

Song Lake POA Walleye Stocking Proposal

Submitted by the SLPOA Temporary Committee – Scott Collier, Diana Moreland and Tarki Heath

1. Rationale

- Fishing on Song Lake has long been a family favored recreation. As a private lake, we can control fish stocking, with NYS DEC permitting approval regarding the fish that are stocked, the size and amounts and the timing.
- Fishing on Song Lake is predominantly catch and release by residents and visitors to the lake. With proper education about catch and release, we can maintain a healthy fishery. Those fishing in the lake do need to be aware of the Best Practices for Catch and Release (see #5) to ensure that we maintain a healthy fishery.
- Song Lake currently has a dedicated line item budgeted for fish stocking started by the late Donald Collier, with approximately \$2000.00 tagged for stocking walleye into Song Lake and given by Song lake neighbors.
- Survival rates are often questioned, but the Song Lake appears to be a viable habitat for walleye as evidenced by catches as recent as this spring (see #3).
- The most common reason to stock these fish is to provide anglers with a recreational fishing opportunity as proposed here.

2. Song Lake Fishery

- Song Lake placed a moratorium on fish stocking in 2017. That moratorium was enacted due to the over-stocking of 2,500 triploid grass carp that occurred between 1995 and 2017. The estimated survival rate of the grass carp, at the time they were stocked, was ten years. The current survival rate is estimated to be 30 years. Song Lake still has a small population of grass carp and additional stocking of these fish has been denied by the NYS DEC for the last three years.
- Walleye have been stocked in prior years as shown in the table below. Number of walleyes stocked into Song Lake, NY 1998-2006. All individuals stocked as fingerlings (3"-4") unless otherwise noted.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Number Stocked</u>
1998	October	500
1999	January	500
2000	November	430
2001	October	1,001
2001	December	1,000
2004	October	6002
2006	November	750

- Song Lake Fishery appears to be a healthy and vibrant habitat for yellow perch, a preferred food stock for walleye. While anglers will need to be aware of additional pressures on perch, the fish survey was conducted in 2019, as part of our Lake Management Plan, indicates that they are abundant.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Total Number Collected	Largest Individual Collected (inches)
Black Crappie	<i>Pomoxis nigromaculatus</i>	6	3.5
Bluegill	<i>Lepomis macrochirus</i>	138	7.8
Brown Bullhead	<i>Ameiurus nebulosus</i>	2	13
Chain Pickerel	<i>Esox niger</i>	12	18.9
Golden Shiner	<i>Notemigonus crysoleucas</i>	32	NA
Largemouth Bass	<i>Micropterus salmoides</i>	31	21
Pumpkinseed	<i>Lepomis gibbosus</i>	47	8.5
Rock Bass	<i>Ambloplites rupestris</i>	9	9.25
Yellow Perch	<i>Perca flavescens</i>	152	11.4
Grass Carp	<i>Ctenopharyngodon idella</i>	1	38

A total of 353 fish were collected in the survey. This included ten species spanning 6 different families. Preferred size classes of bluegill, largemouth bass and yellow perch and one fish in the memorable size class for largemouth bass were collected. No largemouth bass measuring between 120 mm and 320 mm were collected, which could indicate missing year classes or failed recruitment of juveniles to larger size classes. More than half of the yellow perch collected were sub-stock, which may be due to fishing pressure once individuals reach catchable length. The most common fish collected was yellow perch (152 individuals) and no walleye or lake chubsucker were collected. (Abridged from THE STATE OF THE LAKE REPORT AND COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR SONG LAKE, CROOKED LAKE AND TULLY LAKE Stradder C. Caves 2019)

3. Walleye – Sustainability

To our delight, and surprise, the walleye stocked years ago have found the lake to be a sustainable habitat.



Picture on the left is Donald Collier with a walleye he caught a few years ago.

Picture on the right is a walleye about 26 inches caught this June, 2024.



Walleye – August 26, 2024

- Song Lake water is not considered a cold-water body, however there is a cold-water spring entering just south-west of the sunken island.
- There are abundant sunfish and perch minnows to keep these and other apex fish sustainable.
- If individuals would like to help create a spawning area to assist in maintaining this fishery, we should investigate the possibility of building a small rock structure near this cold spring. We would need to have professional guidance and a DEC permit for any structures to be built.

4. Proposal for stocking 5-7- inch walleye

The proposed size is based on the Utah Division of Wildlife Biologists who found that walleye fry, even stocked small showed surprising survival rates and increased populations. Any stocking will need to be approved by the NYS DEC using the free form online. These fish farms are certified with the DEC and ensure the stocks are disease free.

Keeping within the Song Lake Budget, either of these farms would provide approximately 800 juvenile walleye.

Hicklins Fish Farm - Edmeston, NY

5-7 inch walleyes at \$2.35 each

\$2/mile plus tax - delivery one-way about ~60 miles

Fish Haven Farm - Candor, NY

4-6 inch walleyes at \$2.50 each

\$2/mile plus tax - delivery one way and ~55 miles away

5. Use Best Practices for Catching and Releasing Fish – NYS DEC

While a fresh fish dinner represents the ideal conclusion to a fishing trip for many people, an increasing number of anglers prefer to return their catch to the water. Unfortunately, improperly catching and handling fish can result in stress and injury to the fish that can greatly impact their survival.

How You Can Help: Releasing larger sportfish and panfish back to the water helps ensure that mature, healthy fish can spawn again, and helps to perpetuate a fit population of quality-size fish for future angling enjoyment. When practicing catch and release, anglers can take a few simple steps to help released fish survive:

- Quickly play and land fish-- do not fight fish to exhaustion.
- Handle fish as little as possible and release them quickly, minimizing their time out of water-- unhook fish in water if possible.
- Handle fish carefully to avoid injury-- be sure to avoid contact with the gills, and do not squeeze fish or remove protective slime. Pike and walleyes shouldn't be gripped by the eye sockets.
- Consider using only artificial lures-- their use is mandatory on some waters.
- Use barbless hooks if you plan to release most of the fish you catch. When a fish is deeply hooked, do not try to remove the hook-- clip the leader instead.

<https://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/freshwater-fishing/learn-to-fish/being-a-responsible-angler>