



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lake Erie fishermen obtain global recognition for sustainable fishing

Iconic Canadian freshwater fisheries are the largest in the world to achieve MSC certification

TORONTO, Canada, October 8, 2015 – The Lake Erie yellow perch and walleye (pickerel) fisheries have become the fourth and largest commercial freshwater fishery in the world to achieve MSC certification, demonstrating they are well-managed and environmentally sustainable. They are the first in the Great Lakes to achieve MSC certification and only the second in North America.

With total catches of 3,176 metric tonnes of yellow perch and 2,132 metric tonnes of walleye in 2014 by the now certified vessels, the fisheries will provide a significant volume of MSC certified lake fish to markets in the U.S., Canada and globally. This also signifies an influx of locally sourced, MSC certified fish for the 11.6 million inland inhabitants in the surrounding Canadian and U.S. areas – a rare opportunity for non-coastal communities.

*“Our fisheries have a long, rich history, and operating them sustainably is about ensuring our local industry can stay productive and competitive for this and future generations,” said **Tim Tiessen, President of the Ontario Commercial Fisheries' Association (OCFA)**. “Sustainability is the hallmark of our industry so MSC certification is excellent news for the Lake Erie yellow perch and walleye commercial fisheries. The companies buying our fish are looking for ways to prove to their customers that it is responsibly sourced, and the MSC certification allows us to do just that.”*

Lake Erie is not only home to one of the world’s largest freshwater commercial fisheries but also the economic backbone of many local communities founded on and supported by the industry. As the most important species harvested, yellow perch and walleye (pickerel) contribute heavily to the area’s 1,490 fishing and processing jobs, provided by independently-owned small and medium sized businesses.

The MSC fishery certificate, initiated and owned by the OCFA, applies to yellow perch landed in Ontario, Canada and in Ohio, United States, and walleye landed in Canadian waters. The Lake Erie fishery is managed cooperatively by Canada and the United States through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC).

*“The success of this large project involved the work of many groups and individuals, including fish processors, fishermen, and the Lake Erie Committee, which includes the Lake Managers from the Province of Ontario and four US States bordering Lake Erie,” added **Tiessen**.*

In addition to the fishery certification, two Ontario-based supply chain processors, La Nassa Foods and Presteve Foods Ltd, have also achieved MSC Chain of Custody (CoC) certification allowing them to purchase and sell Lake Erie yellow perch and walleye as MSC certified. Other OCFA members are eligible to complete CoC certification.

*“The MSC is extremely proud to welcome such a significant and iconic fishery into our program,” said **Jay Lugar, Program Director for MSC in Canada.** “When we think fisheries in Canada we must always consider the importance of commercial freshwater fisheries. As the most credible and recognized standard for sustainable fishing, and in a country known worldwide for its freshwater resources, we are committed to expanding engagement by inland fisheries in Canada. The Lake Erie certification is a tremendous achievement and we hope it will pave the way for more freshwater fisheries to enter the program.*

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About the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an international non-profit organization. Our vision is for the world’s oceans to be teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations. Our ecolabel and certification program recognizes and rewards sustainable fishing practices and is helping create a more sustainable seafood market.

The MSC ecolabel on a seafood product means that:

- It comes from a wild-catch fishery which has been independently certified to the MSC’s science-based standard for environmentally sustainable fishing.
- It’s fully traceable to a sustainable source.

There are 270 fisheries in over 35 countries certified to the MSC Standard. These fisheries have a combined annual seafood production of almost nine million metric tonnes, representing close to 10 per cent of annual global yields. More than 19,000 seafood products worldwide carry the MSC ecolabel. For more information visit www.msc.org

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