



ILLINOIS & MICHIGAN CANAL

FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

LOCATION – Originally running from Lake Michigan in Chicago to LaSalle and the Illinois River, this once vital transportation artery is now dry in many areas while other sections contain water on an intermittent basis. The Canal travels through many towns including Lockport, Joliet, Morris, Ottawa, Utica and LaSalle.

DESCRIPTION – With construction commencing in 1836 and taking 12 years to complete, the Illinois and Michigan (I&M) Canal stretched 96 miles linking the Great Lakes to the Illinois River. The canal was the impetus for the settlement and development of much of northeast Illinois and is rich in history. The I & M Canal was originally hand-dug to depths of 6 to 8 feet and time has degraded much of the Canal and portions have little or no water flow. Those that do are marginal in terms of supporting viable fish populations. The best areas in terms of water supply are from Channahon through Morris, the Lock 14 section in LaSalle and to a lesser degree, the Utica section.

HISTORY AND STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY: The I&M Canal supports a variety of fish species with better angling opportunities available near Channahon, the Aux Sable lock, Armstrong Street and Lock 14 in LaSalle. Nettle Creek aqueduct in 2013 caused dewatering of the Canal west of the aqueduct. This also impacted the feeder system for Gebhard Woods and those ponds are dewatered. *No special mercury advisory or other contaminant-related consumption advisories pertain.*

Catchable-size Rainbow Trout are released in the Spring and Fall in the Lock 14 pool in LaSalle and catchable-size Hybrid Sunfish and Channel Catfish are stocked at Lock 14 in conjunction with an annual children's fishing event. Aquatic vegetation treatments are conducted annually at the Lock 14 pool. A full fisheries survey of selected areas of the Canal is conducted once every two years. The 2020 survey was greatly impacted by low water levels, downed trees, creeping water primrose and other nuisance aquatic vegetation.

LARGEMOUTH BASS: Although Largemouth Bass can be found throughout the Canal, the best area at the present time is the Lock 14 section in LaSalle. Bass up to 4 pounds are possible. **Site Regulation: 15" Minimum Length Limit.**

SMALLMOUTH BASS: While none were collected in 2020, Smallmouth Bass have been more commonly found in the area near the Channahon feeder and below the Aux Sable lock. **Site Regulation: 15" Minimum Length Limit.**

BLUEGILL: This Bluegill population could be classified as fair at best, generally dominated by smaller individuals. Larger Bluegills are more commonly caught by ice fishermen. Best areas include the Morris section and Lock 14.

REDEAR SUNFISH: Found at Lock 14, Redear Sunfish numbers have been slowly increasing over the years. The largest fish captured in 2020 was just over 7 inches.

BLACK and WHITE CRAPPIE: Both species of crappie can be found in the Canal. Large crappies are not common, but fish in excess of ten inches have been collected during IDNR

sampling. The Canalport Park Access in Morris and Lock 14 provides the best opportunity for these species.

CHANNEL CATFISH: While none were collected in 2020, Channel Catfish have historically been found at the Channahon Access as well as the Aux Sable Lock and the Morris area. Lock 14 pool is also a good bet due to the annual stocking program. **Site Regulation: 6 Fish Daily Creel Limit.**

FLATHEAD CATFISH: While none were collected in 2020, Flathead Catfish have historically been found at the Aux Sable lock area.

ADDITIONAL LAKE INFORMATION: Boat access is limited and **only electric trolling motors can be used.**

Additional Site-Specific Fishing Regulations:

All fish species - Two pole and line fishing only.

Large or Smallmouth Bass – 15” Minimum Length Limit

Channel Catfish – 6 fish Daily Creel Limit.

Rainbow Trout – Spring and Fall closed season (Lock 14)

CONTACT INFORMATION – Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail: 815/942-6529.
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