

There have been protective measures built into the Ontario fishing regulations to help protect & restore the walleye population in Wolfe Lake and other bodies of water within the province's Fishing Management Zone 18. Recent netting studies concluded that walleye populations within FMZ 18 are suffering a "heavy mortality rate" to different factors, including over harvest (60% of the angling effort is expended within FMZ 17 and 18), shoreline alteration, contaminant run-off and introduction of invasive species like zebra mussels and black crappie. Largest proportions of the total catch for walleye are of juvenile and immature sized fish, but lacking larger, older, reproductive (particularly female) fish.

In an effort to increase Zone 18's (including Wolfe Lake's) walleye population, regulation changes were established in 2013 which incorporated a HARVEST SLOT SIZE RESTRICTION: 40cm – 50cm / 15.7" – 19.7". The species will continue to be closely monitored.

It's good to recognize that female walleye grow larger than males — perhaps because they must carry eggs — but reach sexual maturity slower than males. Recent studies suggest that bigger, older females play a critical role in facilitating population growth in walleye. Big females lay larger eggs, which studies show produce young with higher survival rates.

We can do our part to help Wolfe Lake's walleye population recover by respecting the harvest slot size, practicing responsible ethics when keeping a few fish for the table and considering "catch and release" of this species that is clearly in need of some protective management. I have personally noted that the slot size may be making a positive impact, with larger walleye being caught more frequently than in recent years. It's these larger fish we should focus on releasing, as they're the reproductive individuals.

For detailed information on the netting study and other components of the management plan for walleye (and other fish species within FMZ 18), visit ebr.gov.on.ca

Best regards and Good Fishing!
Margie Manthey, Fishing Director
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