



For Immediate Release

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24.3 Million Pounds of Fish Byproducts Now Being Productively Used in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Region

*First annual 100% Great Lakes Fish performance report shows major progress
toward full fish utilization*

(Chicago, Illinois) – The Conference of Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers (GSGP) today released its first performance report for the 100% Great Lakes Fish initiative, tracking the initiative’s reach and impact.

The report estimates that 24.3 million pounds of fish byproducts are now being productively used in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence region. The byproducts are generating about \$3.4 million (US) in economic value and avoiding about 9.6 million pounds of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions.

Fish byproducts include skin, scales, viscera, heads, tails, and other parts that historically were landfilled in many cases. Fish byproducts in our region are now being made into valuable products including fish meal and oil, pet food and treats, fertilizer, compost, bait, and fish leather.

The report measures the collective impacts of the 48 organizations participating in GSGP’s 100% Great Lakes Fish Pledge. Through the Pledge, these organizations commit to productively use all the fish byproducts they handle and to not landfill. Together, these organizations represent about 53% of estimated fish volume across the region’s commercial, aquaculture, and recreational fisheries. By sector, Pledge participants represent about 90% of commercial fishery volume, 55% of aquaculture production, and 1% of the recreational fish harvest.

“This report demonstrates the major strides our region has taken toward full fish utilization,” said David Naftzger, Executive Director of GSGP. “We can now track how many fish byproducts

are being productively used, the economic and environmental benefits that they create, and where the biggest opportunities remain. GSGP plans to similarly report results every year and use them to measure progress toward our ultimate goal--100% utilization.”

The report shows particularly broad progress toward 100% utilization in the region’s commercial fishery, where organizations participating in the Pledge represent approximately 90% of estimated commercial fishery volume. Aquaculture producers are similarly using their byproducts productively at a high rate, while work to address fish byproducts from the recreational fishery is at an earlier stage.

GSGP has begun working with fish cleaning stations and fisheries agencies around the Great Lakes to improve systems for collecting, storing, transporting, and productively using material generated by recreational anglers. This work builds on the progress already made with commercial processors. Approaches to productively use sportfish byproducts can be replicated at marinas and cleaning stations throughout the region.

The 100% Great Lakes Fish initiative seeks to eliminate waste and increase the value generated from fish caught, raised, or processed in the Great Lakes region. Traditionally, only about 40% of each fish, primarily the fillets, is consumed by people, while much of the remaining material has been relegated to low value uses or discarded. The initiative works with fish processors, aquaculture producers, researchers, fisheries agencies, Tribes, recreational fisheries, manufacturers, and other partners to identify productive and higher-value uses for those byproducts.

An infographic illustrating the 2026 performance results is available at <https://gsgp.org/projects/100-great-lakes-fish/annual-report/>

More information on 100% Great Lakes Fish and the 100% Great Lakes Fish Pledge is available at <https://gsgp.org/projects/100-great-lakes-fish/>

About the Conference of Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers

www.gsgp.org

The Conference of Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers unites the chief executives from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Québec, and Wisconsin. The Governors and Premiers work as equal partners to grow the region’s \$9.3 trillion (US) economy and protect the world’s largest surface freshwater system.

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