



For Immediate Release

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Great Lakes Region Effectively Ends Landfilling for Commercial Fish “Waste”

(Chicago, IL)—The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers (GSGP) announced today that the region has effectively ended the practice of landfilling fish “waste”—heads, guts, skin, and scales--generated by the commercial fish industry. 44 companies have now signed the Governors’ and Premiers’ 100% Great Lakes Fish Pledge which commits them to productively using all parts of the fish they handle. Together, these companies account for over 30 million pounds of fish annually, which is about 90% of the Great Lakes commercial catch by volume.

The Great Lakes are home to sizeable commercial fisheries and growing aquaculture and fish processing sectors, yet in most cases only the fillets are eaten while the remaining material is often discarded or relegated to low value uses. Through the Pledge, the region is approaching 100% utilization of each fish caught, raised, or processed in the region. And, GSGP’s 100% fish initiative is helping to increase the value of these materials by identifying new, higher value uses such as fish leather, meal and oil, and others. This helps increase revenue, creates new jobs, and supports rural economic development while reducing emissions and improving the resilience of Great Lakes fisheries.

A short video overview of the initiative is available here: <https://vimeo.com/1147810184>.

What’s next?

In 2026, GSGP will continue to invite companies to join the Pledge, working toward 100% participation. Work will also grow with aquaculture companies and fish cleaning stations in the region. Incorporating fish cleaning stations will create new opportunities to build local collection, handling, and processing pathways that convert “waste” into inputs for new products and markets.

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

Quotes

“This milestone reflects the leadership of companies across the Great Lakes seafood value chain—commercial fishers, aquaculture producers, and processors—who are proving that full fish utilization is practical,” **said David Naftzger, Executive Director of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers.** “By working to use more of each fish, these organizations are reducing waste, strengthening their businesses, and helping open new markets for Great Lakes-sourced products. We are excited to build on our momentum in 2026 by expanding the Pledge and productively using more raw material across the region.”

“Across the Great Lakes, fishing businesses like ours have already been finding ways to put more of the fish to use, and this Pledge helps align and accelerate that progress,” **said Charlie Henriksen, owner of Henriksen Fisheries and Wisconsin commercial fishery advocate.** “By committing publicly to full utilization, we’re strengthening our businesses and keeping working waterfronts viable across the region.”

“As an aquaculture producer, we focus every day on efficiency and responsible practices—and using 100% of each fish is a natural extension of that commitment,” **said Michael Sellitti, Owner of Skytop Springs Fish Farm.** “The Pledge pushes all of us to innovate, reduce waste, and create new value from material that used to be overlooked.”

“At John O’s Foods, we know that every fish represents both livelihood and responsibility, and we’re proud to commit to using more of each one,” **said John Omstead, Owner of John O’s Foods.** “The 100% Great Lakes Fish Pledge is helping create the partnerships and product pathways that turn byproducts into new revenue and keep this industry strong across the region.”

“When you work with fish every day, you see how much value is left behind if we only focus on fillets,” **said Dennis VanLandschoot, CEO of VanLandschoot & Sons Fish Market and Committee Member of the Lake Superior Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee.** “The Pledge gives our industry a clear commitment and shared direction to reduce waste, build new markets for byproducts, and keep Great Lakes fish supporting jobs and communities long-term.

“For the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, fish are central to our culture, our waters, and our responsibility to future generations,” **said Doug Craven, Director of Natural Resources**

of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. “Using more of each fish reflects respect for the resource, and by building better utilization pathways we can support communities and reduce waste while continuing to prioritize sustainable management.”

“Healthy, well-managed fisheries are the foundation of the Great Lakes fishery, and maximizing the value of each fish complements that work,” **said Marc Gaden, Executive Secretary of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.** “Seeing industry leaders commit to full utilization is an encouraging example of how sustainability and economic opportunity can move forward together.”

The 44 companies participating in the 100% Great Lakes Fish Pledge include:

A&A Marine Foods – Tilbury, Ontario	Great Lakes Food Co. – Chatham, Ontario
Acme Smoked Fish – Brooklyn, New York	Great Lakes Tinned Fish – Grand Rapids, Michigan
All Temp Foods – Leamington, Ontario	Halvorson Fisheries – Cornucopia, Wisconsin
Aquaborne – Sacramento, California	Henriksen Fisheries - Ellison Bay, Wisconsin
Aqua Garden LLC – Amery, Wisconsin	Hudson Valley Fisheries – Hudson, New York
Archway – Chicago, Illinois	Huron Tackle – Traverse City, Michigan
Big Fish Farms – Bethel, Ohio	J&M Fisheries - Ellison Bay, Wisconsin
Big O’ Smokehouse – Caledonia, Michigan	John O’s Foods – Wheatley, Ontario
Big Stone Bay Fishery – Mackinaw City, Michigan	Lindal Fisheries – Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin
Bodin Fisheries – Bayfield, Wisconsin	Motor City Seafood – Highland Park, Michigan
Baileys Harbor Fish Co. – Baileys Harbor, Wisconsin	OceanArc Technologies – Pataskala, Ohio
Cambrian Co-Products – Minneapolis, Minnesota	Presteve Foods – Wheatley, Ontario
Carlson’s Fishery - Leland, Michigan	Purvis Fisheries – Silver Water, Ontario
Cole-Munro Foods – St. Thomas, Ontario	Red Cliff Fish Co. – Bayfield, Wisconsin
Dan’s Fish, Inc. – Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin	Rushing Waters Fisheries – Palmyra, Wisconsin
Dramm Corporation – Manitowoc, Wisconsin	Skytop Springs Fish Farm - Sydney, New York
Euclid Fish Company – Mentor, Ohio	Springhills Fish – Hanover, Ontario
Farm to Pet – Chicago, Illinois	Steelhead Food Co. - St. Thomas, Ontario
First Catch LLC - Baraga, Michigan	Superior Fresh – Northland, Wisconsin
Fiskur Leather – Mora, Minnesota	Taylor Fish Co. – Wheatley, Ontario
Freshwater Fish Marketing Corp. – Winnipeg, Manitoba	Treaty Fish Co. – Suttons Bay, Michigan
Fortune Fish & Gourmet – Bensenville, Illinois	VanLandschoot & Sons Fish Market – Munising, Michigan

About GSGP

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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