

Great Lakes Tributaries a Focus of '26 Fishing Expo

By Bill Hilts, Jr.

New York's Great Lakes are a fantastic one-two punch when it comes to a wide variety of fish species and angling techniques. One focus that often flies beneath the radar is the tributaries of those Great Lakes of Erie and Ontario, a catalyst for the angling community. No boat is needed and access is plentiful. The Greater Niagara Fishing Expo, set for Feb. 19-22 at the Niagara Falls Convention Center, will lead you to the promised waters.

Keynote speaker for tributary fishing fanatics is Roger Hinchcliff with Steelhead Manifesto, a salmon and steelhead fishing guru known for his angling knowledge. Roger is considered the leading authority in the country for salmon and steelhead fishing. He loves to share his expertise with other anglers. He speaks more than 30 times per year to crowds of 60 to 400 people, at fishing clubs, consumer shows, and retail events. He is also a pro staffer and industry consultant for many fishing companies. Hinchcliff is very familiar with fishing in New York and Lake Erie tributaries. He will deliver seminars each day including talks on Spinners, Float Fishing, and water temps for Steelhead. He will bring something to the table for everyone of any skill level.

If you are new to tributary fishing or are experienced but looking for more angling knowledge, the Western New York Steelheaders group will be offering a Basic Lake Erie Tributary Steelhead Fishing Clinic on Feb. 21 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The clinic free but space is limited. To ensure a seat is available, pre-register at dafisherman885@roadrunner.com.

There will also be a Fly-Fishing Clinic put on by the Lake Erie Chapter of Fly Fishers International on Feb. 21 at 8 a.m. This clinic is taught by LEC-FFI members with years of experience in all aspects of Fly Fishing. The focus of this clinic is to provide beginners to intermediate Fly Fishers with knowledge such as purchasing the correct equipment and to teach techniques that will bring your Fly Fishing to the next level.

If you have a thirst for even more tributary knowledge to make you a better stream angler, there are over 35 additional seminars on tributary fishing, given by experts on the topics being discussed. Visit the Expo website to make your education plan for which seminars you want to attend at <https://niagarafishingexpo.com/education/> .

When it comes to the gear that you need for tributary fishing, just take a look at some of the vendor booths that will be exhibiting in the main hall of the convention center – with many offering show-special pricing: Arctic Spinners, Death Roe Soft Beads, Limestone Bait Company, TAAR Outdoors, Trib Reels, WNY Steelheaders, VooDoo Custom Tackle, Colville Outfitters, the WNY Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and the Lake Erie Chapter of Fly Fishers International of the many vendors pertaining to tributary fishing. With over 170 vendors at

the show, check out <https://niagarafishingexpo.com/list-of-2026-exhibitors/> to see them all.

This year, the Greater Niagara Fishing Expo is raising money for pediatric cancer therapy. The theme for the 2026 show is “Fishing Fights Pediatric Cancer!” For example, Catching Dreams Charters, a non-profit organization that focuses on fishing therapy for families that are affected by cancer, will be selling raffle tickets for some excellent door prizes and make sure you sign up for a chance to win ... and help a most worthy cause. Because of this effort, we will be facilitating more fishing therapy for kids with cancer and their families this year.

For all the details on the 2026 Greater Niagara Fishing Expo, visit www.niagarafishingexpo.com.