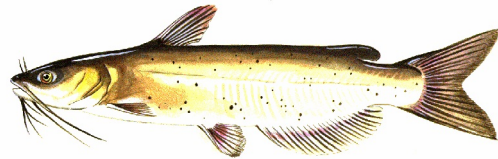


STATUS OF THE CATFISH FISHERY



ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION OF FISHERIES

MARCH 2008

STATUS OF CATFISH FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION I

DISTRICT 1: JO DAVIESS, STEPHENSON, WINNEBAGO, BOONE, DEKALB, OGLE, AND CARROLL COUNTIES

SHABBONA LAKE - Shabbona Lake is a 319-acre impoundment constructed in 1974. It is located in the DeKalb area situated in the 1,550-acre Shabbona Lake State Park.

On a yearly basis reliable stocks of 8" catfish from the hatchery system began in 1981. From 1985 to 1991 (6 years) 77,476 catfish have been stocked (average 40 per acre), and from 1991 through 2000 (10 years) 114,515 catfish have been stocked or 36 per acre per year. From 2001 to the present, 56,544 or 20 per acre have been stocked.

A 1988 creel census found 11.1 pounds of catfish per acre caught with 79% of these fish harvested or 8.8 pounds per acre. Both harvested and released catfish weighed close to 1 pound.

The 1990 creel census found an increase to 16.4 pounds of catfish per acre caught with an 88% harvest or 14.5 pounds per acre. This year the harvested fish weighed nearly 2 pounds.

The 1997 creel census found 21.3 pounds per acre caught with 74% harvested or 15.8 pounds per acre. These fish averaged 1.64 pounds.

In the 2002 creel census channel catfish were harvested at 26.8 pounds per acre and averaged 2.9 pounds.

Catfish angling should continue to improve in 2008, with catfish as large as 15 pounds

PIERCE LAKE - Pierce Lake is a 162-acre impoundment constructed in 1960. The lake is situated in Rock Cut State Park, a 3,092-acre park northeast of Rockford.

Pierce Lake has been stocked with 47,024 non-vulnerable catfish from 1985 to 1991 (6 years) or 48 catfish per acre per year. From 1991 through 2000 (10 years) 55,383 catfish or 34 catfish per acre per year have been stocked. From 2001 to the present, 15,638 or 20 per acre have been stocked.

A creel census in 1987 found 11.66 pounds per acre of catfish caught with 96% harvested at 11.15 pounds per acre of fish weighing an average of only .98 pounds.

A creel census in 1993 found a harvest of 9.6 pounds per acre at a harvest rate of 46%. The 1999 creel census found a harvest of 10.89 pounds per acre of fish weighing 1.002 pounds at a harvest rate of 60%.

Anglers appear to be willing to accept a smaller size catfish on Pierce Lake than on other lakes, but are also beginning to creel fewer fish.

LAKE LE-AQUA-NA - This 43-acre impoundment is located in northwestern Stephenson County, three miles north of the village of Lena. The lake was constructed in 1955 and is situated in the 715-acre Lake Le-Aqua-Na State Park.

Lake Le-Aqua-Na has been stocked with a total of 11,258 non-vulnerable catfish from 1985 to 1991 (6 years) or 43.6 fish per acre per year. From 1991 through 2000 (10 years) 20,744 catfish or 48 catfish per acre per year have been stocked. From 2001 to the present, 13,403 or 40 per acre catfish have been stocked.

A 1989 creel census found a harvest of 11.3 pounds per acre of catfish that weighed 1.3 pounds. The ratio of kept-to-caught fish was 87%.

The 1994 creel census found 20.4 pounds per acre caught with 84% kept or 17.1 pounds per acre. These fish weighed 1.26 pounds.

Channel catfish angling has always had an excellent reputation at Lake Le-Aqua-Na and this year should be another ideal one.

DISTRICT 2: ROCK ISLAND, HENRY, BUREAU, LASALLE, LEE, AND WHITESIDE COUNTIES

LASALLE LAKE - The 2,058 acre cooling lake in LaSalle County was opened for public fishing in 1987. The lake was stocked initially with 10,000 8 to 10 inch channel catfish from Fountain Bluff Fish Farm. No catfish stockings have been necessary since then. LaSalle Lake is like most cooling lakes in that they are catfish factories. The lake has a tremendous population of channel catfish of all sizes. A creel conducted in 1996 reported 17,213 channel catfish were harvested. Anglers caught over 42,000 channel catfish. The harvested catfish averaged 0.6 pound. Three gillnets set overnight in 1996 and in 1999 ranged from 38 to 49 channel catfish per net. Channel catfish as large as 15 pounds are occasionally caught. This lake should continue to produce large numbers of channel catfish.

Remember, when fishing LaSalle Cooling Lake, it is a perched cooling lake and gets very rough when the wind picks up. The lake has a fair population of flathead catfish up to around 40 pounds. The lake was stocked with blue catfish in 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2007.

A blue catfish collected on 01-09-02 weighed 23 pounds and 12 ounces. Anglers did well for blue catfish in 2005, 2006 and 2007. In 2007 the blue catfish was one of the most sought after species. The fall electrofishing survey in 2003 resulted in the collection of 30 blues between 5.4 and 21 pounds. The Fall electrofishing survey in 2004 resulted in the collection of 156 blue catfish. The largest collected weighed 20 pounds. Larger blues were observed. One angler reported catching a 40 pound blue catfish in 2004. In 2005, 97 blues were collected in 40 minutes of DC electrofishing. All sizes of blues up to twenty pounds were collected. Anglers reported good catches of blues up to the 25 pound range and 1 angler reported catching a 42 pound blue. In

2006, 311 blues were collected in 65 minutes electrofishing. All sizes up to 22 pounds were collected. In 2007 we collected 209 in 60 minutes. Pictures at the boat ramp showed two 43 pound blues that were caught. Reports of blues in the mid 50's have been reported. This program looks very promising.

HENNEPIN CANAL - The Hennepin Canal is a 96 mile long canal which travels through 4 counties. The canal is very shallow, averaging between 4 and 5 feet and is approximately 80 feet wide. The canal is fed by the Rock River at Rock Falls. The canal was never stocked with channel catfish. The catfish came in from the Rock River. The canal has a strong population of 1 to 7 pound channel catfish. Because the canal has such a strong channel catfish population, there is no size or creel limit. Jug fishing is also permitted from sunset to sunrise. The canal offers many anglers enjoyment fishing for channel catfish. The Canal also has a good population of flathead catfish. Flathead catfish as large as 50 pounds have been caught in the Canal.

For more information about location of boat ramps, fishing or camping, contact Hennepin Canal Parkway at 815-454-2328 or write the Hennepin Canal Parkway, 16006 - 875 E Street, Sheffield, IL 61361.

DISTRICT 3: HENDERSON, KNOX, MCDONOUGH, MERCER, AND WARREN COUNTIES

ARGYLE LAKE - This 92.7 acre watershed impoundment, located near Macomb, has been a popular catfishing site since 1951. The most recent 2002 creel census showed the overall fishing pressure at 154 hours/acre. The creel survey also revealed that 1,273 channel catfish were caught and released, and 945 were harvested at an average weight of slightly over one pound.

The channel catfish population at Argyle Lake is not naturally produced fishery. Annual stocking efforts by the IDNR have totaled 50 non-vulnerable sized (8 inch) fish/acre. The 2007 catfish data shows an excellent population of 1 to 3 pound fish with individuals ranging up to 10 pounds. Channel catfish fishing success at Argyle Lake in 2008 has the potential of being very good.

LAKE STOREY - This 133 acre watershed impoundment, located on the northwest edge of Galesburg, has a tradition of good channel catfish fishing during the summer through fall period. The lake is estimated to have a very high overall fishing pressure in the range of 400 to 800 hours/acre. Annual channel catfish harvest is estimated at 1,250 to 2,500 fish with an average size of 1.5 pounds.

The channel catfish population at Lake Storey is not a naturally produced fishery. Annual stocking efforts by the IDNR have totaled 50 non-vulnerable sized (8 inch) fish/acre. Current 2007 catfish data shows an excellent population of 1 to 4 pound fish with individuals ranging up to 8 pounds. Channel catfish fishing success at Lake Storey in 2008 has the potential of being very good.

MCMASTER LAKE - This 142 acre watershed impoundment situated in the center of the 2,500 acre Snakeden Hollow State Fish & Wildlife Area has several unique physical features to support a quality channel catfish population. The lake is 56 feet deep in the central main basin with adjacent shallow gravel bars, abrupt drop offs, numerous bays, points, and islands, a standing timber area, extensive shallow flats of submerged aquatic vegetation, and cattail flats. In addition, the dam is rip-rapped with large rock which provides ideal spawning habitat for the catfish. The channel catfish population is maintained by natural spawning and recruitment.

Current 2007 catfish data shows a good density population of all sizes, three quarters to 3 pounds with a few individual fish ranging up to 8 pounds. Channel catfish fishing was good in 2007 and has the continued potential of being very good again in 2008.

During 2006, the site's largest impoundment, (Lake McMaster) had a new spillway installed which will increase the lake size to an estimated 160 acres and the water depth by 5 feet. To facilitate spillway construction, the lake level was lowered 10 feet making boat access impossible. Construction is now complete and the lake is being allowed to re-fill. The boat ramp has been extended to facilitate access, but anglers should anticipate continued low water levels in 2008 as the water levels slowly rise.

DISTRICT 4: PEORIA, FULTON, AND STARK COUNTIES

ANDERSON LAKE STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AREA - This 1,132 acre bottomland impoundment is adjacent to the Illinois River, 12.5 road miles southwest of Havana. In 2007, catfishing was rated as good by the site staff, with channel catfish averaging 1-3 pounds. Periods of high or rising water can produce excellent fishing for shore anglers and trot lines. In 2008, catfish and bluegill should provide good fishing opportunities. The site has good shoreline access, a new road, and concrete boat ramp. The lake has no horsepower motor limit, but caution is advised due to numerous stumps. Contact the site staff at 309/ 759-4484 about water conditions.

BANNER MARSH - In 2007, the water level of Banner Marsh remained at approximately 1,200 acres. The three major lakes are Johnson (600 acres), Wheel (350 acres), and Shovel (100 acres). All have boat access ramps and a 25 hp limit.

A good channel catfish population exists in the three major lakes. Fish range between 1 - 6 pounds with fish over 8 pounds available. Shoreline fishing access is good, but boat fishing is probably the best method to use on these lakes. Due to the clear water, fishing after dark near weedlines and points is most effective with cutbait or large minnows.

CANTON LAKE -The current channel catfish population consists of a high density of fish from 1/3 - 3.0 pounds. The turbid water conditions have permitted natural reproduction and recruitment to maintain a large population of small size fish.

From 1997-1999, 992 flathead catfish from 1 to 42 pounds have been stocked into Canton Lake. In 1999 and 2001, 5000 blue catfish at 5 inches long were stocked into

Canton Lake. The 2007 spring survey sampled blue catfish up to 28 inches long and 15 pounds. The main forage base of Canton Lake is gizzard shad and would also be a very good bait for catfishing in this lake.

DISTRICT 5: TAZEWELL, MARSHALL, PUTNAM, AND WOODFORD COUNTIES

LAKE EUREKA - Located in the City of Eureka, Lake Eureka is a 30 acre lake that was rehabilitated in the early 1980's to remove a very undesirable fish population. It was restocked with largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish. Since that time it has received annual stockings of put-grow and take channel catfish from the hatchery system.

While only limited numbers are stocked each year, channel catfish provide an excellent fishery at Lake Eureka. Many 3lb.+ sized fish are caught each year. Best times to fish are April - June. The entire shoreline is accessible with an adjacent city park and playground. Best baits are cut shad, worms, stink baits and liver.

POWERTON LAKE - This 1,426.0 acre lake was built in the early 1970's and opened to public use in 1983. It was a "perched" reservoir, completely surrounded by levees. Built in a drainage district in the Illinois River Bottom, the lake inundated old drainage ditches. Fill water was pumped through the Midwest Generation Power Plant and dumped directly into the lake. For these reasons, Powerton was first populated with strong year classes of channel catfish. As a result of the rocks along the shoreline, reproduction and recruitment of channel catfish has been quite good. According to a recent creel, channel catfish represent 36% of the total harvest at Powerton Lake.

In October of 1999, - 35,000, 4.4" long blue catfish were stocked at Powerton. These fish were obtained as fry from the State of Arkansas and reared at the Little Grassy Fish Hatchery. Blue catfish have been stocked annually since, with the exception of 2002. The source for all of these fish was broodfish obtained from Arkansas and spawned there to produce fertile eggs or fry. We have determined that excellent growth for bluecat has taken place at Powerton. We have seen blue catfish up to 49 pounds in weight. Forage for smaller blue catfish are threadfin shad and brook silversides. Larger blue catfish forage on gizzard shad, carp and other available fishes. The strategy behind stocking blue catfish at Powerton is to cultivate a new "trophy" fishery for catfish enthusiasts.

Flathead catfish at Powerton Lake provide an exciting fishery. Sport fishermen have caught flatheads up to 60 pounds in weight. These fish are usually caught on live bait, usually bluegills from the shoreline adjacent to swift flowing water.

NORTH SPRING LAKE - An excellent fishery for channel catfish is found on North Spring Lake. Many 1.5 to 4 pound fish are available for sport fishermen. In the Spring and Fall, channel catfish move along the north west shoreline, feeding on invertebrates. They are moving and actively feeding as soon as the water temperature is approaching 50° F. Best baits are shad, cut baits and shrimp. Many channel catfish fishermen fish

after dark and are rewarded with excellent catches. There is a (6) fish daily limit on catfish at Spring Lake.

SOUTH SPRING LAKE - An excellent reproducing population of fast growing catfish are found at South Spring Lake. Many fish are caught after dark along the levee road. Rock rip-rap provides cover for feeding fish. Pole and line fishing only and a (6) fish number limit are the catfish regulations at South Spring Lake. Brown bullheads are abundant and provide an excellent catfish resource for bank fishermen at South Spring Lake.

STATUS OF CATFISH FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 2

DISTRICT 6: DUPAGE, KANE, AND MCHENRY COUNTIES

McCULLOM LAKE - Catfish grow well in this 244-acre glacial lake and large fish weighing over 5 lbs. are typically caught by anglers. Non-vulnerable fingerlings ($N = \sim 2,400$; average length = 8 in.) produced by the State hatchery system are stocked annually to maintain the population. A fall 2006 electrofishing and netting survey indicated good survival of stocked catfish over the past 3-4 yrs. Forty-nine stock-sized catfish (>10.9 in. long) were sampled and 33% of these fish were over 16 in. long. Nearly 15% of the stock was over 16 in. long. Over the next year or two, McCullom Lake should provide excellent fishing for catfish that are suitable for the frying pan. Two pole and line fishing only is enforced and there is a six fish daily creel limit for channel catfish. Access to this lake is limited to shoreline fishing at several small parks and one small, undeveloped boat ramp. Outboard motors are limited to 9.9 horsepower. A handicap-accessible fishing pier is available in Petersen Park on the lake's northeastern shoreline. Ice fishing is very popular here, in part, because of improved access on the ice. There is an aerator that runs periodically during winter so beware of open water and areas of thin ice.

SILVER LAKE - This DuPage County Forest Preserve District lake has a channel catfish fishery that has been improving in recent years. The District periodically restocks this relatively deep (maximum depth = 35 ft.) reclaimed gravel pit lake with about 3,500 non-vulnerable catfish fingerlings to maintain the population. Catfish up to 26 in. long are regularly caught by anglers, but we catch few catfish in surveys due to the lake's clear water, rapid drop-offs, and abundant aquatic vegetation. Current regulations include two pole and line fishing only and a 12 in. minimum length limit and three fish daily creel limit for channel catfish. An improved launch, rental boats, and handicap accessible fishing piers are available at this 62-acre lake. Anglers can launch their own non-gasoline-powered boats up to 20 ft. in length.

DEFIANCE LAKE - The channel catfish population had been declining in this 48-acre natural glacial lake located in Moraine Hills State Park due, in part, to a shift in stocking priorities among lakes within District 6. In summer 2005, the lake was again stocked with non-vulnerable catfish fingerlings ($N = 646$; average length = 8 in.) from the State

hatchery system to enhance the catfish population. A spring 2006 electrofishing and netting survey produced a good catch of catfish for the first time in several years. Sampled catfish ranged in size from 11-24 in. long. Nearly 60% of the sampled catfish were over 16 in. long and 11% were larger than 20 in. long. Older catfish from previous introductions continue to be available to anglers. The largest catfish weighed 5.5 lbs. Shoreline fishing at Defiance Lake is limited during summer because of dense shoreline vegetation and abundant submersed plants in shallow areas around fishing piers. Vegetation treatment is not an option due to the presence of State endangered and threatened plants. Boat rental is available through a concessionaire and electric trolling motors are allowed at the lake; gasoline motors are not allowed. Anglers now may launch their own canoes and kayaks for fishing. Check with the park office (815-385-1624) for the most current access information.

DISTRICT 7: LAKE COUNTY

FOX CHAIN O'LAKES - Channel catfish naturally reproduce in the Fox Chain O' Lakes system and maintain their population without supplemental stocking. Catfish are very abundant and under fished in the Chain. They offer tons of fight and are often caught on small crank baits with trolling for other species. The IDNR commonly collects fish to five pounds whiles sampling in spring trapnets or in fall electrofishing. The Proportional Stock Density (PSD) for catfish has increased to a high of 86% (in 2007) from a low of 7% in 1988. Fish averaged 18.6 inches in 2007 with several fish over 30 inches and 10 pounds. Flathead catfish are present but not abundant in the Fox Chain system, fishermen catch a few fish each summer below the McHenry Dam.

DIAMOND LAKE - This 149.0 acre lake is managed in cooperation with the Mundelein Park & Recreation District and began receiving annual stockings of non-vulnerable fingerling in 1985. Approximately 1700 non-vulnerable channel catfish are stocked annually in Diamond Lake. Stocking were reduced from an initial stocking rate of 50 fish per acre to 25 fish per acre to 10 fish per acre in order to improve fish condition which was low due to overabundance. Condition has rebounded since the stocking reductions and fish are more "plump".

STERLING LAKE - This small 74.4 acre lake is managed in cooperation with the Lake County Forest Preserve District and began receiving annual non-vulnerable size fingerling stockings in 1986 to establish a catfish fishery. Sterling Lake receives approximately 790 non-vulnerable catfish annually. Creel results from 2003 indicated catfish represented 2% of the harvest and were fifth behind black crappie, bluegill, carp, and walleye. IDNR Survey data reflects this low abundance, gill net catches declined from 8 fish per net night (1993) to 3.5 fish per net night in 2006 and up from a low of 1.5 fish per net night collected in spring 2003. The goal of stocking channel catfish in this lake is to provide a put-grow and take fishery for anglers while diversifying the predator base to control forage species. Channel catfish generally don't reproduce successfully in smaller lakes so require supplemental stocking to maintain their presence.

DISTRICT 8: COOK COUNTY

BUSSE LAKE - This 590 acre lake system is divided into two portions; the Main Lake and South Pool. Both lakes offer ample opportunity to shore fish or bring a small boat (electric motors only) to get away from the crowds. The Lakes' have a 6 fish per day creel limit for channel catfish. This regulation holds true for all Cook County Forest Preserve Lakes as well as a 2 pole and line gear limit. Approximately 3340 non-vulnerable channel catfish are stocked annually and split between the two Pools annually to maintain their presence and provide some predatory pressure on panfish and forage species. The Pools have a gizzard shad / bluegill forage base so fish are well fed and grow quickly.

SKOKIE LAGOONS - This 190 acre lake system contains 7 lagoons, many are divided by low-head dams and not negotiable by boat. A developed boat launch for small boats (electric motors only) is located on Tower Road and ample shore fishing access areas are available. Patches of aquatic vegetation and downed timber offer structure that holds fish. The forage base in Skokie Lagoons consists of gizzard shad and bluegill; both are abundant and fatten fish quickly. These Lagoons as well as Busse Lake are about the northern most extent of gizzard shad in Illinois so enjoy these fisheries for what they offer. Insight into which portions of Skokie Lagoons offer better shore fishing opportunities than others can be obtained at one of the local bait and tackle stores. Approximately 2264 non-vulnerable channel catfish are stocked annually in Skokie Lagoons to maintain their presence and abundance.

WOLF LAKE - This 390 acre urban lake sits on the Illinois - Indiana border and offers a considerable amount of fishable shoreline. Boats are allowed on the lake (motors over 10 hp must remain at a "No Wake" speed). Approximately 13,536 non-vulnerable channel catfish are stocked annually into Wolf Lake to diversify the predator base and provide sportfishing opportunities it's constituents. Regulations for the lake include a 6 fish per day creel limit and a 2 poles and line gear restriction. Aquatic vegetation can get thick in summer but spring and fall fishing shouldn't be hindered by excessive vegetation. During the previous survey channel catfish between 13" and 20" were collected.

DISTRICT 9: GRUNDY, KENDALL, WILL, AND KANKAKEE COUNTIES

HEIDECKE LAKE - Once serving as a cooling reservoir for Collins Generating Station, the decommissioning and subsequent demolition of this fossil fuel electric generating plant has resulted in Heidecke transitioning into an ambient lake. A self-sustaining channel catfish population which produces good numbers of desirable-size fish has existed for many years. Unlike other cooling reservoirs, the channel catfish population at Heidecke Lake is not dominated by smaller fish. A total of 185 channel catfish were collected in the fall 2006 survey ranging from 11.0" to 28.0", averaging 20.2". Although younger fish were not common in the 2006 survey, this has been the case in most fall surveys. Channel catfish were a mainstay in the 2006 anglers creel survey and were the second most common fish harvested (3.77 pounds/acre). Channel catfish which were

caught by anglers in 2006 had an average weight of 2.9 pounds (approximately a 19-inch fish). An estimated total of 7,370 pounds of channel catfish were harvested at an average weight of 5.76 pounds. Approximately 44.9% of the channel catfish which were caught in 2006 were harvested. When other fish species refuse to bite during the warm summer months, channel catfish will supply the bulk of the angling action on this water area. There is a daily limit of 6 fish per angler. Flathead and blue catfish are not present in Heidecke Lake.

A partially perched lake, Heidecke can become very rough under windy conditions. There is no horsepower limit and a boat and motor rental are available at the lake concession. Heidecke Lake is open to fishing from April 1st to mid-October, closing ten days prior to the opening of the North Zone waterfowl season.

BRAIDWOOD LAKE - Located near the town of Braidwood in Will County, Braidwood Lake is a 2,308 acre nuclear generating station cooling reservoir which is open to fishing from March to October. Similar to many other cooling lakes, Braidwood has developed a thriving, self-sustaining channel catfish population. Successful natural reproduction and high recruitment have resulted in a population which is generally dominated by smaller fish. The intensified IDNR survey conducted in the fall of 2007 produced an overall electrofishing catch rate (CPE) which was more than twice the long-term average. The total collection of channel catfish increased by 76.7% over the previous survey which was completed in 2005. CPE was actually highest at Station I (warm pool) where channel catfish were collected at the rate of 1.32 fish/minute. A combined total of 228 were captured ranging in length from 4.7" to 27.2". While the average size fish which was collected declined from the previous survey (14.2" in 2005 to 13.2" in 2007) the actual density of quality size and larger channel catfish (16-inch plus) increased. Despite the high number of fish which were collected, little evidence of forage competition was exhibited. Body condition for most all length groups sampled was at or exceeded what would be considered average weight. Channel catfish are a mainstay of the angler=s creel and were the most frequently caught and most commonly harvested species in 2007. The estimated exploitation rate for channel catfish was 42.8% with harvested fish averaging 0.55 pounds (approximate length of 12.4"). Based on the results of the 2007 creel survey, channel catfish ranked first in a number of categories including; total number and total poundage of fish caught, total pounds harvested and most commonly caught species per hour of angling effort. Among anglers interviewed who expressed a preference in terms of their target species, the majority of anglers (39.2%) indicated they were seeking channel catfish. Channel catfish are present throughout the lake and angling success in any given area is affected by water temperature. In the early season, the area off the south access is usually best. As water temperatures warm, anglers should concentrate on current break areas in the northern portion of the lake. There is no daily creel for channel catfish on Braidwood Lake. Both flatheads and blue catfish have been stocked; blue catfish in 2003 and again in 2006 and 2007, and flathead catfish stocked in 1992, 1995 and 1996. Flatheads have apparently established a reproducing and recruiting population. The

2007 creel survey indicated that flathead catfish ranked second behind channel catfish in terms of the total pounds harvested while blue catfish were caught less frequently. Braidwood Lake has two boat launching facilities, located at opposite ends of the lake as well as extensive bank fishing areas. Boats must have a working gasoline motor and there are no horsepower limitations. Braidwood Lake is open to fishing from March 1st to mid-October, closing ten days prior to the opening of the Central Zone waterfowl season.

STATUS OF CATFISH FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 3

DISTRICT 10: CHAMPAIGN, DEWITT, FORD, IROQUOIS, LIVINGSTON, MCLEAN, PIATT, AND VERMILION COUNTIES

CLINTON LAKE - Channel catfish have been a major part of the fishery in Clinton Lake. The population is self sustaining. Good numbers of catfish ranging in size from 8 to 16 pounds are caught each year. The majority of the catfish are caught in front of the discharge canal which opens to fishing on April 1 of each year. Also anglers will find catfish near the bridge openings that cross the lake. Water depth is good in these areas and there is a slight current coming through the openings. The discharge area of the lake is closed to fishing from October 10 through March 31. Trotline and jug fishing are restricted to the area east of Parnell Bridge in the Salt Creek Arm of the lake, and to the area of the lake located north of the Davenport Bridge in the North Fork Arm of the lake. Trotlines must be attended at least once every 24 hours, and jug anglers must keep their jugs under constant surveillance, picking them up before leaving the lake. Both types of fishing are limited to 50 hooks per licensed angler and all devices must be clearly labeled with the name of the angler and their address. This area serves as a refuge for fish and waterfowl during this time. Fishing off the bridges during this period is permitted, and does offer some good catches of channel and flathead catfish. Major access areas have bulletin boards with area rules, fish creel and size limit regulations and other visitor information posted. All state boating, hunting, fishing and park regulations remain in full force where applicable. Various portions of the lake are designated as no-wake, electric motor only, or no boat areas for safety and security reasons. Areas closed to public access include: the water intake area for the power plant, the spillway and dam areas east of the spillway, and the discharge flume (ditch). Boats and fishermen are not allowed in designated swimming areas when swimming is permitted. Please pay special attention to such areas designated by the maps, posted signs, and buoys. The entire portion of the lake between the DeWitt County Highway 14 Bridge and the Illinois Route 48 Bridge is designated as a fish and waterfowl refuge and is closed to all public use for the period of October 10th. Through March 31. The land portions of the site in this designated area will still be open for authorized hunting activities (except waterfowl) during this time period. As on all large lakes, Clinton Lake can become very rough when the wind exceeds 15 m.p.h. All boaters are advised to be aware of the weather. Although there is no horsepower or speed limit on Clinton Lake, shallow areas and underwater hazards do exist in numerous portions of the lake. Boaters should operate their craft accordingly.

DAWSON LAKE - The channel catfish fishery is sustained through stockings from the State Hatchery System. Each year 8" channel catfish are stocked into Dawson Lake. The catfish population is dominated by catfish in the 12 to 24 inch range. The average weight for channel catfish harvested in the latest creel survey was 2.329 pounds. There is always a good number of catfish in the population. Dawson Lake has a two pole and line fishing only regulation and a 6 fish per day harvest restriction on channel catfish.

EVERGREEN LAKE - Channel catfish fishing continues to be fair at this lake. The fish population is self sustaining. In order to improve the catfish fishery, recent stockings have taken place. Good numbers of catfish ranging in size from 8 to 16 pounds are caught each year. Evergreen Lake has a two pole and line only restriction. Evergreen Lake has two boat ramps and has a 10 horsepower limit on all boats. In order to launch a boat on Evergreen Lake, a sticker must be purchased. The stickers can be purchased at the boat ramps, Comlara Park Visitor's Center, or by calling 309/726-2022.

HOMER LAKE - The channel catfish fishery is sustained through stockings from the State Hatchery System. Each year 8" channel catfish are stocked into Homer Lake. The catfish population is dominated by catfish in the 16 to 24 inch range. The average weight for channel catfish harvested in the latest creel survey was 1.323 pounds. There is always a good number of catfish in the population. Homer Lake has a two pole and line fishing only regulation and a 6 fish per day harvest restriction on channel catfish.

LAKE BLOOMINGTON - This lake has always been known for its good catfish fishing. Catfish in the 4 to 16 pound range are not uncommon. The upper end of the two arms and the area by the dam provide good places to catch this species. The population is naturally reproducing, and appears to provide good year classes almost every year. Channel catfish fishing is expected to continue to be good. This lake also hosts good numbers of large flathead catfish which can add additional excitement to your fishing trip. Lake Bloomington has a two pole and line only restriction. Lake Bloomington has one boat ramp and charges an access fee. Boats are limited to 40 horsepower. For information on fees and Lake Bloomington call 309/747-2615.

LAKE MINGO - The channel catfish fishery is sustained through stockings from the State Hatchery System. Each year 8" channel catfish are stocked into Lake Mingo. The catfish population is dominated by catfish in the 16 to 23 inch range. The average weight for channel catfish harvested in the latest creel survey was 1.176 pounds. There is always a good number of catfish in the population. Lake Mingo has a two pole and line fishing only regulation and a 6 fish per day harvest restriction on channel catfish.

LAKE VERMILION - Channel catfish fishing continues to be good at this lake. The fish population is self sustaining. Good numbers of catfish ranging in size from 4 to 6 pounds are caught each year. The majority of channel catfish caught are between 13 and 22 inches. Lake Vermilion has a two pole and line fishing only regulation. Trot lines and jug fishing allowed north of Boiling Springs Road.

WELDON SPRINGS - The channel catfish fishery is sustained through stockings from the State Hatchery System. Each year 8" channel catfish are stocked into Weldon Springs. The catfish population is dominated by catfish in the 12 to 20 inch range. There is always a good number of catfish in the population. Weldon Springs has a two pole and line fishing only regulation and a 6 fish per day harvest restriction on channel catfish.

**DISTRICT 11: CLARK, COLES, CUMBERLAND, DOUGLAS, EDGAR, MACON,
MOULTRIE, AND SHELBY COUNTIES**

LINCOLN TRAIL LAKE - Is located within Lincoln Trail State Park, approximately two miles south of Marshall in Clark County. The lake covers 146 surface acres with a maximum depth of 35 feet and average depth of 15.9 feet. A 10 h.p. boat motor restriction is in effect. Public boat launching facilities are available. Only eight (8) channel catfish were collected (15-25 inches) in the 2007 fish population survey. Reports from park staff, concession managers, and anglers, indicate that catfish fishing is good. A large number of channel catfish are taken at night. A six catfish/day creel limit exists. Fishing prospects for channel catfish in 2008 are good.

MILL CREEK LAKE - Is located approximately eight miles west of Marshall, in Clark County. The lake covers 811 surface acres with a maximum depth of 60 feet and average depth of 22.7 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available. The Clark County Park District (217-889-3901) collects a boating access fee. From 1996 through 2005 the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Clark County Park District have both stocked channel catfish. 38 channel catfish were collected (14-28 inches) in the 2007 fish population survey. Results from the 2006 angler creel survey indicated that fishermen harvested 4.1 lbs./acre that averaged 3.1 lbs. A six catfish/day creel limit exists. This fishery has developed very well and numerous anglers have reported that they have been able to catch limits of channel catfish. Fishing prospects for 2008 are good.

CHARLESTON SIDE CHANNEL LAKE - Is located approximately three miles southeast of Charleston, in Coles County. The lake covers 330 surface acres with a maximum depth of 16 feet and average depth of 7.7 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available. There is a no wake regulation in effect on the entire lake. 32 channel catfish were collected (12-19 inches) in the 2007 fish population survey. A six catfish/day creel limit exists. Very good fishing for channel catfish exists through maintenance stockings by the IDNR. Fishing prospects for channel catfish in 2007 are good to excellent.

LAKE PARADISE - Is located approximately four miles south of Mattoon in Coles County. The lake covers 176 surface acres with a maximum depth of 16 feet and average depth of 8.5 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available, but are in poor condition. The City of Mattoon (217-234-3611) collects a boating access fee which covers Lake Mattoon as well. A naturally reproducing channel catfish population exists. A good number of catfish were collected (13-28 inches) in the 2004 fish population

survey. This lake was not surveyed in 2006 due to low water. Fishing prospects for channel catfish are rated as good.

OAKLAND CITY LAKE - Is located on the northeast side of Oakland in Coles County. The lake covers 23.0 surface acres with a maximum depth of 8 feet and average depth of 3.5 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available. Electric motors only are allowed on this lake. 47 channel catfish were collected (10-27 inches) in the 2007 fish population survey. Channel catfish fishing prospects are likely fair to good in Oakland City Lake. A six catfish/day creel limit exists. Fishing prospects for channel catfish in 2008 are good.

COLES COUNTY AIRPORT LAKE - Is located on the south side of Coles County Airport, between Charleston and Mattoon, in Coles County. The lake covers 20.0 surface acres with a maximum depth of 7 feet and average depth of 3.5 feet. Recreational use is restricted to fishing only. No boat launching facility is available. Good fishing for channel catfish exists through maintenance stockings by the IDNR. A six catfish/day creel limit exists.

LAKE MATTOON - Is located approximately eight miles southwest of Mattoon and about 1.5 miles northwest of Neoga, in Shelby, Coles, and Cumberland Counties. The lake covers 1050 surface acres with a maximum depth of 31 feet and average depth of 11.4 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available. The City of Mattoon (217-234-3611) collects a boating access fee which covers Lake Paradise as well. A very large number of catfish were collected (13-26 inches) in the 2006 fish population survey. Fishing prospects for channel catfish are fair to good. Fishing prospects are expected to improve, as 91,700 fingerling (4") channel catfish were stocked into the lake in October 2006. Fishing prospects for channel catfish in 2008 are fair to good.

PANA LAKE - Is located approximately two miles east of Pana in Shelby and Christian Counties. The lake covers 219 surface acres with a maximum depth of 36 feet and average depth of 14.7 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available for the (new) lower lake. The City of Pana (217-562-3626) collects a boating access fee. A good number of catfish were collected (10-21 inches) in the 2006 fish population survey. A fair to good channel catfish angling exists in the lower (new) lake through maintenance stockings by the IDNR. Fishing prospects for channel catfish in 2008 are fair to good.

WOOD LAKE - Is located on Lake Shelbyville Project Lands, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Flood Control Project, approximately four miles south of Sullivan in Moultrie County. The lake covers 27.0 surface acres with a maximum depth of 22 feet and average depth of 7.3 feet. A gravel public boat launching facility is available. Electric motors only are allowed on this lake. Fair to good fishing for channel catfish exists through maintenance stockings by the IDNR. A six catfish/day creel limit exists. Fishing prospects for channel catfish in 2008 are excellent.

WALNUT POINT LAKE - Is located in Walnut Point State Park, approximately 3 miles north of Oakland in Douglas County. The lake covers 52 surface acres with a maximum

depth of 32 feet and average depth of 12.5 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available. Electric motors only are allowed on this lake. Only 12 channel catfish were collected (10-25 inches) in the 2007 fish population survey. Fair to good fishing for channel catfish exists through maintenance stockings by the IDNR. A six catfish/day creel limit exists. Fishing prospects for channel catfish in 2008 are good.

PARIS TWIN LAKES - Are located on Route 1 on the north edge of Paris in Edgar County. The two lakes have a combined surface acreage of 220 acres. Public boat launching facilities are available. The City of Paris (217-465-7601) collects a boating access fee. A good number of catfish were collected (14-20 inches) in the 2006 fish population survey. Good to excellent fishing for channel catfish exists through maintenance stockings by the IDNR. A six catfish/day creel limit exists. Fishing prospects for channel catfish in 2008 are excellent.

LAKE DECATUR - Is located in Decatur in Macon County. The lake covers 3093 surface acres with a maximum depth of 22 feet and average depth of 6.0 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available. The City of Decatur (217-424-2837) collects a boating access fee. A naturally reproducing population exists, although recently reproductive success appears to be highly variable. A good number of catfish were collected (11-32 inches) in the 2006 fish population survey. Results from the 2006 anger creel survey on Lake Decatur indicate that channel catfish are the most widely sought species on the lake, with catch rates on 0.044/hr. and a harvest rate of 0.84 lbs./acre. Fishing prospects for channel catfish in 2008 are good. No creel limits exist on this population.

LAKE SHELBYVILLE - Is located in Shelby and Moultrie Counties in east-central Illinois. This lake has a surface area of 11,100 acres, with a maximum depth of 67 feet, and an average depth of 18.9 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available, with a fee assessed on U.S. Army Corp of Engineers' (217-774-3951) boat ramps, and free access on state or gravel ramps. Only 23 channel catfish (16-29 inches) were collected in the 2007 survey. Fishermen catch rates were reported a poor in the 2003 fishermen creel survey. The causes for reduced catch rates and numbers are unknown. Currently there are no creel limits on this population. Fishing prospects for channel catfish in 2008 are fair.

STATUS OF CATFISH FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 4

DISTRICT 12: ADAMS, BROWN, CALHOUN, HANCOCK, MORGAN, PIKE, AND SCHUYLER COUNTIES

LAKE JACKSONVILLE - This 476 acre lake was rehabilitated and restocked in 1986. Since 1991, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Hatchery System has stocked non-vulnerable size channel catfish (8 - 10 inch) on an annual basis. In 2007, 7042 non-vulnerable channel catfish were stocked. Annual stockings and the corresponding 6 fish per day creel and 2 pole and line fishing only have resulted in an excellent

channel catfish fishery. During the 2007 fall fish survey, all of the channel catfish collected were greater than 16 inches and exhibited "average" body condition. Channel catfish that were greater than 20 inches comprised 66% showing an increase of 17.5% from the 2006 collection. In 2007, the average channel catfish collected was slightly over 20 inches in length. The average weight was 3.0 pounds indicating a slight decline from 3.7 pounds in 2006. The largest individual collected was 22 inches in length and weighed 4.0 pounds. Fallen timber and underwater stumps present along the shorelines in Lake Jacksonville provide ideal habitat and cover for this species. However, drought conditions in 2007 drastically reduced normal water levels and subsequently exposed much of the desirable habitat. This is believed to have affected overall collection numbers. The City of Jacksonville charges a moderate fee for a lake, boat sticker that must be purchased prior to launching.

PITTSFIELD LAKE - The channel catfish population in this 240 acre lakes remains fairly stable from year to year. Natural reproduction occurs in the lake, but not enough to sustain a "quality" population. In 2007, the average channel catfish measured 25.2 inches in length as compared to the 2006 average of 25.4 inches in length. The channel catfish that were collected all exhibited "average" to "good" body condition. The largest individual channel catfish collected in 2007 measured 29.1 inches and weighed 13 pounds. In 2003, 10,000 channel catfish were stocked into Pittsfield Lake ranging from 6 - 8 inches (#5000) and 8 - 10 inches (#5000). These fish should be in the 20 - 23 inch range this fishing season. In January of 2008, a group of channel catfishermen caught 170 pounds of channel catfish following an unprecedented rainfall. A bonus to the channel catfish anglers, a small, reproducing flathead catfish population is present and occasionally large flathead catfish up to 50 - 60 pounds are caught. Nearly 100% of the large "hogs" are photographed and released. This city owned lake has established a 25 horsepower limit with a "NO WAKE" restriction. Boat anglers must purchase a lake sticker at City Hall prior to launching.

DISTRICT 13: CASS, CHRISTIAN, LOGAN, MASON, MENARD, AND SANGAMON COUNTIES

LAKE SPRINGFIELD - We collected 93 channel cats in total or 11 fish per hour in the Fall 2007 electrofishing survey on this 4234 acre lake. Gill nets, which target channel catfish, were not set due to time, budget and man-power constraints. This is a very good number for electrofishing in a large reservoir. The channel catfish collected ranged in size from 8.0"-26.0" and were in excellent body condition. There is no recent creel survey (angler interview) data available but there are numerous channel catfish tournaments held at the lake. Typically it takes an angler catch of fifty pounds to win an over-night tournament. Lake Springfield remains one of the best channel catfish lakes in the state.

In addition, in the Spring of 2005 the Division of Fisheries working with the local catfish club stocked the lake with 139 blue catfish from the Mississippi River in an attempt to create a blue cat fishery in Lake Springfield. They range from 3 to 57 pounds when stocked and should be much larger than that by now given the strong forage base in

Lake Springfield. To date no young have been seen so it is still uncertain if they will get off a spawn in the lake.

LAKE SANGCHRIS - This 2165 acre lake is located 20 miles southeast of Springfield. It is a cooling lake and like most cooling lakes it had produced excessive numbers of channel catfish. From the initial impoundment in the mid 60's to about 1992 the lake produced thousands of fish that ranged from 8"-15". They had slow growth rates and were in poor body condition. This indicates that there were far too many fish for the available forage. In other words the channel cats were "stunted". For some reason, beginning in 1993 we started collecting fewer, various sized individuals up to 5 pounds with the larger fish in good body condition. That trend continues through 2007. In the Fall 2005 fish population survey we collected a very good 52 channel catfish or 6 per hour of electrofishing. Again no gill nets were set for the reasons mentioned above.

In addition, Lake Springfield and Lake Sangchris are excellent and very good flathead catfish lakes, respectively. Twenty to forty pound individuals are not uncommon. Lake Sangchris produced a 65+ pounder in 1996.

LAKE CHAUTAUQUA - Is a 1200 acre backwater lake of the Illinois River located just north of Havana. Through a management agreement with the owner, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the IDNR began management of the lake in 1999. Following reconstruction of the berm that separates the lake from the river, the lake was drained and re-stocked. It initially received 20,000 channel catfish fingerlings in the Spring of 1999 along with largemouth bass, bluegill and crappie both black and white. Natural reproduction of the channel catfish has carried the lake to date and no additional supplemental stockings have been necessary. In the Spring 2007 fish population survey a phenomenal 135 channel cats were collected per hour of electrofishing. They ranged in size from 11"-22" averaging approximately 18" or 2 pounds. They were in excellent body condition.

LAKE TAYLORVILLE - This 1286 acre lake in Christian county has long been an excellent channel catfish lake but the IDNR had been hesitant in touting it. There had been a problem with contaminants, in particular chlordane. There is now good news. There have been no channels with detected chlordane levels above the action limit for several years. In the Fall 2007 fish population survey 6 channel cats were collected per hour of electrofishing. If gill nets were to be set the numbers would dramatically increase, it is an excellent channel cat lake. They ranged from 13" to 21" and were in excellent body condition.

There are numerous small, state and city-owned lakes in the district that are stocked annually with 8" channel catfish at rates of 10-50 per acre of water. Those lakes provide excellent channel catfish opportunities. They include: the **lakes and ponds at the Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area, Lakes Williamsville, Kincaid, Ashland, Virginia, Loami, Mt. Pulaski** and the **Illinois Department of Transportation Lake** in Springfield.

DISTRICT 14/15: GREENE, JERSEY, SCOTT, MACOUPIN, AND MONTGOMERY COUNTIES

OTTER LAKE - 75 Channel Catfish were found via spring gill netting effort in 2007. This total is well above the twelve year mean of 29 catfish boated per sample. Captured individuals measured 14" to 30", and weighed up to 14.3 lbs. 53 (71%) weighed at least 3 lbs., while 8 (11%) exceeded 8 lbs. in total weight. Body condition remains superb with the majority of fish exhibiting large girth. This fishery continues it's excellence through 2007, and beyond.

COFFEEN LAKE - 51 Channel Catfish were seen via 6 hours of daytime electrofishing. 51 (8.5 fish/hr.) was near the fall 2001 CPUE, and exceeded the 5 year mean of 7.4 fish/ hr. The catfish caught ranged from 8.3" to 18.5", and weighed up to 1.94 lbs. Reproduction is good as 21 (41%) were less than 12", 9 (18%) were at least 16", and 0 measured more than 20" in length. 6 (12%) exceeded 1 lb., while 0 topped 2 lbs. Smaller fish are reproducing, and recruiting into the population, but quality catfish are hard to come by. Most fish captured were on the thin side, and looked to have slower growth. This population is rated below average.

LAKE CARLINVILLE # 2 - During the May 2007 survey 31 Channel Catfish were captured using daytime electrofishing only. This number far exceeds what we collected over the last 3 samples combined. It truly looks like the IDNR stocking program has paid off (2003 - 2006). The individuals caught measured 12.5" to 28.5" and topped the scale at 13.2 lbs. 24 (77%) exceeded 2 lbs., while 10 (32%) topped 4 lbs. in total weight. I rate this population as good at this time.

GILLESPIE OLD CITY LAKE - 25 Channel Catfish were captured via our 2007 fall population sample. These fish were found during one hour of daytime electrofishing effort (25 fish/hr.). Catfish caught ranged from 15.7" to 29.1", and topped out at 14.3 lbs. Fish are equally spread out over the entire length frequency range. 9 (36%) were 20" or less (less than 2.6 lbs.), 8 (32%) weighed 3 to 5 lbs., and 8 tipped the scale from 5.5 to 14.3 lbs. For some reason this impoundment has always yielded good numbers of Channel Catfish using this gear. This fishery continues it's strength, and will be rated excellent for this report period.

GILLESPIE NEW CITY LAKE - During the fall 2007 sample 27 Channel Catfish were netted via 2 hours of daytime shocking (13.5 fish/hr.). CCF found measured 20.1" to 29.9", and weighed up to 10.2 lbs. As well, these fish were nicely spread out through the length frequency zone. 3 (11%) measured 21" or less, while 16 (59%) measured 22" to 24", and hit the scale at 4 to 6 lbs., and finally 8 (30%) were 25" to 29.9" and tipped the scale from 7 to 10.2 lbs. This water body was stocked by the City of Gillespie from time to time when funds were available. Starting in 2007, this lake will be receiving Channel Catfish more frequently via IDNR- Fisheries. With this new program, this population should become even stronger. This fishery is rated good for this time frame.

DISTRICT 16: MADISON, ST. CLAIR, AND BOND COUNTIES

GORDON MOORE PARK LAKE - This 13 acre lake, located in Alton, is managed cooperatively by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Alton Parks and Recreation Department. This lake is part of the Urban Fishing Program. Under this program the lake is stocked with catchable size (8-10 inch) channel catfish every two weeks from June through September, at the rate of approximately 1,560 pounds per stocking. The large volume of stocking has created a strong channel catfish population. This lake would be rated as above average for both numbers and size of channel catfish. There is a 6 fish per day creel limit.

GOVERNOR BOND LAKE - This 775 acre water supply lake located in Greenville offers good opportunities for catfish anglers. The most recent survey (fall 2006) showed an excellent channel catfish population in this lake. 170 channel catfish were collected between 12 and 29 inches with an average length of 18.8 inches. The condition of the fish was fair with an average relative weight (Wr) of 89. Four flathead catfish were also collected. Three of the 4 were over 20 lbs, with the largest weighing 37.5 lbs. The lake has no creel or length limits for catfish. A city permit is required for boat access with a 120 hp motor limit.

SILVER LAKE - This 550 acre water supply lake located in Highland offers good opportunities for catfish anglers. The most recent survey (fall 2006) produced 26 channel catfish ranging in length from 16 to 31 inches. The average weight of the fish collected was 5.6 pounds. The lake has no creel or length limits for catfish. A city permit is required for boat access.

DISTRICT 17: CLINTON, MONROE, RANDOLPH, AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

WASHINGTON COUNTY LAKE - This lake consistently produces some nice catches of larger channel catfish. During our population survey conducted in 2007, we collected 54 catfish during two hours of electrofishing, which is fairly consistent with past surveys. The average channel catfish weighed 2.6 lbs, with the largest fish weighing 7 lbs. Catfish can reach 12 lbs in this lake. Most of the catfish were collected in the coves around woody structure. The population is rated as excellent. Fishing should continue to be good for this species in 2008. There is a 6 fish daily creel limit on channel catfish.

BALDWIN LAKE - This thermally enriched body of water has a channel catfish population that is characterized by excess reproduction and recruitment. The end result is a large, slow growing population, composed primarily of small individuals. The last creel census in 1996 showed that the average size of channel catfish harvested by anglers was under 1/2 pound in weight. Our fisheries surveys generally confirm this, with a few fish weighing 1 to 2 pounds. There are, however, some other species of catfish that grow exceptionally well, and to very large sizes. These are the flathead and blue catfish. Our latest population survey showed numerous blue cats in the 4 to 18 pound weight range, with the largest blue cats observed in the past at an estimated 65 to 70 lbs. Flatheads were collected in the 3 to 19 pound weight range, and can attain 50 lbs or more in this lake. Both species are fairly plentiful. The flathead and blue

catfish populations are rated as good, while the channel catfish population is rated as poor. There is no creel limit for catfish in this lake.

RANDOLPH COUNTY LAKE - This lake contains a large population of channel catfish that is somewhat underutilized by anglers. During our 2006 population survey, we collected 40 channel catfish in 1.5 hours of electrofishing. In 2007, we only collected 12 catfish due to extreme water clarity, which forced the fish to go deep. Based upon 2006 data, the average fish weighed 2 lbs, and the largest catfish weighed 3.3 lbs. The population is rated as good. A 6 fish daily creel limit applies.

CARLYLE LAKE - The channel catfish population looks very good. Our survey showed fish ranging in weight from 2.44 lbs to 8.58 lbs. The average channel cat weighed 3.5 lbs. We saw a greater percentage of larger channel catfish during this survey. In fact, 18% of the stock was 24" or greater in length. The flathead catfish population is rated as excellent. We saw an estimated 16 different year classes of flatheads, from young of the year up to 30 lb fish and everything in between. The average flathead weighed 6.2 lbs. Twenty-one % of the stock was 28" or greater in length, and condition was excellent. Numbers of fish are high, and flathead reproduction and recruitment in Carlyle Lake continues to be nothing short of amazing.

STATUS OF CATFISH FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 5

DISTRICT 18: CLAY, EFFINGHAM, FAYETTE, JEFFERSON, MARION, AND WAYNE COUNTIES

FORBES LAKE - Natural reproduction is not expected to maintain a quality fishery in this 525 acre impoundment and 4,851 non-vulnerable size fingerlings were stocked in 2007. One fish from this stocking was collected during the fall survey. Fish ranging from 13 to 21 inches were the most abundant, while the average size was 17 inches and 1.7 lbs. The largest fish collected was 25.4 inches and 7.27 lbs.

SAM DALE LAKE - Natural reproduction is not expected in this 198 acre impoundment and 4,312 non-vulnerable size fingerlings were stocked in 2007, one of which was collected during the fall survey. Fish ranging from 16 to 20 inches in length were the most abundant averaging 19 inches and 2.4 lbs., while the largest was 23.1 inches and 4.5 lbs.

RAMSEY LAKE - Natural reproduction is not expected in this 46 acre impoundment and 1,381 non-vulnerable size fingerlings were stocked in 2007, two of which were collected in the fall survey. Fish ranging from 14 to 22 inches were the most abundant averaging 18 inches and 1.8 lbs., while the largest was 24.2 inches and 4.54 lbs.

DISTRICT 19: CRAWFORD, EDWARDS, JASPER, LAWRENCE, RICHLAND, AND WABASH COUNTIES

SAM PARR LAKE - The channel catfish fishery in this 180-acre lake in Jasper County remains in great shape. Data from the Fall 2007 population survey show an abundance of fish in the 1.5 - 4.5 lb range and larger fish to ten pounds remain common. Growth rates for channel catfish in this lake remain good and angling prospects for the coming year look great. This lake should provide anglers with an excellent opportunity to catch a limit of quality size channel catfish. The best places to fish include the rip-rap along the dam, the upper ends of the two main arms of the lake, and in the backs of coves.

NEWTON LAKE - Natural reproduction of channel catfish in this 1,750 acre cooling lake is tremendous, and this has produced an over-abundance of channel catfish less than 1-lb. Growth rates of these smaller fish remain well below average, but have improved slightly over the past few years. Growth rates and condition improve significantly for fish exceeding 1.5 pounds, and larger fish 2 - 4 lbs are common. However, anglers can expect the majority of their catch to be comprised of fish under 1.5 lbs. Because of their abundance, there are no daily creel or size limits for channel catfish in Newton Lake. The warm water temperatures in this cooling lake provide excellent fishing opportunities year-around. Bank fishing opportunities have been expanded to include the shoreline bordering all non-restricted areas of the lake. The lake has a 25 h.p. limit, and the cold arm of the lake is closed to fishing during the waterfowl season. The entire lake is closed to fishing each fall during the regular firearm deer season.

REND LAKE - The number of channel catfish has declined over the last two years to just below the 10 year average. In spite of the decline, the fishing prospects for channel catfish continue to be excellent for the coming year. Even with the decline in numbers, Rend remains one of the premier catfish lakes in the state. The lake has excellent natural reproduction and average growth rates. In the past, anglers have typically caught dozens of fish in a single outing. This year should be no different. Channel catfish from 1 - 2.5 lbs remain abundant, and larger fish up to 7 lbs are common. Larger fish are also present. Drift fishing the flats or near the mouths of the larger coves with shrimp, cut shad, shad gut, or leeches works extremely well. Bank fishing near or in the sub-impoundments or along the rip-rap is also productive, especially during the warmer months.

The catch per effort for flathead catfish fell to just below the ten year average as well, but the size structure of the population remains relatively stable and the population should also provide good fishing in the coming year. Most flathead catfish will range up to 20 lbs. with a few larger fish.

DISTRICT 20: GALLATIN, HAMILTON, HARDIN, POPE, SALINE, AND WHITE COUNTIES

HARRISBURG NEW CITY RESERVOIR - Harrisburg New City Reservoir is located approximately one mile east of Galatia and has a surface area of 209 acres. The lake

has a maximum depth of 30 feet and an average depth of 10 feet. Channel catfish fishing in Harrisburg New City Reservoir is very good. The reservoir is supplementally stocked each year with non-vulnerable channel catfish which helps sustain the population. A wide range of catfish were collected during population surveys ranging from 0.50 pounds up to 12 pounds. Abundant forage and supplemental stocking will maintain a strong channel catfish population and good fishing for many years. A 6 fish daily creel limit applies.

JONES STATE LAKE - This lake is located in southern Illinois five miles southeast of Equality on the Saline County Conservation Area. The 105 acre lake has a maximum depth of 35 feet and an average depth of 13 feet. Channel catfish fishing in Jones Lake is very good. A strong catfish population is maintained by yearly supplemental stockings of non-vulnerable channel catfish. Catfish collected during fish population surveys range from 0.50 pounds to 10 pounds. A 6 fish daily creel limit applies.

DISTRICT 21: ALEXANDER, JACKSON, PERRY, PULASKI, AND UNION COUNTIES

KINKAID LAKE - This 2,750 acre lake is located five miles northwest of Murphysboro in Jackson County. Better known for its muskie population, this lake also has an unusually high population of channel catfish that are basically under harvested. During spring fish sampling, many catfish in the 2 - 5 pound category are seen. Fish up to 20 pounds are probably present. During summer months, channel catfish are commonly caught on crank baits by bass anglers. Trot lines and jugs are legal and commonly produce high catch rates of all sizes of channel catfish. There is no creel limit for channel catfish on this lake.

LAKE MURPHYSBORO - This 145 acre state park lake is located two miles west of Murphysboro in Jackson County. Lake Murphysboro has been stocked annually with non-vulnerable channel catfish for over a decade. These channel catfish measure 8" - 10" when stocked in the fall and opportunities exist to catch channel catfish up to 15 pounds. Creel limits of 6 fish per day are common for experienced anglers from late spring through early fall. This lake is fertilized in the spring and early summer which helps reduce weed growth and increases fish production which directly benefits the channel catfish population. Approximately 1,450 channel catfish are stocked into this lake each year. The lake has a 10 HP limit on motors.

DISTRICT 22: FRANKLIN, JOHNSON, MASSAC, AND WILLIAMSON COUNTIES

Crab Orchard Lake - Crab Orchard Lake is a 7000 acre federal impoundment located in Williamson County approximately one mile south of Carterville. The channel catfish population in Crab Orchard Lake is self-sustaining and has not required supplemental stocking to maintain an excellent fishery. Fall 2003 - 2005 surveys produced six channel catfish per hour of electrofishing, while five were collected per hour in 2006 and 2007. The proportion of channel catfish which were larger than 16 inches in length was

100% during the period of 2002 through 2006 and 90% in 2007. The percentage exceeding 22 inches has remained in the 40 to 50% range during the past seven years.

A portion of Crab Orchard Lake east of Wolf Creek Road is closed to boat traffic October 1 to March 15 to reduce disturbance of resting waterfowl, and the extreme south end of Grassy Bay is closed from April through June for a spawning sanctuary. All anglers are required to obtain a refuge user permit. For information, contact: Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, 8588 Rt. 148, Marion, IL 62959 or call 618/997-3344.

STATUS OF CATFISH FISHERY IN ILLINOIS RIVERS

ILLINOIS RIVER - The channel catfish resources of the Illinois River are well known. A quality fishery for channel catfish is found in numerous locations. Some of those deserving recognition are the tailwater of the Peoria Lock and Dam, the Peoria Narrows, East River, Marshall County Conservation Area, Starved Rock and near Hennepin. There is a fish consumption advisory for channel catfish from the Peoria Pool to the head waters of the Illinois River. Fishing gear for sport fishermen on the Illinois River can include trot lines and jugs (restricted to a fifty hook limit per license).

ROCK RIVER - Flathead catfish were collected from the Rock River in October, 2006 using commercial hoop nets. The nets were set and pulled after 72 hours on three separate days. On the first two days all fish were fin clipped to determine the recapture rate. The results of this study along with a comparison of previous years data are presented below.

YEAR	# Stock >11"	Total > 16.1" PSD	Total > 24" RSD1	Total > 28" RSD2	Total >36" RSD3
1999	227	99.1	75.3	59.0	24.2
2001	365	98.9	86.0	74.5	37.0
2003	355	98.3	78.0	64.5	38.6
2006	945	100.0	56.3	29.1	12.6

As the data indicates, reproduction and recruitment for flathead catfish in the Rock River is outstanding. In 2006 a record number (945) of flatheads were collected over the 9 day sampling period. Due to the large mesh size on the nets, all of these fish were greater than 11" (stock size), and most, if not all were over 16" in most years. The RSD1 (24") of 56.3% is outstanding! This is the preferred size of fishermen and the target is to have at least 10% of the population in this range. The RSD2 (28") is considered memorable and RSD3 (36") is considered a trophy catch. In all but 2006,

over 1/4 of the fish collected were in the trophy category. In 2006 considerably more fish were collected which would decrease the % of trophy fish accordingly. However, 12.6% of the fish collected or 119 fish were still trophy size! The Rock River has long been known as a trophy flathead catfish fishery and this data indicates that the title is well deserved.

Channel catfish were collected from the Rock River on Oct. 16, 2006 using commercial hoop nets as part of the flathead catfish study. The channel catfish were incidental in the nets, but they were so abundant that lengths and weights were taken at two different stations. The results are presented below.

Station	Total > 11"	Total >16"	Total >24"	Total >28"
Dixon below dam	86	55	0	0
Sterling - Steel Mill	383	182	18	1
TOTALS	469	237	18	1

PSD = $237/469 \times 100 = 50.5$ Excellent (Target range is 40-60)

RSD24 = $18/469 \times 100 = 3.83$ Low (Target range is 10 - 20)

RSD28 = $1/469 \times 100 = .21$

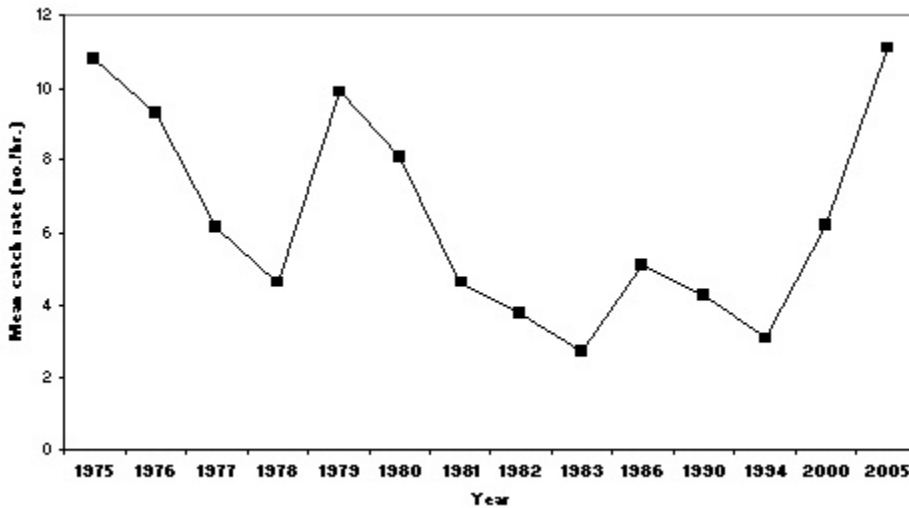
In addition to the catfish that were measured, an additional 2,075 channel catfish were released without being measured or weighed. The fish were released to prevent undue stress and mortality.

From this data it appears that channel catfish in the Rock River have excellent reproduction and recruitment, but low survival past 24". However the data may be biased by an unusually large year class of fish. A total of 232 catfish were between 11 and 16 inches in length, with the majority averaging about 14.5 to 15". This large year class of fish was about 4 years old at the time of collection. Since a 24" channel catfish averages about 8.5 to 9 years of age, another 4 years will be necessary to determine if this strong class is still present. On the other hand, anglers tend to prefer the smaller channel catfish (18-19") for eating since the larger catfish tend to take on a stronger flavor, so this may be contributing to the small numbers of larger (>24") catfish. Another collection in 2 years and again in 4 years is recommended to follow up this data.

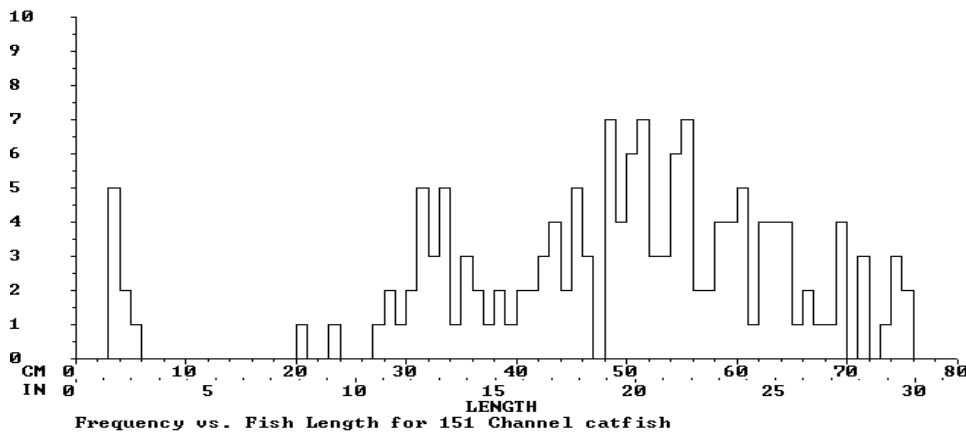
SPOON RIVER - The Spoon River meanders for a distance of 160 miles through Stark, Knox, Peoria, and Fulton Counties in western Illinois. Sampling from 1995 through 1998 revealed healthy channel catfish and flathead populations throughout the length of the river. Public boat access, a limitation on the Spoon, has been improved very slightly by construction of a new ramp at London Mills.

KANKAKEE RIVER - Mean catch rate for channel catfish in 2005 was 11.0 fish per hour at all 13 mainstem stations, the highest rate recorded over the period 1975 - 2000 (see figure below). Channel catfish were found at all locations, but were more

abundant at the higher gradient stations at Momence Island Park and within the Kankakee River State Park. The population was dominated by larger, older individuals (see graph below) with 72% of the individuals having a length of 16 inches or larger. Catch rate had been very low over the last several surveys since 1986 but increased in both 2000 and 2005. However, no significant trend was observed over the collection period from 1975-2005. Young of the year were collected indicating recent spawning success.



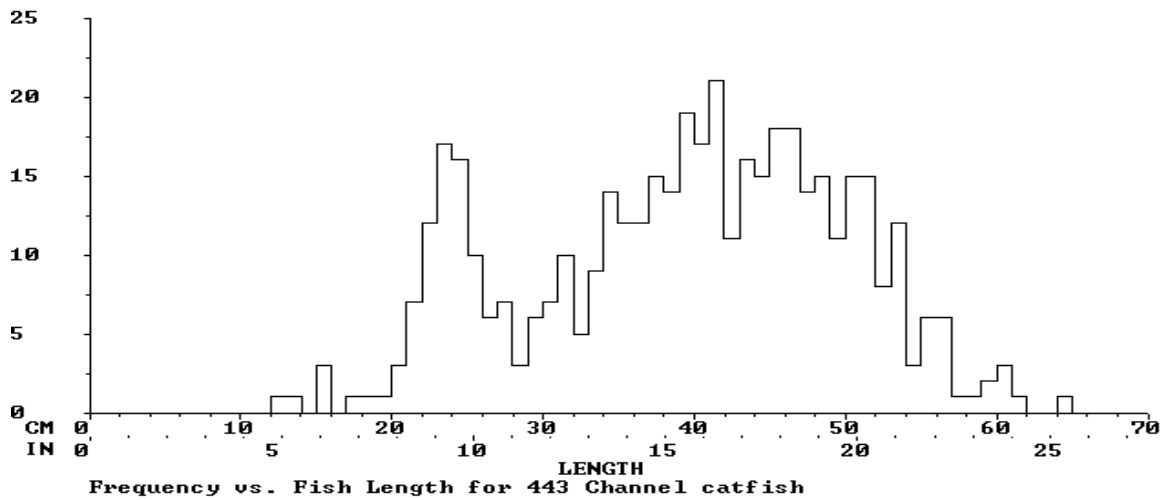
Mean catch rate (no./hour boat electrofishing) for channel catfish in the Kankakee River mainstem (13 stations), 1975-2005.



Length frequency distribution for channel catfish from the Kankakee River mainstem, 2005. All 13 stations and collection gears combined.

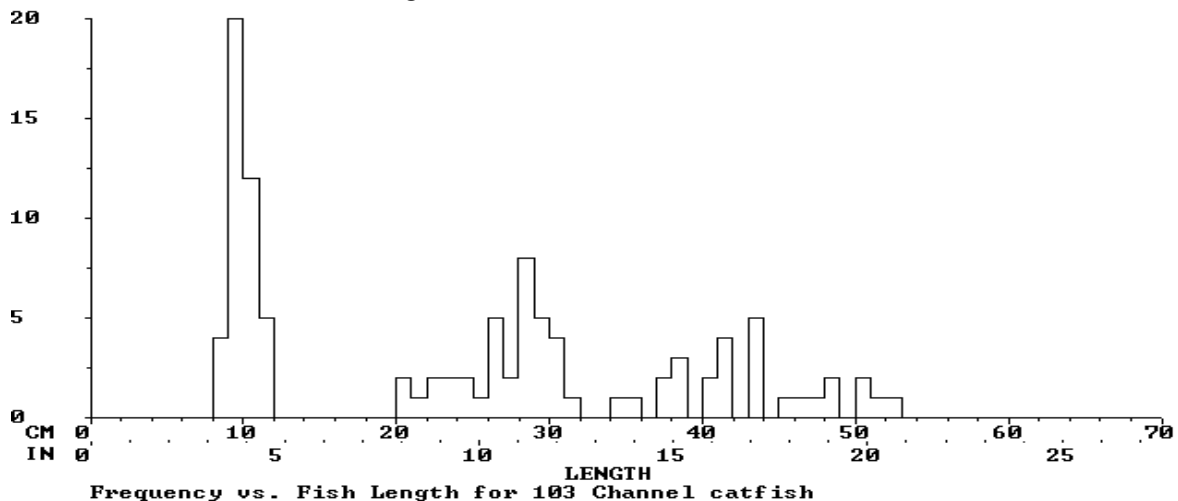
FOX RIVER - Mean catch rate for the 2007 survey on the Fox River mainstem was 31.6 fish per hour, compared to an average of 23.0 collected in 2002. Channel catfish were found at all 14 locations in 2007, with the highest catch at Wedron (59/hour). Other spots with catch rates over 40 per hour included: McHenry, Elgin, Geneva, and

Milbrook. Over 50% of the population was 16 inches or larger in length (see graph below). Catch rate for fish 20 inches or longer was 3.6 per hour. No young of the year were collected by boat electrofishing or seining, indicating poor reproduction in 2007. Samples were taken in early July, therefore, it is also possible young of the year were not yet vulnerable to collection gear due to a late spawn.



Length-frequency distribution for channel catfish from the 2005 Fox River mainstem survey. Electrofishing and seine gears combined.

DES PLAINES RIVER - Channel catfish were very abundant at two locations on the Des Plaines River sampled in 2005. These segments at Riverside and Romeoville are higher gradient than most of the river and are very productive for game fishes. Catch rate was 53 per hour at Riverside and 106 per hour at Isle la Cache. Most of the fish at Isle la Cache, a very shallow area collected by backpack shocker, were young of the year, indicating good reproduction. The riverside collection was composed of larger fish with no young of the year present. This area was sampled with boat electrofishing which tends to select for larger individuals.



Length-frequency distribution for channel catfish from the 2005 Des Plaines River surveys at Riverside and Romeoville.

UPPER AND MIDDLE KASKASKI RIVER - The Kaskaskia River basin was surveyed in 2007. Five mainstem river sites sampled above Lake Shelbyville produced 0 to 8 channel catfish per hour, with the largest weighing about 2.5 pounds. Only one flathead catfish was collected above the lake. Results were much better between Lake Shelbyville and Carlyle Lake. Five mainstem river sites were sampled between the lakes, producing 7 to 61 channel catfish per hour. The largest channel catfish collected was about 3.8 pounds. Ten flathead catfish were also collected. All were on the small side up to about 3 pounds.

EMBARRAS RIVER - The Basin Survey conducted in 2006 produced a low number catfish upstream of Lake Charleston and relatively big populations downstream of the lake. Highest numbers of both channel catfish (37 per hour of electrofishing) and flathead catfish (6 per hour) were obtained on the Embarras River mainstem at St. Marie. Numbers collected from the tributaries were negligible. All fish collected were rather small, with the largest channel catfish at 18 inches and the largest flathead catfish at 19 inches. Despite poor sampling results, fishermen still report catching the occasional large catfish from the river. A few ramps along the river will accommodate small boats and canoes. The river is generally shallow throughout its length as well.

UPPER SANGAMON RIVER - A basin survey was conducted in 2003 on the Sangamon River Basin. 56 channel catfish were collected from the Upper Sangamon River Basin. Catch rates were generally low at most sampling sites. However, a whopping 38 of these fish were collected from a single site on the Sangamon River near Roby in Christian County! All of these fish were less than two pounds, but they represent a thriving population for years to come. The largest channel catfish collected from the basin was 3.5 pounds.

2005 sampling in Salt Creek below the Clinton Lake dam produced 10 channel catfish per hour, all of them were less than ten inches. No channel catfish were collected from the Sangamon River below the Lake Decatur dam during 2005 sampling. Dissolved oxygen levels were very low at the time of sampling.