

## LAKE ERIE TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT

Lake Erie is a natural resource that is a vital component of Ohio's economy. The quality-of-life contributions that result from its recreational use cannot be measured in dollars, however there are many statistics we can cite that point to the economic value of its waters.

Based on records from the Ohio Division of Wildlife, there are approximately 870 Ohio-based licensed charter boat captains on Lake Erie. Private charter, head boat and personal watercraft fishing trips top 800,000 annually.

Trips booked by these charter captains along with the harvest from private boats fishing Lake Erie's Ohio waters result in harvests of 8 million lbs. of walleye, yellow perch, steelhead trout and other species each year. The commercial fishing harvest adds in another 3.7 million lbs. There were 746,744 fishing licenses were sold in Ohio in 2021; a 17% decrease from 2020. There were 921,897 active Ohio fishing licenses in 2021, a slight (6.6%) decrease from 2020. Annual Lake Erie charter fishing revenue is estimated at \$10 million.

This extremely productive fishery provides significant economic impact to a wide variety of businesses including not only the charter and commercial fishing captains, but also to bait & tackle shops, grocery stores, lodging facilities, fish cleaning businesses, restaurants, and many other business segments. ODNR reports that Ohio's portion of Lake Erie results in sportfishing impact of more than \$1 billion annually.

The same impact factors hold true for pleasure boating as those who use Lake Erie for this activity spend money on a large variety of goods and services. Statistics from the Ohio Division of Watercraft show that Ohio registered 586,159 watercraft in 2021. This puts Ohio among the top 8 states in the country for boat registrations. The economic impact of recreational boating in Ohio is \$4 billion annually.

There are about 260 licensed marinas on Ohio's Lake Erie waters. Records from the eight Ohio counties along the lake show that there are approximately 38,000 registered boat docks.

Data from a 2021 study of the economic impact of tourism in Ohio conducted by Oxford Economics, shows that for the eight Lake Erie-bordering counties in Ohio, total tourism related impact was \$17.2 billion. This spending helped support 126,243 jobs and generate \$2.4 billion in total taxes. This is over 25% of the annual tourism related spending, jobs and taxes for the entire state. This data is firm evidence of the economic value of Lake Erie not only to those who work and reside along its shores, but to all Ohioans.

It is also one of the many reasons why we must do all we can to protect the lake. And our tourism industry is certainly not the only beneficiary of a healthy lake. Consider also: public water supplies, lakefront homeowners, realtors, shipping, manufacturing, other types of lakefront businesses, lake-bordering towns, the Lake Erie Islands, wildlife, wildlife watchers, outdoor enthusiasts, our visitors and all places where visitors spend money.

Furthermore, the data cited here only pertains to tourism impact in Ohio, we know our friends in Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York and Ontario, CA can all share similar information about how Lake Erie benefits their areas.