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**DEC PLANS TWO-YEAR LAKE ONTARIO TRIBUTARY ANGLER CREEL SURVEY
Information Gathered Will Support DEC Management, Conservation of the Fishery**

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Acting Commissioner Denise M. Sheehan today announced that DEC plans to conduct an angler creel survey on New York's Lake Ontario tributaries starting this fall. The survey will help DEC continue to effectively manage the important tributary fishery and gather information on population trends, habitat preferences, angler effort, and more.

The creel survey will be conducted on 28 tributary streams ranging from Twelvemile Creek in Niagara County eastward to Black River in Jefferson County. Major stream fisheries included in the survey will include Eighteenmile Creek, Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek, Irondequoit Creek, Oswego River, Salmon River, North and South Sandy Creeks and the Black River.

"Lake Ontario and its tributaries have consistently supported the highest angler effort in the State, which exceeded 2.6 million angler days in our most recent survey," Commissioner Sheehan said. "It is truly one of New York State's most vibrant and active fishing areas and this survey will help us to better understand and manage the fishery. I ask anglers to be cooperative with our survey teams and help us in our efforts."

The main objectives of the angler creel survey will be to determine angler effort (number of hours spent fishing) and number of fish caught by species in New York's Lake Ontario tributaries. Other information anticipated from the study includes: fish species sought by anglers, percent of fish caught that are released, catch rates and residence of anglers.

The last comprehensive Lake Ontario tributary creel survey was conducted in 1984. DEC fisheries biologists and anglers agree that updated information on fishing patterns is essential for effective and responsive management of this important resource. DEC has been conducting surveys of Lake Ontario's open-lake, boat-based fishery since 1985, however a recent focus on the steelhead (rainbow trout) fishery has prompted further study of stream fisheries. Other management changes that have taken since the last survey include: prohibition of snagging, additional tackle regulations, changes in fish stocking patterns, and increases in catch-and-release angling.

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The creel survey is scheduled to start in mid-September 2005 and will run through May 2006. The timing of the survey will coincide with the angling opportunities for chinook and coho salmon, brown trout and steelhead in the tributaries. Anglers seeking species other than those listed previously, including Atlantic Salmon, black bass, northern pike, yellow perch and sunfish, will also be included in the study. On several tributaries there is considerable boat angling effort (i.e. drift boats), which will also be surveyed as part of the study.

Creel survey technicians will be covering pre-established survey routes to count anglers and conduct brief interviews with them as available. During interviews, technicians will be clearly identified as Department employees. It is important that anglers cooperate with survey staff and provide accurate information on their fishing experience so that DEC can compile a representative assessment of the Lake Ontario tributary fishery.

Anglers seeking additional information about this survey can contact Mr. Steve LaPan, Leader, DEC Lake Ontario Unit, P.O. Box 292, Cape Vincent, NY 13618-0292, telephone (315) 654-2147.

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