Great Lakes Fishery Commission

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Contact: Greg McClinchey
226-980-9193

Great Lakes Fishery Commission Unveils Interactive Web-Based Visualization Tool for Fish Stocking Data

Ann Arbor, MI–The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (Commission) is excited to announce the launch of an interactive, web-based visualization tool designed to enhance public and fishery manager access to fish stocking data in the Great Lakes. This innovative tool is a significant step forward in fishery management, allowing users to explore more than 7 decades of stocking events with unprecedented ease and accuracy. Users can access the data by visiting http://fsis.glfc.org/.

Fish stocking has long been a vital practice for fishery rehabilitation and supplementation, with more than 400 million fish released into the Great Lakes and their tributaries in the past ten years. Despite the critical role of these data, access has historically been limited to static tables and cumbersome queries. The new website changes that by providing a dynamic and interactive platform for users to visualize these data through maps, charts, and tables.

Key features of the new tool:

- **User-friendly interface:** Allows easy exploration of fish stocking data through interactive maps, charts, and tables.
- **Standardized and accurate data:** Extensive collaboration with more than 40 agency staff from 15 offices to ensure data accuracy and standardization.
- **How-to guides:** Comprehensive guides to help users navigate and utilize the tool effectively.
- **Real-time data access:** Users can download datasets or dynamically link to the data, and agency staff can upload and correct data directly on the site.
- **Ticket tracker system:** Registered users can file trouble or suggestion tickets to improve the site.
- **Secure and reproduceable data:** All data and site code are backed up at an offsite location, ensuring security and reproducibility.

"This project represents a significant advancement in how we manage and interact with fish stocking data," said Commission executive secretary Marc Gaden. "By making these data more accessible and user-friendly, we are supporting better fishery management and fostering greater public engagement."

The development process identified and addressed several data issues, from typos to the need for standardization, ensuring the integrity of the information presented. The site also supports advanced data requests through a web portal (REST API), allowing technical users to create custom applications and visualizations which are linked to real-time data. An R package has been developed to facilitate data use in the common statistical software, further expanding the tool's versatility.

The public-facing site requires no login and aims to attract a wide range of users, from fishery managers and policy makers to anglers and the general public. This transparency and accessibility are expected to enhance the understanding and appreciation of fishery management efforts across the Great Lakes basin.

This project was supported by the Science Transfer Program, which seeks to make scientific information more accessible to inform fishery management decisions. The project to develop this tool was led by Adam Cottrill of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Future Developments: Looking ahead, the Commission hopes to incorporate recovery data and additional features into a second version of the site. This expansion will require further data standardization and collaboration among a total of 35 agency offices in the Great Lakes basin. The Commission is committed to continuous improvement and user feedback, ensuring the tool remains relevant and useful.

For more information and to access the new visualization tool, please visit http://fsis.glfc.org/.

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