

# OGLEBAY SCHENK LAKE CATCH & RELEASE POLICY

## Please help us return all catch and release fish to the water safely.

Some fish you may want to keep, and others you may want to release to grow and be caught later.

**Did you know it takes six or seven years to grow a large trout or bass?** Fish have delicate gills in which they breathe oxygen, and their bodies have delicate internal organs. To preserve the large fish for future fishing, they must be handled properly for survival.

## Five steps to follow for safe release:

**1. Do not handle the fish.** Fish are covered in a protective coating. When the protective coating is disturbed a fungus that will harm, and eventually kill, the fish can develop.

**2. Do not touch a fish with a dry hand.** Simply reach down and release the hook from the fish's mouth, allowing it to swim away untouched. Small pliers or forceps facilitate hook removal.

**3. If you must handle the fish, do so gently.** Simply turn the fish on its side in your hand or upside down, where it will become immobile. You can then remove the hook and release without struggle. If you wish to photograph your fish, do so while the fish is submerged.

**4. Do not disturb the gills or squeeze the fish.** When handling, be careful not to disturb the gills or squeeze the fish. With gill damage, the fish's chance of survival is unlikely. Squeezing the fish can damage its delicate internal organs.

**5. Be sure to revive the fish completely before releasing it.** If the fish is exhausted, it will turn over on its side or upside down. Large fish will require more time than small fish because they only come to the net after being completely exhausted.

When you revive a fish, hold the fish gently and watch it pump water through its gills. If the gill action is weak, or non-existent, glide the fish back and forth in the water so that water flows through the gills, giving the fish oxygen. As the fish revives, its gills will work more energetically until it is able to remain upright in the water and finally swim away on its own.

