

## Otisco Lake Tiger Musky Tagging Project (Survey #:719040)

James Everard, Region 7 Fisheries

02/24/2020

Otisco Lake is an 1,877-acre meso-eutrophic lake lying wholly within Onondaga County, near the city of Syracuse. It is the most easterly of the eleven Finger Lakes and is eighth in size. Otisco Lake is a popular destination for anglers looking to catch a tiger musky (*Esox lucius x masquinongy*) in the Central New York region. Targeted catch rates from recent angler diary cooperator program data average 0.102 tiger musky per hour (1 tiger musky for every 9.8 hours), indicating a quality tiger fishery. Around 11,000 tiger muskies are annually stocked by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) into Otisco Lake to support the fishery.

Anglers belonging to the Central New York (CNY) Chapter of Muskies Inc. approached DEC Region 7 Fisheries staff about conducting a tiger musky tagging study at Otisco Lake. Because tiger muskies are often difficult to collect during routine DEC sampling efforts and since angling can often be a more effective means of collecting them, regional staff felt that a well-designed cooperative study with the Muskies Inc. Chapter could provide useful information to inform future management of the tiger musky fishery of both Otisco Lake and other tiger musky waters. Subsequently, DEC staff developed a formal project plan (Appendix 1) which, among other things, clearly outlined the project objectives, expected outcomes, scope of work, plan duration, and the roles and responsibilities of both the club and department. This is a cost-effective way of collecting data given the minimal DEC staff time required.

Because of the nature of the project, CNY Muskie Inc. members were required to obtain a special license from the Department to conduct the tagging study. Due to the delay caused by preparation of the project plan the license wasn't granted until mid-October.

The late season license issuance resulted in a narrow window of opportunity for CNY Muskie Inc. members to tag in 2019. Luckily all four permitted members had taken part in a required tagging training session, provided by DEC personnel in early-June, so they were able to get right out on the water. These members were able to catch and tag four tiger muskies in 2019 (Table 1). Lengths of these fish ranged from 21.5 to 34.75 in, with an average of 29.3 in, while ages ranged from 2 to 6. With the late start and the low number of fish tagged, there were no recaptures in 2019.

The project plan calls for a four-year tagging study that is supported by a renewable special collector's license that is currently valid through December 2020. With a full season of angling opportunity, the number of tigers tagged should greatly increase in 2020.



*Table 1. Tiger musky caught and Floy tagged in 2019 by CNY Muskie Inc. chapter on Otisco Lake.*

Date	Site	Fish Number	Length	Tag	Age	Tagger
19-Oct	2	1	34.75	JR 01477	6	TY
19-Oct	2	2	21.50	JR 01651	2	AH
19-Oct	5	3	35.00	JR 01471	6	TT
26-Oct	5	4	26.00	JR 01470	4	TT