



MAZONIA STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AREA

FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

LOCATION – The Mazonia State Fish and Wildlife Area main office is located in Grundy County, 3 miles southwest of Braidwood on Illinois Route 53 and Huston Road. The south unit, which includes the Ponderosa, Wilderness and Monster Lake areas, is located in Kankakee County north of County Highway 6 and west of the town of Essex.

DESCRIPTION – The area consists of over 200 impoundments ranging from less than ¼ acre to nearly 150 acres. Most all of these water areas are typified by steep drop-offs and many have maximum depths in excess of 30 feet with some twice that. Shoreline access to most lakes and ponds is limited by extensive stands of tall reed grass. Concrete boat ramps access four of the largest lakes within the main Mazonia area and here boats are restricted to trolling motors only. Gravel ramps are present on Eagle, Ponderosa and Monster Lakes. Gasoline motors are allowed on these water areas and while there are no horsepower limitations, a strict no-wake regulation is enforced. “Belly boats” have become an effective and popular way of accessing and fishing the smaller interior ponds. With the exception of Monster Lake which offers year ‘round fishing opportunity, Mazonia is closed to fishing during upland game and waterfowl season. Following the completion of the hunting seasons, Mazonia reopens for ice fishing dependent upon ice conditions.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES: Main lakes are surveyed on an alternate year basis. Spring trap netting is also incorporated at selected lakes. Lakes sampled in 2015 were Bullhead (Lake #7), Carp (Lake #8) and Gar (Lake #9) Lakes. Habitat enhancement projects have been completed on many of these lakes and ponds. Aquatic vegetation, while present, has currently not required any active management.

STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY – Most of the larger water areas contain largemouth bass, bluegill, white and black crappie, channel catfish, carp and various other species. Gizzard shad are the primary forage item. The IDNR presently stocks channel catfish into selected lakes on a rotational basis. Coolwater stocking programs (walleye and northern pike) on several lakes have been discontinued due to the failure of those species to successfully recruit. Redear sunfish have been stocked into Clear Lake and Ponderosa Lake as well. *No special mercury advisory or other contaminant-related consumption advisories pertain.*

LARGEMOUTH BASS – Bullhead Lake, located in the Main Unit, was surveyed in the spring of 2015. Collected at the rate of 66 per hour of electrofishing effort, largemouth bass catch rates (CPE) declined from the previous survey and fell slightly below the ten year average. The average size bass collected during this survey was 12.2” which was somewhat less than the average size collected in 2013 but a full inch larger than the long term average. Nearly 5% of the adult bass collected were at least 18” in length while legal size bass comprised over 26% of the adult collection. Carp Lake and Gar Lake were also surveyed in 2015 with bass CPE values showing very little change from the 2013 surveys. Both lakes exhibit a higher density of bass which are 12” or larger while roughly 10% of the adult population in either lake meets legal size. Bass greater than 18” were not as prevalent in either of these lakes as compared to Bullhead Lake. Best bets for bass fishing success continue to be Bass, Gar and Carp Lakes in the Main Mazonia Unit and Monster and Wilderness Lakes in the South Mazonia Unit. Bigger bass are taken each year by anglers targeting the more remote, harder to get to lakes and ponds.

BLUEGILL – While not common, larger bluegills are present in good numbers in some of the impoundments within the Mazonia area. 14% of the bluegills collected from Bullhead and Carp Lakes were 7” or larger. Better bets for larger fish can be found at Clear Lake and Ponderosa Lake as well as the smaller ponds at the Wilderness Area.

REDEAR SUNFISH – Although present in several of the Mazonia lakes, Ponderosa supports the best population of redear sunfish. In the 2013 trap net survey, redear sunfish dominated the collection, ranging from 6.7" to 11.7" and averaging 9.9" and 12.5oz.

CRAPPIE – Of the three lakes surveyed, better collections were obtained from Bullhead and Gar Lakes with black crappie dominant in Bullhead Lake and white crappie more prevalent in Gar Lake. Good numbers of larger fish were sampled and in each lake 10"-plus crappie (both species combined) accounted for nearly 37% of the adult population. Although they were not common, crappie exceeding 12" were also collected.

CHANNEL CATFISH – This species is present in most all of the larger water areas with densities greatest in lakes receiving annual supplemental stockings. During the spring 2015 survey on Gar Lake, gill netting yielded channel catfish which averaged 20.5", with the largest fish approaching 7 pounds. **Flathead catfish** are present in Monster Lake and can be caught near the Granary Creek cut-off.

NORTHERN PIKE – Several years of annual additions of northern pike fingerlings have generally failed to produce a viable fishery and those stocking programs have been terminated. The current state record northern pike was caught from Monster Lake. Larger fish may be present in some of the south unit lakes, holdovers from when these lakes were leased by private fishing clubs. Northern pike are commonly confused with the diminutive grass pickerel, which are similar in appearance and fairly common in the Mazonia area, but are not protected by a length and/or creel limit.

GAR – Several of the larger lakes within the Mazonia Main Unit provide anglers with the unique opportunity to catch one of three gar species. Longnose, shortnose and spotted gar have all been collected from the larger Mazonia lakes. Appropriately named Gar Lake, which is somewhat connected to the Mazon River, likely supports the best gar population within the Main Unit. The largest specimen collected from that lake in 2015 was a longnose gar which measured 44½" weighing nearly 11½ lbs.

ADDITIONAL FISH SPECIES: A variety of other species which can be caught include common carp, freshwater drum, bullheads and green sunfish.

FISHING REGULATIONS – Statewide fishing regulations apply at this lake (see current Illinois Fishing Information booklet and IFISHILLINOIS website <http://www.ifishillinois.org/> for specific details).

Additional Site Specific fishing regulations:

Boaters - Trolling motor only, except Monster and Ponderosa Lake – gasoline outboards allowed, no wake

All fish species - Two pole and line fishing only.

Bluegill or Redear Sunfish – 10 fish daily creel limit on Ponderosa, unlimited elsewhere

Channel Catfish – 6 fish daily creel limit.

Largemouth Bass – 15" minimum length limit; 3 fish daily creel limit.

White, Black, or Hybrid Crappie – 10 fish daily creel limit

CONTACT INFORMATION – Mazonia/Braidwood State Fish & Wildlife Area: 815/237-0063.
IDNR Fisheries County Fish Biologist: 630/553-6680.