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Wally the walleye may help lake life

By Mark Boshnack
Staff Report

“Wally” gives everyone a chance to do something good for Otsego Lake.

The Otsego County Conservation Association is selling the toy walleye fish to help offset costs involved with supporting a successful program to improve the lake, according to a media release.

The State University College at Oneonta Biological Field Station’s management plan for stocking the lake began in 2000, involving the state Department of Environmental Conservation and others, including OCCA.

Walleyes have proven to be an effective way of controlling the alewife, an invasive species that threatens the ecological balance of Otsego Lake and made the water less clear, according to the release.

The alewife, which were illegally introduced to the lake in the 1980s, are highly effective at eating the microscopic zooplankton that kept algae in check, Field Station Director Willard Harman previously said.

Harman did not return a message left Tuesday night. The 10-inch-long Wally, with a washable surface, is being introduced by OCCA to help offset costs of the program and raise public awareness, according to the release.

The price is \$20 each, including shipping.

It should be available next week and can be ordered by calling 547-4488 or e-mailing admin@occainfo.org. Walleye is a game fish that was popular in Otsego Lake. But with the accidental introduction of the cisco _ a fish that preys heavily on walleye fry it had disappeared by the 1970.

Last year, 40,000 walleye fingerlings were released into the lake.

Walleye OCCA provided \$6,000 for the effort.

According to Field Station officials, the fingerlings are released in water about 15 feet deep over weed beds where the walleye can hide to escape predators.

No one from the conservation association returned calls for comment left late Tuesday afternoon and night.

