100% Great Lakes Fish

WHAT IS 100% GREAT LAKES FISH? The Great Lakes region is home to significant commercial fishing, aquaculture, and fish processing industries as well as important Tribal and sport fisheries. People generally eat the fillet of the fish, and the other 60% of the fish is used for low-value animal feed or discarded.

The 100% Great Lakes Fish initiative, led by the Conference of Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers (GSGP), aims to eliminate waste by finding new, higher-value uses for every part of each fish—whether caught, raised, or processed in the region. The 100% Great Lakes Fish team includes Tribes, inter-Tribal organizations, State and Provincial agencies, researchers, fish processors, and international partners.

WHY IT MATTERS Our region's fisheries are undervalued and underutilized. Using the entire fish can create significant economic returns for the Great Lakes region, create more jobs, help rural economies, and improve the resilience of our fisheries.

HOW IT STARTED The Iceland Ocean Cluster pioneered the 100% fish idea with the Icelandic cod. Today, more than 90% of the cod is being used – with the value of the products made from each fish increasing from $12 (US) to over $5,000 (US).

Early research and industry partnerships have revealed strong economic and environmental potential, along with promising market opportunities for Great Lakes fish byproducts.

WHERE WE ARE NOW To date, the initiative has mapped over 20 million pounds of available fish byproduct in the region; completed biotechnical testing on six species; identified multiple value chains; created prototypes; and, catalyzed more than $600,000 (US) in investment.



More than 40 companies and organizations have signed the 100% Great Lakes Fish Pledge—representing over 90% of the region's commercial fish production—to end landfilling and fully use each fish by the end of 2025. These include commercial, Tribal, and aquaculture producers.

Work continues to expand markets, support innovation, and showcase the economic and environmental benefits of a "head-to-tail" approach.

This project has been generously supported by grants from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Ontario Commercial Fisheries' Association, and Acme Smoked Fish Foundation. In 2025, the 100% Great Lakes Fish Initiative received the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) award for Sustainable Aquatic Food Systems.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.gsgp.org

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