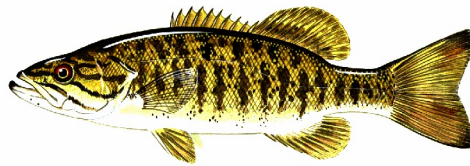


STATUS OF THE BASS FISHERY



**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES**

DIVISION OF FISHERIES

JANUARY 2009

STATUS OF BASS FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION I

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

SHABBONA LAKE - This 319-acre lake was built in 1974 and partially funded with Sport Fish Restoration monies. With fishing as the main purpose of the lake, it was first opened to anglers in 1977 with standing timber, stump fields, fish cribs, anchored trees, rock piles, and earthen fishing piers in place.

In addition to largemouth bass, Shabbona Lake's predator population includes sizeable walleye and muskie populations along with the recently-introduced hybrid striped bass.

Shabbona Lake was opened with a 14" size limit in effect, but as time passed and the exploitation rate increased, a daily limit of one bass per day was implemented.

Creel census data from 1990 documented a fishing effort of 624 man-hours per acre. The largemouth bass catch totaled 12,784 fish weighing 8,300 pounds with a harvest of 1,431 bass (11%) weighing 2,639 pounds. The average size of bass caught weighed 3/4 of a pound and those harvested weighed 1.85 pounds for a total of 8.3 pounds per acre.

The 1997 creel census found a fishing effort of 502 man-hours per acre. The largemouth bass catch was estimated to be 29.9 bass per acre or 36.3 pounds per acre of fish that averaged 1.21 pounds while harvest was 1.4 bass per acre (4.7%) or 3.96 pounds per acre of bass that averaged 2.8 pounds. The 2002 creel census reported a fishing effort of 534 man hours per acre. Largemouth bass were caught at 49 pounds per acre and the average size of harvested bass was 2.5 pounds.

There are three fish rearing ponds at Shabbona Lake. From 1996 through 2002, at least one or two ponds have produced 11,810 largemouth bass 4.5" to 5.5" and 21,172 smallmouth bass 3.5" to 5.5". In 2003, two ponds produced 4,268 largemouth bass at 4.4" and the smallmouth bass pond produced 2,226 fish at 5.2". In 2005, two ponds produced 3,522 largemouth bass that averaged 5 inches. In 2006, one pond produced 1,599, averaging 3.8" largemouth bass and 785 smallmouth bass that averaged 6 inches. In 2007, the two ponds produced 1,303, 7.9" smallmouth bass and 489, 8.1 inch largemouth bass. In 2008, the two ponds produced 2,904, 4.8 inch largemouth bass and 290, 6.5 inch smallmouth bass.

The largemouth bass population of Shabbona Lake is continually improving. Fall electrofishing surveys find 8 to 9 year classes of bass with several individuals up to 20" in size.

From 1990 through 1994, bass were electrofished at a rate of 100 per hour with 23 per hour of these fish 8" in size or larger.

From 1995 through 1999, bass were electrofished at an average rate of 161 per hour with 39 per hour of these fish 8" and larger in size. From 2000 to the present, bass were electrofished at an average rate of 147 per hour with 55 per hour 8" or larger. Smallmouth bass were collected in record numbers in 2008 (130 per hour). In 2006 largemouth bass greater than 12 inches were sampled at 90 per hour and 56 per hour in 2008.

Bass fishing has been good for the past several years and it will be good this year with many large fish taken.

PIERCE LAKE - This 162-acre lake was constructed in 1960 by damming Willow Creek, a tributary of the Rock River. The lake was completely drained in 1970 due to a rupture in the drain valve. The lake was restocked in 1971 and from then to 1986 the lake had a strong bass population. Fall electrofishing catch rates averaged 145 bass per hour over this period. Surveys from 1987 to 1992 documented a serious decline in the catch rate of bass to an average of 31 per hour with 19 of these being young-of-the-year.

A lake creel survey conducted in 1992 indicated that the bass harvest was zero. The catch-and-release of bass was also extremely low with only 0.52 bass per acre reported caught at only 0.15 pounds per acre. A research project conducted by the Illinois Natural History Survey included a population estimate of largemouth bass. This estimate indicated there were only 149 bass 8" and larger for the entire lake.

A supplemental stocking of fingerling largemouth and smallmouth bass was made in 1993. Fall electrofishing surveys from 1994 to the present have determined that the lake's bass fishery has shown a great recovery. An upward trend continued in 2002 with 173 bass per hour collected with 44 per hour 8" or larger. Of these 8" plus bass, 55% were greater than 12".

Pierce Lake participated in a statewide bluegill study between 1999 and 2005. During this time a harvest restriction of 10 bluegill per day and a minimum size length of 8" were implemented. Along with this bluegill restriction, 21,755 bass 4" and larger with a distinctive fin clip were stocked from 1999 to 2006.

To go along with the enhanced largemouth bass population, smallmouth bass are gaining in prominence. A total of 24,315 smallmouth bass at 2" have been stocked from 2000 to the present time (4,860 yearly). Smallmouth are typically electrofished at 44 per hour in the fall.

There is a 14" minimum size limit with a harvest rate of one per day of large or smallmouth bass.

LAKE LE-AQUA-NA - This 43-acre lake was built in 1955 and first opened to fishing in 1957. It was rehabilitated and restocked in 1977 following a severe winter fish kill. In addition to largemouth bass, northern pike is the only other predator. The forage base is

comprised of warmouth sunfish, bullheads, brook silversides, bluegill, black crappie, golden shiners, and gizzard shad.

The 1989 creel survey documented an effort of 545 man-hours per acre with a harvest of 3.23 largemouth bass per acre weighing 2.2 pounds. The overall harvest of bass was 7.2 pounds per acre. The combined harvest and catch-and-release was found to be 23.9 bass per acre weighing 23.7 pounds per acre.

The 1994 creel found an increase in fishing pressure to 742 man-hours per acre with a decline in harvest of bass to 2.13 bass per acre again weighing 2.2 pounds. The overall harvest of bass was 4.7 pounds per acre. The combined harvest and catch-and-release was found to be 47.34 bass per acre weighing 20.1 pounds per acre.

Fall electrofishing data 1995 through 1998 found an average catch rate of 8" and larger bass at 16 per hour. From 1999 to the present, the fall surveys found an average catch rate of 8" and larger bass at 26 per hour. In 2006 the fall survey resulted in 65 per hour greater than 8 inches, and of these 40 were greater than 12 inches. A statewide bluegill study beginning in 1999 involves this lake with no catch or size limit on bluegill and a yearly stocking of bass. From 1999 to the present, 6,089 - 4" bass with a distinctive fin clip have been stocked.

A 14" minimum size limit was enacted in the 1970's and a daily creel limit of one bass was implemented in 1990. Although large bass are not common in this lake, they can always be found by the dedicated angler.

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. LaSalle Lake is like most cooling lakes; there is excellent growth but poor reproduction and recruitment of largemouth bass. Despite the excellent growth of largemouth bass in LaSalle Lake, the lake was on the brink of disaster by the mid-1980's. To protect the precarious bass population two strategies were employed: 1) a stringent creel of one bass over 18 inches and, 2) an aggressive stocking program.

Between the years 1986 and 1990, the lake was stocked annually with approximately 10, 1 to 2 inch bass fingerlings per acre or approximately 20,000 fish. This program was not very successful. In 1991 - 79,746 (39/A) 4 inch largemouth bass were stocked into LaSalle Lake. Thanks to local Bass Clubs approximately 56% of these fish were either marked by a fin clip or a freeze brand. By marking we were able to ascertain more accurately the contribution this program was having on the bass population.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>4" LMB STOCKED</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>4" LMB STOCKED</u>
1998	40,926	2007	60,891(2.6- 4.4)
1999	50,175	2008	45,077(4.0)
2000	63,796		
2001	44,477		
2002	44,146		
2003	39,908		
2003	38,241 (2.7")		
2004	51,901 (3.0-4.5")		
2005	51,645 (3.5-4.3")		
2006	62,051 (2.4-5.0")		

Approximately 50 percent of the bass were marked with a freeze brand between 1991 and 1997. No bass were marked after 1999. The results for the past nine years have been tremendous. Young-of-year largemouth were collected at a rate of 30 to 40 times the lakes historical average. The stockings have accounted for up to 96% of the YOY bass. LaSalle Cooling Lake is scheduled to be stocked annually with 40,000 - 4" largemouth bass fingerlings.

The bass fishery looks promising especially for the chance of catching a trophy bass. Bass from the 1991 year-class started reaching legal size (18") as early as the fall of 1993. The largemouth bass population declined dramatically in 1997, 1998, and 1999. In 2000 - 2003, the largemouth bass population was much stronger. There is still an excellent population of 4 to 7 pound bass.

LaSalle Cooling Lake also receives a reduced stocking of smallmouth bass about 20,000 a year or 10 per acre. This program also appears to be working, with an excellent population of trophy-sized smallmouth bass. Excellent numbers of smallmouth bass were collected in the 1999 - 2007 fall surveys. Gizzard and threadfin shad are the main forage in LaSalle Cooling Lake.

Remember when fishing LaSalle Cooling Lake that it is a perched lake and gets very rough when the wind picks up.

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 an excellent largemouth bass fishery. The lake has a number of 4 to 6 pound bass present and every spring a few 6 to 8 pound bass are caught.

In 1998, stock size bass were collected at a rate of 106 bass per hour and the PSD had improved to 35.2. In 1999, stock size bass were collected at a rate of 77 bass per hour and the PSD continued to 38.5. In 2000, stocked size bass were collected at a rate of 72 bass per hour and the PSD was 28.7. In 2001, stocked size bass were collected at a rate of 151 bass per hour and the PSD was 20.5 and in 2002, they were collected at a rate of 119 bass per hour and the PSD was 20.2. In 2003, they were collected at a rate of 74

bass per hour and the PSD was 15.5. In 2004, they were collected at a rate of 137 bass per hour and the PSD was 28.5. In 2005 bass were collected at a rate of 109 bass per hour and the PSD had improved to 48.0. In 2006 bass were collected at a rate of 196 bass per hour and the PSD was 32.1. In 2007 bass were collected at a rate of 175 bass per hour and the PSD 53.9. In 2008 bass were collected at a rate of 87 bass per hour and the PSD was 36.4.

In 1994 a population estimate put the number of bass greater than 8 inches at approximately 50 pounds/acre. The number of stock-sized bass collected in the fall survey in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 were 106, 77, 72, 151, 119, 74, 137, 100, 168, 89 and 44 respectively. Quality sized bass during the same period were collected at a rate of 23, 28, 22, 15, 24, 12, 39, 48, 54, 48 and 16 fish per hour, respectively. Six strong year-classes were present.

The black bass fishing regulations for Lake Carlton are a 14 inch minimum length limit and a one per day creel. These stringent regulations were enacted because Lake Carlton receives annually between 600 and 800 man-hours fishing pressure per acre. Lake Carlton should have an excellent bass fishery for years to come. Prime fishing areas include the edge of the weed beds and the brush piles or fish cribs.

JOHNSON SAUK TRAIL LAKE - Is a shallow, very fertile 58 acre lake in Henry County. Dense vegetation had plagued this lake until the introduction of 115 triploid grass carp in 1990. The results were excellent in 1991 and in 1992 until late fall when Eurasian milfoil started to establish itself.

The lake has an excellent bass population with good numbers of 4-6 pound fish available to the angler. Stock and quality size largemouth bass were collected at an excellent rate (100 and 59/hour respectively) in the fall 1997 survey. In 1998, the numbers were 78 and 35 per hour respectively. In 1999, the numbers were 100 and 65 per hour respectively. In 2000, the numbers were 116 and 80 per hour. In 2001, the numbers were 169 and 44 per hour respectively, and in 2002 the numbers were 146 and 83 per hour. In 2003, the numbers were 158 and 85 per hour, respectively. In 2004, the numbers were 124 and 34 per hour respectively. In 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 the numbers were 183, 153, 81, 79 and 69, 57, 32, and 24 per hour, respectively. The lake currently has a 14 inch minimum length limit. The lake was stocked with 4,343 - 4.7 inch largemouth bass in 2001.

Sauk Trail has an excellent bass fishery with 5 to 6 strong year-classes present. Prime bass fishing areas include edge of the weed beds and the brush piles. Most trophy bass are caught in the spring and late fall.

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 Illinois Natural History Survey completed research projects on both the walleye and muskie stocking programs in 1994. While the muskie population steadily improved in the early 1990's, the bass and bluegill populations began to deteriorate. The exact cause of the deterioration is not understood

at this time. Lake George has historically had an excellent bass population until the late 1980's. The lake historically had a good population of extremely large bass, and reproduction and recruitment were always consistent.

In 1992 largemouth bass fingerlings became available when the State purchased Sand Prairie property. This property contained a few extremely shallow ponds that contained bass of different sizes. In October of 1992, Region 1 personnel were able to harvest 540 of these bass and stock them in Lake George. These bass ranged from 4 to 16 inches. In 1993 and 1994 Lake George was stocked with 1,670 - 4 inch bass fingerlings. In 1995 and 1996, the stocking was doubled to 3,340 - 4 inch bass fingerlings or 20 per acre. In 1997, the lake was once again stocked with 1,670 - 4" bass fingerlings. In 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001, the number was doubled again to 3,468; 3,610; 3,489; 3,340 - 4 inch bass. In 2002 - 3,500 - 4.5 inch bass; in 2003, 2,754 - 4.0 inch; in 2004, 3,344 - 3.6 inch bass were stocked and in 2005 - 3,480 - 4.2inch bass were stocked.

The results have been encouraging with bass levels back to historical levels. In 1995 and 1996 largemouth bass of all sizes were collected at a rate of 77 and 76 bass per hour respectively. In 1997, largemouth bass of all sizes were collected at a rate of 134bass/hour. Bass 14" and larger were collected at a rate of 52/hour. In 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 largemouth bass of all sizes were collected at a rate of 232, 238, 255, 146, 121, 89, 135, 85, 220,204 and 92 per hour. Bass 14" and larger were collected at a rate of 22 per hour in 1999 , 25 in 2000, 18 in 2001, 22 per hour in 2002, 29 per hour in 2003 ,30 per hour in 2005, 16 per hour in 2006 and 26 per hour in 2007 and 19 per hour in 2008. Bass quality size and larger were collected at 94 per hour at night in 2002 and 88 per hour in 2004.

Currently on Lake George there is a 14 inch minimum length limit. The fishing pressure derived from creels conducted in 1989, 1993, and 1994 reported the fishing pressure to be at approximately 200 man-hours per acre. Fishing for largemouth bass in the early 90's was tough. The two main reasons were 1) a decrease in the bass population and 2) someone introduced gizzard shad in the lake in 1990 and the shad population exploded. As a result, the bass have an over abundance of forage. The bass population has dramatically improved over the last 7 years. Bass numbers are back to historical levels. Bass fishing should be excellent in 2008.

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 approximately 80 feet wide. The canal had an excellent bass fishery. Prime bass fishing areas were the brush piles and water lotus bed. Water was reintroduced to different sections of the far east end in 1986 and 1996. Bass and walleye have been stocked annually in these pools to try and prevent the overpopulation of bullheads and bluegill. The program appears to be working with numerous 2 to 4 pound bass available to anglers. The mouth of the feeder has suffered several fish kills of various degrees of severity in recent years due to low dissolved oxygen levels during the summer. The whole western half of the Canal suffered a severe fish kill during the 2000 and 2001 winter. This section was restocked in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005,

2006, 2007 and 2008. The bass fishing on the west end has greatly improved. The eastern half of the Canal still has excellent bass fishing.

Marked bass fingerlings were stocked in this area of the canal in 1991-1994, and 1996 - 2000. Additional bass were stocked in 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2005 from money given to the Chris Harris Memorial. Preliminary results from stocking the feeder have been encouraging as many of the bass are remaining in this area. Largemouth bass were stocked in the east end in 1996 through 2008 where water was reintroduced in 1996. In 2002 - 82,342 largemouth bass between 1.4 and 4.3 inches were stocked in different sections of the Canal to replace bass lost in winter kill. In 2003, - 96,631 largemouth bass between 2 and 4 inches were stocked in different sections of the Canal. In 2004 - 34,446, 1.6" and 1,035 - 3.5 inch largemouth bass were stocked. In 2005 - 77,404, 1.7", 5,906, 3.4" and 3,000, 5.5 inch bass were stocked. In 2006-46,467, 1.7" and 1,488, 5.3" inch bass were stocked. In 2007 - 76,828, 2.0" and 656. In 2008 23,253, 2.8" bass were stocked.

Several of the boat ramps were improved in 1991 and 1992. The location of the boat ramps can be obtained by writing the Hennepin Canal Parkway Office or stopping in at the Visitors Center. Because the water level in the Canal is controlled at the mouth of the feeder, the water level remains constant year round. This results in the Canal having consistent fishing year round. The Visitors Center and the Izaak Walton Camp Ground offer two of the Canal's favorite ice fishing areas.

The Hennepin Canal currently has a minimum length limit of 14 inches. The Canal offers many anglers enjoyment fishing for largemouth bass. The Better Fishing Association and Izaak Walton have been very instrumental in working for Canal improvements.

LAKE KAKUSHA - This is a shallow 52 acre watershed lake on the edge of Mendota in LaSalle County. The lake has an excellent bass population with an abundant number of 2 to 4 pound largemouth bass available for the anglers. Bass of all sizes were collected at a rate of 105, 97, 135, 50, 127, 67, 57, 84, 166 and 63 per hour in 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2008, respectively. Because of the lake was to low due to effectively sample in 2004, 2005 and 2006. Bass over 12 inches were collected at a rate of 39 bass per hour during the fall survey in 1997, 29 per hour in 1999, 28 per hour in 2000, 18 per hour in 2001, 33 per hour in 2002, 31 per hour in 2003, 22 per hour in 2004, 42 per hour in 2006 and 66 per hour in 2007. The lake currently has a 14 inch minimum length limit with a three fish a day creel limit. The bass fishing should be strong for several years.

The boat ramp on the north side of the lake has been dredged to make launching much easier. When the lake level is low, boating can be difficult because of the shallow littoral areas. In 1999, Lake Kakusha became part of the Illinois Natural History Survey Bluegill study. As a result, the lake got stocked annually with between 1,300 and 1,700 - 4 inch largemouth bass fingerlings. In 2002 - 1,377 - 4.1 inch bass were stocked. In 2003, - 1,587 - 4.0 inch bass and in 2004, 1,414 - 3.5 inch bass were stocked in Lake Kakusha. In 2008, 2,280 2.5" bass were stocked.

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

ARGYLE LAKE - This 92.7 acre state lake, located west of Macomb in McDonough County, has been a popular fishing site since 1951. The most recent creel survey at Argyle Lake in 2002 (197 day survey) revealed the overall fishing pressure at 154 hours/acre. This is down from 378 hours/acre in 1995. The 2002 survey revealed that 3517 (4724 in 1995) largemouth bass were caught and released (1.23 lb. avg.) with only 242 (457 in 1995) being harvested at a 2.23 lb. average size.

The current 2009 largemouth bass fishing regulations at Argyle Lake reflect an attempt to increase the quality of bass fishing by a modified 12" to 15" slot limit, where only one largemouth bass can be harvested over 15"/day/angler. Bass within the 12" to 15" slot are not legal to harvest.

Largemouth bass population data from the most recent 2008 fishery survey at Argyle Lake has revealed an electro-fishing catch rate of 0.37 fish/minute for 15" and larger fish. This is slightly higher than the minimum lake management goal of 0.30 fish/minute. Largemouth bass anglers in 2009 should find good numbers of 12" to 15" fish for catch and release and adequate numbers of quality sized fish 15" (1.75 lb.) and larger.

SNAKEDEN HOLLOW STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AREA - This 2500 acre coal surface-mined area southeast of Victoria in Knox County was purchased by the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources in 1987. The site contains 112 impoundments (282 total acres of water) of various sizes up to 160 acres. Providing public sport fishing opportunity is one of the secondary site objectives. The fish management strategy at the site is to provide a diverse sport fishery which includes largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, muskie, walleye, channel catfish, smallmouth bass, and redear sunfish.

Lake McMaster, the site's largest impoundment had a new spillway installed which will increase the lake size to an estimated 160 acres when the water level reaches full capacity in 2009. At full capacity, Lake McMaster will have a maximum depth of 65'. The lake's habitat is diverse and is characterized by drop-offs, islands, flooded timber, and extensive shallow flats of submerged aquatic plants and cattails. Lake McMaster is the only impoundment at the site with a boat ramp.

To enhance the largemouth bass fishery, the site has a restrictive daily limit of 3 fish/person, only one of which can be over 15". Largemouth bass population data obtained from several site impoundments in 2008 revealed a good response to the current bass regulations. In 2009, the larger site impoundments including Lake McMaster, will support good densities of 12" to 15" bass with limited numbers in the 15" or larger range. The remote, smaller walk-in ponds on the site that have less fishing pressure than the larger lakes will produce higher angler bass catch rates.

Snakeden Hollow State Fish and Wildlife Area is closed to all fishing each year during the

late fall and early winter permit hunting period (2weeks before duck season through the close of Central Zone Canada goose season).

LAKE STOREY - This 133 acre public co-op lake, located in Knox County at the northwest edge of Galesburg, is a watershed impoundment having a high carrying capacity of fish. The lake's fishery is managed by the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources for the following sport fish: largemouth bass, black and white crappie, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish, walleye and muskie. The lake is estimated to have a high overall annual fishing pressure in the range of 400 to 800 man hours/acre. To prevent an over-harvest of quality sized largemouth bass at Lake Story, a 12" to 15" slot limit with only one fish over 15" in the daily take per angler is in effect. A City of Galesburg ordinance restricts all mechanically powered watercraft to electric trolling motors.

Largemouth population data obtained from 2008 surveys has revealed an overall high density fishery (3.65 bass/minute) with adequate numbers of bass larger than 15" (fall electro-fishing catch rate of 0.46 bass/minute). Bass fishing prospects for 2009 at this heavily fished lake will remain good for the experienced angler.

DISTRICT 4: PEORIA, FULTON, AND STARK COUNTIES

ANDERSON LAKE STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AREA - Due to the annual inundation of Anderson Lake by the Illinois River, fish species management is a difficult objective. The associated sedimentation, loss of lake water volume, and loss of aquatic plants have all negatively impacted the sportfish habitat present. Fishery data from the 2008 fall survey indicated a low density of bass from 10 to 16 inches in Anderson Lake, with .24 fish collected per minute of electrofishing.

Illinois River bass regulations are in effect at Anderson Lake with a 12 inch minimum size in effect. The lake has no horsepower motor limit, but caution is advised due to numerous stumps. Contact the site staff, in advance, at 309/759-4484 about water conditions.

BANNER MARSH - The 2008 fall survey and angler success indicated the largemouth bass 12" - 18" protected slot length limit (no possession) and a 3 fish daily creel limit were having a positive effect on the bass population. The RSD 14, RSD 16, and RSD 18 values have remained high with 27% of the bass sampled over 16 inches in length. The overall water level in the marsh remained high in 2008.

East Point Access, Wheel Lake: At normal pool the 350 acre lake is composed of a deep final cut section and a large series of strip mine wheel cut lakes. The wheel cut portion (280 acres) contains a maze of points, islands, flooded brush and diverse aquatic vegetation, while the final cut portion (70 acres) has a maximum depth of 60 feet and rocky structure. This lake has a water clarity average of 1 foot and the least rooted aquatic plants on the site. The fall 2008 survey showed a strong bass population from 6 inches to 19 inches. The RSD18 value showed 8% of the bass were over 18 inches with an overall collection rate of .67 bass per minute of electrofishing. The lake's major fish

species are largemouth bass, bluegill, white and black crappie, muskie, channel catfish, walleye, carp and gizzard shad.

Bell's Landing Access, Shovel Lake was enlarged to over 200 acres by the end of 2000. It is a "T" shaped final cut strip mine lake (74 acres) with a maximum depth of 65 feet that was attached to approximately 100 acres of littoral zone surrounding deep water pockets (25 acres of strip mine ponds). This lake has a water clarity average of 4 feet and good rooted aquatic plant growth. The fall 2008 survey showed a strong bass population from 6 inches to 19 inches. The RSD value showed 10% of the bass were over 18 inches with an overall collection rate of .92 bass per minute of electrofishing. The lake's major fish species are largemouth bass, bluegill, white and black crappie, muskie, walleye, channel catfish, carp, and gizzard shad.

Main Access, Johnson Lake is approximately 600 acres and is composed of a maze of deep strip mine water connected to shallow flats of flooded trees. This lake has a water clarity average of 4 feet and good rooted aquatic plant growth. The fall 2008 survey showed a strong bass population from 7 inches to 19 inches. The RSD 18 values showed 7% of the bass were over 18 inches with an overall collection rate of .76 bass per minute of electrofishing. The lake's major fish species are largemouth bass, bluegill, white and black crappie, walleye, channel catfish, northern pike, muskie, carp, and gizzard shad. There is a 25 horse power limit at Banner Marsh.

The 2009 fishing season at Banner Marsh will offer a good supply of 1 to 4 pound bass with a limited number of trophy fish from 5 to 8 pounds. Weedlines and large areas of aquatic vegetation are present in summer, so bring your weedless lures.

Organized bass fishing tournaments need to register the date and location with Rob Hilsabeck at (309) 446-9143.

CANTON LAKE - Canton Lake has produced its share of trophy largemouth bass over the years. The 2008 spring survey revealed a diverse fishery composed of yellow bass, white and black crappie, and a numerous carp population. Gizzard shad have also been introduced into the lake from an unknown source. The gizzard shad may provide additional forage for the larger bass, but may also hinder bass recruitment.

The overall bass fishery in 2008 was characterized by a medium density population but, the size structure and body condition of the bass population is very good. Fifty-five percent of the bass sampled were over 15 inches in length with an overall collection rate of 1.2 bass per minute of electrofishing. In 2009 dedicated anglers can expect fish over twelve inches (1 to 2 lbs.) and a limited number of trophy bass (4 to 8 lbs.). The combination of sedimentation, lack of aquatic vegetation, and competition from other fish species is the cause for poor bass recruitment and average bass density. In 2004, a stocking of 5000, 2.9 inch bass was completed to assist natural reproduction. In 2006, 1 million fry bass were stocked. In 2007, a bass stocking of 36,000 fish at 2.2 inches long and a stocking of 6,250 fish at 4.5 inches long were completed.

The lake regulations include a 15 inch minimum length limit and a daily creel limit of three largemouth and/or smallmouth bass per day.

The lake's major fish species are largemouth bass, muskie crappie, bluegill, yellow bass, channel catfish, carp, and gizzard shad. The City of Canton has various user fees for boat use and a 85 horse power motor limit.

DOUBLE T SFWA - This site is located 3 miles northwest of Canton and was acquired by the state of Illinois in September 2001. The big lake is approximately 64 surface acres in size and has very steep and deep profile that is typical of a stripmine lake. The largemouth bass population is defined by a high density of fish from 6 to 19 inches long with average Relative weight values.

The 2008 electrofishing survey collected 2.6 fish per minute. The current bass regulation is a 21 inch minimum size limit and 1 fish per day. A concrete boat ramp was installed in 2005 and the lake is electric motors only. Organized bass tournaments need to register with Rob Hilsabeck at (309) 446-9143.

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

POWERTON LAKE - This 1,426 acre lake was opened for fishing in 1983. It has a history of very limited largemouth bass populations. Almost no aquatic vegetation resulted in very limited successful reproduction and survival of young bass. Many attempts to initiate good populations through stocking and other management techniques had only marginal success. The fishery was characterized by numerous white bass, channel catfish and green sunfish with gizzard shad as a forage base.

In 1987, a stocking of smallmouth bass was made to ascertain if they would be able to reproduce, survive and create a black bass fishery. Since the available fish habitat includes large rock along most of the shoreline, and appropriate sized forage was available, this initial stocking prospered. Smallmouth bass were stocked at a rate of 10 fingerling fish per acre each year until 1991, when it was determined that the smallmouth bass population was being maintained by strong natural reproduction.

As a result of the initial stocking success, a good population of smallmouth bass was established. Fast growth and good body condition of smallmouth was promoted by the survival and reproduction of threadfin shad and brook silversides this year in Powerton Lake. During the fall population sample, 58 percent of all smallmouth collected were 12 inches long or longer. However, only two smallmouth collected were of legal size. A collection rate of almost 65 fish per minute of electro-fishing indicates a fair abundance of smallmouth bass. Reproduction of smallmouth bass was less than has been observed in recent samples. The level of reproduction and recruitment of smallmouth bass shown by this years sample indicates some decline in the smallmouth bass fishery in 2008 and 2009. It takes three years growth in Powerton Lake to produce a legal fish.

As a result of the review of population survey data trends, the outlook for smallmouth bass fishing in 2009 is not as good as it has historically been. Best months to fish are March and April with early October also good. Best baits are jigs or shad imitators fished off the rock ledges along the levees in the coolest water available. Fly fishing has proven effective when a hatch of midges is occurring. The use of streamers and fly fishing tackle has also proven effective early in the season.

No services, food, or gas are available at Powerton Lake. A double concrete ramp provides boating access, and there is no horsepower restriction in effect at Powerton.

SPRING LAKE - In 1978, Spring Lake (Tazewell County) was divided into two distinct waters for the purpose of major rehabilitative management of fish and wildlife populations. North Spring Lake consists of 578 acres and South Spring Lake has an area of 610 acres. Both Lakes have an average depth of 2.9 feet. Historically, they were part of the Illinois River and as such was a lateral, freshwater marsh with luxuriant aquatic vegetation growth. The management of these lakes was intended to result in a "recreation" of this marsh environment. North Lake was rehabilitated in 1981 and South Lake in 1986. For the purpose of defining the largemouth bass populations, they need to be considered separately.

SPRING LAKE (NORTH) - This lake is characterized by heavy growth of aquatic vegetation for much of the spring, summer and fall. There is an excellent population of intermediate to large bass, mainly in the 2 to 5 pound range. A window of opportunity for fishing exists from March 15 through April 30 or until aquatic vegetation becomes excessively abundant. At that time of year, largemouth bass fishing could be rated as excellent. In May, largemouth bass fishing becomes much more difficult due to the tremendous coverage of aquatic weeds and very clear water. Many bass fishermen select the hours of darkness to fish during the warm summer months. They catch a large number of big bass on weedless surface lures at that time. The extensive weed beds serve as a fish preserve, creating growth problems for intermediate and larger sized bass. Aquatic vegetation consists of lily, lotus and heavy growths of Eurasian milfoil, coontail and algae.

As a result of the review of data generated by field surveys in 2008, fishing for largemouth bass should be excellent on North Spring Lake in 2009. The 2008 fish population survey showed that 23% of the largemouth bass collected were 15 inches or longer. In the past, condition and growth of largemouth have been impacted by the extremely dense Eurasian milfoil beds. Because of vegetation treatments, more open area was created in 2008, resulting in better growth. We were able to collect largemouth at a rate of 1.07 fish per minute of electro-fishing. This indicates an excellent density of largemouth bass. Strong reproduction and recruitment of largemouth bass over the last 2 years was also indicated by the fall population sample. A 3 fish daily limit and a minimum size of 15 inches is in effect. The best largemouth bass fishing at North Spring Lake occurs early, before weeds become a problem. Try fishing this spring along the levees and around duck blinds using crank baits or after dark using surface plugs later in the summer.

SPRING LAKE (SOUTH) - The coverage of aquatic vegetation in 2008 was much less abundant than was seen in previous years. The Eurasian milfoil was treated in 2008 using 2,4-D DMA 4. This treatment using 90 gallons helped to reduce the milfoil coverage. The South Lake=s largemouth bass population size structure in 2008 was characterized by numerous intermediate sized fish, good reproduction, and good numbers of largemouth (21.6% of fish sampled) over 15 inches in length. Strong reproduction, recruitment and growth were observed from this year's largemouth bass sample data.

Based on the results of sampling efforts in 2009, the fishing prospects for largemouth bass in South Spring Lake are good. The best results for bass fishing in 2009 will be early in the spring before weeds become a problem. Best areas will be along the center ditch and the spring hole areas along the bluff. Best baits will be crank baits, spinners and top-water plugs.

All bass tournaments must pre-register at the site on a first come, first served basis at least 60 days prior to the event. A 25 horsepower restriction is in place at Spring Lake. Food, bait and boat rental are available at the lake.

STATUS OF BASS FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 2

DISTRICT 6: DUPAGE, KANE, AND McHENRY COUNTIES

McCULLOM LAKE - Recent surveys indicate that anglers will find a mature and balanced population of largemouth bass in McCullom Lake. The electrofishing catch during fall 2008 (33 bass/hour) was down compared to previous years, but size structure remained in good shape for anglers seeking large fish (PSD = 52%, RSD-15 = 32%, and RSD-18 = 5%). The largest bass sampled measured 18.6 in. long and weighed 3.6 lbs. Although natural reproduction occurs in the lake, declining numbers of bass in recent surveys and reports of lower catches by anglers suggests the lake may benefit from supplemental stocking. IDNR initiated largemouth bass stocking in 2006 and stocked nearly 5,000 advanced fingerlings (4.0 in. long). Similar numbers and sizes of bass were stocked in 2007, and another 20,000 small fingerlings (1.5 in. long) were stocked in 2008. Length-frequency histograms from fall electrofishing surveys suggest stocking was successful in two of the three stocking years (2007 and 2008). Continued recruitment of stocked bass to adult size should result in higher catches of bass by anglers in the near future.

Access at this lake is limited to shoreline fishing at several small parks and a single narrow, public boat ramp on the lake's south shore. Outboard motors are limited to 9.9 horsepower. A one fish daily creel and 15 in. minimum length limit for largemouth bass is enforced at the lake. A handicap-accessible fishing pier is available in Petersen Park on the lake's northeastern shoreline (access from McCullom Lake Road). The lake is moderate in size (244 acres), shallow (average depth = 5.3 ft.), and lacking in good

structure for bass. Try targeting the edges of lily pad beds on the north and west end of the lake, the overhanging trees at the northeast end, or any submerged logs or deadfalls where the water is deep enough to hold fish. This lake also supports a strong northern pike population so be prepared to hook into some healthy northern pikes while fishing for bass. Ice fishing is very popular here, in part, because of improved access on the ice. There is an aerator that runs when needed so beware of open water and areas of thin ice.

SILVER LAKE - This DuPage County Forest Preserve lake has an abundant bass population. Good natural recruitment combined with abundant vegetation and low angler harvest has resulted in density dependant “stunting” of several abundant largemouth bass year classes. This slow growing population had a size structure skewed toward intermediate-sized fish (8-12 in. long; PSD = 3.3%; PSD management goal = 40-60%). Scale aging indicated that growth rates were well below the northern Illinois average and that 6 years is needed for bass to reach the 12-in. mark. A bass removal program (via electrofishing) was initiated in 2006 to reduce the number of intermediate bass present and allow for faster growth of remaining fish. To date, we have removed 645 bass less than 13 in. long that had a combined weight of 282 lbs. The removal effort has resulted in an improvement in bass population size structure. Based on data from spring fish surveys, PSD increased from 3% in 2005 to 35% in 2008 and RSD-15 increased from 0% to 3% over the same time period.

Angling restrictions at Silver Lake include two pole and line only fishing for all fish and a 15-in. minimum length limit and three fish daily creel for bass. 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 - Located in a beautiful natural setting in Moraine Hills State Park, Defiance Lake is popular with largemouth bass and northern pike anglers. Shoreline fishing is limited during summer due to 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. Outside boats have been excluded in the past, but anglers can now bring in canoes and kayaks to fish the lake.

A combination of poor sampling efficiency for bass and low natural recruitment has resulted in low catches of largemouth bass ($N < 10$ fish/hr.) in many past annual electrofishing surveys. However, a spring 2008 survey indicated that bass numbers may be improving at this 48-acre natural glacial lake due, in part, to the supplemental stocking of 1,200 advanced bass fingerlings (> 4 in. long) in alternate years since 2001. The electrofishing catch rate this past spring was 39 bass/hr., and the good news for anglers

is that a high proportion of the sampled fish were large. Sixty percent of bass larger than 8 in. long (stock-sized fish) were over 15 in. long and 23% of the stock was over 18 in. long. The largest fish sampled was 19.5 in. long and 4.7 lbs.

LAKE ATWOOD - The McHenry County Conservation District owns this 20-acre reclaimed quarry that offers an opportunity to fish for bass from shore or non-motorized boats (no gas or electric motors allowed). An improved boat launch and handicap-accessible fishing pier are available at the site. The lake is deep and clear (30-ft. maximum depth; 18-ft. visibility is typical) and heavily vegetated. These conditions make for some challenging fishing, but local anglers flock to this lake because it holds nice-sized bass up to 20 in. long and over 4 lbs. Based on a spring 2007 survey, bass were very abundant (electrofishing catch = 1.6 bass/min.) and population size structure was excellent (Proportional Stock Density = 59%). The lake is stocked annually with about 500 bass fingerlings to supplement natural reproduction and the program appears to be very successful. There is a one fish daily creel limit and 15 in. minimum length limit for largemouth bass at the lake. Easy access and numerous fish make this a great place to take a kid fishing.

MALLARD LAKE - At 89 acres, Mallard Lake is the largest fishing lake in the DuPage County Forest Preserve system, and it supports an excellent largemouth bass population. We captured 102 bass in 60 minutes of electrofishing during May 2008. Small and large fish were well represented in the sample. About 12% of the sampled bass were yearlings, which indicated adequate natural reproduction. A good proportion of the bass 8 in. and larger were over 12 in. long (PSD = 63%) and 7% were over 15 in. long. The biggest bass captured was 17 in. long and weighed 2.8 lbs. Regulations include two pole and line only fishing for all fish and a 15-in. minimum length limit and three fish daily creel for largemouth bass.

Favorable largemouth bass population dynamics observed in electrofishing surveys were reflected in angling statistics provided by an IDNR sponsored creel survey conducted by the Illinois Natural History Survey from March through October 2007. The survey showed that bass were targeted most by anglers seeking a specific species (directed effort = 30% of 22,493 angler-hours of total fishing effort) and this popular species ranked second behind bluegill in the number of fish caught (3,914 bass total or 44 bass/acre; average weight = 1.0 lb.). Anglers harvested only 54 bass that had an average weight of 1.8 lbs. These harvest statistics suggests compliance with regulations and a willingness of most anglers to practice catch-and-release bass fishing.

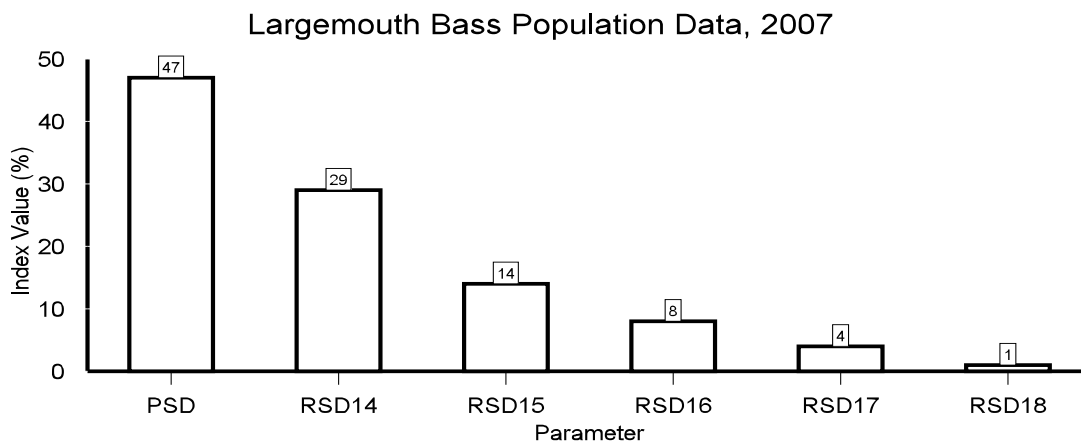
At this time, only shoreline fishing is allowed at Mallard Lake, but an extensive trail system and bridges to islands make for plenty of good fishing spots. Handicap accessible fishing piers are available and further access development is likely in the future.

DEEP QUARRY LAKE - This 40-acre reclaimed quarry in DuPage County is being managed for trophy bass fishing. Hence, an 18-in. minimum length limit and one fish daily creel are being enforced at the lake. A spring 2007 survey produced a catch of 105 bass in 60 min. of electrofishing. Many of these fish were yearlings ($N = 59$), but other year classes were well represented in the sample. Proportional Stock Density was 36%, but Relative Stock Density (RSD-15) was 0%. The absence of big bass in the survey does not mean they are gone from the lake. Many large bass were seen avoiding the AC electroshocker by swimming to deep water in this steep-sided, clear water quarry lake.

Shoreline fishing is popular and carry-in boats and electric trolling motors are allowed. Try fishing the edge of the shallow, gradually sloping shelf created off the west shore and the numerous man-made fish cribs and reef structures located throughout. A "Fishing in DuPage County" booklet will help locate drop offs and other structures that hold bass.

DISTRICT 7: LAKE COUNTY

FOX CHAIN O'LAKES - Bass fishing is very popular on the Chain O' Lakes. Tournaments are numerous. The intense fishing pressure targeting a resource limited to backwaters, channels, and vegetated lakes means fishermen target basically the same resource whether they are a weekly tournament angler or an occasional fisherman. Catch data shows fish survive fairly well to 12" (maturity- PSD Value) then become nearly half as abundant at legal size (14"- RSD14) and become, again, become less abundant at each inch beyond. We only occasionally collect bass over 18" long while electrofishing in the Chain however large bass are present and caught by patient (and good) anglers fairly often.



The above graph illustrates population indices derived from recent catch data. From the management perspective this population doesn't look too bad. It shows a population with high reproductive potential that could expand if fish nested successfully. **Practicing catch and immediate release, in May, would go a long way to increasing the number of successful nests and ultimately bass.** Electrofishing catch rates were just below

management objectives of 0.5 fish per minute at 0.38 fish per minute so even though population statistics are acceptable, catch rates were below objectives. Sampling error explains some of the low catch rates with sample runs occurring in both good and poor bass habitats not just good habitats. Most electrofishing survey goals are to look for species diversity in the "system" and not just abundance of one species.

Supplemental bass stockings which began in 1989 have helped offset reproductive limitations and will continue to maintain the population at current levels. Bass abundance varies lake to lake depending on the amount and type of vegetation and the quality of the near shore habitat.

Smallmouth bass are present in the system but represent only a small proportion of the bass population. Fishermen have reported smallmouth bass to 18". Smallmouth bass have a "Catch and Release" season from April 1 to June 15 since the Chain is ultimately an impounded portion of the Fox River.

Bass stockings are concentrated in backwater lakes and deeper channels where habitat is more appropriate to fingerling survival and away from larger open lake predators.

In 2007, the Chain O' Lakes was stocked with approximately 94,921 four inch fingerlings and approximately 126,237 (1.5" to 3") fingerlings. In 2008 approximately 57,400 four inch fingerlings and 90,950 (1.5") fingerlings were stocked.

INDEPENDENCE GROVE LAKE (LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT) - The Lake County Forest Preserve District developed this lake with fishing in mind and provides ample shorefishing access. The lake was stocked early in its impoundment with a compliment of panfish and predators so that a balanced fishery exists. Lake County opened the Park with a users-fee for non-County residents and a "Catch and Release" management philosophy in spring 2001.

A standardized fish survey in May 2006 yielded 1.8 per minute of electrofishing. This exceeded the Management goal of 1 fish per minute. Bass ranged in size from 2.5" to 21" and had a Proportional Stock Density (PSD) of 88. PSD Management Objectives for a balanced fishery generally fall between 40 and 60 so you can see the population is composed of larger sized fish and is unbalanced. In a Catch and Release system this may not pose the same collapse potential as in a harvest system but there is some concern about sustainability of the system and the current regulations effects. The Relative Stock Density value for fish greater than 14" (RSD-14) was 48. What do these population indices mean? They suggest bass fishing is really good right now with a large proportion of fish from 12" to 14" long and occasional beasts up to 20 inches long in the 4 to 5 pound range. As older, larger fish die from either hooking mortality or natural causes the population will adjust to more normal proportions. Biologists generally like to see a PSD between 40 and 60 meaning roughly half the population is larger than 12". In this sample 88% of the sample was larger than 12".

Independence Lake is an appealing Park to be in, it offers an abundance of shore fishing opportunities, and can provide a lot of action at the end of your fishing pole. This is a great place to take your Mom or Dad fishing. Largemouth bass exceeding 7 pounds have been reported. There will be some adjustment to the population as the older larger fish, which grew fast as part of the initial impounding, are replaced by slower growing but abundant fish as the lakes second generation.

STERLING LAKE (LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT) - This lake offers a varied fishery including panfish, channel catfish, bass, muskie and walleye. It is located east of the intersection of Route 41 and Route 173 in Van Patton Woods Forest Preserve and can be fished from shore or from a car top boat or canoe. Electric motors are allowed but no gas motors.

A fish survey in May 2006 yielded 1.7 largemouth bass per minute of electrofishing. Fish ranged in length from 2" to 17.5" long. The sample's Proportional Stock Density (PSD) was within Management Objective of between 40 and 60 at 58. Catch rates were high and population indices were within target ranges. Combining good numbers of quality-size (12") fish and a relatively large proportion of fish over legal size (length limit = 15"), roughly 20% of the catch, include the right mix of ingredients for consistent action. Sterling Lake offers bass fishermen the chance to catch decent size fish, from shore, on a public access lake: this is a tough combination to achieve in northeastern Illinois. When electrofishing we collect bass near vegetation, near shore, in less than 5 feet of water.

DISTRICT 8: COOK COUNTY

BUSSE LAKE (COOK COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT) - 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. Outboard motors cannot be attached to boats using Cook County Forest Preserve District lakes. Bass have a 14" inch length limit, 6 fish per day creel. This holds for all Cook County Forest Preserve Lakes. Largemouth bass were collected via electrofishing at a rate of 1.0 fish per minute and 0.9 fish per minute in the Main Pool and South Pool, respectfully in 2004.

Catch rates met sampling goals for these lakes. Population indices were also similar for the two lakes and were within management objectives. The Proportional Stock Density (PSD), which describes the number of fish over 12 inches long compared to the total number of fish over 8 inches long, was 58 in the Main Pool and 67 in the South Pool. The Management objective for this index is for the data to fall between 40 and 60. The interpretation is that 40 to 60 percent of the sample should be at least 12 inches long to maintain a strong reproductive potential and conversely the opposite proportion of fish (60 to 40 percent) of the sample should range from 8 to 12 inches to will replace older fish. Mortality increases with age so fewer older, larger fish should be present in the population and the majority of fish should be those approaching or just reaching sexual maturity or 12". The Relative Stock Density (RSD) index offers a way to evaluate specific lengths.

We use an RSD - 14 to evaluate the 14 inches length limit on Busse's Lakes. Our sampling showed that 31 percent of the bass caught in the Main Pool (RSD-14 = 31) and 27 percent of the bass caught in the South Pool (RSD - 14 = 27) were at least 14 inches long. Both these values are slightly above management objectives and suggest bass fishing should be good in both pools. These lakes are maintained through natural reproduction. No bass have been stocked in these lakes for several years and things look pretty good. Busse Lake has a variety of habitats including deep water, hard substrate and natural shoreline (vs. sheetpiling). These all combine to provide adequate habitat for bass to thrive.

SKOKIE LAGOONS (COOK COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT) - This 190 acre lake system contains 7 lagoons, many are divided by low-head dams and are not negotiable by boat. A developed boat launch for small boats (electric motors only with no gas motor attached) is located off Tower Road and a variety of shore fishing access and parking locations are scattered throughout the system. Patches of aquatic vegetation and downed timber offer structure to hold fish as well as many fish cribs spread throughout the system. Forage species include gizzard shad and small bluegill. Bass over 4 pounds were collected during the survey and larger fish have been reported by local anglers so the potential for good action abounds. The electrofishing catch rate for largemouth bass, in 2004, was 1.0 fish per minute, in-line with management objectives. The PSD was 58 and RSD - 14 was 31. These data indicate a balanced fishery with plenty of larger size fish to catch and carry the population forward with natural reproduction. Local bait and tackle shops can offer insight into which portions of Skokie Lagoons offer better shorefishing opportunities than others since there are multiple "pools" in the Lagoon system and a variety of locations to park.

WOLF LAKE (WILLIAM POWERS STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AREA) - This 390 acre urban lake sits on the Illinois - Indiana border and offers a considerable amount of shoreline fishing. Boats are allowed on the lake (motors over 10 hp must remain at a "No Wake" speed). Both largemouth and smallmouth bass are present in the system. Wolf Lake has a 6 fish, 14" length limit for bass (either singularly or aggregate). Aquatic vegetation in late summer becomes dense and makes motoring around the lake difficult. In spring and fall vegetation is less dense. Bass over four pounds have been collected and reported by anglers. The combined black bass (both largemouth and smallmouth) catch rate was 30 fish per hour in 2005. This was below our target goal of 60 fish per hour but still reasonable for an urban lake with abundant shoreline access. In lakes with a lot of shorefishing pressure bass populations have a tendency to shift toward off shore habitats which makes them more difficult to sample via electrofishing. Bass which consistently inhabit near shore habitats can be cropped off by fishermen so only fish with non-traditional habits survive. Population statistics indicate a slightly unbalanced fishery tending toward larger individuals with a largemouth PSD of 68 and a smallmouth bass PSD of 69. These data suggest reproduction may be sporadic though it does occur. PSD values give a good indication of the percent of the population that could reproduce naturally if allowed too. Managers use another index to compare fish at specific sizes. Relative Stock Densities allow managers to pick a size and see what proportion of the

sample equals or exceeds that value. The RSD-14 value for largemouth bass at least 14 inches long (legal in Wolf Lake) was 53 and for smallmouth was 38. These data indicate that 53% of the largemouth bass and 38% of smallmouth were at or above legal size so fishing can be quite good. Catch and release fishing and heavy vegetation in late summer probably combine to protect black bass during summer when fishing pressure can be extremely heavy. With continued restraint on harvest, this fishery should continue to flourish.

Wolf Lake was stocked with approximately 4500 smallmouth bass fingerlings in 2007 and 9000 smallmouth fingerlings in 2008. Fish were divided proportionately between the North (isolated lake) and the Main Lake.

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

HEIDECKE LAKE - Located in Grundy County just southeast of Morris and under an hour's drive from the Chicago metropolitan area, Heidecke Lake offers a diverse angling experience and provides very good black bass fishing opportunities. Impounded in the late 1970's, Heidecke Lake previously served as a cooling reservoir for Midwest Generation's Collins Station, a fossil fuel peaking plant. However, this generating station was decommissioned at the end of 2004 and has since been completely razed. This has eliminated thermal loading and any flow which was created by the circulation of cooling water through the plant, resulting in an ambient lake. Water clarity has remained relatively unchanged and as such the rate of expansion of aquatic plant growth has been less than anticipated.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, largemouth bass dominated the black bass fishery but over time this changed. Even though an intensive stocking program attempted to bolster the largemouth bass population, no appreciable improvement was noted in either IDNR fisheries surveys or, more importantly, in angler's creels. At the same time, the smallmouth bass population was flourishing via natural reproduction and recruitment, without the benefit of additional hatchery stockings. The supplemental stocking program for largemouth bass was terminated in 1997 and although this species is present, the fishery is not what it was back in the early days of Heidecke Lake (an all-time high of 540 largemouth bass were collected in 1980 and many of these fish exceeded 16 inches). If aquatic vegetation proliferates in response to improved water clarity, it will be interesting to see how this will effect the largemouth bass population. To improve spawning efforts for largemouth bass, artificial spawning logs have been placed at various locations in the lake.

The smallmouth bass population has been very strong for the past several years and this species was collected in a greater than 2½ to one margin in comparison with largemouth bass in the 2008 fall standardized biennial survey. Incidence of their occurrence in IDNR surveys began to increase in the mid-1980's and by 1992 smallmouth bass outnumbered largemouth bass in fall sampling, this despite the fact that significant numbers of largemouth bass fingerlings were being stocked. The 2008 fall survey overall electrofishing catch rate for smallmouth bass remained unchanged from the 2006 survey (0.56/minute)

and was very close to the long-term average (average catch rate for the period 1995-2006 of 0.64/minute). The density of smallmouth bass which met or exceeded the legal limit declined from the previous survey and this size group comprised 8.1% of the total fall collection. Similarly, the number of 18-inch and larger smallmouth also declined, contributing less than 2% to the total collection. The average size smallmouth bass collected decreased from the previous survey (11.2" to 10.5") but remained very close to the long-term average.

Despite a slight increase in electrofishing catch rate, the largemouth bass population continues to struggle. Largemouth bass collected in the fall 2008 survey exhibited an average length of 6.0" which dropped markedly from the long-term average of 8.5". Largemouth bass were collected at the rate of 0.21/minute, which is slightly up from 2006 but less than half of the long-term average. Both catch rate and number of fish collected were heavily influenced by the nearly 104,000 4-inch fingerlings which were stocked in June, 2008. Stocked fish contributed heavily to the fall collection and hopefully this year class will recruit strongly into adulthood. A lone largemouth bass 18 inches or larger was collected and less than 3% of the sample met or exceeded the minimum length limit.

Based on the results provided by the 2006 angler creel survey, smallmouth bass are a mainstay of the Heidecke Lake fishery and ranked fourth behind striped bass hybrids, walleye and channel catfish in terms of the total number which were caught; largemouth bass were eighth on this list. Catch-and-release angling for black bass and especially smallmouth was indicated by a low exploitation rate as less than 2.5% of the smallmouth bass caught were kept. (Note: The estimated average size smallmouth caught by anglers weighed 1.47 pounds at an approximate length of 14 inches).

Heidecke Lake is open to fishing from April 1st until 10 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. The bank fishing area access is located at the eastern side of the lake and is handicapped accessible, featuring a barrier-free fishing pier. A concessionaire located at the boat ramp offers bait and tackle as well as boat and motor rentals. Heidecke Lake is a partially perched lake and can become very hazardous in windy conditions. There are no boat motor horsepower restrictions but boats must have a working gas-powered motor. Larger boats and watercraft with high windshields may have difficulty passing under the railroad trestle to access the north side of the lake. Black bass harvest is regulated by a 15-inch minimum length limit and a three (3) fish per day creel (singly or aggregate).

MAZONIA STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AREA - Located in Grundy and Kankakee Counties, this reclaimed strip-mine area contains water bodies ranging in size from 0.1 to 150 acres. Most all of the larger ponds and lakes have similar fish species composition and support naturally recruiting largemouth bass populations. Smallmouth bass, if present, are incidental. To protect these populations, this entire area is governed by a 15 inch minimum length limit and a three (3) fish daily creel limit. Among the lakes which were surveyed in 2008, Mazonia Lake #3, or Big Dog Lake, continues to exhibit a very strong largemouth population with bass collected at an overall rate of 1.6/minute of electrofishing

effort. The average size bass collected during this survey did not vary from the previous survey, measuring 11.7". Legal size bass comprised 9.5% of the collection with nearly 3% exceeding 18". Favorable rates of reproduction and recruitment were suggested by length frequency distribution, although somewhat depressed body condition for fish from 10 to 15 inches suggests some stock-piling could be occurring. Analysis of scale samples verified the presence of multiple, consecutive year classes.

Slightly less accessible is Lake #10 (Clear Lake) which was surveyed in 2008 as well. The southern-most lake in the Main Unit, Lake #10 does not have an improved boat ramp but is a popular destination for float tubes or boaters who can easily portage their watercraft. Most anglers are drawn to this lake for its bluegill fishery but also for largemouth bass action. During the 2008 survey, largemouth were captured by electrofishing at the rate of 1.9/minute for all sizes which greatly exceeded the long-term average (0.7/minute). The average size bass collected from Lake #10 remained unchanged from the 2006 survey and measured 9.8". The density of legal size bass collected in the 2008 was slightly higher than what has been observed in recent surveys with 3.5% of the collection falling within this category.

Fish population surveys were also completed on three water areas at the South Unit - Monster, Ponderosa and Eagle Lakes. Both Ponderosa and Eagle lakes are typified by extremely clear water which greatly reduces sampling efficiency. Monster Lake is more turbid and is also more fertile which equates to greater sampling success. Sampling results from Ponderosa Lake compared favorably with the previous survey; catch rates remained fairly consistent at 0.7 bass/minute. The average length for bass collected in the fall surveys has also remained stable and in 2008 largemouth bass which were collected exhibited an average length of 11.8" with more than 14% of the sample of legal size. Results from the Eagle Lake survey were somewhat dubious due to the small sample size. Bass collected in that survey averaged 10.1" with few fish collected exceeding legal size. Sampling efficiency on Monster Lake was greatly improved and is reflected in the collection numbers. Largemouth bass were captured at the rate of 2.5/minute of effort and averaged 6.8". The average size bass collected in the fall of 2008 declined by nearly one inch when compared to the long-term average and was nearly three inches below the average size bass collected in 2006. However, the 2008 data set was heavily influenced by young-of-the-year and age one bass which were very prevalent. This is further illustrated by the values for several population structural indices. Both proportional stock density or PSD (the percentage of "stock" size fish - length at which maturity is achieved - that are of "quality" size - the size which most anglers prefer to catch), and relative stock density or RSD (the percentage of legal size bass in relation to "stock" size) remained consistent with 2006 values. The young to adult ratio or YAR (an index which evaluates the reproductive success of a given population, i.e. bass which are 6 inches or less in contrast to those 12 inches and larger) increased to its highest point since 2004.

Shoreline access is made difficult by the growth of tall reed grass which encircles most of the Mazonia lakes and ponds. As a result, float tubes or "belly boats" have become a very popular way to fish these areas. Typical of strip mine lakes, water clarity is usually very

good and successful anglers take this into consideration in regards to both tackle and tactics. Boat access is available at several of the larger lakes, with propulsion limited to electric trolling motors at the Mazonia Main Unit. The Mazonia South Unit contains several large lakes ranging from 50 to 150 acres and as such gas-powered outboards (no horsepower limit) will be permitted. These lakes are governed by a strict no-wake regulation for boaters. Primitive but serviceable gravel boat ramps are presently available at Monster, Ponderosa and Eagle Lakes only. Best bets for bass fishing success include: in the Main Mazonia Unit Lakes 3, 7, 8 and 9 and Monster and Wilderness Lakes in the South Mazonia Unit. The Doc's Club and Wilderness areas presently offer bank fishing and carry-in boat fishing. With the exception of Monster Lake which offers year 'round fishing opportunity, Mazonia is closed to fishing during upland game and waterfowl season. Following the completion of the hunting seasons, Mazonia reopens for ice fishing dependent upon ice conditions.

BRAIDWOOD LAKE - A 2,308 acre partially perched cooling reservoir, Braidwood Lake is located in Will County near the town of Braidwood. Braidwood Lake has two boat launching facilities, located at the north and south ends of the lake as well as extensive bank fishing areas. Boats must have a gasoline powered motor and there are no horsepower limitations.

A cooling facility for Exelon's Braidwood Nuclear Generating Station, lake temperatures can soar into the high 90's and approach 100 degrees (Fahrenheit) during the summer months. As a result of several consecutive seasons of extended periods of high water temperatures, the aquatic plant community has shifted from one which hosted a variety of both emergent and submersed rooted plants, to one which is almost completely dominated by phytoplankton. These same conditions appear to have had an adverse effect upon the largemouth bass population as well. In recent years, bass sampled in fall surveys tended to be of larger average size but the number of fish collected began to decline. In 2005 largemouth bass electrofishing catch rates fell to 0.17/minute which was an all-time low. To augment the shortfall in natural production of largemouth bass, a supplemental stocking program was initiated in 2006. Since the inception of this stocking program a total of more than 247,000 largemouth bass fingerlings have been released. Size at stocking has ranged from 2.3 to 5.6" but has averaged close to 4". A total of more than 112,700 bass fingerlings were released in 2008, the most in one year to date. Results of the 2007 survey were somewhat disappointing as although the total number of largemouth collected increased, many of these were cohorts from that year's stocking. The actual number of bass greater than 8 inches in length actually declined from 2005 to 2007 which would suggest poor recruitment of fish stocked in 2005. Smallmouth bass have been incidental in most all IDNR sampling efforts. A formal creel survey was conducted during the 2007 season, the results of which were not available at the time this report was compiled. To further protect the population and increase density, the black bass harvest regulation was amended in April, 2007. Anglers are now restricted to a daily limit of one (1) black bass 18 inches or larger. In a continuing example of cooperation between corporate partners, constituents and the IDNR, the fish habitat enhancement project which was initiated in 2007 broadened in 2008. A combination of both man-made fish habitat units and live

emergent plants were placed at various areas around the lake. This project was funded by Exelon's Braidwood Generating Station and saw in excess of 75 habitat units and nearly 2,000 water willow plugs set in place throughout the lake. Members from local bass angling organizations, as well as Exelon corporate and Braidwood Station staff, assisted IDNR personnel in the deployment of the habitat units and planting the plugs. Hopefully, more of these types of projects will come to fruition which will create additional key habitat elements for largemouth bass.

Braidwood Lake is open daily from 6:00 a.m. until sunset, March 1st until 10 days prior to the opening of waterfowl season in the Central Zone. Like many other cooling lakes, fog can cause problems during the first and latter portions of the fishing seasons. Anglers should also be wary of windy conditions which can make the lake extremely dangerous.

LAKE MILLIKEN - Located near Wilmington within the Des Plaines Conservation Area in Will County, this 26 acre lake is often over-looked, yet supports a very strong largemouth bass population. Largemouth bass provide the majority of the action with smallmouth bass considered incidental. Bass harvest on Lake Milliken is restricted to fish a minimum of 15 inches in length (statewide creel) and float tubes (belly boats) and boat fishing are not allowed. However, shore fishermen will find ample targets in a variety of weed beds, stumps, lay-downs, brush piles and other features which can hold fish. Data from the 2008 fall IDNR survey indicated a very stable population, producing good numbers of legal-size bass as well as a few fish of trophy caliber. Catch rates for the 2008 survey greatly exceeded the previous survey and were right at the long-term average of 1.35 bass/minute of electrofishing effort. The average length for bass collected in the 2008 survey was more than 11.4" with nearly 11% of the collection legal size or better and 2% exceeding 18". For those bassers who lack the "big rig", bank fishing for trophy bass at Lake Milliken can be very rewarding. Lake Milliken is open to fishing year 'round from 6:00 a.m. until sunset.

MONEE RESERVOIR - A public co-op lake owned and operated by the Forest Preserve District of Will County, Monee Reservoir is a 44 acre water area located near the town of Monee and just off I-55. A minimum length limit of 15 inches coupled with a restrictive daily creel of just one fish has resulted in a substantial bass population which provides fast action for sub-legal fish with some "big fish" potential. No smallmouth bass are present in Monee Reservoir. Electrofishing catch rates for largemouth bass 6 inches and larger showed little change from 2005 to 2007 (falling around 0.8/minute). The average length for bass collected in 2007 (8.8 inches) fell slightly below the long-term average. Higher overall electrofishing catch rates experienced in the 2005 survey were influenced by the substantial number of young-of-the-year and one year old bass. The 2006 year class which showed strong representation in the 2005 survey did not appear to recruit at a high rate as these fish were not as prevalent in the 2007 survey. Legal size and larger bass were fairly common in the 2007 survey, accounting for nearly 38% of the bass which were at least 8 inches in length. Several trophy-caliber bass were collected as well. Monee Reservoir offers diverse habitats, both natural and man-made. Boat rental is available at the site and boat fishing is restricted to those boats only. Serious bass fishermen are advised to utilize this service. The majority of the shoreline is closed to bank fishing and

therefore much of the fishery receives modest angling pressure. Early-spring herbicide treatments have resulted in a shift in the aquatic vegetation component of the lake. Where once dominated by Eurasian milfoil, the reservoir is presently supporting a more diverse collection of native plants. Angling for bass just off the edges of these weed beds reportedly results in good bass action throughout the year, including the “dog days” of summer. Monee Reservoir is open year ‘round but is closed to ice fishing.

STATUS OF BASS FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 3

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

HOMER LAKE - The largemouth bass population on this lake has been good for the past 5 years. During the 2005 survey, 42 bass per hour of electrofishing were collected. Based on bass collected in 2005 that were larger than 8 inches, 48% were larger than 12 inches and 19% were larger than 15 inches. The bass regulation at Homer Lake is a 14-inch minimum length limit with a 6 fish daily creel limit.

LAKE OF THE WOODS - Lake of the Woods is a 25.5 acre lake in Mahomet and is part of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District. During the 2007 fall survey, 90 bass per hour of electrofishing were collected. Approximately 39% of the bass were longer than 12 inches, but only 3% were longer than 15 inches. Bass density is starting to increase from strong year classes in 2003 and 2005. The bass regulation on Lake of the Woods is a 15-inch minimum length limit and a 1 per day harvest restriction. Lake of the Woods has an electric motor only restriction.

SHADOW LAKE (LAKES AT RIVERBEND) - This lake is an old gravel pit that is connected to the Sangamon River by a small drainage outlet. This allows the movement of fish from the lake to the river and vice versa. On rare flood events, the river can flood into this lake. With the influence of the river on the fish community, the bass population can vary. In 2002, a catch rate of 88 bass per hour of electrofishing was obtained. Of bass 8 inches and larger, 60% were longer than 12 inches and 13% longer than 15 inches. One bass was collected that weighed over 5 pounds. In 2008 only 24 bass per hour was obtained. The bass regulation is a 15-inch minimum length limit with a 1 per day harvest restriction.

SUNSET LAKE (LAKES AT RIVERBEND) - This lake will provide anglers a chance to fish clear water for largemouth bass. This lake is a gravel pit with deep water, but does have some shallow water with vegetation. In 2008, a catch rate of 138 bass per hour of electrofishing was obtained. All of the bass collected were less than 15 inches. Even with the majority of the population being small, there are large bass in this lake. Two bass over five pounds were collected during the 2004 survey. The largemouth bass regulation is a 15-inch minimum length limit with a 1 per day harvest restriction. Sunset Lake has an electric motor only restriction.

CLINTON LAKE - The fall 2008 sample was poor due to heavy rains and flood conditions during the survey. The fall 2007 survey resulted in a catch rate of 51.8 bass per hour of electrofishing. This is the second highest catch ever obtained on Clinton Lake. There are good numbers of larger bass in the lake, with 65% being over 12 inches in length, 23% over 15 inches, and 1% larger than 20 inches. There was a good spawn in 2006 and produced the second highest catch rate for bass under 6 inches since 1992. However, the spawn in 2007 was the weakest we have seen since 1993. The best spawn was in 2002 and is the year class that is responsible for the majority of the bass larger than 15 inches.

In order to improve the smallmouth bass fishery, the State Hatchery System started stocking smallmouth bass in Clinton Lake in 2001. The highest catch rate for smallmouth bass was obtained in the 2006 survey. The majority of the smallmouth bass were less than 6 inches, but this relates to a strong year class and will provide excellent smallmouth fishing in a few years. The catch rate declined in 2007, but there was an increase in the percentage of smallmouth larger than 15 inches.

The bass regulation on Clinton Lake is a 16" minimum length limit with a 3 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 (new buoy line across lake), the spillway and dam areas east of the spillway, and the bank or 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 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.

WELDON SPRINGS - This lake provides an excellent opportunity to catch a big largemouth bass. The catch rate for the 2007 fall survey was 96 bass per hour; even with high catch rates, growth rates are still good. Of the bass 8 inches and longer that were collected, 81% were longer than 12 inches, 40% longer than 15 inches, and 2% were longer than 20 inches. The 2008 survey resulted in a catch rate of 91 bass per hour. Weldon Springs has one boat ramp and the lake is limited to electric motors. The largemouth bass regulation is a 15-inch minimum length limit and a one per day harvest restriction.

LAKE BLOOMINGTON - The fall survey in 2007 depicted an improving bass population. Catch rates were higher than the 12 year average and the catch rate for bass larger than 15 inches was the highest rate in over 12 years. However, the 2007 and 2008 year classes were very weak. The catch for bass in 2008 declined from 211 per hour in 2007 to 68 per hour in 2008. This is the lowest catch rate for bass in 13 years. The bass regulation on Lake Bloomington is a 15" 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.

DAWSON LAKE - The largemouth bass population on this lake provides anglers with a great opportunity to catch a quality largemouth bass. Based on bass collected during the night survey in 2007, the size structure of the bass population looks good. Approximately 60% of the bass were over 12 inches and 14% were over 15 inches. The catch rate for bass larger than 15 inches was higher than the six year average. The strong 2006 year class increased catch rates in the 8 to 12-inch size range from 18 bass per hour in 2006 to 56 per hour in 2007. The results of the 2008 survey were very similar to the 2007 survey. The catch rate in 2007 was 94.3 bass per hour and 103.3 in 2008. The bass regulation on Dawson Lake is a 15-inch minimum length limit with a 6 fish daily creel limit. Dawson Lake has a no wake restriction on motors over 10 horsepower.

EVERGREEN LAKE - The catch rate in 2008 was 95 bass per hour and was the third highest catch rate in 15 years. Recruitment has been a problem on Evergreen Lake for many years. A vegetation project was initiated to produce cover for small game fish in Evergreen Lake, with the goal of increasing natural recruitment. Starting in 2005, vegetation was planted in Evergreen Lake to increase habitat available to small bass. In the fall of 2007 bass spawning structures were placed in the lake to help bass find better nesting sites. The 2008 year class was very strong and should improve the quality of the bass fishery. The catch rate for bass less than 6 inches was the highest catch rate in 15 years. The bass regulation on Evergreen Lake is a 15-inch 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.

WHITE OAKS PARK LAKE - Even though this lake is located in the City of Bloomington, it still provides an angler a good chance of catching a largemouth bass. In 2003 and 2007, a catch rate of 80 bass per hour of electrofishing was obtained. This catch rate exceeded the objective of 65 per hour. The majority of the bass in the lake are less than 15 inches, but the high density will give anglers an easier time at catching a bass. The lake has no boat ramp, but can easily be fished from shore. The bass regulation is a 15-inch minimum length limit with a 1 per day harvest restriction.

MILLER PARK LAKE - This is another lake located in the City of Bloomington and offers a good bass fishery. A catch rate of 97.8 bass per hour was obtained in 2007. Of the bass collected over 8 inches, 54% were longer than 12 inches and 22% were longer than 15

inches. Bass are plump at all sizes, with the largest bass tipping the scale at 4.9 pounds. The lake has no boat ramp, but can be easily fished from shore. The bass regulation at Miller Park Lake is the statewide bass regulation.

TIPTON LAKE - Tipton Lake is a relatively new park lake in Bloomington that provides an angler with a good bass fishery. The catch rate in 2007 was 164 bass per hour. Approximately 46% of the sample was bass less than 6 inches. The bass are producing strong year classes and as this pond gets older it should produce some nice fish. Of the bass collected over 8 inches, 65% were longer than 12 inches and 35% were longer than 15 inches. The lake has no boat ramp and shore access is limited to fishing piers. The bass regulation is the statewide bass regulation.

LAKE MINGO - The catch rate for largemouth bass in Lake Mingo declined during the 1990s but has started to increase in the past few years. Natural recruitment of largemouth bass has been poor for many years, but the State Hatchery System stocks largemouth bass to supplement natural recruitment. Natural recruitment needs to improve to help maintain a good bass fishery. In 2006 catch rates for bass less than 6 inches were the highest rate since 2000. Since the Lake Mingo survey is completed in May, these fish were from the 2005 year class. There has been an increase in catch rate for small bass since 2000. The overall catch rate for bass was 56 per hour and failed to meet the objective of 60 per hour. Of the bass collected over 8 inches, 49% were longer than 12 inches and 15 % were longer than 15 inches. The bass regulation on Lake Mingo is a 15-inch minimum length limit with a 6 per day harvest restriction. Lake Mingo has one boat ramp and charges a fee to launch a boat.

LAKE VERMILION - The largemouth bass population continues to be good and should continue to get better, especially with the cooperative stocking program between the Vermilion County Conservation District, Consumer Illinois Water Company and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The total number of bass collected per hour was 41 in 2001 and 54 in 2003. In 2007 the catch rate increased to 76 bass per hour. Approximately 23% of the bass collected were stocked fish. Each year the lake is stocked with 2,400 8-inch bass that are marked. The size structure of the bass population also looks good with 45% being over 12 inches in length and 18% over 15 inches (based on bass collected that were 8 inches and larger). Lake Vermilion has a good number of large bass in the population and with the help of the stocking program bass fishing should be good. The bass regulation on Lake Vermilion is a 15" minimum length limit with a 6 fish daily creel limit. Lake Vermilion has one boat ramp and charges a fee to launch a boat. This lake is part of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Lakes Program. This program will help to improve water quality and fish habitat in Lake Vermilion.

CLEAR LAKE (KICKAPOO STATE PARK) - In 2007, a catch rate of 84 bass per hour of electrofishing was obtained. The density of largemouth bass has increased in this lake over the past ten years. The population is dominated by small bass, but larger bass are present in the lake. Only 8% of the bass collected were larger than 12 inches. Even though this lake is very clear, it does have shallow areas with aquatic vegetation. The

bass regulation is a 14-inch minimum length limit with a 3 per day harvest restriction. This lake does have a boat ramp.

INLAND SEA LAKE (KICKAPOO STATE PARK) - In 2007, a catch rate of 75 bass per hour of electrofishing was obtained. The population is dominated by small bass, but larger bass are present in the lake. Only 7% of the bass collected were larger than 12 inches, but 2% were larger than 20 inches. Even though this lake is very clear, it does have shallow areas with aquatic vegetation. The bass regulation is a 14-inch minimum length limit with a 3 per day harvest restriction. This lake does have a boat ramp.

LONG LAKE (KICKAPOO STATE PARK) - This lake is another deep clear lake that was formed from strip mining. In 2006, a catch rate of 34.8 bass per hour was obtained. Bass density is relatively low but does provide anglers an opportunity to catch a largemouth bass. The bass regulation is a 14-inch minimum length limit and a 3 per day harvest restriction. The lake has two boat ramps.

SPORTSMEN LAKE (KICKAPOO STATE PARK) - This lake has a relatively low density of bass. The bass population is dominated by small bass, but an experienced bass angler may catch a large bass in this lake. In 2008, a catch rate of 45 bass per hour was obtained. Only 4% of those bass captured were larger than 15 inches. The bass regulation is a 14-inch minimum length limit with a 3 per day harvest restriction. This lake does have boat access.

GEORGETOWN RESERVOIR - This lake is an impoundment of the Little Vermilion River and is heavily influenced by the river. The density of bass has increased in the past ten years, but density is still low. This lake resembles a slow moving river and should be treated as such. Anglers wanting to fish a small river for largemouth bass will have an opportunity on this lake. Approximately 24% of the bass collected in 2004 were larger than 15 inches. There are beds of aquatic vegetation that hold fish, but the water is dark to due high loads of suspended sediment. The bass regulation is a 6 per day harvest restriction. There is one boat ramp.

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

MILL CREEK LAKE - 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 and the Clark County Park District (217-889-3901) collects a boating access fee. A 12-15 inch protected length limit is in effect for largemouth bass.

This lake supports an abundant self-sustaining bass fishery due to the abundant aquatic vegetation, which grows in the lake. Historically, an excellent largemouth bass population exists with the average catch ranging from 1 to 2 pounds. A good catch and release fishery exists for bass within and above the protected slot length limit of 12-15 inches.

Angling pressure on this lake, non-organized and tournament from both Illinois and Indiana residents, is very heavy, attesting to this lake's popularity. A significant fish kill, comprised primarily of largemouth bass, occurred in late summer 1999. The fishery has recovered very well and catch rates by fishermen have improved significantly in recent years. The results of the fish population survey of fall 2007 resulted in a catch rate of 77 bass, age 1+ or older, per hour. This is slightly lower than 82 per hour in 2005, but still much improved over the 56 per hour in 2003. Bass were collected from 3 to 20 inches, with the largest weighing 4.2 lbs. This bass population appears to have recover completely, as catch rates of bass in fish population survey significantly exceeded those prior to the fish kill in fall 1997. This fishery ranks with the best in the state. Bass fishing prospects are rated as very good to excellent for catch rates and very good to excellent for size.

LINCOLN TRAIL LAKE - 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. Free public boat launching facilities are available. There is a 10 h.p. motor limit on this lake. A 14-18 inch slot length limit for largemouth bass became effective in April 2002. There is a four (4) fish daily creel limit, of which only one (1) can be over 18 inches.

Largemouth bass in this lake have excellent natural recruitment due to abundant aquatic vegetation, resulting in a self-sustaining bass fishery. A good catch and release fishery exists at the present time. The results of the fish population surveys of both fall 2005 and 2007 resulted in a catch rate of 42 bass, age 1+ or older, per hour, which is slightly below average for this lake. Catch rates vary due to abundance of vegetation, water clarity, and less than ideal conductivity levels. A high density of bass occurs in this lake, however the size structure is not as high of quality as desired. The bass collected in the most recent survey ranged from 3 to 21 inches and the largest fish collected weighed 3.9 lbs. Low harvest rates of bass below the slot length limit contributes to slower growth rates and reduced recruitment through the protected range. **This is a lake that would benefit greatly from increased angler harvest of largemouth bass below the slot limit's protected range.** This would increase growth rates and recruitment through the protected range. Bass fishing prospects are rated as good for catch rates, fair to good for size.

LAKE DECATUR - 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. Several public boat launching facilities are available and the City of Decatur (217-424-2837) collects a boating access fee. A 14-inch minimum length limit is in effect for largemouth bass.

Due a lack of aquatic vegetation, natural recruitment of bass fry is poor in Lake Decatur. Fingerling bass have been stocked in 1990 and 1992-2004 by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and 1999-2003 by the Decatur Angler's Association to try to boost the bass population. The results of the fish population survey of fall 2008 resulted in a catch rate of only 20 bass, age 1+ or older, per hour. High water levels and high turbidity may have played a factor in reduced catch rates. Bass were observed in higher number during a walleye survey in October. The average catch rate from the standard fall survey is much

lower than the catch rate from 2006 survey of 30/hr, but similar to the 2004 survey of 18/hr. Bass collected ranged from 2 to 17 inches, with the largest weighing 3.2 lbs. Catch rates of the 2008, 2006, and 2005 year classes were well represented. The 2008 year class was collected in relatively numbers, exhibited good growth, and should recruit very well into this fishery. The contribution of these three year classes should provide an outstanding boost to this fishery in the next couple of years. Bass fishing prospects are rated as fair for catch rate and size.

LAKE MATTOON - 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 and the City of Mattoon (217-234-3611) collects a boating access fee which covers Lake Paradise as well. A 14-inch minimum length limit is in effect for largemouth bass.

Bass recruitment is not as high as desired due to a lack of suitable aquatic vegetation for nursery habitat in the lake. Catch rates from the standard fish population survey in fall 2008 (48/hr) were better than catch rates in fall 2006 (32/hr), but below the results of the 2004 survey (56/hr). A very good distribution of fish from 6 through 18 inches was collected with the largest fish weighing 5.0 lbs. A fair number of 1-2 pound bass are available with bass up to 7 pounds caught. Bass fishing prospects are rated as fair to good for catch rates and good for size.

CHARLESTON SIDE CHANNEL LAKE - Located approximately three miles southeast of Charleston, in Coles County. The lake covers 330 surface acres with a maximum depth of 10 feet and average depth of 4.7 feet. Free public boat launching facilities are available. The entire lake is designated as a no-wake area. A 14-inch minimum length limit is in effect for largemouth bass.

Fingerling bass have been stocked in 1990 and 1992-2005 and 2008 due to poor natural recruitment of bass fry in the lake, due to the lack of suitable aquatic vegetation for nursery habitat in the lake. Although bass density is low a wide variety of sizes of bass exist in the lake. Overall the collection rate was very poor in the fish population survey in fall 2007, with only 17, age 1+ and older bass collected per hour. The size of bass collected ranged from 3 to 16 inches, with the largest weighing 2.8 lbs. Despite consistent stocking at high densities, bass fishing prospects are rated as poor to fair for catch rates.

PARIS TWIN LAKES - 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 and the City of Paris (217-465-7601) collects a boating access fee. A 14-inch minimum size limit is in effect for largemouth bass.

Catch rates during the 2008 fall survey for age 1+ and older bass were 31 in the east lake and 68 per hour in the west lake. This is much improved for the west lake. Bass collected ranged from 2 to 21 inches with the largest weighing 6.3 lbs. Catch rates from the 2006

survey were 27 in the east lake and 39 per hour in the west lake. Bass fishing prospects are rated as fair to good for catch rates and good for size.

PANA LAKE - Located approximately two miles east of Pana in Christian and Shelby 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 and the City of Pana (217-562-3626) collects a boating access fee. A 14-inch minimum size limit is in effect for largemouth bass.

Although sporadic reproductive success occurs in this lake, a fair to good quality largemouth bass fishery exists. Low catch rates of largemouth bass in biological surveys may be attributed in part to relatively low conductivity levels. Good numbers of bass over the 14-inch minimum length limit are reported caught by anglers in recent creel surveys. In the fish population survey in fall 2008, catch rates for age 1+ and older bass averaged 45 per hour, which is greater than the results of the 2006 survey's catch rates of 21, but similar to the 2004 survey of 43/hr. Bass were collected from 3 to 20 inches with the largest weighing 4.8 lbs. Bass fishing prospects are rated as fair to good for catch rate and size.

LAKE PARADISE - 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. A new public boat launching was built in 2006 which should enhance access to this lake. The City of Mattoon (217-234-3611) collects a boating access fee which covers Lake Mattoon as well. A 10-horse power boat motor limit is in effect. A 14-inch minimum length limit exists and compliance appears good.

Although reproductive success is sporadic in this lake, bass population quality remains at least fair. Densities of bass are not as high as desired, with catch rates in the 2008 fish population survey averaging 23 age 1+ and older, bass per hour. This is much lower than the fall 2004 survey, which averaged 40, age 1+ and older, bass per hour. Bass were collected from 4 to 17 inches with the largest weighing 3.1 lbs. Bass fishing prospects are rated as fair for catch rate and good for size.

This lake has been targeted for an aquatic plant introduction program to help provide critical nursery habitat for largemouth bass fry. Aquatic vegetation was planted in 2007 and 2008, with modest, but positive results. Continued work is warranted to produce significant habitat. American pondweed performed the best, with wild celery also doing well.

WALNUT POINT LAKE - 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. Free public boat launching facilities are available. Only the use of electric motors is allowed on this lake. Largemouth bass in this lake have excellent natural recruitment of bass fry, resulting in a self-sustaining bass fishery. A 12-15 inch slot length limit is in effect for largemouth bass.

Bass collection rates in the fish population surveys of both fall 2005 and fall 2007 were lower than usual, with only 29 and 27 age 1+ and older bass collected per hour of electrofishing, respectively. Catch rates, though lower than usual, likely do not reflect the true density of bass in this lake, which is usually very high. Bass were collected from 2 to 20 inches with the largest weighing 5.1 lbs. Although bass numbers are good, fishing can be difficult. Jig and pig combinations seem to work especially well due to high numbers of crayfish present. Bass fishing prospects are rated as fair to good for both catch rate and size.

LAKE SHELBYVILLE - 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. Numerous public boat launching facilities are available, with a fee assessed on U.S. Army Corp of Engineers' (217-774-3951) developed access area boat ramps, and free access on state park or Corp gravel boat ramps. A 14 inch minimum length limit and statewide creel limit of six fish daily is in effect for largemouth bass.

Recent floods and a few well-timed smaller flood pulses have resulted in excellent natural recruitment of largemouth bass. It appears that strong year classes were recruited in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, and 2008! Recruitment of the 2008 year class of bass was excellent due to a prolonged high summer flood which inundated terrestrial vegetation. The strong year classes produced should sustain this fishery for many years.

This lake has become a very popular tournament destination due to the high quality of the fishery. Fishermen catch rates in 2006, 2007, and 2008 were much improved over 2004 and 2005. Fishermen reported catching good numbers of bass both below and above the size limit through the 2008 season. Tournament results in 2008 were not as impressive as in 2007. High water levels in 2008 resulted in reduced catch rates for most gamefish species in the lake. In 2007, total weights reported at two tournaments held in June were 891 lbs. (377 fish) and 603 lbs. (237 fish) weighed in.

The number of bass collected in the 2008 fall survey (22/hr.) was well below the 2007 survey results (31/hr), but similar to the 2006 (24/hr.) survey. Collection rates were higher at mid lake and down lake sights. Incidental sampling later in the season indicated the potential for high catch rates. The largest bass collected during the 2008 fall survey was 19 inches and weighed 4.2 lbs, with the largest reported by tournaments being 6+lbs". The largemouth bass fishing prospects for 2008 remain good to excellent for numbers and good to excellent for size and should improve significantly in future years.

A founding population of smallmouth bass was stocked in Lake Shelbyville in falls 2006, 2007, and 2008. Approximately 200 fingerling smallmouth, averaging 6.5", were stocked in 2006, 279 averaging 7.1" were stocked in 2007, and 366 averaging 6.4" were stocked in 2008. All were stocked into the lower part of the lake. Good recruitment of largemouth bass will allow for continued efforts to establish smallmouth bass in Lake Shelbyville. 1,435 smallmouth bass averaging 4.4" were stocked into the Kaskaskia River just above Lake Shelbyville in 2008 as well.

STATUS OF BASS FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 4

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

LAKE JACKSONVILLE - This 476 acre lake, located south of Jacksonville, Illinois was rehabilitated and restocked in 1986. Since the rehabilitation, an above average largemouth bass population has developed and serious bass fishermen have taken note. This lake has consistently produced quality largemouth bass and has attracted the attention of many bass clubs resulting in a weekly schedule of tournaments during the fishing season. Since so many anglers wish to fish Lake Jacksonville, the City has adopted a policy where it controls the number of tournaments conducted each year. Applications are accepted beginning January 2 of each year on a first come-first serve basis. If your group or club wishes to schedule a tournament the number to call is 217/479-4641. During the 2008 fall, fish population survey, largemouth bass collection increased from 60 bass per electrofishing hour in 2007 to 86.3 largemouth bass per hour in 2008. The lake experienced three, previous, consecutive years of summer drought conditions where fluctuating water levels appear to have affected spawning. In 2008, 0+ and 1+ year classes comprised 7% and 3.5% respectively. During four hours of daytime, A.C. electrofishing, ten (10) year classes were represented in the collection. Year class delineation is based upon average largemouth bass growth in Illinois. Largemouth bass in the 12" - 16" size range comprised approximately 45% of the collection. In 2008, largemouth bass sixteen (16) inches and larger comprised 26.3% of all bass collected. Largemouth bass eighteen (18) inches and larger comprised 49% of fish greater than 16 inches.

Natural spawning in the early 1990's resulted in poor reproduction and subsequent recruitment. In an attempt to improve the overall bass population, the City of Jacksonville built a 2.8 acre nursery pond that would normally produce 4,000 to 7,000 largemouth bass fingerlings each year. In 2008, the City of Jacksonville, following IDNR recommendations, drained and removed a portion of the sediment that had entered the rearing pond. More work may need to be completed in the nearby future; however, in 2008 the rearing pond was allowed to fill to normal pool and stocked with 15,000, 2" largemouth bass fingerlings. Fathead minnows were stocked for forage as usual. However; when draining the rearing pond in the fall, extensive contamination by green sunfish severely impacted production. A total of 438, 4.1" largemouth bass fingerlings were collected. In 2007, only 695 largemouth bass fingerlings were produced averaging 7.45 inches. The rearing pond produced fish are supplemented with an additional fingerling stocking with bass produced from the Illinois Hatchery System.

LAKE PITTSFIELD - Located in Pike County in Western Illinois, Lake Pittsfield, a 240 acre, city owned lake, is a major recreational area, flood control reservoir and primary water source for the City of Pittsfield. Lake Pittsfield in 2008 received slightly above average precipitation following three consecutive years of summer drought. This lake

maintains a stable and well proportioned largemouth bass population. During the 2008 fall survey, a total of 356 largemouth bass were collected during 2 hours of daytime electrofishing or 178 bass per hour. This is a noticeable increase from 138.5 bass per hour in 2007 and a slight increase from 177.5/hour in 2006. Reproduction was very successful as exhibited by 23% of the collection being comprised of young-of-year. One pound individuals dominated the bass collection in 2008 comprising nearly 56% of the bass collected. In 2008, ten (10) consecutive year classes were represented with five (5) individuals 8+ or older all measuring 20 inches or larger.

A 14" minimum length limit is in effect with most anglers practicing "catch and release". Overall, the largemouth bass population is rated good; however, slow growing. Dense beds of coontail on the eastern shoreline provide "refuge" areas for young-of-year, but also create foraging obstacles for larger fishes. Sporadic, quality, gizzard shad spawns also affect growth. Anglers utilizing weedless rigs do best. There is a 25 hp "no wake" regulation in effect. All propellers **must** be removed from motors larger than 25 hp.

BUCKHORN POND #1 - This small and deep lake (3.2 acres) located in the Buckhorn Unit of Siloam Springs State Park is for bank anglers only. When the IDNR initially purchased the Buckhorn property, the largemouth bass population was still developing in this pond. At that time, an 18 inch and one fish per day regulation was imposed to protect this fishery. During the 2004 survey, data indicated 69 individuals were collected with sixty-eight (68%) of the collection ranging in length from 9 - 12 inches. Drought conditions from 2005 thru 2007 prohibited electrofishing accessibility. During the 2008 survey, not one bass 12 inches or greater was collected. Ninety-six percent (96%) of the largemouth bass ranged in length from 8.3 inches to 11.8 inches. Over-harvest and illegal harvest are believed to have caused the decline in this sport fishery. There is an 18 inch length with a one fish daily creel.

WEINBERG-KING LAKE - This small 3.8 acre lake located in Schuyler County is heavily fished by visitors to Weinberg-King State Park. The lake is a major attraction to Equestrian groups that overnight and utilize the campgrounds and the miles and miles of equestrian trails as well as school groups from the surrounding communities. The three consecutive years of summer drought conditions have severely impacted the largemouth bass population. Coincidentally, three year classes were absent from the collection; all years that experienced drought. Looking on the brighter side though, young-of-year largemouth bass comprised 73% of the 2008 collection and will hopefully recruit into the population. The additional largemouth bass that were collected (6) were all over 12 inches in total length indicating a fair amount of angler harvest to be occurring.

A large "T"- shaped fishing pier, extending over the water, is available for anglers and lies in close proximity to the parking facility and pavilion. Only bank fishing is allowed with 2 pole and line fishing only.

ARROWHEAD LAKE (CAMP POINT LAKE) - In 2005, Arrowhead Lake experienced two fish kills. In an attempt to "jump-start" the largemouth bass population, largemouth bass

from the Illinois Hatchery were utilized. In 2008, a survey was conducted to monitor the progress of the stocking. Fifty percent (50%) of the collection ranged between 12.7 inches and 13.52 inches. In 2009 these fish should be mature enough to spawn and begin to re-establish the largemouth bass population. _____

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

LAKE SANGCHRIS - This 2,235 acre lake continues to be one of the better bass lakes in the state. The three year period 2005-2007 produced record numbers of bass per hour of electrofishing averaging 158. Half of that number would be considered very good for a lake of that size. The fall 2008 survey, conducted under poor weather conditions and lower than usual water temperatures, produced only 63 bass per hour. Fish populations don't change that rapidly so it is assumed that the 63 number is an aberration. There are a lot more bass in the lake than that. The next data we look at is the population structure and that hasn't changed much in several years. Only 15% of the bass collected were over 15" and 4.5 % were over 18". These are not figures typical of Lake Sangchris' history. Another bad sign, as mentioned last year, is the below average body conditions of the bass in Sangchris. Fish range from 10-20 percent below their expected weight-to-length ratios. This is probably due to an overpopulation of bass with respect to their forage base and the fact that the water gets very hot for extended periods in the summer months. The fish literally burn more calories than they can consume. In an attempt to correct the poor body conditions and to change the population structure to produce more, larger fish, the regulation was changed April 1, 2008. Ostensibly this will remove many of the smaller bass and protect those left to a larger size.

LAKE SPRINGFIELD - Bass fishing should remain very good-to-excellent on this 3,866 acre lake. Since 1992 fish population surveys have consistently produced 100+ bass per hour of electrofishing with the upper third of the lake (west of the I-55 Bridge) producing over 150 bass per hour. In the fall 2006 electrofishing survey the total catch was a record 137 bass per hour. The fall 2007 survey was nearly identical with 134 bass collected per hour. There are no lakes of that size in the state that can boast such high numbers of bass. The fall 2008 survey produced fewer fish than the previous two years but still above 100 fish per hour. The population structure remains much the same, although numbers of fish over 15" were down slightly. Only 11% of the bass collected were over 15" and 2% of those were over 18". Unlike Lake Sangchris, the body conditions of these fish were excellent. Most bass' weights average 10-20% over the average for fish of their lengths. While the numbers of fish over 15" and 18" are unexplainably low, with the total bass density as high as it is high and their body conditions so good, the population would be described as very good. One consideration, the lake gets very high recreational boat, skiing and wave runner traffic in the summer. The best time to fish this lake is in the spring and fall. The winter too can produce excellent fishing opportunities in the warm-water area of the lake.

LAKE TAYLORVILLE - Lake Taylorville is a 1286 acre lake in Christian county that has

made a tremendous turn-around in the bass population over the past fifteen years. From 1982-1992 average catches were approximately 25 bass per hour of electrofishing and all fish were over 12". This indicates poor spawns and recruitment. That number steadily increased from 1992 to an all-time high of 100 bass per hour of electrofishing in 2001. The fall 2007 survey produced a record 132 bass per hour of electrofishing. As with Lake Sangchris, the fall 2008 survey was conducted under poor weather conditions. Very cold water temperatures and blustery winds made sampling difficult. The numbers of bass collected reflected that. Only 40 bass were collected per hour, far below the past several years' average. The population structure remained pretty much the same however. Twenty-three percent of the bass were over 15" and 5% of those were over 18". As always the bass were in excellent body condition, due to the strong gizzard shad population. As some of you may know, in 1992 the city and the Department of Natural Resources began a sport fisheries recovery program attempting to increase the numbers of bass in the lake. The city built several nursery ponds on arms of the lake. Initially two were used to raise largemouth bass and one was used to raise young crappie or sauger depending upon what is needed in the lake. Since the bass and crappie are doing so well, in 2008 all three ponds were used to raise sauger. These ponds are drained every fall releasing the young fish into the lake. To date the lake has been stocked with nearly 51,000 largemouth bass fingerlings, 63,000 crappie, and over 8,000 sauger from those ponds. Because of the strong shad population bass, crappie and sauger grow very well once they are released. **One note:** The lake is very shallow, averaging less than six feet deep. Caution should be taken when boating on the lake to avoid submerged flats and islands. The upper half of the lake averages only three feet deep and little bass habitat exists except for the lotus pads.

JIM EDGAR/PANTHER CREEK FISH AND WILDLIFE AREA LAKES -

PRAIRIE LAKE - At 210 acres, Prairie Lake is the largest of the three lakes recently built on the 15,575 acre site in Cass County. It was initially stocked in the fall of 1999 with bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish and muskies. The following Summer 21,000 largemouth bass fingerlings were introduced. As in any new lake, growth rates were excellent. In total the number of bass collected per hour has remained constant for years at around 100 per hour (111 in 2006 and 95 in 2007). That number dropped to 75 in 2008 but it is hard to say, with just that one data point, if there is a decline in the bass numbers. The 2009 survey will be very important in that regard. The population is skewed to the high side for fish over 15", where those fish made up 83% of the population. That has to do more with sampling bias than the real number of bass. Small bass, including young-of-the-year are very difficult to collect in the crystal clear lake, so the percent of larger fish is exaggerated. Nine percent of the bass collected were over 18". All of the bass were in good body condition. The bluegill/ redear sunfish are providing a good forage base for the bass. There is a rearing pond on-site that has been used for largemouth bass production since the lake was constructed. That pond will be used for smallmouth bass production beginning in 2008. The smallies will be stocked from the pond into the lake biennially, since raising them for only year produces a 5" fish. Raising them the second year produces an 8"-10" fish that is not as likely to become largemouth food. It will be

interesting to see if they recruit into the fishery. The smallmouth will not reproduce naturally in the lake but it is hoped those stocked from the pond will do well enough to contribute to the lake's fishery.

This lake has an unlimited hp limit for boats but those boats over 10 hp must run at No Wake speed. There is a two-lane concrete ramp at Prairie Lake. In addition, there are camping facilities and rental cabins for those who want an extended stay.

GRIDLEY AND DRAKE LAKES - Both of the smaller lakes at Jim Edgar Panther Creek are being managed for quality panfish (bluegill and redear sunfish) so the bass are purposely being crowded to keep the sunfish from overpopulating. In other words, there are so many bass in these lakes that they are not growing well. In Gridley, the bass are nearly stunted with most averaging 13". The same is happening at Drake Lake but the bass are not quite in as bad of shape. So the bass catching is very good-to-excellent on those lakes but there are very few quality bass.

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

MT. OLIVE NEW CITY LAKE - This impoundment endured a massive oxygen depletion fish kill several years ago. Since then IDNR - Fisheries has been supplementally stocking 4" largemouth bass in an attempt to strengthen the existing predator base. It looks as though this program will be successful at this point. In May of 2008, IDNR - Fisheries conducted a largemouth bass supplemental stocking evaluation. In 60 minutes of daytime electrofishing, 97 fish were seen. These fish measured from 6" to 21" in total length, and topped the scale at 5.1 lbs. 23% were less than 8", 58% were 8" to 14", and 14% exceeded 16" in size. It looks as though this bass fishery will be back in business soon. This impoundment is rated good for the 2008 reporting period.

BEAVER DAM LAKE - The spring 2008 sample showed decreased numbers of largemouth bass in this shallow, fertile impoundment. 93 bass (93 fish/hr.) were boated during one hour of daytime electrofishing effort. These fish measured 7.5" to 16.5" and weighed up to 2.4 lbs. Reproduction and recruitment are solid as 37 bass (40%) were found in the 8" to 12" area. Larger fish (>16") are still lacking in this population. 45 bass (48%) were 14" or longer, and 8 (9%) exceeded 16" in total length. Trophy fish reside in this water body (greater than 5 lbs.), as they have been collected up to 8 lbs. in the past. On the other hand, their overall abundance is suspect. This is not a dire concern due to the fact high bass densities are desired to better manage for trophy panfish. This population is rated average for this report period.

COFFEEN LAKE - The fall 2008 survey was very good for this fish group. 946 bass were collected in 6.0 hours of electrofishing (158 fish/hr.) This species appears to have exploded since the fall of 2004, even though 2007 was an even better sample. The bass measured 2.5" to 22" and topped the scale at 5.5 lbs. Reproduction is good as 281 fish (30%) were seen less than 8" in length. 320 (34%) were 12" to 15", and 15 (1.6%) topped

18". This water body has one heck of a bass population, in terms of overall abundance. Huge numbers of intermediate sized bass swim in this impoundment. My only concern is larger bass above 16" are declining. This is most likely due to the extreme thermal regime, or possibly hooking stress from trophy bass anglers. I rate this fishery as good for this report period.

BUNKER HILL CITY LAKE - The May 2008 survey on this lake for largemouth bass was pleasing. 79 bass were captured measuring from 3" up to 20", and topped the scale at 4.1 lbs. Younger year classes are present as 25 (32%) were 8" or less in total length. Intermediate sized individuals are doing fine, as well. 42 fish (53%) resided in the 10" to 14" zone. Larger bass (> 14") were harder to come by during this sample. Only 5 (6%) exceeded 14" in size for this spring survey. I was pleased with the overall bass abundance, but was hoping to collect more larger specimens in 2008. I rate this lake as average for this report period.

MT. OLIVE OLD CITY LAKE - Seventy-nine (79) largemouth bass were seen on May 21, 2008 while expending one hour of daytime electrofishing effort. This value is solid since our benchmark for this species is 60 Largemouth Bass per hour of this gears effort. Natural reproduction is excellent in this impoundment as 39 (49%) of bass 4" or less were collected during this field work. 16 individuals (20%) resided in the 10" to 14" range, and 12 (15%) logged in at 16" or more in total length. As well, when discussing poundage, 7 (9%) weighed 3 lbs. or more. I rate this fishing hole as average for this time frame.

WHITE HALL CITY LAKE - Ninety-three (93) largemouth bass were captured during October of 2008 via one hour of daytime electro-shocking. Once again, this value exceeds our benchmark of 60 fish per hour of effort. 10 (11%) were 6" or less which exhibits decent natural reproduction for this lake. Intermediate sized bass are dominating this population at this time. 61 (66%) fell in the 7" to 11" length zone. 16 bass (17%) topped 15", while 5 (5%) were 18" or longer in total length. 5 bass (5%) ended up weighing at least 3 lbs. in total weight. This bass fishery will be rated average for 2008.

GREENFIELD CITY LAKE - One-hundred and 59 (159) largemouth bass were collected during our October 16, 2008 electrofishing sample. These individuals were found by electrofishing this water body for one hour of daytime work. This more than doubles our expected catch per unit effort. 80 fish (50%) fell at 6" or below which shows outstanding natural reproductive capability for this impoundment. 31 bass (20%) were in the 10" to 14" area, while 11 (7%) topped 15" in size. 5 (3%) were at least 3 lbs., and 4 (2.5%) exceeded 5 lbs. in total weight. I rate this impoundment as good for this species in 2008.

OTTER LAKE - One-hundred and sixty one (161) largemouth bass were netted during our spring 2008 LMB evaluation. This study consisted of four hours of daytime electrofishing throughout the lake. This amount of fish relative to the effort expended is below average. We are in the midst of a stocking program in order to boost this fishery. Hopefully when this program concludes, bass densities will improve. 24 fish (15%) were 9" or less. This group would show the fish stocked over the past year since our stocking program is

releasing 4" to 8" individuals. 33 (21%) were found in the 12" to 14" zone, while 59 (37%) topped 15", and 14 (9%) were 18" or larger in size. 21 (13%) were 3 lbs. or more, and 2 (1.2%) topped out at 5 lbs. or higher. I will rate this population as average for this time frame.

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

SILVER LAKE - The 2006 fall survey shows a continued increase in bass numbers from the previous surveys. Seventy four bass per hour were collected as compared to 43 bass per hour in the 2004 fall survey. The number of larger bass has remained good with 18% greater than 15 inches collected in the 2006 survey. This lake has been stocked with approximately 13,750 4 inch largemouth bass annually for the past 3 years. These stocking combined with an apparent improvement in reproduction and recruitment of bass has resulted in continued improvement in the bass population and size structure in this lake. The angling prospects for bass would be rated as good and improving on this lake. A permit from the city of Highland is required for boat access to the lake. There is a 25 HP motor limit, a 15 inch length limit and 3 fish daily creel limit on largemouth bass.

HORSESHOE LAKE - This is a large, shallow, flood plain lake that floods from the Mississippi River during high water. This flooding results in a very diverse fish community in the lake. The fish community includes lots of carp, buffalo, drum, gar, and yellow bass that compete for space and food with largemouth bass. However, the lake maintains an impressive population of bass. The electrofishing survey conducted in the fall of 2008 showed good numbers of quality largemouth bass. The survey produced 87 bass per hour, of which 28% were greater than 15 inches in length and 6% were greater than 18 inches. These numbers are up from the previous two surveys in 2004 and 2006. The lake gets a lot of shoreline anglers but not a lot of boat fishing targeting largemouth bass. The lake could be considered a "sleeper" bass lake. Quality bass can be found around woody structure, rip-rapped banks and duck blinds. There is a 50 HP motor limit on this lake. There is a 15 inch length limit and 3 fish daily creel limit .

PEABODY RIVER KING STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AREA (Various Lakes) - This area is a reclaimed strip mine with 504 acres of fishable water. This site has a lot to offer the adventuresome angler. Most of the recent surveys on these lakes have been less than accurate. Very high conductivity, clear, and deep water have prevented reliable survey information. Good numbers of bass are present in most lakes. Some lakes appear to have high numbers with small average size and others have fewer bass but very good average size. In general the number and quality of bass increases with the degree of difficulty of access. Bass over 19 inches in length have been collected from some of the more remote lakes. Anglers willing to hike or take a boat to these remote lakes will be rewarded with good fishing. Use of lighter line and smaller baits would likely increase success in the lakes with very clear water. The larger lakes have a 10 HP motor limit, other lakes are restricted to electric motors only, and others are bank fishing only. A 15 inch length limit and 3 fish daily creel applies to all lakes.

GOVERNOR BOND LAKE (GREENVILLE NEW CITY LAKE) - The largemouth bass population of this lake has improved dramatically over the past few years. The 2008 fall survey produced 54 bass per hour. Of the bass collected in the 2008 survey 24% were over 15 inches and 4% were over 18 inches. Supplemental stockings of largemouth bass by the city of Greenville is likely responsible for this improvement. A permit from the city of Greenville is required for boat access to the lake. There is a 120 HP motor limit, a 15 inch length limit and 3 fish daily creel limit on largemouth bass.

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

CARLYLE LAKE - Bass numbers are up compared to 2007. Most of this increase is due to young bass. The high water levels that Carlyle Lake experienced for most of the year allowed largemouth bass to have a successful spawn. The state also stocked 160,788 bass ranging in size from 2 to 5 inches to help make up for poor reproduction and recruitment that is typical for Carlyle Lake, unless a prolonged high water event occurs. Young of the year bass showed up in good numbers during our annual fisheries survey. We collected 34 bass/hour of all sizes in 2008 compared to 20 bass/hour in 2007. Twenty-six percent of the bass stock was 15 inches or greater in length and 7% was 18 inches or more. Legal bass (14 inch minimum length limit) had an average length of 16 inches. The average weight for 16 inch bass was 2.2 lbs. The two largest bass collected during our survey weighed 5 lbs and 5.6 pounds. Bass weighing 6 and 7 pounds do exist in the population, though a 7 pound fish is very rare.

Overall, largemouth bass were in superb condition. Very healthy robust fish that are heavy for their length. The reason for the great condition of the bass was due to gizzard shad. The shad spawn was perfectly timed. Tens of thousands of 3 - 4 inch shad were available as forage for bass in the fall. This means that winter mortality of bass should be low since they were able to gorge on shad. Spring fishing for bass should be better because of this. Overall, spring bass fishing for 2009 is rated as fair to good. The best fishing during this time will be in the larger coves and protected areas as the bass come in to spawn. The last week of April/first week of May is a good time to catch some keepers. A 14" minimum length limit/6 fish per day creel applies.

BALDWIN LAKE - Growth rates for largemouth bass are exceptional in this cooling lake. Average growth rates for 1+ year old fish are 14.8" and for 2+ year old fish are 17.5". During our 2008 population survey we collected only 33 bass/hour compared to 60/hour in 2007. The goal is at least 60 fish/hour. The reason for the reduction in bass numbers was due to adverse weather conditions (high wind and wave action). Our latest survey showed that the current largemouth bass population contains a high percentage of large fish. Eighty-two percent of the bass stock was 15 inches or greater in length, while 15% of the stock was 18 inches or more in length. The largest bass collected weighed 5 lbs. Bass up to 6+ pounds in weight have been collected in the past.

The smallmouth bass population is expanding slowly. During our latest survey we

collected 15 bass. The average size was 1.2 lbs. The largest smallmouth weighed 2 lbs. A few anglers have caught smallmouth bass in the 4 lbs range.

I would rate largemouth bass fishing as good for large bass. Smallmouth bass fishing will be fair. An 18 inch minimum length limit/3 fish per day creel applies for both species. Most of the good habitat consists of rip-rap. The southern end of the lake is closed annually as a waterfowl refuge from November 1 to February 1.

WASHINGTON COUNTY LAKE - The bass population continues to look good. Catch per unit effort from our latest survey was 112 bass per hour of electrofishing. Thirty-one percent of the stock was 15 inches or greater in length, while six percent was 18" or greater in length. The bass population structure is very well balanced, with several strong year classes ranging from young of the year up to trophy sized fish. A typical survey shows that three and four pound fish are fairly common, with several five pound fish in the mix, and usually a trophy bass as well. The largest bass from our latest survey weighed 6 lbs. Several seven and eight pound fish have been collected during past surveys. The really big fish seem to be in close to shore during a rain event based upon past fall surveys. This lake is very fertile and has abundant woody habitat. The points can hold some decent fish. Often times the larger bass are fairly deep. Gizzard shad is the principal prey item. I would rate the bass population as excellent, although anglers report that the large bass are very difficult to catch. A 14 inch minimum length limit/3 fish per day creel applies.

RANDOLPH COUNTY LAKE - This lake typically has a population of bass characterized by large numbers of smaller fish due to very successful spawns and recruitment. Our latest survey produced 129 bass/hour of electrofishing which is representative for this lake. Thirty-nine percent of the stock was 12 inches or greater in length, while eight percent was 14 inches or greater in length. We usually collect a larger percentage of 14" plus fish, but many larger bass were in deeper water at the time of the survey, and water clarity was very high making it difficult to effectively sample the bass population. The largest bass collected during our survey weighed 3 lbs. We have collected fish in the past weighing 7 + pounds, so the big bass are here, though relatively rare. Water willow and woody cover provide good habitat, and the points can produce some decent fish. I would rate the fishing as good for smaller bass, with a chance to catch a trophy bass in the spring. A 14 inch minimum length limit/3 fish per day creel applies.

STATUS OF BASS FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 5

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

FORBES LAKE - The fall 2008 fish population survey indicates that the population continues to improve as the catch per effort was acceptable at 70.5 fish per hour. Reproduction was poor as indicated by the YAR of 0.2/1. PSD remained within the

preferred range at 45.3% and the RSD-14 at 20.1% was significantly improved. No supplemental stockings were made and the contribution of previously stocked fish was 0.8% of bass collected. The big bass of the survey was 21.4 inches in length at 5.6 pounds.

SAM DALE LAKE - The fall 2008 fish population survey indicated that the bass fishery continues to do fairly well. Densities are good as indicated by the catch per effort of 69 fish per hour, though reproduction was poor, as indicated by the YAR of 0.2/1. Stock indices remained lower than preferred, the PSD at 26.6% and RSD-14 at 11.3%. The big bass of the survey was 19.3 inches in length at 4.8 pounds.

LAKE SARA - The fall 2008 fish population survey indicated continued improvements, densities were good. The catch per effort was 65 per hour and reproduction was improved as the young adult ration was 0.8/1. Both PSD, 52.7%, and RSD-14, 32.3%, increased indicating continuing growth of fish out of the stock size range. The big bass of the survey was 20.9 inches in length at 6.1 pounds.

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

NEWTON LAKE - The hot dry conditions over the past three years have made fall sampling extremely difficult at Newton Lake. Water levels 3 - 3.5 ft. below normal pool and water temperatures up to 20 degrees warmer than average have been largely responsible for significant declines in the number of bass collected. To address this issue the annual population survey in 2008 was moved to the spring. Due largely to improved sampling conditions, CPUE jumped to 120 bass per hour. The size structure of the population also showed significant improvement. The PSD increased by 51%, moving to the upper end of the target range. A large portion of the adult bass population (42%) is currently comprised of bass >15" in length, and the percentage of bass greater than 18" in length increased to its highest level in over 15 years, again due in part to improved sampling conditions. Over 16% of the bass population now exceeds 18" in length. Growth rates for bass in Newton Lake remain above average, and the mean Wr value for bass over 8" in length is 97. If recruitment and growth rates remain good and mortality low, the bass population should remain strong in the coming years. Newton Lake has a 25 h.p. limit, and current regulations include an 18" minimum length limit and three fish daily creel limit for largemouth bass. In addition, the cold arm of the lake is closed to fishing during the waterfowl season and the entire lake is closed to fishing during the regular firearm deer season.

EAST FORK LAKE - East Fork Lake contains one of the better bass populations in southern Illinois if not the entire state. The size structure of the East Fork bass population remains virtually unchanged from last year with 41% of the bass population larger than 15" in length. The PSD of this excellent bass fishery remains high, and the number of fish just below the 15" minimum length limit remains strong as well. These smaller fish (12" - 14") should contribute significantly to the fishery in the coming year. At 81 bass per hr., the

catch per effort was significantly lower than last year, but remains well above the target range. The Wr of bass over 8 inches in length also declined slightly to 93, but growth rates remain above average. This population is very stable and continues to provide excellent fishing opportunities. This lake has consistently produced fish over 7 pounds, and this year should be no exception with just over 9% of the bass population exceeding 18" in length. If growth rates and recruitment remain good as expected, this lake should continue to provide excellent bass fishing for several years to come. Boat permits and tournament permits are required on this city-owned lake, and may be purchased in advanced. For permit information contact the Olney City Clerks office at 618/395-7302.

REND LAKE - Maintaining a steady flow of smaller fish into the population through supplemental stocking has helped to improve and stabilize the size structure of the Rend Lake bass population. Prior to recent supplemental stocking efforts, the population suffered from chronic poor recruitment. To address this concern, over 350,000 bass fingerlings have been stocked in the last seven years including over 58,000 this year alone. These fish have had a significant impact on the density and size structure of the population, and population indices have improved significantly. Data from the most recent population survey show all population indices met or exceeded the target goals, and the condition of all sizes of fish is excellent (mean Wr 98). Bass numbers remain strong, and growth rates continue to be good. Persistent stocking and improved sampling conditions resulted in a significant increase in this year's catch per effort. The total number of bass collected in the recent population survey was at a five year high with a catch rate of 100 bass per hour of electrofishing. Overall, the size structure of the population remains very similar to last year. The total number of larger bass (≥ 15 ") in the population is stable, however, the percentage of the total population exceeding the 14" minimum length limit declined slightly over the previous year. This decline is due to the significant increase in the total number of bass in the population, specifically smaller bass. Currently 32% of the adult bass population exceeds the 14-inch minimum length limit. However, a large year class of fish already over 12 inches in length should contribute significantly to the fishery in the coming year. The number of bass over 20" in length also remains stable, and fishing should be good in the coming year. Tournament permits are available at Wayne Fitzgerald State Park, 618/629-2320.

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

JONES LAKE - This lake is an artificial impoundment located five miles southeast of Equality on the Saline County Conservation Area. The lake has a surface area of 105 acres, maximum depth of 35 feet, with an average depth of 13 feet. Fishing regulations for Jones Lake are as follows:

All Fish	2 pole and line fishing only
Largemouth bass	Largemouth bass between 14 - 18 inches must be released immediately, 5 fish under 14 inches and 1 fish over 18 inches can be harvested daily

Channel catfish

6 fish daily creel limit

Jones Lake has a 10 horsepower or less outboard motor limit

Stock indices from survey data are within recommended ranges for a healthy largemouth bass population. Proportional stock density was 55 which indicates good numbers of quality size fish. Mean relative weights are within recommended ranges and the young adult ratio has increased. The largemouth bass population appears to be in good condition and will provide good fishing opportunities.

HARRISBURG NEW CITY RESERVOIR - This lake 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. Fishing regulations for Harrisburg New City Reservoir are as follows:

All Fish	2 pole and line fishing only
Channel Catfish	6 fish daily creel limit
Striped, White, or Hybrid Striped Bass	17" minimum length limit
Striped, White, or Hybrid Striped Bass	3 fish daily creel limit

Largemouth bass fishing prospects look very good. Recent survey data revealed a balanced fishery with an abundance of bass 3 - 4 pounds. Population indices are within recommended ranges, and the number of bass greater than 18 inches has increased every year since 2004.

DOLAN LAKE - This lake is an artificial impoundment located 8 miles southeast of McLeansboro within the Hamilton County Conservation Area. The lake has a surface area of 71 acres, maximum depth of 18 feet, with an average depth of 8 feet. Fishing regulations for Dolan Lake are as follows:

All fish	2 pole and line fishing only
Bluegill or Redear Sunfish	25 fish daily creel limit
Channel Catfish	6 fish daily creel limit
Largemouth Bass	18" minimum length limit
Largemouth Bass	1 fish daily creel limit

Dolan Lake also has a 10 horsepower or less outboard motor limit.

Dolan lake was rehabilitated in 2005 and re-stocked with sportfish in 2006. The sportfish have matured and growth has been better than expected. Stock indices from survey data are within recommended ranges for a quality largemouth bass population. A total of 404 bass were collected in an hour of electro fishing with an abundance of fish measuring

between 14 and 18 inches. The largemouth bass population appears to be in good condition and will provide good fishing opportunities.

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

CEDAR LAKE - Cedar Lake is located five miles southwest of the City of Carbondale in Jackson County off of Route 51 South. Largemouth bass are very abundant in Cedar Lake. There is a 14 - 18 inch protected slot limit on this lake. In 2002, the daily creel limit on this lake was changed from two bass under 14 inches and two bass over 18 inches to five bass under 14 inches and one bass over 18 inches. Bass anglers are encouraged to harvest bass under 14 inches to improve the overall condition of the bass population. Thinning out the smaller bass will increase bass growth rates and body condition which should result in a faster growing bass population. During the 2008 sample, largemouth bass were collected at a rate of 168 fish per hour which is the highest on record. The percentage of bass collected that were in the 14 - 18 inch protected slot (19%) was the fourth highest on record. The percentage of bass over 18 inches (15%) was the second highest on record. Overall, the 2008 spring bass survey was one of the best samples on record (comparable records began in 1993). There is a 10 HP motor limit on this lake.

KINKAID LAKE - This 2,750 acre lake is located five miles northwest of Murphysboro in Jackson County. Largemouth bass fishing in Kinkaid Lake for 2009 should be good. There is an abundance of bass less than 16 inches including numerous bass between 15 - 16 inches. Bass more than 16 inches are present but tend to be difficult to catch. The bass in this lake are relatively slow growing but they are long-lived. Smaller bass, less than 12 inches, tend to be skinny but once bass reach 12 - 13 inches the growth rates and body condition greatly improves. The best chance to catch bass in this lake is in the spring and fall as this lake receives a lot of recreational boat traffic during the summer months. Because of excessive angling pressure and lots of recreational boat traffic, anglers may have better luck if they fish slower and deeper than most bass anglers typically fish. During the 2008 spring survey, largemouth bass were collected at a rate of 101 per hour which is the highest rate on record. Of the 403 bass collected during the 2008 spring survey, 32% were over 15 inches and 25% were over 16 inches. The 2008 spring survey was the best on record. Approximately 13,500 smallmouth bass were stocked (4 - 5 inches in length) in September 2008. Since 2005, approximately 21,000 smallmouth bass (<4 inches) have been stocked into Kinkaid Lake.

LAKE MURPHYSBORO - This 145 acre state park lake is located two miles west of Murphysboro in Jackson County. The opportunity to catch bass over 15 inches and weighing 2-3 pounds is excellent. Other bass in the 12" - 15" range are also very abundant. Bass were collected at a rate of 122 fish/hr with 15% of the bass measuring 15 inches or better. The 2008 fall survey catch rate was the third highest on record. This lake receives more fishing pressure for crappie and bluegill than for largemouth bass. There is a 10 HP motor limit on this lake.

PINCKNEYVILLE CITY LAKE - This 165 acre lake is located 3 miles northwest of Pinckneyville off of Route 127 West. This lake has an 18" size limit/1 fish per day creel limit which has resulted in excellent bass fishing the past few years. Of the 117 bass collected during the 2008 fall survey, 44% were over 15 inches and 15% were over 18 inches. Both of these percentages represent the highest percentages for these categories in the last 6 years. The catch rate was the fourth highest number on record. Pinckneyville remains one of the best bass lakes in southern Illinois. There is a 10 HP motor limit on this lake.

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

CRAB ORCHARD LAKE - Crab Orchard Lake is a 6,965-acre impoundment located in Williamson County approximately one mile south of Carterville, Illinois. Largemouth bass fishing prospects at Crab Orchard Lake for the 2009 season are very good. More stringent harvest regulations (implemented in April 2002), increased bass and threadfin shad stocking efforts, habitat enhancement, and designation of a spawning refuge seem to be positively influencing population quality.

During the 2008 fall survey an average of 59 bass were collected per hour of electrofishing, essentially achieving the management plan goal of 60 per hour. In addition, 22% were larger than the 16 inch minimum size limit, and 10% were larger than 18 inches, nearly identical to data collected in 2007. Growth rates for bass remain good and are attributed to lake productivity and abundant gizzard and threadfin shad. Over 21,000 advanced bass fingerlings plus 154,000 bass fry were stocked in Crab Orchard Lake during 2008 to assist in maintaining the population.

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 southern end of Grassy Bay is closed from April through June for a spawning sanctuary.

LITTLE GRASSY LAKE - Little Grassy Lake is a 1000-acre impoundment located on the south side of the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge between Marion and Carbondale, Illinois. Largemouth fishing prospects at Little Grassy Lake for the 2008 season are very good. During the spring 2008 electrofishing survey, 71 bass were collected per hour. Proportional stock density was excellent at 68, and 34% of bass collected were larger than 15 inches, the upper end of the protective slot limit. Largemouth bass spawning success in Little Grassy Lake continues to be adequate, so no supplemental bass stocking has been conducted, although threadfin shad are stocked each spring that they are available to provide a strong forage base. Little Grassy Lake has a ten horsepower outboard motor limit.

DEVILS KITCHEN LAKE - Devils Kitchen Lake is an 810-acre impoundment located just east of Little Grassy Lake on the south side of the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge between Marion and Carbondale, Illinois. Devils Kitchen Lake is very clear and infertile, but contains large numbers of largemouth bass. An average of 154 bass were collected

per hour of electrofishing during the Spring 2008 survey. The lack of fertility in Devils Kitchen has a negative impact on relative weight, and many bass are 8 to 12 inches in size (PSD in 2008 was 10), but trophy bass over 9 pounds are also present. Anglers are encouraged to remove small bass from Devils Kitchen Lake to boost growth, and therefore no minimum size limit is in effect. Devils Kitchen has a ten horsepower outboard motor limit, and a portion of the lake's southeast side has been designated as electric only.

All fishoffs and tournaments are required to be pre-registered with the refuge, and all anglers are required to have a refuge user permit. Write USFWS, Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, 8588 Rt. 148, Marion, IL 62959 or call 618/997-3344 for information.

STATUS OF BASS FISHERY IN ILLINOIS RIVERS

ROCK RIVER - The Rock River continues to have an excellent smallmouth bass fishery. From Prophetstown north to the Wisconsin border, the smallmouth fishing is good to excellent. A survey completed in 2008 revealed that the exceptional year class produced in 2005 has reached quality size and is doing very well. Catch rates for smallmouth bass during this survey were excellent with a catch per unit effort (CPUE) of 54 fish/ hour or 0.9 fish/minute. The catch rate of stock size fish, those greater than 11", was 10.4 fish/hour which is very good. The proportional stock density (PSD) of 35% was in the expected range for a healthy population.

Slightly over one third of the larger fish collected were over 14" in length, and the relative stock density of 14" fish (RSD14) was 13%. The target range for RSD14 is 10%. The RSD16, which is the relative stock density of fish over 16" in length was 5% (Target range 1-2%) which indicates excellent fishing prospects. The greatest number of large fish were surprisingly collected near Prophetstown State Park.

The 2008 year class appears to be strong with 40% of the sample composed of fish smaller than 7". Overall the smallmouth bass population of the Rock River appears to be healthy and doing very well.

FOX RIVER - Smallmouth bass surveys for the Fox River are conducted every 2 years during the late fall to determine population density and size structure. Fall surveys were completed in 2004 and 2006 and showed very similar results in terms of average catch rate (78 and 70/ hour, respectively). The areas with the consistently highest catch rates are St. Charles, Batavia, and Oswego, although fish are present throughout the river where habitat is favorable. The population was dominated by fish in the 7-10 inch range, however, larger fish (>15 in.) were very common. Very few young of the year were captured in 2006, which may indicate poor spawning success and/or recruitment during the drought year of 2005, as described in the 2007 report.

Fish community samples were taken throughout the Fox River Watershed in the summer of 2007, including many mainstem sites. This survey is part of statewide program

conducted jointly by EPA and DNR, designed to gauge the current health of rivers and streams. Major watersheds like the Fox River are sampled every five years allowing identification of major changes and long term trends, which is very important, especially in urbanizing watersheds like the Fox. Results from this survey will be available next year. Although the survey was not designed to assess smallmouth bass due to the timing and location of the survey sites, we did observe many yearling and young-of-the-year bass, suggesting recent reproductive success.

DUPAGE RIVER - The DuPage River system typically produces smallmouth bass catch rates lower than the Fox River, however, populations are very good some areas, particularly in the lower West Branch, and the DuPage River mainstem. The last survey was conducted in 2005 near Shorewood, producing 28 stock-sized fish (≥ 7 inches) per hour, including several larger fish up to 17 inches. Reproduction was very good in 2005, as indicated by high number of Y-O-Y (46 per hour). Drought conditions apparently we offset by the high number of wastewater plants which discharge to this system. A survey of the entire watershed in planned for 2008.

DES PLAINES RIVER - Sport fish surveys were conducted near Riverside and Hodgkins in 2007. Largemouth bass were reasonably abundant in the Riverside area, with 24 captured in one hour of electrofishing. No large individuals were collected, although about one-third of the individuals were over 12 inches in length. Largemouth bass were in very low abundance at the Hodgkins locations. The Des Plaines River was sampled extensively in 2008.

The Des Plaines River is not well suited for smallmouth bass due to the low gradient channel, and possible water quality problems, especially in the lower stretches. Fish are occasionally taken in the higher gradient area downstream of Hofmann Dam, downstream of Romeoville, and in Salt Creek near Graue Mill. Attempts to stock these higher gradient areas has been largely unsuccessful, presumably because of water quality limitations. These short, isolated segments of higher quality habitat may be unable to sustain populations through natural reproduction. Frequent high flows, and rapidly changing water levels in this urbanized watershed may also have a detrimental effect on spawning.

KANKAKEE RIVER - The most recent sampling for the Kankakee was conducted in the fall of 2006, however, high water levels and lower than normal temperatures were present during the survey. Catch rates were lower and fish were generally smaller than in previous surveys due primarily to poor sampling conditions. More typical results were obtained in 2005 when samples were performed at 13 locations from the State Line to the Des Plaines Conservation Area. The higher gradient areas at Momence and in Kankakee State Park are the most productive, with catch rates ranging from 94 to 110 per hour. The catch rate for fish 14 inches or larger was 19-21 per hour in these well known hot spots. Smaller fish and Y-O-Y were also very abundant in many areas of the mainstem and tributary streams as well, with up to 68 captured per hour. The low gradient areas at the State Line and near the confluence with the Des Plaines River consistently produce the fewest total number of smallmouth bass (5 and 12/hour respectively).

KASKASKIA RIVER (Upstream of Carlyle Lake) - Perpetual high water conditions below Lake Shelbyville did not allow assessment of the smallmouth bass population in 2008. This was the sixth year of a supplemental stocking program for smallmouth bass below Lake Shelbyville. Past assessments have shown that the river is responding well to the program, as fall electrofishing catch rates have increased dramatically. These catch rates increased from 20.5 smallmouth bass per hour in 2003 to 67.5 per hour in 2006. Notable increases at all sizes show promise for an increasing adult population, which have translated to general population increases through successful spawning years. 2008 proved to be our most successful year to date of pond propagation for this smallmouth bass project. Efforts to establish smallmouth bass in Lake Shelbyville and the Kaskaskia River upstream of the lake are progressing nicely. The upstream population is in its third year and 2007 sampling showed excellent survival and growth of stocked fish. However, the current adult smallmouth bass population, both upstream and downstream of the lake, continues to be relatively small and vulnerable. Catch-and-release fishing for smallmouth bass in the Kaskaskia River is strongly recommended.

The Intensive Basin Survey of the Kaskaskia River was conducted in 2007. Many of the tributary streams produced several young largemouth bass. Good sized largemouth bass in the 13 to 17-inch range were collected at the mainstem river sites above Lake Shelbyville. One year old smallmouth bass, stocked upstream of the lake in 2006, were collected in the 5 to 9-inch range. Below Lake Shelbyville, smallmouth bass continue to be the story. Significant numbers of young fish 3 to 10 inches were collected as far south as Cowden. A 15-incher was the largest collected during the basin survey, but other sampling has produced adults over five pounds! South of Shelby County, the bass population (both largemouth and smallmouth) appeared to decline to near-zero numbers.

KASKASKIA RIVER (Downstream of Carlyle Lake) - The most recent electrofishing survey (2007) shows continued recovery of the largemouth bass fishery in the lower Kaskaskia River (from Carlyle Lake to Kaskaskia Lock and Dam). Best fishing remains in the navigation channel below Fayetteville and in many of the oxbows still connected to the channel. Tournament anglers report a successful 2008 season despite prolonged high water; most winning stringers included 3-4 pound bass. Biannual bass stockings started in 2004 should be providing plenty of catchable fish. Habitat in the form of downed treetops, rootwads and brushpiles is more prevalent in the oxbows but the riprap and submerged willow along the navigation channel can be productive as well. The heavily fished Carlyle Lake tailwater harbors decent numbers of bass as well, some in the 5 lb range.

EMBARRAS RIVER - This river continues to be a strong producer of spotted bass. A few ramps along the river will accommodate small boats and canoes, as the river is generally shallow throughout its length. Electrofishing catch rates during the 2006 basin survey produced up to 12 spotted bass per hour at the mainstem river sites. Unfortunately, these fish topped out in the 11-inch range. Largemouth bass were much less numerous, but they were bigger. Numbers tended to increase to the south.

WABASH RIVER TRIBUTARIES - The small streams that flow into the Wabash River can produce a nice mix of spotted bass, largemouth bass, and smallmouth bass. Brouilletts Creek in Clark County is particularly good for smallmouth bass up to 13 inches. Most of the adjacent land is in private ownership along these small streams.

UPPER SANGAMON RIVER - A basin survey was conducted in 2008 on the Sangamon River Basin. Sangamon River mainstem sites produced from zero to 17 largemouth bass per hour with an average of 4.75 largemouth bass per hour and the largest at 12 ½ inches. The most productive mainstem site for largemouth bass in the upper Sangamon River basin was at Monticello. The mainstem sites also produced a few smallmouth bass, with 14 inches being the largest collected at Mahomet.

The tributaries produced similar results with up to 9 largemouth bass per site and 4 smallmouth bass per site. Smallmouth bass were widespread throughout the Upper Sangamon River Basin, but they occurred in low numbers. The Salt Creek basin continues to produce more smallmouth bass than the other parts of the Sangamon River basin. Fishermen should be conservative with their take of bass from this river basin.

The tailwaters of Lake Decatur were not sampled in 2008, but electrofishing catch rates in 2005 produced 54 largemouth bass per hour. This stretch of river is under-utilized and worthy of a canoe trip. A canoe launch is available on the north side of the river below the dam. The tailwaters of Clinton Lake is also a popular bank fishing destination. Routine sampling in 2005 produced electrofishing catch rates of 36 largemouth bass per hour and 4 smallmouth bass per hour. The largemouth bass were up to 16.5 inches, and the smallmouth bass were up to 9 inches.

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, IDNR, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.

This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the IDNR Clearinghouse at 217/782-7498 for assistance.

Printed by the authority of the State of Illinois 500 - 12/08