

Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region

FISHING GUIDE



***GREAT FISHING
OPPORTUNITIES!***

*Bass • Walleye • Panfish • Trout • Musky
Catfish • Northern Pike • Steelhead*

1-866-7PA-Lake • www.PaGreatLakes.com

PENNSYLVANIA'S GREAT LAKES REGION
OUR LAKES, RIVERS, STREAMS AND
RESERVOIRS ARE BOUNTIFUL...
...Plenty of activities for the entire family!

-  **Visit Crawford**
814-333-1258 www.VisitCrawford.org
-  **VisitErie**
814-454-1000 www.VisitErie.com
-  **VisitMercerCountyPa**
724-346-3771 www.VisitMercerCountyPa.com
-  **Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry and Tourism**
814-677-3151 www.OilRegion.org

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
www.fishandboat.com



LICENSING INFORMATION

Anglers 16 years of age or older must possess a license to fish in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania offers a variety of resident and non-resident fishing licenses – from a one-day permit up to a lifetime license. In addition, a Trout Permit is required to fish for trout and a Lake Erie Permit is required to fish on the waters of Lake Erie, Presque Isle Bay and Erie tributaries; a combination Trout/Lake Erie Permit is also an option. Licenses may be obtained online at: <https://www.fishandboat.com/Fish/FishingLicense/Pages/BuyAFishingLicense.aspx>.

Licenses are also available in person from issuing agents in over 700 tackle shops and outdoor stores around the state.



GUIDE TO FISHING Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region

One of the country's greatest angling destinations!

The wide variety of waterways in Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango Counties are home to diverse gamefish species. Whether you prefer dabbling a #14 Elk Hair Caddis for native brookies, floating an olive Woolly Bugger for steelies, pitching a jig-n-pig to cover for largemouth, trolling a crankbait for walleye or simply watching a bobber for a bluegill nibble, this corner of Pennsylvania has it all.

Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region has over 40 trout streams, 300 miles of warmwater creeks and rivers, 100,000 acres of inland lakes & reservoirs, plus the vast frontier of Lake Erie. Of course, each waterway does not hit a home run for every species. This guide will help you plan where to spend time angling for your favorite species.

SMALLMOUTH BASS:

Northwest Pennsylvania offers world class smallmouth fishing, with Lake Erie leading the way. Lake Erie is the place for quality smallies in the 4 to 7 lb. range during May/June and October/November (8-pounder bass documented), plus unbelievable numbers of 2 to 3-pound bass in the summer. An incredible flowing-water smallmouth fishery exists on both the Allegheny River and French Creek. Conneaut Lake is a bronzeback trophy lake with the potential of 6 lb. bass - particularly after Labor Day. Woodcock Lake and Justus Lake are sleeper smallmouth lakes. Don't overlook Mercer County's Shenango Lake which has developed an outstanding smallmouth bass fishery in recent years. Check out small streams like Oil Creek, Sugar Creek, Sandy Creek, Elk Creek and Conneaut Creek for a unique fly-fishing experience.

LARGEMOUTH BASS:

While largemouth bass are found in just about every pond, lake and reservoir in NWPA, the following waters stand out. Presque Isle Bay is arguably one of the best largemouth fisheries in the state with strong numbers of 2 to 4 lb. bass. For that exceptional big largemouth, check out the smaller natural lakes in the region, including Sugar Lake, Conneaut Lake, Edinboro Lake and Lake LeBoeuf. Don't overlook Lake Wilhelm and Shenango Lake in Mercer County; both offer good-size largemouth as well. However, if you desire to catch numbers of average-size largemouth, visit Pymatuning Lake. Have no worries about when to fish largemouth because the bite is on from April through November.

MUSKY:

Without a doubt, Pymatuning Lake is one of the top lakes in the state for producing exceptional-size muskellunge; anglers troll for them on this lake from early April through December. During the late fall and winter, the hunt for a trophy musky turns to the Allegheny River and French Creek. However, if you have your sight set on casting for a big musky on a small lake, focus your efforts on Justus Lake, Woodcock Lake, Conneaut Lake, Edinboro Lake and Lake LeBoeuf. The PA state record musky of 54 lb. 3 oz. came from Conneaut Lake.



NORTHERN PIKE:

Presque Isle Bay is the early spring and fall hotspot for pike, with ample numbers of 2-footers plus an opportunity for one growing to 3 feet. Other waters where respectable northern pike are encountered include the Allegheny River, Shenango Lake and Conneaut Lake.

WALLEYE:

Perhaps the most desired fish for the table, walleye are pursued by legions of anglers all season long in NW PA. Action starts in early April and continues until early July at Pymatuning Lake where 15 to 18-inch fish are routinely taken. By mid-summer, the focus shifts to trolling the open waters of Lake Erie. (The waters of Erie can quickly turn treacherous due to sudden weather changes. If your boat is not big-water capable or you do not have Great Lakes experience, check into an Erie charter fishing trip.) In the fall, the Allegheny River and French Creek are in the forefront for walleye. Woodcock Lake, Lake Wilhelm and Shenango Lake are also popular with walleye anglers.

CRAPPIE:

Some anglers spend the entire fishing season chasing crappies. While these popular panfish are found in most water, here's the inside scoop on the best waters by season: Shortly after ice-out, fish select areas of Presque Isle Bay (Misery Bay, Marina Lake, the Lagoons or Head-of-the-Bay) as well as the shallow mud-bottom bays of Pymatuning Lake. In late spring, the hottest bites are Pymatuning Lake and Shenango Lake. With the arrival of summer, check out Conneaut Lake and Shenango Lake. In the fall, some of the more popular lakes are: Lake LeBoeuf, Lake Wilhelm, Shenango Lake and Pymatuning Lake. Ice fishing hotspots include Edinboro Lake, Lake Wilhelm, Woodcock Lake, Pymatuning Lake, Conneaut Lake, and Presque Isle Bay.



BLUEGILLS:

Looking for the biggest bluegills in May and June? Presque Isle Bay, Pymatuning Lake, and Conneaut lead the way. Close behind are Shenango Lake, Lake Wilhelm, Justus Lake and Lake Pleasant. These same lakes are excellent waters for bluegills during ice fishing season as well.



PERCH:

Many anglers consider Lake Erie/Presque Isle Bay to be the #1 yellow perch fishery in the world. In late summer and early autumn anglers search for large



schools of perch in the main lake not far off shore – typically 30 to 50 feet of water. By late fall, some perch schools move into Presque Isle to winter over before spawning in the bay with the arrival of spring. Anglers travel distances to ice fish for perch on Presque Isle Bay during the winter. At ice-out, the open-water perch bite kicks off in the Bay and

lasts until almost May. In recent years there has been an explosion of yellow perch in Pymatuning Lake, making it the second-best perch spot in NW PA without question. At an even 3 lbs., the PA state record yellow perch was taken from Lake Erie.



WHITE BASS:

Several lakes in NW PA feature a white bass fishery. The last four state record white bass have come from Conneaut Lake, with the current record standing at 3.9 lbs. Pymatuning Lake and Shenango Lake are also top tier white bass waters. During the summer, white bass often force baitfish upwards in the water column where a wild melee of predator and prey erupt on the surface, offering incredible topwater action. In the late fall with water temps in the 50s, anglers must go deep with jiggging spoons to catch trophy white bass.



HYBRID STRIPERS:

The only water in the Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region to provide an opportunity for hybrid striped bass is Shenango Lake. A hatchery cross between a white bass and striped bass, hybrids can grow to a little over 20 pounds in our region. These exceptionally hard-hitting fish are known for smashing baits, tearing up tackle and making line-stripping runs. Best time to catch stripers in relatively shallow water is from late April to late June. In the summer, stripers follow suspended shad around the lake requiring special presentations.

CATFISH:

If you are looking for a tug of war with a BIG flathead cat, the Allegheny River, Shenango Lake and Shenango River are the places for you to cast a line. Flathead catfish exceeding 30 pounds have been recorded from NW Pennsylvania. Try fishing at night with large live bait from July through September. Quality channel catfish are caught from Pymatuning Lake, Shenango Lake, Lake Wilhelm, and Lake Erie.

LAKE ERIE TROUT:

Some anglers troll for lake trout in the deep water of Erie's Eastern Basin during the summer. But the real fun is casting for lake trout on nearshore shoals during the late fall. And don't be surprised if you hook a big lake-run brown trout or an acrobatic steelhead when trolling deep for walleyes. (However, the primary focus on steelhead occurs during the spawning run up tributary streams). The state record brown trout of 20 lb. 9 oz. and state record lake trout of 31 lb. 13 oz. both came from Lake Erie.



STEELHEAD:

The tributaries of Lake Erie are the only place in the entire state an angler can battle a steelhead one-on-one with a fly rod or spinning gear. Starting in October and continuing through mid-April, anglers will drive for hours to reach the tributaries of Lake Erie for the annual steelhead run. There are numerous tributaries used by the spawning fish. The state record steelhead came from Walnut Creek; it stands at 20 lb. 3 oz. During peak stream migration runs, the tributaries can be crowded with anglers, especially at the more popular sites. Some tributaries are closed entirely to fishing, while others have restricted access. For the most complete information on Erie tributaries access, download the following brochure from the PA Fish & Boat Commission: <https://www.fishandboat.com/Resource/Lakes/Documents/LakeErie-brochure.pdf>

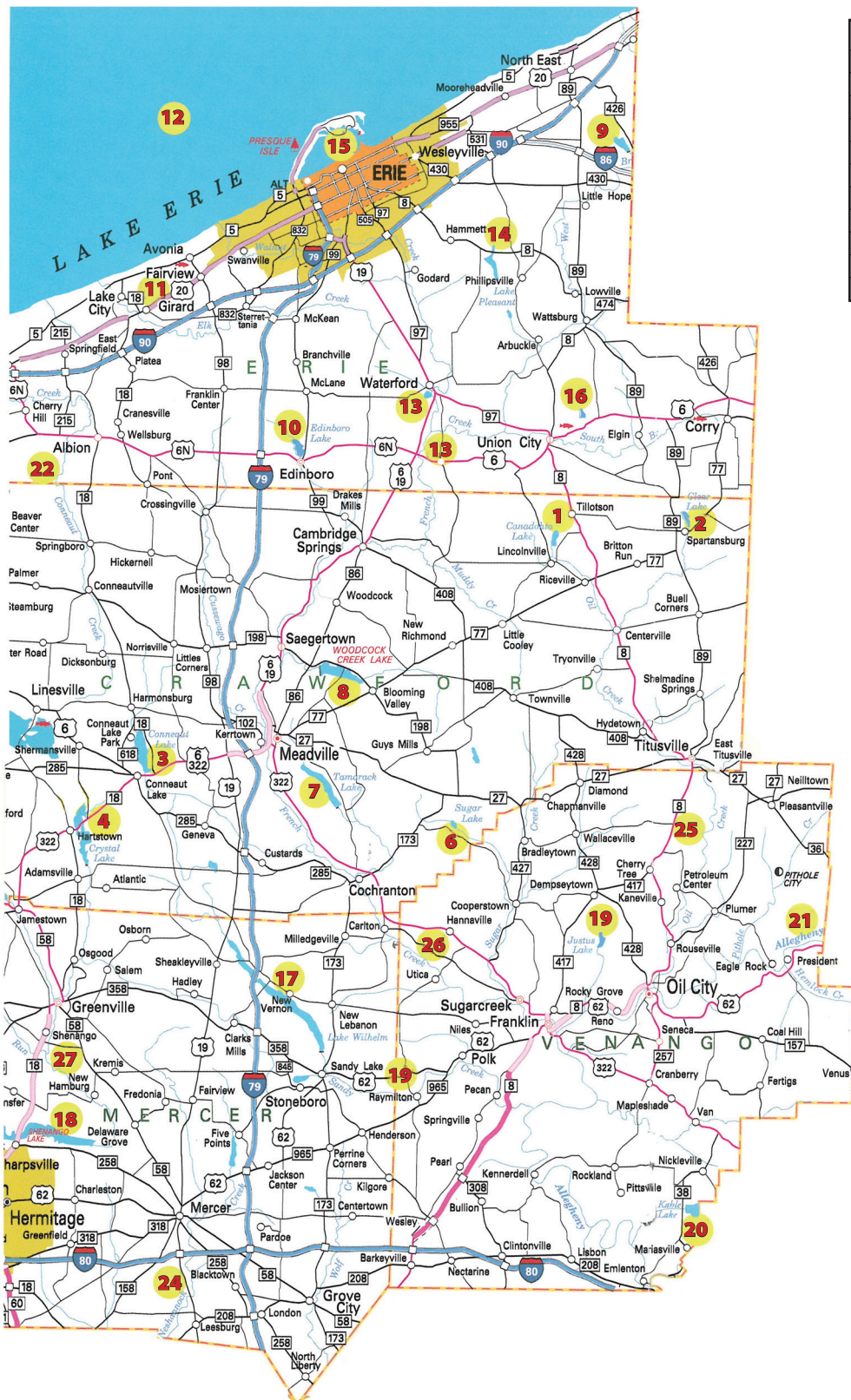


INLAND TROUT WATERS:

For anglers who relish the opening day of trout season each year, there are over 80 stocked streams and lakes in NW PA. To verify dates of trout season as well as a complete list of waters, check the PFBC Regulation Summary which comes with each license purchase. Below are special regulation waterways which are open to trout fishing year around; be sure to check PFBC Regulation Summary for limitations and exact boundaries.

- **CATCH AND RELEASE FLY-FISHING ONLY** – 1.3 miles of Little Sandy Creek (Venango County).
- **DELAYED HARVEST ARTIFICIAL LURES ONLY** – 1.18 miles of Cool Spring Creek (Mercer County); two sections totaling 2.55 miles of Oil Creek (Venango County).
- **STOCKED TROUT WATERS OPEN TO YEAR-ROUND FISHING:** Shenango River at New Hamburg (Mercer County) and Justus Lake (Venango County).





STATE RECORD FISH FROM NW PENNSYLVANIA

Musky	54 lb. 3 oz.	Conneaut Lake
Salmon, Chinook	28 lb 15 oz.	Lake Erie
Salmon, Coho	15 lb. 5 oz.	Lake Erie
Salmon, Pink	4 lb. 8 oz.	Elk Creek
Sucker	12 lb. 14.4 oz.	Allegheny River
Trout, Brown	20 lb. 9 oz.	Lake Erie
Trout, Lake	31 lb. 13 oz.	Lake Erie
Trout, Steelhead	20 lb. 3 oz.	Walnut Creek
White Bass	3 lb. 15.7 oz.	Conneaut Lake
Yellow Perch	3 lb. 0 oz.	Lake Erie
Rock Bass	3 lb. 2 oz.	Elk Creek

NORTHWEST WATERWAYS CHART

Lakes and Reservoirs

Fish Species > "W" indicates a variety of "warmwater species" such as bass, musky, walleye, crappie, catfish, and panfish. "T" indicates "stocked trout."

#	WATER/COUNTY	SPECIES	ACREAGE	MOTORS	BOAT ACCESS
CRAWFORD COUNTY					
1	Canadohta Lake	W	169	10HP	Gravel Ramp
2	Clear Lake	W	117	No Motors	Cartop Access
3	Conneaut Lake	W	928	Unlimited	Surface Ramp
4	Crystal Lake	W	60	No Motors	Cartop Access
5	Pymatuning Reservoir	W	13,000	20 HP	Surface & Gravel
6	Sugar Lake	W	90	10 HP	Gravel Ramp
7	Tamarack Lake	W	562	Electric	Surface & Gravel
8	Woodcock Lake	W	500	10 HP	Surface Ramp
ERIE					
9	Eaton Reservoir	W	246	Electric	Gravel Ramp
10	Edinboro Lake	W	240	Unlimited	Surfaced Ramp
11	FV Gravel Pit	T & W	15	Electric	Cartop Access
12	Lake Erie	W	640,000	Unlimited	Surfaced Harbors
13	Lake LeBoeuf	W	70	UL-No Wake	Surfaced Ramp
14	Lake Pleasant	T & W	60	No Motors	Cartop Access
15	Presque Isle Bay	W	3,840	Unlimited	Surfaced Ramps
16	Union City Reservoir	W	25	No Motors	Cartop Access
MERCER					
17	Lake Wilhelm	W	1,680	20 HP	Surfaced Ramp
18	Shenango Lake	W	3,560	Unlimited	Surfaced Ramp
VENANGO					
19	Justus Lake	T & W	144	Electric	Surface Ramp
20	Kahle Lake	W	250	Electric	Surface Ramp

NOTE: The marsh ponds on Gamelands in Northwest, PA usually support largemouth bass and sunfish. Only non-powered boats are permitted, and parking is limited. Shoreline fishing is also limited due to terrain.

MAJOR WARMWATER CREEKS & STREAMS

Primary species in flowing water are smallmouth bass and assorted sunfish, plus walleye, musky, & pike in some larger creeks & rivers.
Trout are stocked in some sections of these streams.

#	WATERWAY	MILES	MOTORS	BOAT ACCESS
21	Allegheny River	118 M	Unlimited	Surfaced Ramp access at Tionesta, Oil City, Franklin, Fisherman's Cove, Jet motors recommended
22	Conneaut Creek	43M	Wade/Float	Pull-off access, canoes
23	French Creek	80M	No Wake	Unimproved access with parking (Cambridge Springs, Saegertown, Meadville, Shaws Landing, Cochran, Utica)
24	Neshannock	9 M	Wade	Pull-off access, wading
25	Oil Creek	12M	Wade/Float	Pull-off access, canoes
26	Sandy Creek	15M	Wade Only	Pull-off access, wading
27	Shenango River	30M	Wade/Float	Pull-off access, canoes

PA GREAT LAKES REGION

VISIT CRAWFORD

www.VisitCrawford.org

Pymatuning State Park

2660 Williamsfield Road
Jamestown, PA 16134
724-932-3142

www.dcnr.state.pa.us

Almost everything about Pymatuning State Park is huge. At 21,122 acres, it is one of the largest state parks in the Commonwealth. The 17,088-acre Pymatuning Reservoir is the largest lake in the Commonwealth. In its three campgrounds, Pymatuning has the most campsites in the Pennsylvania state park system. More people visit Pymatuning than almost any other state park in Pennsylvania. But the biggest thing about Pymatuning is the fun you can have boating, fishing, swimming, camping and enjoying other recreational opportunities. In addition to the state park facilities, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission operate a fish hatchery and visitor center, and the Pennsylvania Game Commission has wildlife viewing areas.



VISITERIE

www.VisitErie.com

Presque Isle State Park/Presque Isle Bay/Lake Erie

Foot of Peninsula Drive/Route 832
Erie, PA 16505-2042
(814) 833-7424

www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/prequeisle.aspx

Fish from shore or stream, bring your boat or hire a charter. Lake Erie was recently ranked #3 out of the top 100 Best Bass Lakes of the Decade by Bassmaster magazine. The wide variety of waterways offer diverse game fish species including steelhead, trout, walleye, pike, bluegill, perch and small & largemouth bass. Averages of 1.5 million fish are caught each year in Lake Erie, Presque Isle Bay and its surrounding waterways, such as Elk Creek and Walnut Creek. Updated stream enhancements and controlled spawning grounds guarantee productive fishing holes for a variety of species. Several fishing charters, boat liveries, canoe and kayak rentals, lifts and marinas are located throughout the county and on Presque Isle State Park.

Popular Fishing Areas such as:

- Edinboro Lake
- French Creek
- Lake Pleasant
- Walnut Creek
- Elk Creek



VISIT MERCER COUNTY PA

www.VisitMercerCountyPa.com

Maurice K. Goddard State Park

684 Lake Wilhelm Rd.
Sandy Lake, PA 16145
724-253-4833
www.dcnr.state.pa.us

Located near Sandy Lake, Pa., the 2,856-acre state park features 1,860-acre Lake Wilhelm, which is popular with anglers. 20-hp motors can be used on the lake and there is also a 241-slip marina. Many recreational activities attract visitors in every season. During the summer months, the popular activities are boating, fishing, hiking, and biking. A twelve-mile scenic biking trail follows the shoreline of Lake Wilhelm. In the winter months, the state park is a great place for cross-country skiing, ice skating, snowmobiling, and ice fishing. Also located at Maurice K. Goddard State Park is one of the state's designated scenic byways. Lake Wilhelm Scenic Byway is 6.4 miles long and runs the western side of Lake Wilhelm and Sandy Lake.



Shenango River Lake

2442 Kelly Rd. (Admin. Office)
Hermitage, PA 16148
724-962-7746

www.lrp.usace.army.mil/rec/lakes/shanano.htm

A 3,560-acre river lake. Visitors may spend their day picnicking, camping, boating, jet skiing, water skiing, or enjoying nature's beauty at one of the many recreation or access areas located on the lake. Fishing enthusiasts are attracted to the waters for bass, walleye, muskellunge, and a variety of panfish that inhabit the lake. Located at the lake is a trail for off-road vehicles. Around the shorelines are lovely picnic sites and pavilions to rent for a day of fun. Another popular activity is bird watching, with a large variety of migratory birds stopping over at the lake. Birds that have their home here include bald eagles, osprey, and trumpeter swans. Other animals that inhabit the lake are beavers and river otters.



OIL REGION ALLIANCE OF BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND TOURISM

www.OilRegion.org

Oil Creek State Park

305 State Park Road
Oil City, PA 16301-9733
814-676-5915

The Oil Creek Valley is the site of the world's first commercially successful oil well. Oil Creek State Park tells the story of the early petroleum industry by interpreting oil boomtowns, wells, extraction, and transportation. Oil Creek carves a scenic valley of deep hollows, steep hillsides, and wetlands. Oil Creek is known for its bass and trout. Boughton Run, Troy Run, and Jones Run provide brook trout fishing. There are two delayed-harvest artificial lure-only areas that cover 2.5 miles of Oil Creek.



Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region



“Reel it in!” **1 REGION
10 STATE RECORDS**



Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region
crawford • erie • mercer • venango