

POSITION PAPER:

*Commercial Fishing*

Date:



Oneida Lake Association, Inc.—P.O. Box 3536—Syracuse, NY 13220

*It's Your Lake—Help Us Preserve It!*

Our current law allows the unrestricted buying and selling of any freshwater species of fish that is not subject to a minimum size limit or a closed season. This law, passed when commercial fishing was a viable activity in New York State, fails to address current environmental conditions.

Oneida Lake's yellow perch population is dangerously low. Cormorant predation has removed hundreds of thousands of adult perch from the lake. These birds will continue to ravage our already depleted perch schools. In addition, commercial fishermen harvest as many "jack perch" as they can. These catches severely impact recreational anglers, who make up the vast majority of Oneida Lake's fishing fraternity. Continued commercial pressure can only hurt a perch population that is dangerously low.

Sportspersons have recently voiced several concerns regarding Oneida Lake commercial perch fishing. These include:

- 1-Natural resources are unfairly distributed.
- 2-Everything is harvested. No quality control exists.
- 3-Large harvests occur during the spawning season.
- 4-The high market value of perch encourages the taking of multiple limits.
- 5-People are fishing commercially, using a sportsperson's license.
- 6-Proceeds are not reported to the IRS.

We have to pressure the Federal Government for cormorant control.

We can, however, eliminate commercial perch fishing ourselves. This harvest provides primary income to no one. Rather, it depletes a recreational resource that attracts tourists and creates jobs throughout Central New York.

The Oneida Lake Association believes that the sale of perch, and other, angler-caught panfish should be banned in New York State. This is also the position of the professional biologists associated with the American Fisheries Society. Only Maine, Vermont, and Maryland still allow this out-dated practice.