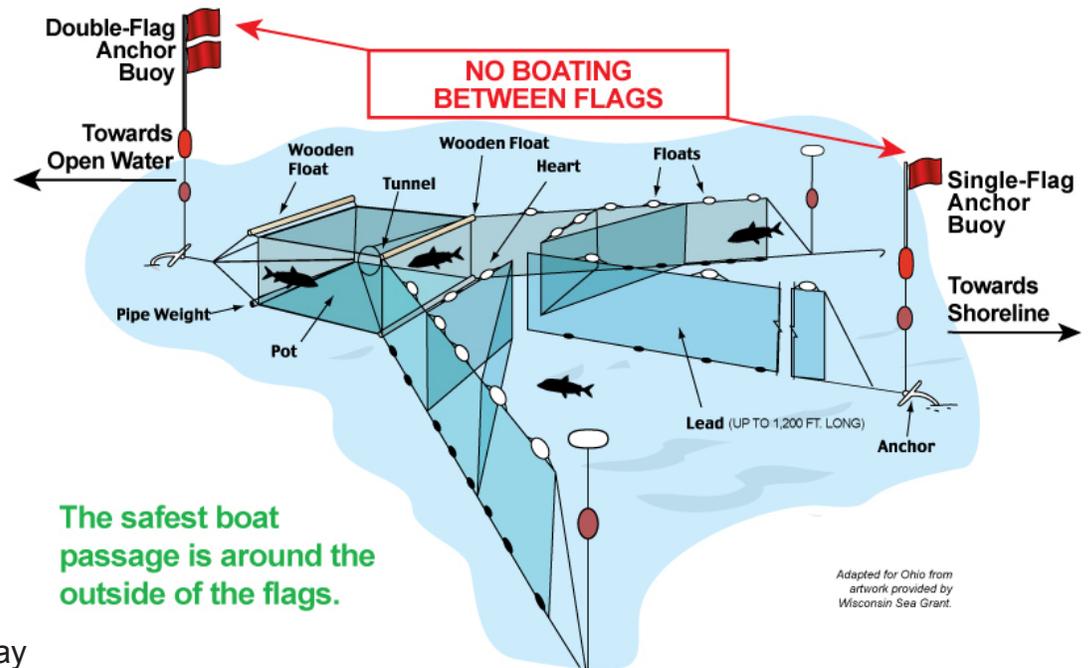


Safe Boating Around Commercial Fishing Nets

There are several different types of fishing nets used on Lake Erie. Both recreational boaters and commercial fishermen enjoy the riches of Lake Erie's bountiful fish population. It is common to spot commercial fishing nets on the lake during the commercial fishing season. The season runs from **March 1 through December 10**. In order to safely navigate around these nets, recreational boaters should learn to identify the markings required on the different types of nets and keep a good watch for them. The most common types of nets that the boater will come into contact with will be Trap or Fyke nets and seines.

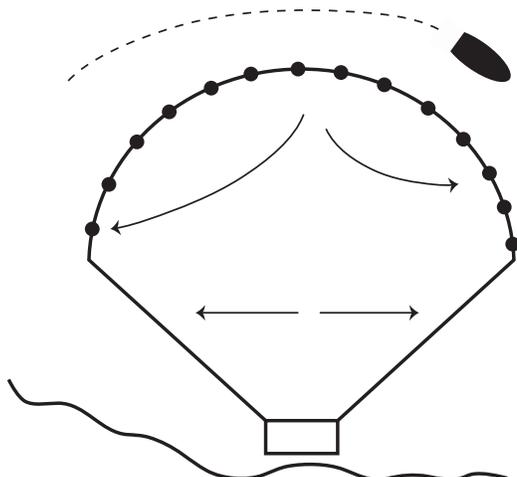
Trap or Fyke nets will be at least 1/4 mile from shore from June 15 through September 15. **Prior to June 15 and after September 15**, they can be set closer to shore. However, they must always be 1/4 mile from any reef during the commercial fishing season.



Adapted for Ohio from artwork provided by Wisconsin Sea Grant.

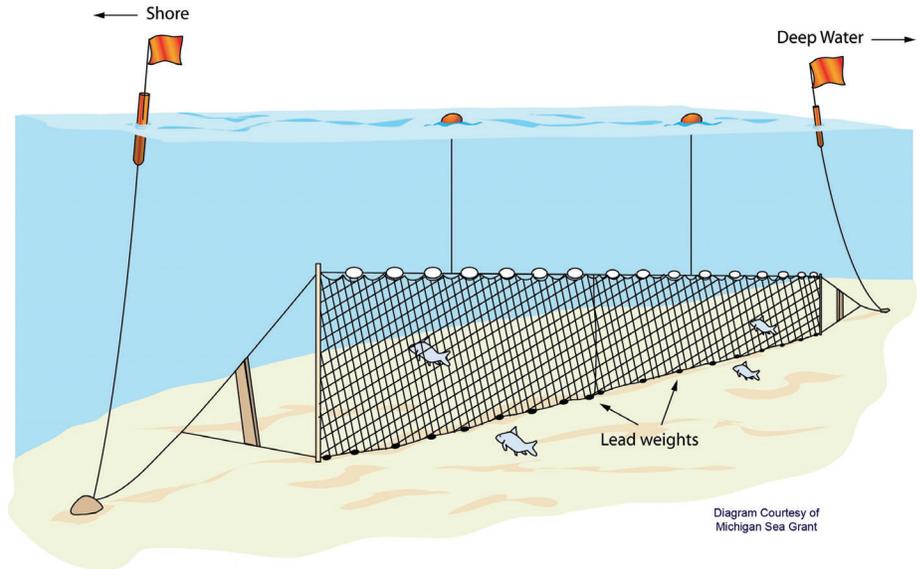
Trap or Fyke nets are usually set singly, but may be set in a series of four or more.

Square red flags are required to mark trap nets. The inside (shore side) of a series of nets should be marked with a single 18-inch square red flag mounted on a six-foot staff. The outside perimeter of a series of nets may be marked with two 18-inch square red flags (red on top and any color except orange on the bottom) on a eight-foot staff. Safe boat passage is made by traveling offshore of the staff with two flags. A boat may also pass between the shore and the single flag.



Seines are used in Sandusky Bay and Western Lake Erie. Seine fisheries legally occur during March 1 - June 14, and the Wednesday after Labor Day - December 10. No commercial seining is allowed from June 15 - Labor Day. One end of the seine is held on shore or on a barge anchored near the shore. A boat carrying the fishing net circles around the fish and returns to shore where a winch is used to haul in the seine. Small black buoys indicating the net's location are visible during the pulling operation. Safe boat passage is made on the offshore side of the black buoys.

Commercial fishing on Ohio waters is only legal in Lake Erie. On the Ohio River, boaters may come across gill nets. Kentucky allows commercial fishing on all parts of the Ohio River that falls within its borders. Gill nets are attached to trees on the bank and are stretched out into the river. They are marked with floats, often milk jugs or other homemade floats. Safe passage is made off shore past the last float.



The most important thing to remember is to follow the three basic rules of navigation. The first is practice good seamanship. The second rule of navigation is keeping a proper lookout. Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision. The final rule is to maintain a safe speed. Every vessel shall proceed at a safe speed so that it can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions. Following these rules and knowing the different types of nets will be necessary for the proper navigation so that a boater may avoid them.

If caught in a fish net with your powerboat:

- Immediately put your boat in neutral and turn off your engine.
- Make sure everyone on board is wearing a life jacket.
- Contact the U.S. Coast Guard or a commercial salvage company for assistance.
- Report any damage to the net or vessel to a local ODNR Division of Watercraft Office.

Use caution when navigating in the area where nets are typically located, the buoys and flags are not lit and can be hard to spot at night or when seas are rough. Also during the fishing season the fishing nets can be moved frequently. Boaters navigating on portions of Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes that are under the jurisdiction of other states or Canada should check with the regulatory authority of that region to learn of other types of nets that may be used, their general location, and marking system utilized.

Report suspected illegal fishing to 1-800-POACHER (800-762-2437).