



Great Lakes Fishery Commission La Commission des Pêcheries des Grands Lacs

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CONTROL CREWS TO BEGIN REMOVAL OF INVASIVE SEA LAMPREYS THROUGHOUT THE GREAT LAKES BASIN TO PROTECT THE \$5.1 BILLION FISHERY

Ann Arbor, MI — The Sea Lamprey Control Program released its [2025 treatment schedule](#) earlier this month. Field crews will begin conducting treatment activities at the end of April, starting on Lake Erie and Lake Ontario tributaries. Highly trained control crews from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Fisheries and Oceans Canada will remove invasive, predatory sea lampreys from tributaries of the Great Lakes throughout the United States and Canada. Depending on various environmental factors, crews are scheduled to conduct treatments through October of 2025. Landowners and the general public may encounter control agents along rivers and streams during treatment periods.

Sea lampreys—native to the Atlantic Ocean and invasive to the Great Lakes—are a highly destructive species that can decimate populations of native and desirable fish species in the Great Lakes, significantly harming both the ecosystem and economy of the region. Adult sea lampreys use rivers and creeks to spawn once and die. The offspring—larval sea lampreys—live in river bottoms as harmless larvae for several years before transforming into parasitic juveniles and migrating to the open lake to feed on the blood and bodily fluids of fish. Sea lampreys use their suction-cup mouth filled with sharp teeth and a rasping tongue to feed on a variety of Great Lakes fishes such as lake trout, walleye, salmon, yellow perch, whitefish, sturgeon, etc. Sea lampreys only feed for approximately 18 months of their life cycle, but each one is capable of killing up to 40 pounds (18kg) of fish during that time. Within a few decades of their invasion, sea lampreys had colonized all areas of the Great Lakes basin and caused major economic losses. They also contributed to significant ecosystem disruption.

The Sea Lamprey Control Program is a highly coordinated effort between the United States and Canada, after both countries signed the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries, a treaty between the two nations, in 1955. TFM, the primary control tactic, was discovered in 1957 by scientists working at the U.S. Geological Survey's Hammond Bay Biological Station in northern Michigan. In addition to lampricides, the program uses traps and barriers to evaluate and control sea lamprey populations in the Great Lakes.



ÉTABLIE 1955 PAR TRAITÉ
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“Staffing challenges at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have impacted our ability to launch the 2025 field season as planned,” said Marc Gaden, the Commission’s executive secretary. “Many concerned people in the region reached out to their representatives in Congress and expressed their strong support for sea lamprey control, and the response from the members was overwhelmingly positive. We are extremely grateful for the support, and we are cautiously optimistic that, because of that, the field season can commence.”

“The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff that comprise the U.S. side of the Sea Lamprey Control Program is a small but mighty force with approximately 85 full-time and 25 seasonal employees,” said Ethan Baker, chair of the Commission. “Although we got a later-than-usual start preparing for the field season on the U.S. side of the border, I am confident those that have dedicated their career to protecting the \$5.1 billion Great Lakes fishery are doing everything they can to make up for the lost time and are eager to get out in the field and get the job done.”

While TFM is fully registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Health Canada, and is considered safe, the public is advised to minimize unnecessary exposure, as they would with any pesticide. Lampricides are selectively toxic to lampreys, though some fish, plants, and insects may be sensitive. If baitfish or other organisms are confined in stream water, it is advised to use an alternate water source because lampricide may induce mortality of aquatic organisms that are crowded or handled. Agricultural irrigation must be suspended for 24 hours, during and following a treatment. Learn more about the application of lampricides here: https://www.glf.org/pubs/factsheets/FACT%204A_HR.pdf.

Gaden concluded: “Sea lampreys destroyed the Great Lakes fishery after they invaded through shipping canals in the early part of the twentieth century. Over the course of the nearly 70 years that field crews have been applying lampricides, we have seen time and time again that if control is reduced, sea lamprey populations will rebound, fish will die, and the economy of the region will suffer. Sea lamprey control in the Great Lakes is essential, proven effective, and a clear example of the efficiency possible through effective partnerships.”



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