

SEPTEMBER 2025

RESTORING THE RIVER

Official Newsletter of The St. Marys River Remedial Action Plan

Part 5: Restrictions on Fish Consumption BUI

Historical Fishing Preferences

For many generations, fishing along the St. Marys River has been a way of life that's shaped Algoma's culture and community. For Indigenous people the River has been a source of nourishment and connection to the land. Some species that were traditionally harvested from these waters, specifically the Rapids, include Whitefish, Walleye, and Pike.

The historic St. Marys River is also known as "Baawitigong" in Anishinaabemowin, meaning "place of the rapids". This is a location that truly holds so much cultural and spiritual significance for members in and around our community.

As time goes on, landscape changes and the St. Marys River is no exception to this. Industrial development introduced new challenges, but the practice of fishing has always endured. There have been times where pollution forced health officials to issue consumption advisories, warning the public about elevated levels of mercury and PCBs in certain fish species. These warnings certainly influenced what people caught, how often they ate local fish, and which species they brought home.



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Preferred Fish Species to
Consume

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Today, fishing remains an important practice on the St. Marys River, though preferences and patterns have shifted. While Whitefish and Walleye are still valued by many, other species such as Salmon have become more commonly sought after in recent years. The reasons vary due to taste, availability, and consumption guidelines all play a role.

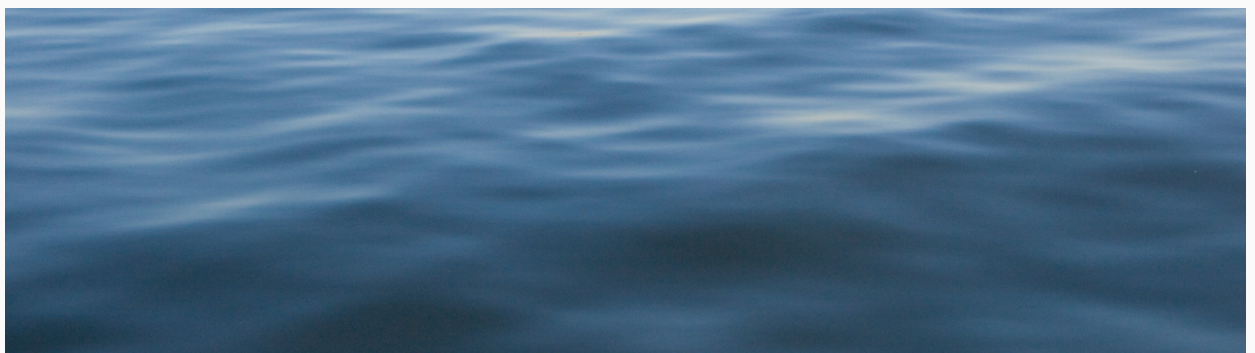
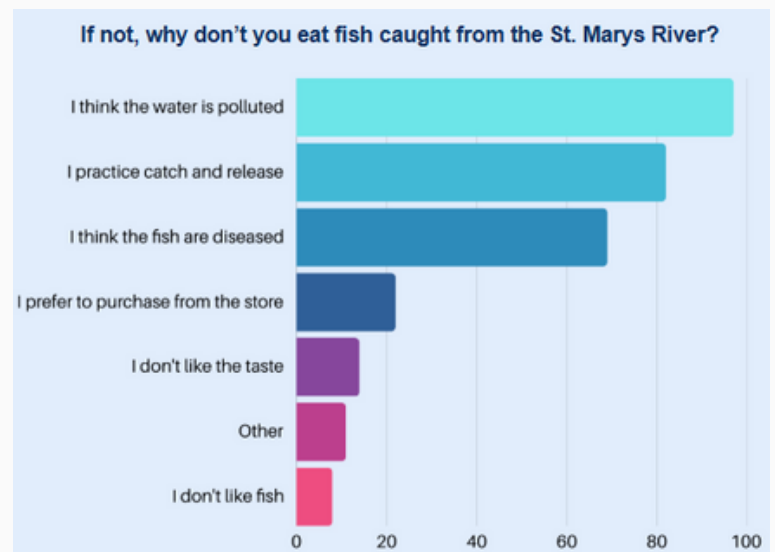
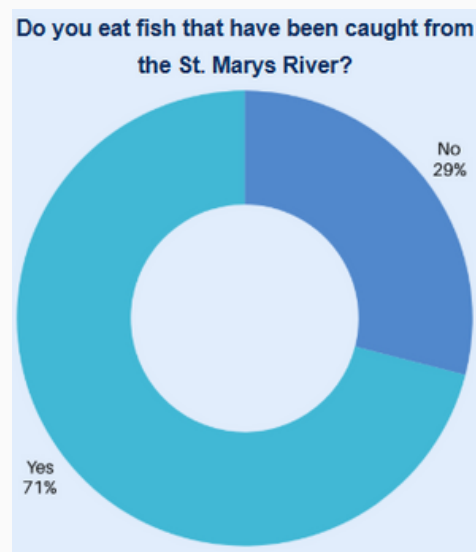
To better understand current trends, the St. Marys River Remedial Action Plan conducted a Community Fish Consumption Survey, asking more than 600 residents and anglers about their fishing habits, species preferences, and how often they eat local fish. The findings provide valuable insight into how people interact with the river today, and how past and present meet in the foods we continue to value.

This information will support ongoing efforts to assess whether one of the River's remaining Beneficial Use Impairments, "Restrictions on Fish Consumption BUI", can be reclassified from "impaired" to "not impaired."

Fish Consumption Survey Findings

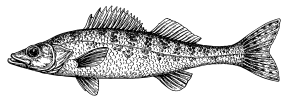
What are the current fishing preferences?

Survey participants were asked whether they eat fish caught from the St. Marys River AOC. Out of the total survey respondents, 71% (N=479) eat fish caught within the river.

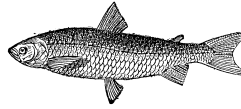


What species are preferred, and which are the most consumed?

Based on the survey results, the three most sought after species of fish are:



Walleye



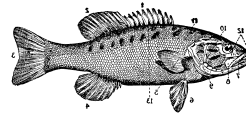
Lake Whitefish



Rainbow Trout



Northern Pike



Smallmouth Bass

Although these species are also the most consumed species, 99% of survey participants indicated that they consume 4 meals/month or less of Walleye and Rainbow Trout, and 97% of participants indicated that they consume 4 meals/month or less of Lake Whitefish.



What is the frequency of consumption for the fish caught from the St. Marys River AOC?

Among the survey participants, 479 (71%) indicated that they eat fish caught from the St. Marys River AOC, but only between 0-3% were categorized as very frequent consumers of 8 or more meals per month. We discovered that the majority of people only eat fish caught from the river a few times a year, and that a smaller group consumes locally caught fish monthly. So, while eating local fish is still part of life here, it's not overly frequent for most people, and that's important when evaluating health risks.



Coming Up Next

We have three more newsletters coming up, each of them taking a deeper look into the findings from the Fish Consumption BUI survey! Next up is “Eating Local Fish - How Often & How it’s Cooked”.

Get Involved!

There are multiple opportunities for you to get involved with the St. Marys Remedial Action Plan. Check out the upcoming possibilities below.

River Stories

This is a series we have begun to integrate into our social media to engage with our followers and community. We want to hear your stories related to the river, tell us about how you grew up fishing on it, or how you spent time with your family along the shore. Share with us your cherished stories so that we can amplify your voice and the importance for the St. Marys River.

If you would like more information on either of these outreach opportunities, please scan the QR code. It will take you to our linktree which has more information in the google forms. Alternatively, feel free to reach out to us through our channels below.

Additionally, if you have an upcoming event you’d like us to be at, please reach out and let us know!



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