

Why You Should Release Big Fish

Releasing large fish is essential to the health of any fishery.

Only a small percentage of fish reach spawning size (1 in 10,000).

Large fish pass on healthy physical traits and survival instincts to thousands of young.

Large female walleye lay about 26,000 eggs per pound of body weight each season.

Less than 1 in 10,000 survive to adulthood under ideal conditions.

A 21" walleye produces approximately 80,000 eggs (creating 8 more adult fish on average each year) and is 9 years old!

A 25" walleye lays around 140,000 eggs (creating 14 more adult fish each season) and is 13 years old!

Smaller fish are easier to clean and much tastier than large fish.

You can release a trophy fish and still have your trophy. Take a photo and measure the length and girth of the fish. Your taxidermist can create a replica that will look exactly like your fish and last much longer than a traditional skin mount.

Releasing large walleye over 20" helps maintain a healthy fish population and ensures productive fishing for future generations.

Your decision to keep or release a fish has an important effect on the fishery!

Tips for Releasing Fish

Don't overplay fish – exhausted fish are more difficult to revive.

Fish caught deeper than 25 ft. down should be brought to the surface slowly and released immediately so they can get back to the bottom.

Use a net or cradle to land fish.

Taking fish out of water puts a tremendous strain on their muscles, internal organs, & skeletal system.

Minimize damage by keeping fish horizontal instead of holding them vertical.

Minimize the time fish are out of the water.

Wet hands before handling fish or wear fish gloves to keep the fish's protective mucus layer intact.

Don't hold fish by the eyes or gills.

Grasp the fish behind the gill covers, but do not squeeze fish.

Avoid letting the fish flop around the boat.

Use barbless hooks (pinch them down with a pair of pliers) and keep a pair of needle nose or hook out pliers for easy removal.

If a fish is hooked deeply, cut the hook and leave it in to release the fish.

Never release a fish that has been on a stringer – studies have shown the majority of these fish die even if they appear healthy and swim away.

To revive fish, hold them upright in the water and face them into the current or wind so fresh water flows over the gills. You can also use your hand to move water over the gills. Don't pull a fish backwards through the water – fish cannot breathe when pulled backwards. A gentle tail slap can also spur fish to swim away. Be patient – sometimes revival can take several minutes.