

COMMERCIAL FISH PRODUCTION IN THE GREAT LAKES 1867-2006

BACKGROUND

Records of commercial fish production in the Great Lakes were collected as early as 1867 in Canada and 1879 in the United States. This information appeared in reports and records of a number of agencies but was not brought together until the establishment of the International Board of Inquiry for the Great Lakes Fisheries in 1940. Tables showing commercial production of principal species in both countries were published by the Board in 1943. This report was for many years the main reference on Great Lakes production for the period 1867-1940, but has been long out of print. The need for an up-to-date record of the production of the fishery was drawn to the attention of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, which republished in 1962 the early statistics (to 1940), with those collected in the period 1941-1960, as Technical Report No. 3. A supplement covering the years 1961 to 1968 was released in 1970. As catch records from 1969-1977 became available, a revised edition of Technical Report No. 3, describing 110 years of Great Lakes fish production (1867-1977), was issued. This edition also incorporates corrections of past entries and uses previously unavailable material. The Commission has continued to aggregate annual records of catch after 1977 and has now put them into an accessible format on its website.

The collection of commercial catch records for the Great Lakes is presently carried out by state and provincial agencies. The United States Geological Survey (formerly the Fish and Wildlife Service and before that the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries) routinely tabulates catch, effort, and catch per unit of effort for New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota waters. The Province of Ontario prepares similar tabulations for its fisheries. Ralph Hile, J. W. Davies, Stanford H. Smith, Gary Eck, Joan Ridgley, Joseph Elrod, and Sharon McDonald have been particularly helpful in the preparation of Technical Report No. 3. This second website edition would not have been possible without help from the following: Stewart Ludsin, Peter McHugh, George Spangler, and Paige Etter.