

## ***Response to club's petition***

1 March, 2011

As a follow up to last night's Federation meeting I'd like to offer some thoughts on the framing of your club's petition to resume stocking walleyes in Owasco Lake.

This has *never* been a simple walleye versus no walleye issue.

Owasco Lake had, at one time, a very good brown trout fishery and at the current time it does not. Ongoing efforts to restore the brown and rainbow trout fisheries have been unsuccessful and the DEC sees the major cause as there being too many predators in the lake. The DEC has already cut the stocking of lake trout dramatically from recent levels. The DEC sees the walleye stocking issue as one of choosing between walleye stocking or stocking brown and rainbow trout. The DEC has repeatedly stated that they are not going to stock another apex predator, such as the walleye, while continuing to stock brown and rainbow trout in Owasco Lake.

The DEC has also stated that if after an appropriate time frame of attempting to restore the brown and rainbow trout fisheries those efforts are not successful they will be much more inclined to reintroduce walleye into Owasco Lake.

We must be clear on this; the current DEC position is that they will not stock walleye in Owasco Lake until they are convinced that the majority of fishing privilege holders is in favor of stocking walleye and ceasing to stock brown and rainbow trout. Asking the DEC to stock both walleye and brown and rainbow trout is not going to change the DEC position.

Owasco Lake is considered a cold water fishery by the DEC. When considering current fishery management practices the stocking of walleye into Owasco Lake while attempting to restore a viable brown and rainbow trout fishery would be a major departure from standard practice. Arguing "We had walleyes in the past so we should get them now!" has gone nowhere.

The argument that some brought forward that "It's our Lake and we should get what we want!" or "No one outside Cayuga County should have a say because the lake is in our county!" means that we will fail before we start. Owasco Lake is a state owned lake. Any fish stocked in it are state owned fish that are paid for by all of the over one million fishing privilege holders. Those privilege holders, should they choose to speak their opinions, do have a say in the matter. As a result of that any attempt to frame this as a "home rule" matter has gotten nowhere.

To sum up: if your petition does not clearly specify that in stocking walleye your petitioners understand that the DEC will stop stocking brown and rainbow trout in Owasco Lake, it will likely accomplish nothing.

Lastly, please make sure that all the petitioners have current fishing privileges. The DEC does spot check for that when reviewing a petition or any other input and any non-holders of fishing privileges signing as petitioners will only dilute the potential impact of your petition.

Thank you

Lance Robson