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Articles

Response of Yellow Perch to Changes in the Benthic Invertebrate Community of Western Lake Erie

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Abstract

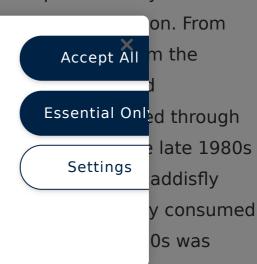
In the western basin of Lake Erie, benthic invertebrate abundance and community composition have changed dramatically over the past five decades, as have abundance and growth of yellow perch Perca flavescens. Before 1950, large benthic invertebrates dominated the benthic community of the western basin. Yellow perch readily consumed

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marginally more than in the 1980s, suggesting that submaintenance feeding episodes

were less frequent. In recent years, yellow perch growth rates have increased modestly, and yellow perch abundance has rebounded. The growth rate of age-3 yellow perch during the year before spawning explained 49% of the variation in age-0 recruitment, indicating that adult growth and condition may influence recruitment. We suggest that increases in benthic macroinvertebrate abundance are responsible, in part, for the increases in yellow perch growth and recruitment. We also suggest that yellow perch diets are a useful indicator of changes in the benthic community.

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