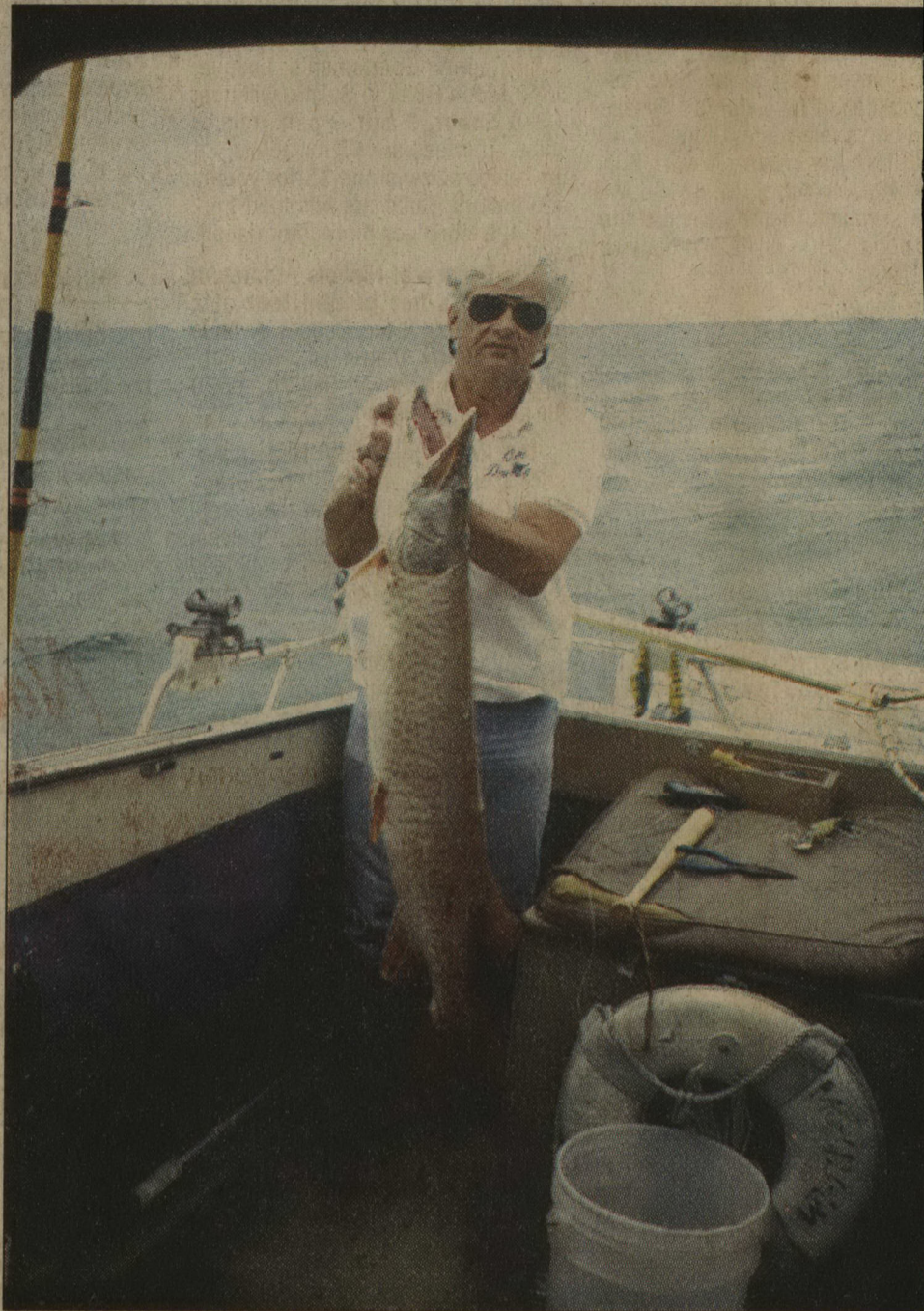


# VENTURE OUTDOORS

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## Let's go fishing

The 'real' reel season starts with trout opener

By BOB GWIZZDZ  
ANN ARBOR NEWS BUREAU

**More fishing stories, C3**

Although it's been going on nonstop since anglers crawled out of bed and ventured out on the ice on that first frosty morning of the new year, fishing season officially kicks off a week from today as trout season opens statewide and pike, walleye and muskie become legal quarry on the inland waters of the Lower Peninsula.

Fact is, there are plenty of stretches of trout stream with extended seasons. And walleye anglers have been catching fish on the Great Lakes and connecting waters (the Detroit and Maumee rivers, for

instance) for weeks. But the last Saturday of April is the traditional opening day and it's a safe bet the best stretches of trout stream and the popular walleye waters will be packed, regardless of weather.

Anglers will find only a few regulations have changed this year, though several changes are significant. The single biggest change is perch fishing will be closed during June on Lake Michigan, south of the 45th parallel, as part of a four-state attempt to save diminishing perch stocks.

There's also been a reduction in the daily creel limit on yellow perch, from 100 to 50 fish on Great Lakes waters. Although the change (which went into effect April 1) was part of the effort to protect the Lake

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Michigan anglers will soon be out like a massive fly hatch, in pursuit of everything from panfish like crappie (top left) to lunker muskellunge, like the one taken from Lake St. Clair (above).

Michigan perch fishery, the Department of Natural Resources had decided to reduce the limit before the states reached a deal.

The other major change for 1995 involves bass and pike. Previously, the size limit on bass was 12 inches in the Great Lakes but 14 inches inland. The size limits on pike were 20 and 24 inches, respectively.

The regulations have been changed to standardize the limits at the inland lengths - 14 inches for bass, 24 inches for pike. In addition, flathead catfish are now part of the five-fish aggregate daily creel limit that applied to bass, pike and walleye.

### OPENER: Anglers seem optimistic

"The changes that occurred inland last year have been extended to the Great Lakes this year," said Bill McClay, a lake management specialist with the DNR.

Prospects for the opening day of trout season will depend on the weather over the next several days. A severe cold front or heavy rains that muddy up the water could put the fish down. Still, veteran trout anglers are optimistic.

"We're running early," said Rusty Gates, proprietor of Gates' Au Sable Lodge on the mainstream of the Au Sable River. "I expect Hendricksons (flies will hatch) this week before the season and they'll still be on opening day. We've got blue-winged olives, real small caddis and black stones right now.

"But we need rain really bad - the river's really low and gin clear. You have to go down to 6X (tippet) on those olives. Hopefully we'll get some rain between now and then."

Walleye fishing has picked up on the Detroit River this week and could be excellent opening day, depending, again, on the weather.

As usual, anglers 17 years of age and older must have a license. Licenses will be issued from electronic terminals in retail stores and DNR offices. Although the machines have been tested, it doesn't make sense to wait until the last minute and risk a technical glitch. Get your license early to avoid potential problems.