

Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters wants to end gill-netting on Lake Nipissing

The [Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters](#) (OFAH) is calling on the provincial government to immediately suspend commercial gill net walleye fishing on Lake Nipissing. The OFAH is basing its recommendation on data provided by the [Ministry of Natural Resources](#) (MNR), which recently commissioned an independent review of the status of the Lake Nipissing walleye fisheries and asked the OFAH to provide comment. OFAH biologists concluded that the walleye population suffered dramatic declines over the past decade due to unregulated commercial gill net fishing.

“Lake Nipissing, one of Ontario’s specially designated waters, has seen its walleye fisheries virtually collapse,” says Terry Quinney, provincial manager of fish and wildlife services. “The MNR has the authority and responsibility to manage our natural resources for the benefit of all Ontarians, and yet they have allowed overharvesting by commercial gill net operations to continue unregulated for more than a decade.”

Since 1999, recreational anglers have complied with shorter seasons, lower limits and a protected slot size in order to help stabilize and restore the walleye population. Despite this, recreational harvest levels in recent years are at an all time low. Although MNR biologists repeatedly indicated that there was reason for grave concern, the province failed to implement a fully regulated commercial walleye regime. The situation is now reportedly critical.

Says Quinney: “Until the provincial government suspends all commercial gill net operations and implements enforceable regulations, their own data tells us that the Lake Nipissing walleye population will not begin to recover. The problem is not the recreational fishery. The problem is, and continues to be unregulated commercial gill netting.”

For more on the issue, go to www.ofah.org/nipissingwalleye.

Export date: Wed Aug 8 12:19:44 2012 / +0000 GMT

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