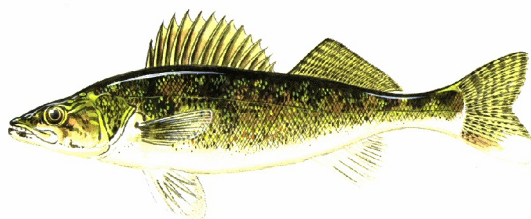


# **STATUS OF THE WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY**



**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES**

**DIVISION OF FISHERIES**

**MARCH 2008**

## **STATUS OF WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION I**

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

**SHABBONA LAKE** - Shabbona Lake is located in the 1,550-acre Shabbona Lake State Park in the DeKalb area. The lake was built in 1974 and first opened to fishing in 1977.

Walleye stocking was initiated in 1975 but reliable, yearly stocks began in earnest in 1983 from the state hatchery system, rearing ponds, and local sportsmen's club donations.

From 1992 through 2006 small fingerlings have been added yearly from the state hatchery system, and 19,915, 4-8" large fingerlings have been periodically stocked through angler donations and from a rearing pond located in the park. Additional large fingerlings were stocked in late 2002 through Sportsmen's Club donations.

Creel census data were taken in 1988, 1990, 1997 and 2002.

The 1988 creel revealed a harvest of 10.2 pounds per acre of walleye that averaged 1.25 pounds under a catch rate of .038 fish per hour. With this catch rate and the publicity it generated, 1989 was a banner fishing year. The 1990 creel census found a lesser harvest of 2.6 pounds per acre of slightly smaller fish that averaged 1.17 pounds under a catch rate of .01 fish per hour.

The 1997 creel data found an estimated 1,623 walleye caught (5.3 per acre) that weighed 1316.4 pounds (4.3 pounds per acre) of fish that averaged .81 pounds. Seventeen and one-half percent of these fish were harvested or an estimated 284 walleye (1 per acre) that weighed 763 pounds (2.5 pounds per acre) of fish that averaged 2.7 pounds. In 2002 anglers caught 11 pounds per acre. The average size of harvested walleye was 1.6 pounds.

Shabbona Lake was first explored as a source for brood fish in 1989 when 192 walleye were netted and electrofished in April. The lake became a reliable source of brood fish in 1995 when 42 females between 2.5 to 11 pounds and 107 males between 15.5 to 25.9" up to 6 pounds were taken as brood stock to the LaSalle Hatchery.

From 1996 through 2001, 360 males and 293 females produced 15.9 million walleye and saugeye fry at the LaSalle Hatchery. With other lake being explored as a source of brood fish, Shabbona Lake's 25 females produced 1,498,000 fry in 2002, and 14 females produced 1,040,000 fry in 2003. A total of 3,024,772 fry were produced in 2004. Shabbona was not used as a brood lake in 2005 OR 2006 after the State closed Spring Grove Hatchery. Walleye were brought down from the Chain of Lakes. In 2007 Shabbona Lake was once again used for a source of walleye brood Fish. Twenty five females resulted in 2,408,000 fry.

The lake's largest walleye at 9.9 pounds was taken in 2001 with good catches made throughout 2003, and a very good outlook expected for 2008. Most walleye will again be taken on the outer edge of the weed line, in deep timber, and along the dam. There is a minimum size limit of 18" with a catch limit of six per day.

**PIERCE LAKE** - Pierce Lake is a 162-acre impoundment in the 3,092-acre Rock Cut State Park located northeast of Rockford. The lake was built in 1960 and completely rehabilitated in 1970 following the entire lake drainage due to a faulty valve.

Walleye stocks were sporadic until 1985 when they began appearing on a yearly basis. A walleye study was initiated in 1987 and a muskie study initiated in 1990 by the Illinois Natural History Survey.

From 1992 through 2002, the lake has been stocked with 78,704 - 1 to 2" fingerlings.

A creel survey in 1999 found a harvest of 6.49 pounds per acre of walleye that averaged 1.57 pounds under a catch rate of .013 fish per hour.

Fall day electrofishing typically produces from 5 to 20 walleye per hour. Night electrofishing typically produces about 60 walleye per hour. An April netting survey was first conducted in 2002 to determine if brood fish could be collected. A total of 113 walleye were collected with one female weighing in at 13 pounds. The 2003 survey produced 150 walleye providing nearly 2,000,000 eggs.

One survey below the dam in the tailwaters in July 1998 found 74 walleye up to 22", two surveys in 1999 produced 61 walleye up to 25.7", and three surveys in 2000 again found 61 walleye up to 28.0". With low discharges in 2001 and a 3' drawdown, only 5 walleye were collected below the dam, but the 2002 collections found 55 walleye below the dam with most of them taken after the heavy rain in June. The dry conditions in 2003 with little lake discharge found only one walleye in the tailwaters. Seven trapnets set in April of 2007 resulted in the collection of 35 walleye between 1.4 and 8.3 pounds.

Fishing should be good at Pierce Lake for walleye in 2008 with the best catches off the gravel points, off the submerged island, and along the dam.

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

**LAKE CARLTON** - Lake Carlton is a small 78 acre lake that has gained its reputation as being the premiere muskie lake in the State. Although the lake has an excellent muskie fishery, it also has a fairly good saugeye fishery. Lake Carlton was stocked annually with 1,900 - 4 inch walleye or 25 per acre until 1992. In 1992, this changed as the lake became a saugeye research lake. Since 1992, the lake has been stocked annually with approximately 25 - 50, 4 inch saugeye per acre. The creel report conducted in 1994 reported 606 man-hours per acre fishing pressure.

Only 122 walleye were caught in 1994 of which 15 were harvested. They averaged 4.9 pounds. Saugeye in the fall of 1997 were collected by night electrofishing at a rate of 13 fish per hour. This is the highest rate walleye or saugeye had been collected. In 1998, saugeye were collected at a new high rate of 37.5 per hour. In 1999, saugeye were collected at a new night rate of 51 fish per hour. In 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004, saugeye were collected at 40, 20, 26, 58, and 25 fish per hour, respectively. Lake Carlton will be stocked with saugeye again in 2008. The numbers of quality-size saugeye are improving and 2008 should provide anglers with an excellent saugeye fishery.

**LAKE GEORGE** - Lake George is a 167 acre lake in Rock Island County. Lake George is developing into one of the premiere muskie lakes in the state. The lake also has a fair population of large walleye. The fishing pressure derived from creels conducted in 1989, 1993, and 1994 reported the fishing pressure to be about 200 man-hours per acre. The creel survey in 1993 reported 86 walleye caught and only 31 harvested. Harvested walleye averaged over 6 pounds.

Lake George was trapnetted for 4 nights in the Spring of 1996. This resulted in the collection of 30 walleye between 1.9 and 9.0 pounds. In 1998, 25 walleye between 3 and 7 pounds were caught in only 10 trapnets. The night electrofishing survey resulted in a record 35 walleye per hour. In 2002, 28 trapnets set overnight resulted in the collection of 45 walleye greater than 14.5 inches.

The walleye population appears to be improving as a result of the lake being stocked annually with approximately 6,680 - 2 inch walleye. Angler harvest has been hampered by someone stocking gizzard shad in the lake in 1990. The shad population has exploded. As a result, the walleye are well-fed and more difficult to catch. Trophy walleye should be available in Lake George in 2008. This lake has a 14 inch minimum length limit with a statewide 6 fish per day creel limit.

#### **DISTRICT 4: PEORIA, FULTON, AND STARK COUNTIES**

**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 concrete boat access ramps and a 25 hp limit.

Walleye have been stocked in Johnson Lake each year since 1987. Fisheries data from 1995-2006 spring trapnet surveys indicate an average walleye population exists. In Johnson Lake, 8 walleye from 16 to 24 inches were sampled with 20 net nights of effort in 2006.

Johnson Lake has clear water, extensive aquatic vegetation, rocky points and water depths up to 60 feet. In 2008, the walleye should average 2-7 pounds, with a 10 pound fish possible! A 14 inch minimum length limit and the statewide 6 fish per day creel limit are enforced.

## STATUS OF THE WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 2

### DISTRICT 7: LAKE COUNTY

**FOX CHAIN O'LAKES** - Walleye have been collected in the Chain by IDNR staff since 1954. Fry stockings were initiated in 1978 to supplement any natural reproduction that sustained the population up to then and to help expand the fishery. Since 1984 brood stock from the Fox Chain O'Lakes have been used by the State Hatchery System for walleye production. Catch rates in 2007 exceeded 15 fish per trap net night which was way over management objectives of 2.5 fish per trap net night, and a few quality locations produce many of those fish.

The slot limit established in 1996 appears to be doing its job of protecting female walleye while allowing harvest of smaller, more abundant male fish. Females averaged 21.3" and males 15.8" in 2007. Both sizes fit nicely into the goals of the protective slot limit.

Since the Chain is a "brood-lake," it is important to protect female walleye of quality reproductive size. The walleye regulation on the Chain O' Lakes allows the harvest of 2 fish between 14" and 18" and 1 over 24". Male fish rarely exceed 18" long and females grow right through 18" so are protected by the slot. In 2007, 4.1 million eggs were collected producing 2.0 million fry. Of those 1.1 million fry were stocked in the Chain the rest went into ponds to produce 592,914 fingerlings (64% conversion fry to fingerling). The Chain O" Lakes was stocked with 286,511 (1.3" to 1.6") fingerlings, rest were used to stock various Public Coop lakes and rivers throughout northern Illinois on the walleye stocking list.

**STERLING LAKE** - This 74.4 acre lake is managed in cooperation with the Lake County Forest Preserve District and began receiving fingerling stockings in 1985 with the goal of establishing a walleye fishery. In 2001, the length limit was raised to 16 inches from 14" to provide an additional year of predation on forage species. Sterling Lake receives annual stockings of 2" fingerlings to maintain their presence. In 2007 Sterling Lake was stocked with 5,440 two inch fingerlings. A recent creel report ranked walleye as the most sought after game fish in the lake. Crappie and bluegill were ranked high on the panfish list. The concession stand has been closed so bait will have to be purchased off-site and no boat rental is available.

### DISTRICT 8: COOK COUNTY

**BUSSE RESERVOIR (Main & South Pools)** - Busse Lake Main and South Pools are two of the best places to target walleye in Cook County. The supplemental stocking of walleye in Busse Lake has been very successful. Initial stockings took place in 1986 and over the years Busse Lake has developed into a respectable walleye fishery. Recent survey data indicates a well structured population represented by several year classes present. Busse Main (410.0 acres) lake is larger than the South Pool (146.0 acres) and offers more desirable habitat and subsequently better walleye fishing. The

lake has an 18 inch length limit, 6 fish creel, and a 2 pole and line limit on gear. Walleye larger than 18 inches were collected in recent surveys so legal fish are present in the lake! Approximately 20,725 two inch fingerlings are stocked in 2007, fish were split between the North and South Pools

Busse Lake is located in northwestern Cook County and is heavily utilized by recreationists including sailboats, canoes and fishermen. There are several parking lots offering access to different parts of the lake. Electric motors are allowed but gas powered motors must be removed from a boat. A concessionaire offers boat rentals, bait and food.

**TAMPIER LAKE** - Tampier Lake is known for it's large walleye. It has been stocked with walleye fry and fingerlings since 1986 and offers the opportunity to catch fish over 10 pounds (a rarity in northern Illinois). Fish are difficult to catch because of the abundance of gizzard shad but they're there. Water is turbid so walleye can be collected 3 - 4 feet of water and sometimes concentrate in and near weed beds. This lake has an 18 inch minimum length limit and a 2 pole and line limit on gear. Tampier Lake was stocked with approximately 7582 two inch fingerlings produced from Chain O' Lakes eggs and fry produced from their broodstock.

**SKOKIE LAGOONS** - Skokie Lagoon's was rehabilitated in 1994 to remove rough fish and give the system a fresh start. Since then the Lagoons have received annual stockings of walleye fingerlings to build and maintain a strong predatory base and provide a quality sportfishery. Gizzard shad are the dominant forage. Seventeen walleye ranging from 16" to 27" were collected during a 2007 electrofishing survey of the system. This catch rate exceeded the management objective of greater than 10 fish per hour (any size) by electrofishing and indicates stockings are successful. Fish were found along weed edges in shallow water and around the many fish attractors along the main channels. The lake has an 18" length limit, 6 fish creel and a 2 pole and line gear limit. .

**WOLF LAKE** - Wolf Lake has been stocked on and off with walleye fry/fingerlings since 1979. Illinois stocked approximately 21,868 two inch fingerlings in 2007 to supplement the current population. Walleye are difficult to collect during summer surveys so little data exists and much of the information we have is based on fishermen's catches. Fishermen targeting walleye concentrate on current areas and constrictions between pools to find fish. Fish approaching 10 pounds have been reported by reputable fishermen. Wolf Lake has a 14 inch minimum length limit and six fish per day creel for walleye (Statewide Regulations) and a two pole and line gear restriction. Motor size is not restricted on Wolf Lake but boats with motors over 10 hp are restricted to no wake. Between walleye fingerlings stocked in Indiana by the City of Hammond and IDNR stockings on our side the walleye population should expand nicely.

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

**HEIDECKE LAKE** - This 1,955 acre former cooling lake located in Grundy County 2½ miles southeast of Morris has received annual stockings of walleye since 1980. Since 2002, annual stockings have averaged 56 fingerlings per acre. Heidecke Lake generally develops a strong plankton bloom in the early spring and also supports a thriving gizzard shad population which has been documented to show multiple spawn pulses. These shad spawns, while benefitting the feeding success and growth of walleyes can make angling extremely tough.

The most recent intensified IDNR survey was conducted in the fall of 2006 and ranked as the top producer of walleye for any standardized survey, surpassing the 2004 collection by more than five times. Catch rates by gear type greatly exceeded long-term averages as daylight electrofishing results were nearly 12 times the average while gill netting efficiency more than doubled. Combined sampling effort yielded a total of 182 walleyes ranging from 7.9" to 23.6" and averaging 16.0". Annual stockings show favorable recruitment and yield excellent size distribution. Generally speaking, walleyes attain legal size (16.0") by their third growing season. Walleyes rated as the top fish caught during the 2006 creel survey at an estimated frequency of 0.102 fish per hour of fishing effort. Of those anglers who expressed a preference, walleyes were far and away the most sought-after species. Compared to the 1997 creel, more than three times as many walleyes were caught in 2006 and these fish had an average weight of 0.9 pounds. In terms of harvest, walleye ranked third overall with an estimated harvest of 2.09 pounds per acre with the average size harvested walleye weighing 2.42 pounds (roughly a 19 inch fish).

A secondary source of walleye broodstock, Heidecke Lake walleye harvest is regulated by a 16 inch minimum length limit with a daily creel limit of three (3) fish. Heidecke Lake is a partially perched cooling lake and can become very hazardous in windy conditions. Impounded in the late 1970's, it once served as a cooling reservoir for Midwest Generation's Collins Station, a fossil fuel peaking plant. However, the generating station was decommissioned in December 2004 and has been demolished. Subsequently, thermal loading as well as any current which was created by the circulation of cooling water through the plant has been eliminated. Heidecke Lake is open to fishing from April 1<sup>st</sup> until ten days prior to the opening of the North Zone waterfowl season. The lake is open daily at 6:00 a.m. and closes at sunset. A concessionaire located at the boat ramp offers bait and tackle as well as boat and motor rentals. There is no boat motor horsepower restrictions but boats must have a working gas-powered motor. The bank fishing area access is located at the eastern side of the lake and is handicapped accessible, featuring a barrier-free fishing pier.

## STATUS OF THE WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 3

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

**CLINTON LAKE** - In 2006, the State Hatchery System stocked approximately 189,182 1.6-inch walleye. The catch rate in 2007 was the 6<sup>th</sup> highest out of the last 14 surveys. The catch rate almost tripled from the 2006 survey results. Approximately 40% of the walleye collected were longer than the length limit. The fishing regulation for walleye is a 14" minimum length limit with a 6 fish daily creel limit. 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 bank of water surface of 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 water fowl refuge and is closed to all public use for the period of October 10<sup>th</sup>. 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.

**LAKE BLOOMINGTON** - Walleye were first stocked into this lake in 1984 and has received approximately 25,000 two inch walleye every year, except in 1985. From 1998 to 2005, 2400 8-inch walleye have been stocked. The 2007 night survey resulted in 76 walleye per hour of sampling. Based on the 2007 survey, size structure is dominated by smaller walleye. Only 7% of the walleye collected were larger than 15 inches. There have been several 10 pound plus walleye caught in Lake Bloomington since 2001. The fishing regulation for walleye is a 14" minimum length limit with a 6 fish daily creel limit. 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.

**EVERGREEN LAKE** - Home of the current State Record Saugeye! The State Record Saugeye was caught in 2001. The lake still holds fish capable of breaking the new record. This lake was selected for experimental stocking of saugeye. The saugeye is a hybrid made by crossing female walleye with male sauger. The saugeye is suppose to be more adaptable to turbid conditions and easier to catch than walleye. The saugeye appear to have adapted quite well to Evergreen Lake. Stocking of this hybrid started in 1992 and the lake has been stocked every year since. Anglers really started catching

saugeye in 1998. In 2007, a night survey was conducted and resulted in 98 saugeye per hour of electrofishing. Of the saugeye collected in the survey, 4 percent were larger than 15", and 1 percent were larger than 25". The fishing regulation for saugeye is a 14" minimum length limit with a 6 fish daily creel limit. 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.

**DAWSON LAKE** - In 2003, the walleye stocking program was switched to a saugeye fishery. The saugeye favors more turbid water and tolerates eutrophic waters better than walleye. Night electrofishing surveys are conducted each fall to assess the fishery. In 2007, 115 walleye/saugeye were collected per hour of sampling. The largest walleye collected was almost 25 inches. The walleye/saugeye population at Dawson Lake is a great fishery in a small lake. Dawson Lake has a 14" minimum length limit and a harvest limit of 3 per day on walleye and saugeye.

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

**LAKE DECATUR** - Is located on the east side of the City of Decatur, in Macon County. The lake covers 3,093 surface acres with a maximum depth of 22 feet and average depth of six feet. Several public boat launching facilities are available and the City of Decatur (217-424-2837) collects a boating access fee. The statewide 14 inch minimum length limit and creel limit of six fish daily is in effect.

An abundance of gizzard shad forage in Lake Decatur allows for the stocking of additional predator species to diversify the fishery. The stocking of 2-inch fingerling walleye from 2000 through 2007 appears to be developing a good fishery. Survey results were hindered in 2007 by both low water conditions and strong thunderstorms with high winds. Collection rates for fall 2007 (14+/hr.), 2006 (26+/hr.), and 2005 (37+/hr.) exceeded standard goals. Collection rates in '06 and '05 were significantly higher than catch rates on Lake Shelbyville for these two years. Walleye collected were scattered along the rip-rap shorelines on or near bridges. The walleye collected ranged from 11 to 24+ inches, with numerous 15 to 20 inch fish collected. The angler creel survey conducted in 2006 revealed that fishermen are not taking advantage of this fishery. Although the average fish harvested weighed 2 pounds, no fishermen indicated that they were fishing for walleye. Angler catch rates were 0.001/hr and the harvest rate was 0.01 lbs/acre. In previous years, numerous reports of fishermen catching walleye were received in fall '02 and summer '03. Walleye fishing prospects for Lake Decatur are rated as fair to good for 2008.

**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. Free public boat launching facilities are available. There is a no wake regulation in effect on the entire lake. The statewide 14 inch minimum length limit and creel limit of six fish daily is in effect. Saugeye (sauger X walleye hybrid) have been stocked annually since summer 2000.

The collection rates from fall 2007 (31/hr), 2006 (26+/hr.), and 2005 (11/hr.) met standard stocking success goals. Numerous saugeye from 6 to 21+ inches were collected in this survey. Catches of 20+ saugeye per day were reported in fall 2005. Saugeye fishing prospects are rated as fair to good in 2008.

**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. The statewide 14 inch minimum length limit and creel limit of six fish daily is in effect.

Consistent stockings of fingerling walleye since 1994 has resulted in the development of a good to excellent walleye fishery. In recent years, knowledgeable fishermen have been able to catch limits of fish from April through mid-June. Some fishermen believe that July and August are the better months, but most reports of good catches are from earlier months. Good numbers of fish to 25 inches are present with fish over eight pounds collected in the 2003 stocking success survey. Survey results were hindered in 2006 by strong thunderstorms with high winds. Catch rates during the 2007 (34/hr), 2006 (11+/hr.), and 2005 (24/hr.) stocking success survey exceeded standard stocking success goals. The walleye collected ranged from 6 to 24+ inches, with numerous 12 to 20-inch fish collected. This fishery is becoming increasingly popular with walleye fishing prospects for Lake Shelbyville are rated as good to excellent for 2008.

## **STATUS OF WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 4**

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

**PITTSFIELD LAKE** - Walleye continue to do well in this 240 acre city owned lake. Steep drop-offs with maximum depths to 34 feet offshore of the west bank provide ideal conditions for this species. This lake has received annual, supplemental stockings of 2 inch walleye fingerlings since 1985. These stockings have produced multiple year classes resulting in a well structured population. During 2007, a small sample (n = 12) was collected. Individuals collected represented 3+ to 7+ years of age. Growth is assumed to be average. The body condition or "robustness" is average as well. This population is expected to continue to be rated as "good", assuming that their numbers are maintained by annual stockings from the Hatchery system. Although Pittsfield Lake maintains a good, strong walleye population, fishing for this species is fairly light. Most walleye are incidentally caught by anglers fishing for crappie. A 14" minimum length limit and 6 fish per day creel limit is in effect. There is a 25 horsepower, "NO WAKE" motor restriction. At this time, any motor larger than 25 Hp must be tipped up and out of the water with prop removed.

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

**CARLYLE LAKE** - Numbers of sauger collected during our 2007 survey were down from 2006, but higher than the 7 year average. The average fish weighed 0.83 lbs, with the average legal fish (14 inch minimum length limit) at 1.7 lbs and 16" in length. The largest fish observed weighed 2.09 lbs and was 18.5 inches in length. Condition of the sauger population overall was slightly lower than desired, but not bad. The spillway offers the best fishing for this species since the concentration of sauger is very dense there. Fishing for this species will be fair in the lake and good at the spillway.

**RANDOLPH COUNTY LAKE** - The saugeye population in this clear water/steep sided lake can be difficult to assess, but many fish are caught by anglers who are fishing for species such as crappie in the spring and fall. Some anglers specialize in catching this species, using trolling methods in the lake to target this species with good success. During our population assessments, we collected 3 fish. One saugeye was a real keeper at 7.5 lbs, another was also a nice fish, weighing 5 lbs, and the third was a young fish at 10 inches in length. Fishing is rated as good for this species, especially if traditional walleye/sauger angling methods are used. A 6 fish daily creel limit and 14 inch minimum length limit applies.

## **STATUS OF WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 5**

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

**FORBES LAKE** - The fishery for saugeye continues to do well, as 5 or 6 year classes of fish were collected during both the spring and fall 2007 surveys. Fish ranging from 13 to 22 inches were the most abundant, while the largest collected was 25.8 inches and 5.5 lbs. Since reproduction is not expected 27,540 fingerlings were stocked in 2007.

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

**KINKAID LAKE** - Walleye stockings over many years have periodically produced good years classes of 14 to 16-inch walleye. Growth has been excellent. In the past, walleye would commonly reach 2 to 2.5 pounds and exit the lake via the spillway during spawning season which corresponds to periods of heavy water flow over the spillway. The construction of a spillway barrier was completed in the fall of 1998 and should alleviate escapement of walleye just as they reach quality size.

The majority of walleye sampled in nets are typically in front of the spillway during heavy water flow in late March and early April. Spring gill netting (1-2 hour sets at dusk) will continue to assess WAE populations and the effectiveness of the spillway barrier and the resultant effect on the Lake's WAE population.

The largest walleye collected by IDNR biologists was collected during 2002 and weighed just over 10 pounds. During 2008, thirty-eight WAE (up to 26 inches and eight pounds) were collected from in gill nets.

During the spring of 2007 55,000 two inch walleye were stocked into Kinkaid Lake. An additional stocking of 1733 six-inch fish was completed in September 2007. More and more reports of walleye catches are being reported each year.

**MALLARD LAKE** - This 50 acre strip cut is located in the Denmark Area of Pyramid State Park in Perry County. Walleye were first stocked in August 2002 and have been stocked annually since that time. This lake is still in the process of filling with water. As a result this lake does not have a boat ramp. No other information is available for the walleye in this lake.

**GREEN WING LAKE** - This 50 acre strip cut is located in the Denmark Area of Pyramid State Park in Perry County. Walleye were first stocked in August 2002 and have been stocked annually since that time. This lake has a concrete boat ramp and a 10 HP motor limit. No other information is available for the walleye in this lake. An attempt to sample the walleye in this lake will be made in the spring of 2008.

## **STATUS OF WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS RIVERS**

**ILLINOIS RIVER** - The sauger population on the Illinois River continues to expand, both in quality and quantity. While not as numerous as in the middle and lower reaches of the River, anglers can still expect to find good numbers of sauger and walleye in the upper pools below the dams at Dresden and Marseilles. The major portion of the sauger population lies below the Starved Rock Dam and extends all the way down to the Mississippi River. The area around the Starved Rock Dam receives a lot of media attention owing to the very successful tournaments held there, but there our sampling indicates that much stronger numbers of fish are found farther downstream. CPUE's in the lower part of Peoria Pool in the Narrows were as high as 147.5 fish/hour.

Tournament anglers have had, and continue to have a very good year. At the MWC tournament held at Spring Valley in March, 2001, 205 boats brought in 1,395 fish that weighed in at 3355.85 pounds - not bad for a 5 fish per day limit per boat. In 2002, 208 boats caught 1,420 fish that weighed 3508.36 pounds. In 2003, 210 boats brought in 1,148 fish that weighed a total of 2049.19 pounds. Tournaments continue to enjoy good fishing even during the fall and winter months. At a recent tournament in that same area, the winning total of 5 fish weighed in at 14.6 pounds, with the big fish coming in at 3 pounds, 13.5 ounces.

Sampling this fall, many smaller fish were collected indicating that the population should remain strong for the next several years. We also collected some of the bigger walleye that we have ever taken at Starved Rock with several fish ranging from 23 to 27 inches in length. There is a 14 inch size limit on walleye and sauger in the Illinois River. The creel is six fish per day.

**ROCK RIVER** - Walleye were collected by night electrofishing on October 23, 24, and November 8, 2006. In addition, incidental walleye were collected and recorded during the smallmouth bass survey in September 2006. The combined data are presented below.

<b>Station</b>	<b>Total #</b>	<b>Stock &gt;250mm (10 in.)</b>	<b>Quality &gt;380mm (15 in.)</b>	<b>Mature &gt; 410mm (16 in.)</b>
Oregon	54	30	9	6
Dixon	77	48	17	13
Sterling	4	2	0	0
Prophetstown	12	13	13	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>31</b>

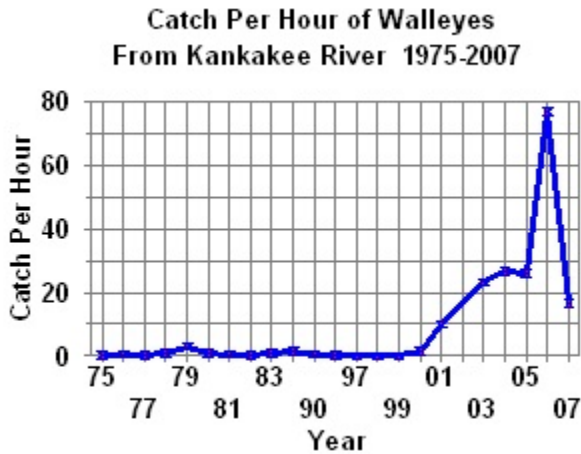
**PSD -  $39/93 \times 100 = 42\%$  (Target 40 - 60%)**

**RSD16 =  $31/93 \times 100 = 33.3\%$  (Target 10%)**

**Total shock time: 339 minutes CPUE =  $148/339 = .44$  fish / minute.**

The data seems to indicate excellent numbers of mature fish in the population which is surprising since the 2004 data showed good numbers of smaller fish but few fish larger than 16". The PSD in 2004 was 29.5%, quite a bit lower than the 42% found this year. The CPUE in 2006 of .44 fish/ minute was lower than the .96 fish/ minute seen in 2004. This could perhaps be attributed to the colder than average fall temperatures which may have changed the movement patterns of the fish, i.e. the fish may have been holding in deeper water making them more difficult to collect. Regardless, the walleye in the Rock River appear to be doing well. Good numbers of both young and mature fish are present, indicating the stocked fish are surviving and growing well. It is impossible to determine if any naturally reproduced fish are present in the population since the stocked fish are not marked. Perhaps a marking program should be undertaken to assess the abundance of naturally reproduced fish in the population.

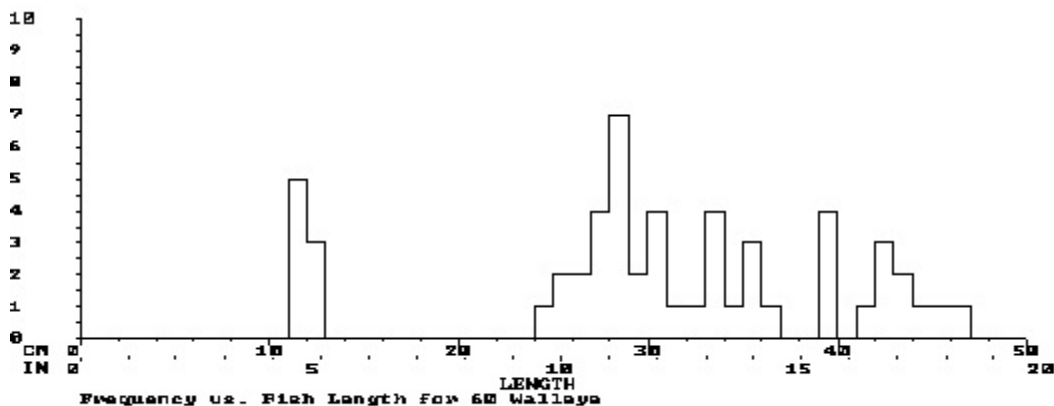
**KANKAKEE RIVER** - The State Record walleye was caught from the Kankakee River in 1961. This once great walleye fishery collapsed during the late 60's and 70's and remained low through the 90's. In 2001 a stocking program was instituted to re-establish this fishery by using walleyes collected from the Kankakee River. Between 2000 and 2007 the DNR has stocked between 78,000 and 94,000 walleye fingerlings every years except in 2002 when the river was too high to collect adults. Catch rates have increased each year since the stocking program began, reaching a high of almost 80 fish per hour of electrofishing in 2006 (see graph). This number dropped back to almost 20 per hour in 2007, which is within the goals of the project. A good walleye population will generally have a catch rate of 10-20 fish per hour.



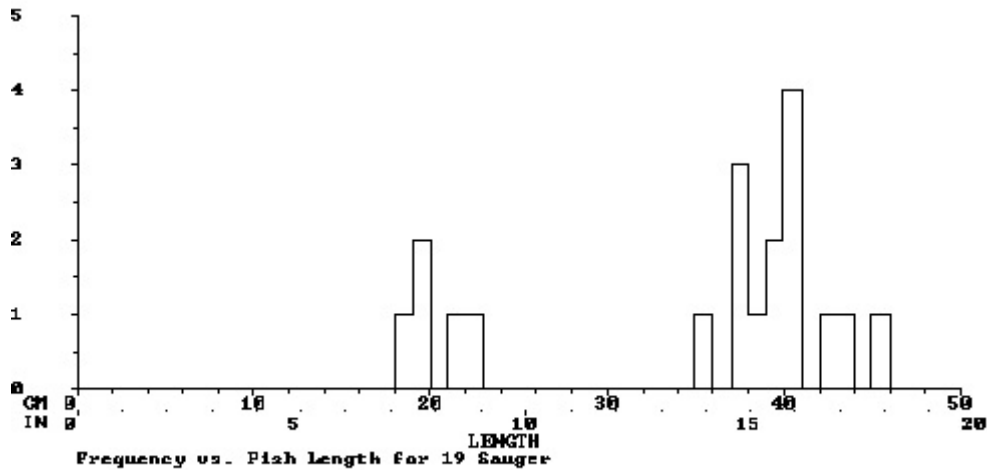
The walleye population has a good size distribution with 40% of the catch in 2007 being over the legal length limit of 16. Twenty-four percent were over 21 inches in length and 6% over 24 inches. So besides the river having good number of fish in it, also has a lot of big walleye.

The stocked walleyes are marked so that they can be distinguished from walleye naturally reproduced in the river. In 2006, 80% of the walleyes collected were marked fish indicating that the stocking program currently is supporting most of the fishery in the river. Hopefully we will see this number go down, to the point that the walleye population will once again be supported through natural reproduction.

**FOX RIVER** - In 2007, a total of 13 stations were sampled on the mainstem of the Fox River between the McHenry Dam and the Illinois River. Catch rate of walleye was 4.6 fish per hour of boat electrofishing, compared 5.7 per hour for the period from 2000 to 2005. Although walleye were found throughout the river, higher densities (10- 15 per hour) were found at McHenry, Geneva and, Sheridan. Most of the fish were between 9 and 14 inches (see graph below), and no fish larger than 19 inches was captured. Young fish were present, resulting from recent spawning or downstream movement from the Chain-O-Lakes stocking program. Walleye are also stocked each year between Yorkville and Wedron (15,000, 2-inch).



**DES PLAINES RIVER** - The Des Plaines River has been stocked with 5000-10,000 2-inch sauger every year since 2001. Stocking locations rotate around 3 locations in the lower Des Plaines downstream of Hoffman. Evaluations have been done routinely at the Riverside location which is stocked every 2-3 years. The evaluation for 2007 yielded 19 sauger in one hour of electrofishing. The average catch rate over the previous three collections was 31 per hour. The length frequency graph below shows distinct age groups including those stocking in spring of 2007 (8-9 inch group) and several groups from earlier stocking events (14-18 inches). This program has been very successful judging by the electrofishing results and reports from anglers who have reported catching large numbers of sauger.



**UPPER SANGAMON RIVER** - A basin survey was conducted in 2003 on the Sangamon River Basin. Walleye were collected at three mainstem sites upstream from Lake Decatur. Average size was about two pounds. The largest walleye collected was 3.4 pounds at Mahomet. Catch rates were also highest at Mahomet, yielding three walleye per hour.

2005 sampling in the tailwaters of Lake Decatur produced six walleye per hour. The fish averaged two pounds with a maximum of 3.5 pounds. Walleye fishing in the tailwaters of Lake Decatur should be good in the spring and fall, while water is flowing.

2005 sampling in Salt Creek in the tailwaters of Clinton Lake produced twelve walleye per hour, all were in the one to three pound range. Tailwater fishing should be good here in the spring and fall also.

**KASKASKIA RIVER** - Fishermen continue to report extremely high catch rates for walleye and sauger below the Lake Shelbyville Dam. These fish stack up in the tailwaters of Lake Shelbyville, where fishermen frequently catch their limit in the spring and fall. Numerous legal-sized walleye and sauger are often observed during our supplemental surveys downstream of Lake Shelbyville.

2007 sauger catch rates from the Kaskaskia River between Lake Shelbyville and Carlyle Lake ranged from 2 to 16 per hour. The highest catch rate came a short distance downstream from the Lake Shelbyville dam. Collected sauger were in the one-pound range.