

Lake Erie's Walleye Fishing was record-breaking in 2025

By Bill Hilts, Jr.

In the New York waters of Lake Erie, it was a record-breaking year for walleye fishing. The catch rate was the best-ever for this Great Lake. According to DEC's open lake creel census, the walleye catch rate of 11 fish per trip was tops in the 38-year history of the survey. Two in five walleye trips caught their limits, with an estimated total catch of over 230,000 walleyes boated in 2025. Because of this fantastic walleye fishing, the Greater Niagara Fishing Expo will be changing things up to provide the opportunity for more anglers to enjoy this fantastic Eastern Basin walleye fishery, no matter what your skill level.

The Eastern Lake Erie Walleye School returns to the Greater Niagara Fishing Expo February 19-22, 2026, at the Niagara Falls Convention Center in Niagara Falls, NY – but with a new and unique twist. The changes include new content and format, multiple instructors in each class, and, best of all, it is included with general admission to the Expo! These customized classes will be taught by Capt. Ross Robertson, Capt. Craig Sleeman, Capt. Dylan Nussbaum, Capt. Pete Alex, Capt. Tom Miranda, Capt. Destin DeMarion, Capt. Mike Yarema, DEC's Dr. Jason Robinson, and Calvin Vander Boon – all experts in the Eastern Lake Erie walleye scene. From instruction on Forward Facing Sonar to catching bigger walleyes for competition fishing, there will be six in-depth two-hour classes from Friday through Sunday, allowing you to attend all six sessions or whichever classes your interest/schedule allows. Check out <https://niagarafishingexpo.com/eastern-lake-erie-walleye-school/> for the details.

If you are new to walleye fishing or are experienced but looking for more angling knowledge, the WNY Walleye club will be offering a Basic Lake Erie Walleye Fishing Clinic on February 22 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The session will cover everything from boat setup and electronics to all the specifics on fishing in the spring, summer and fall. Check out <https://niagarafishingexpo.com/beginner-lake-erie-walleye-fishing-clinic/>. Admission is free but seating is limited. Pre-register at adamt@taarfishing.com.

In addition to the above walleye fishing education, there are also over 35 hours of additional open lake seminars on walleye fishing, given by captains that are 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 and the electronics that you need for walleye 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: Church Tackle, Cisco, Daiwa, Doc's Tackle, Dye Fish, Fish Hawk, FishUSA, Garmin, Innovative

Outdoors, Moonshine Lures, Muddy Creek, Okuma, Pirate Lures, Silver Streak, Torpedo Diver, Traxstech, Walleye X and WNY Walleye of the many vendors pertaining to walleye 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!" as we partner with Catching Dreams Charters, a non-profit organization that focuses on fishing therapy for families that are affected by cancer. Funds will be raised by 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.