

Investing in future of fishing in Niagara County

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The future of fishing in Niagara County depends on two important ingredients: healthy fish populations and the next generation of anglers. This month, both are receiving a boost thanks to the efforts of dedicated volunteers and community organizations throughout the region.

The Niagara River Anglers Association's pen-rearing project in Youngstown has wrapped up another successful season, producing outstanding results that will benefit the Lower Niagara River and Lake Ontario fishery for years to come. The annual volunteer-driven effort is designed to improve the survival and return

rates of hatchery-raised Chinook salmon and steelhead by holding them in net pens along the Lower Niagara River for several weeks before release. During that time, the fish acclimate to local water conditions and develop a stronger imprint on the river, increasing the likelihood they will return as adults when it is time to spawn.

This spring, approximately 115,000 Chinook salmon called the north dock in Youngstown home for five weeks. The fish experienced exceptional growth during their stay, reaching an average size of 50 smolts per pound at release – nearly



three times their original size, and the largest average release size achieved since the project began nearly 25 years ago. The steelhead also posted impressive growth rates, nearly doubling in size during the rearing period. Larger smolts generally have a better chance of survival once they enter the open waters of Lake Ontario, making the pen-rearing project a valuable investment in the future of the fishery.

The success of the program is made possible by the volunteers who dedicate countless hours each spring to feeding fish, maintaining pens, monitoring fish health, and ensuring the project operates smoothly. Their efforts help sustain one of North America's premier salmon and trout fisheries, attracting anglers from across the continent and generating significant economic benefits for local communities.

Just as important as raising fish is inspiring the next generation of anglers who will enjoy and protect these resources in the future. June offers several opportunities for young people throughout Niagara County to experience the outdoors through youth fishing contests and fishing clinics.

I've always believed that one of the best things we can do for our children is get them outdoors and away from cell phones, tablets and computer screens. Fishing teaches patience, responsibility, conservation, and an appreciation for nature while creating lifelong memories with family and friends.

Several youth fishing events are scheduled throughout the month, including the recent contests in Youngstown and the Town of Cambria on June 13; the upcoming Wilson Conservation Club event on June 20; and the popular "Hooks for Harry" event in Olcott and the Town of Niagara contest on June 27. Many of these events provide fishing equipment, bait, prizes, refreshments, and experienced volunteers who are eager to help young anglers learn the sport.

These outings also provide an excellent opportunity for parents, grandparents and guardians to learn alongside their children. Every year, families discover that fishing is an activity they can enjoy together for a lifetime.

While volunteers and community organizations continue to invest in the future of our fishery, anglers on the water are currently dealing with one of the most challenging periods of the fishing season. June is often considered a transitional month in Niagara County. Smallmouth bass are on their spawning beds, salmon and trout are adjusting to constantly changing water temperatures in Lake Ontario, and walleye are just beginning to show up in respectable numbers following their spring spawn.

As if those challenges were not enough, the annual arrival of drifting green moss in the Lower Niagara River creates another obstacle for anglers trying to keep their presentations clean and ef-

fective. Add it all together, and June can test the patience and persistence of even the most experienced fishermen.

Does that mean you should put the rods away and wait for better conditions? Heck no.

Successful anglers simply adapt. Fishing earlier in the day before water levels rise can often help reduce the amount of moss in the river. Topwater presentations can be effective, allowing anglers to avoid much of the drifting vegetation while still targeting aggressive fish. Sometimes the best strategy is simply changing locations altogether.

One of the greatest advantages of living and fishing in Niagara County is the incredible diversity of opportunities available. If conditions are difficult on the Lower Niagara River, anglers can shift their focus to local harbors, ponds, inland waters, or head west to Lake Erie. Smallmouth bass, walleye, panfish, carp and other species provide excellent alternatives while waiting for conditions to improve elsewhere.

That diversity is what separates Niagara County from many fishing destinations around the world. Within a short drive, anglers have access to the Niagara River, Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, harbors, tributaries, ponds, and inland waterways. There is almost always somewhere to fish and something willing to bite.

Whether it's volunteers raising salmon and steelhead for future fishing opportunities, organizations introducing children to the sport for the first time, or anglers adapting to seasonal challenges on the water, Niagara County continues to demonstrate why it is one of North America's premier fishing destinations. June may require a little more patience and flexibility, but anglers willing to adjust can still find excellent action. Sometimes the toughest conditions produce the most rewarding days on the water.

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Twin Cities sets firemen's parade, first responders appreciation day

Columbia Hook & Ladder No. 1 celebrates 150th anniversary

Submitted by David L. Evans
Parade chair and secretary
Columbia Hook & Ladder Co. No. 1
North Tonawanda

The fire departments and volunteer fire companies of the Twin Cities are having their annual parade on Saturday, June 20. This parade event first started in 1880 and has been held every year since then.

The Columbia Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1, celebrating its 150th anniversary, will lead the fire companies in the line of march. Columbia was founded May 7, 1876, by 20 leading citizens of the Village of North Tonawanda, the first fire company on the north side of the Erie Canal. Step off time is 1 p.m. The route will be in North Tonawanda, starting at Oliver Street and the 10th Avenue area, marching north on Oliver Street to Ward Road, turning at Ward Road and to the Gratwick Hose Co. grounds.

City of North Tonawanda Fire

Chief Douglas Orlowski and City of Tonawanda Fire Chief Joseph Briggs will lead the parade inspection in front of the Gratwick Hose hall. Joining them will their assistant fire chiefs, the mayors and common council of both cities, county legislators and other city officials and guests.

Career firefighters of both departments will be part of the parade. Volunteer fire companies from each city are: North Tonawanda – Columbia Hook & Ladder No. 1, Active Hose No. 2, Live Hose No. 4, Rescue Fire No. 5, Gratwick Hose No. 6 and Sweeney Hose No. 7. From Tonawanda – Union Hook & Ladder No. 1, National Hose No. 1, Delaware Hose No. 2 and Niagara Hose No. 3.

Also invited are fire companies of neighboring communities from both counties that have been part of mutual aid responses. From Niagara County are St. Johnsburg, Adams, Frontier,

Bergholz, Shawnee, Sanborn, Pekin and Niagara Active. From Erie County are Brighton, Sheridan Park and Grand Island. Twin City Ambulance and Tri-Community Ambulance will also be represented.

This is a special parade that has gone on in the Tonawanda's community for nearly a century and a half. The public will enjoy the marching firefighter units, senior volunteers, fire apparatus and bands along the entire parade route.

The public is invited to join the general admission afterparty of food, beverages and musical entertainment on the Gratwick Hose grounds at 110 Ward Road. Admission fees will be \$13 per adults and children 12 and older, and \$5 for children under age 12. Tickets can be purchased at the door only; no presale.

For more information, Evans can be reached at 716-693-3466.