1974

INLAND AREA

GREAT LAKES AND NORTHERN MISSISSIPPI RIVER DRAINAGE BASIN
(REGION 3)

Preliminary estimates for 1974 indicate that the landings in the ten states that support a commercial fishery in the North Central Drainage system of the Mississippi River will produce 34 million pounds of fish with a value of $3.5 million. Buffalofish, carp and catfish are the three main species harvested and historically these species have constituted between 75 and 85 percent of the total landings from this area.

Data from the Great Lakes are nearly complete for 1974 and reveal that the total landings will amount to 73.1 million pounds with a total value of $9.4 million. This is an increase of 6.5 million pounds and $ .8 million compared with 1973. This increase in production resulted primarily from alewife landings of 42.8 million pounds - - - a record catch for this species. In 1974 alewives made up 58 percent of the total United States Great Lakes catch. Carp, smelt, white bass and yellow perch landings also increased. Chub production, which has decreased each year since 1967, amounted to only 4.4 million pounds, a record low since collections of Great Lakes statistics began in 1879. Whitefish, suckers and sheepshead landings also declined. In 1974 the nine species mentioned above made up 96 percent of the total United States Great Lakes catch.

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The population of sea lampreys, a parasite that has devastated stocks of some of the Great Lakes choicer fish, reached an all time low in Lake Superior in 1974. Adult sea lampreys, moving upstream to spawn, are collected at electric barriers to assess the effectiveness of efforts by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to control this species. The sea lamprey count in Lake Superior was the lowest recorded and also remained low in Lake Huron. Sea lamprey mortality of planted, hatchery reared lake trout and salmon should also decline and populations of white-fish, burbot, suckers, etc. should show increases in the future. Since DDT was banned, the contaminant level has dropped remarkably, according to the Fish and Wildlife Services Great Lakes Fishery Laboratory. In 1973 the DDT level in chubs was 2.1 ppm but by 1974 it had decreased to 1.2 ppm. The contaminant PCB appears to be leveling off and for the chubs was at 5.4 ppm in 1974. Although mercury levels had dropped rapidly in 1972 the rate of decrease is slowing and the walleye (the only species tested by the Great Lakes Laboratory) level was 1.07 ppm. The FDA has set limits on these contaminants as follows: DDT and PCB, 5 ppm; and for mercury and other heavy metals it is .5 ppm.