

LOCAL

## Monroe hosting regional walleye competition this weekend

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Monroe is once again hosting a walleye competition that will bring hundreds of fishermen to town this weekend. The public will have a chance to meet the participants and view weighing of the large fish.

Last spring and in 2021, the Monroe Boat Club hosted the Michigan Walleye Tour. This year, the club is hosting a regional walleye competition called the Masters Walleye Circuit.

“The Masters Circuit is a professional fishing event and is North America's longest-running team walleye tournament, having set the standard for competition for the past 39 years,” David Ryan, president of the Monroe Boat Club Association, said. “The Masters Circuit has offices in Ponca City, Oklahoma, and operates tournaments throughout the country.”

In addition to Monroe, the tournament has eight other stops this year, in places like Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin and South Dakota. This is the first year Monroe has been on the circuit.

“They have typically been operating out of the Downriver area,” Tim Lake of the Monroe County Business Alliance said.

The local stop is sponsored by the boat club and Cabela’s/Bass Pro Shop, which is in its 22th season as title sponsor of the Masters Walleye Circuit.

“The Monroe area and Monroe Boat Club are now being recognized as an excellent site for championship-caliber events on the shores of Lake Erie,” Ryan said.

The Masters Walleye Circuit, like last year’s Michigan Walleye Tour, will bring about 300 fishermen to the area this weekend.

“This year we are looking at about 100 boats each with two to three fishermen, so nearly 300 competitors. Plus several dozen administrative staff will visit Monroe,” Ryan said. “The Masters Walleye Circuit is a regional competition, not strictly Michigan-focused, so the competitors travel from several states to visit the Monroe area for the event.”

The Monroe event will begin with a welcome event for fishermen this Thursday at Cabela’s in Dundee. The competitions and weigh-ins will take place Friday and Saturday. The public is welcome to attend the Friday and Saturday events.

“The boats and fishermen depart from Bolles Harbor at 7 a.m., with weigh-in to begin at 3 p.m. both Friday and Saturday at Monroe Boat Club. Admission is free,” Ryan said. “Because camaraderie is a Masters Circuit hallmark, area residents will enjoy getting to know some of the teams during the weigh-in afternoons.”

Assisting at the weigh-ins will be the Monroe Boat Club’s Grade-school Fishing Club, which includes area students in fifth and sixth grades.

“They will have the opportunity to assist the tournament by bringing the fish to the official scales on the tournament stage,” Ryan said.

Livestreaming of weigh-in will take place at 3 p.m. both days on [masterswalleyecircuit.com](http://masterswalleyecircuit.com) and [facebook.com/MastersWalleyeCircuit](https://facebook.com/MastersWalleyeCircuit).

The five heaviest fish per boat are weighed and recorded at the stage each day. The participants compete for prizes.

“This tournament has a lucrative payout, which is based on the number of teams entered into that event, and is awarded to 20% of the field. In addition to a hefty check, the first-place team also earns a \$1,000 Bass Pro Shops/Cabela’s National Team Championship (NTC) prize package including paid entry, a travel stipend, team jerseys and plaques,” Ryan said.

He is hoping a walleye caught in Monroe waters might even break records.

“The record for the Masters Circuit event in Lake Erie was set in 2015, with first-place being over 90 pounds for the combined two-day event, with second place being only ounces away,” Ryan said. “The Masters Circuit will hit the best waters at the best times, and this event is in the perfect part of the season to see some huge weights and full baskets make it to the scales. This year, an estimated 10 million walleye will make their way from the depths of Lake Erie and all funnel into the Detroit River for their annual spring spawning migration.”

Tim Lake said Monroe's economy will be positively impacted by the Masters Walleye Circuit.

“Using a modest 3.5 to 1 rollover projection equals \$771,750 of economic impact,” Lake said.

He also learned the average fisherman in the challenge spends \$1,470 for each event, and the average participant arrives an average of 4.9 days in advance.

“The Masters Circuit events are more than two- or three-day tournaments. Many teams arrive early for pre-fishing and experience a week or more of great walleye action while fine-tuning their patterns and exploring the wonderful host community,” Ryan said. “The economic impact felt in Monroe and the surrounding area from visitors coming to take part in one of the best spring walleye competitions is staggering. Millions of dollars flow into the communities along the lake and river during the month of April alone from visiting anglers.”

This year's Michigan Walleye Tour, which the Monroe Boat Club hosted the last two years, will take place May 6-7 at Monroe's Sterling State Park.