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New supply of sustainable freshwater walleye and northern pike *First freshwater fishery in Western Hemisphere certified as sustainable*

June 24, 2014 (Seattle, WA) —The Waterhen Lake walleye and northern pike gillnet commercial fishery in Manitoba, Canada, has achieved Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification becoming the first freshwater fishery in the Western Hemisphere to attain certification as a sustainable, well-managed fishery against the global MSC standard. Following an independent assessment conducted by Intertek Fisheries Certification (IFC), walleye, also known as pickerel in Manitoba, and northern pike from this fishery are now eligible to carry the blue MSC ecolabel.

About the Waterhen Lake walleye and northern pike fishery

Located in Waterhen Lake in the central portion of Manitoba known as the 'Interlake,' the commercial gillnet fishery operates in winter from the beginning of November through the end of March. Waterhen Lake has been commercially fished since 1931. In order to participate in the commercial fishery, individuals are required to be a member of the Lake Waterhen Fishermen's Association which consists of 22 members. The client for the certificate is the Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship Fisheries Branch of the provincial government on behalf of the Lake Waterhen Fishermen's Association. The branch undertook this assessment with the objective that the certification will serve as a model for the management of commercial fisheries in the region and in support of the Manitoba government's commitment to work toward certification of fisheries in the province.

"We are pleased to see the responsible approach to resource management that has been demonstrated by the Association," said Gord Mackintosh, Manitoba's Conservation and Water Stewardship Minister. "This fishery certification will show the world that Manitoba has carefully developed a sustainable fishery which is not only good for the environment but also good business."

Essential to the government's involvement with the certification was the strong leadership and commitment provided by the Lake Waterhen Fishermen's Association, including continued support from the Chief and Council of Skownan First Nation.

"We believe that our nation is here to protect the natural state of our fish, wildlife and the environment for future generations," said Chief Cameron Catcheway from the Skownan First Nation. "We backed this process 100 percent because we want our next generations to continue to live with a healthy and certified source of food for years to come and to be able to live off the lake just as our ancestors did who protected our livelihood."

Waterhen Lake commercial fishers, working in cooperation with Conservation and Water Stewardship departmental officials, contributed specifically to the development and implementation of the Waterhen Lake Fishery Management Plan along with performance reference points and harvest control rules as part of monitoring fish stocks and managing the sustainability of the fishery; commercial fishing log books to monitor retained and discarded by-catch; voluntary closed areas around Lake Waterhen to protect spawning and rearing habitat; and a lost gear retrieval program.

Lorne Huhtala, President of Lake Waterhen Fishermen's Association, said, "We are pleased to announce that Lake Waterhen is now MSC certified which means having a sustainable abundance of walleye and pike stocked in our lake. This is a great achievement as the first freshwater fishery to be certified in North America and the Western Hemisphere. With this comes a lot of hard work from many organizations including Manitoba Natural Resources, Manitoba Fisheries Branch and the Government of Manitoba along with all the dedicated fishermen in the surrounding areas such as Skownan, Mallard and Rockridge. This certification will now create greater sale opportunities within the international market and is a great success for Lake Waterhen, the Province of Manitoba and Canada."

In 2013, the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for commercially harvested walleye was 36,300 kg. Northern pike catches are not managed through a TAC, but annual volumes are similar to walleye and have averaged 26,740 kg over the past five years. Fresh and frozen foodservice and retail outlets in the U.S. midwest and in Canada are the primary markets for walleye fillets. Northern pike is predominantly sold as frozen fillets into markets in the European Union, primarily in France.

Milestone achievement as first MSC freshwater fishery in Western Hemisphere

Scott Wallace, Senior Research Scientist with the David Suzuki Foundation, commended the fishery and said, "Manitoba's lakes are an important part of Canada's sustainable fish production. The Waterhen Lake fishery is taking the lead in offering Canada's first wild-capture MSC certified freshwater fish and we're hopeful that other fresh water fisheries will follow suit."

"The MSC congratulates the Government of Manitoba and the Lake Waterhen Fishermen's Association on becoming the first MSC certified freshwater lake fishery in North America and the Western Hemisphere," said Jay Lugar, fisheries outreach manager for MSC Americas. "This is a big achievement that supports the government's commitment and efforts to bring certification to more Manitoba's fisheries. MSC and global markets would welcome more fisheries from the province into the program and we hope this milestone motivates others to enter the assessment process."

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About the assessment and certification

Intertek Fisheries Certification (IFC), an independently accredited certifier, was the certifier for this assessment against the MSC standard. During the assessment, the three principles of the MSC standard were evaluated in detail: the status of the fish stock, the impact of the fishery on the marine ecosystem and the management system overseeing the fishery. More information about the Waterhen Lake walleye and northern pike fishery and the complete Public Certification Report detailing the fishery's passing scores against the MSC standard can be found on MSC's web site at www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/certified.

About the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an international non-profit organization set up to help [transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis](#). The MSC runs the only certification and ecolabeling program for wild-capture fisheries [consistent with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice](#) for Setting Social and Environmental Standards and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization Guidelines for the

Ecolabeling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries. These guidelines are based upon [the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing](#) and require that credible fishery certification and ecolabeling schemes include:

- Objective, third-party fishery assessment utilizing scientific evidence;
- Transparent processes with built-in stakeholder consultation and objection procedures;
- Standards based on the sustainability of target species, ecosystems and management practices.

The MSC has offices in London, Seattle, Singapore, Beijing, Berlin, Cape Town, Copenhagen, Glasgow, The Hague, Halifax, Madrid, Moscow, Paris, Reykjavik, Salvador, Santiago, Stockholm, Sydney and Tokyo.

In total, 335 fisheries are engaged in the MSC program with 237 certified and 98 under full assessment. Another 40 to 50 fisheries are in confidential pre-assessment. Together, fisheries already certified or in full assessment record annual catches of close to ten million metric tonnes of seafood. This represents over eleven percent of the annual global harvest of wild capture fisheries. Certified fisheries currently land over seven million metric tonnes of seafood annually – close to eight percent of the total harvest from wild capture fisheries. Worldwide, more than 20,000 seafood products, which can be traced back to the certified sustainable fisheries, bear the blue MSC ecolabel.

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