This option would protect walleye that reach 40cm in length until they reach 60 cm in length. Female walleye typically have two to three spawning opportunities before they reach 60 cm. Most male walleye, which mature at approximately 40 cm, would be protected by this regulation. Angler catch data suggest that this regulation would result in the release of approximately two of every five walleye caught by anglers, or 40 per cent.



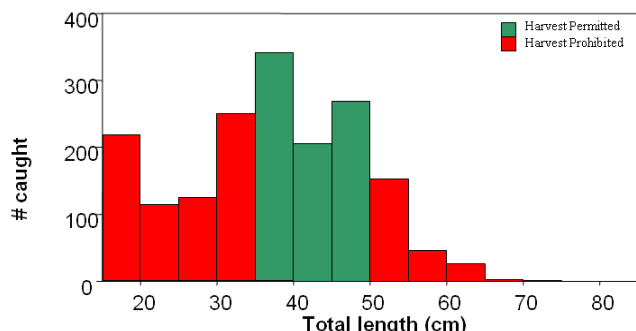
Option 1: Application of a 40-60cm (15.7-23.6”) protected slot to the catch from the Fall Walleye Index Netting program in FMZ 17.

Option 2: 35-50 cm (13.8-19.7 inches) harvestable slot. Sport Fishing Licence holders may keep one walleye over 70cm (27.6 inches).

The harvestable slot means that anglers can only harvest walleye between 35 and 50cm (13.8-19.7 inches) long. Any fish caught that is smaller or larger than that slot must be immediately released. Holders of a Sport Fishing Licence would be allowed to harvest one “trophy” walleye over 70 cm (27.6 inches).

This option would protect the largest female walleye which are the best spawners. The harvestable slot also protects young walleye while allowing harvest of walleye in the size range preferred by many anglers. Based on the most recent angler harvest data, this

regulation would result in the release of approximately three of every ten walleye caught by anglers, or 30 per cent.

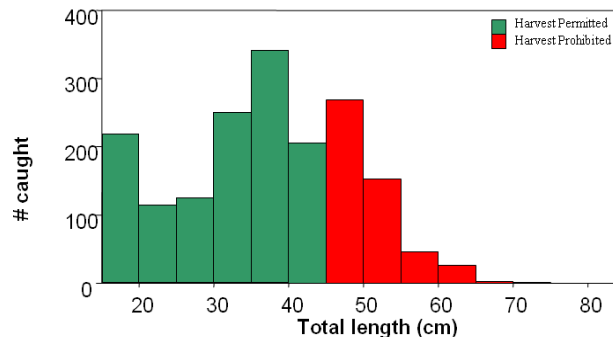


Option 2: Application of a 35-50 cm (13.7-19.7") harvestable slot to the catch from the FWIN program in FMZ 17.

Option 3: Maximum size 45 cm (17.7 inches).

The maximum size regulation means that all walleye over 45 cm (17.7 inches) must be immediately released. This regulation would protect virtually all mature male, and the large majority of mature female walleye in the population.

This option would allow anglers to harvest walleye less than 45 cm (17.7 inches) with no harvest of larger "trophy" fish. Recent creel surveys indicate this regulation would result in the release of approximately one out of every five walleye caught by anglers, or 20 per cent.



Option 3: Application of a 45cm (17.7") maximum size limit to the catch from the Fall Walleye Index Netting program in FMZ 17. All walleye 45cm or greater must be released

Seasons and Sanctuaries

The current walleye seasons and sanctuaries in FMZ 17 protect walleye during the spawn when they're most vulnerable. FMZ 17 also has a closed winter season on most lakes to reduce the overall angling pressure. No change to the winter closure is being considered at this time.

Provide Feedback

The ministry is encouraging the public to provide feedback on the proposed management options. Feedback will be collected from numerous sources, including information sessions, internet postings and a public feedback survey.

For more information on the draft Fisheries Management Plan, dates of public information sessions, and to provide comment, visit:

www.ontario.ca/zonecouncils or contact:

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