



# Lake Sara

## Fisheries Fact Sheet

**Location:** Lake Sara is located in Effingham County approximately 5 miles southwest of Effingham, Illinois.

**Area:** Lake Sara was constructed in 1957 and has a surface area of 614 acres, a maximum depth of 47 feet, and a mean depth of 19 feet. The lake has 38 miles of shoreline and a watershed of 7,560 acres.

**Status of the Sport Fishery:** The sport fish population in Lake Sara is comprised primarily of largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, white and black crappies, white bass, and channel catfish. Other common species include yellow bullhead and common carp. The fish population is surveyed annually, and summaries below are based on the results of the most recent population survey and four-year trends in the population indices.

**Largemouth Bass:** In an attempt to improve the size structure of the population, regulations were changed on April 01, 2017, to a 15” – 18” protected slot limit. Early results indicate that the regulation appears to be working. In 2023, the percentage of the adult bass in the sample over 15” was 23% and 6% exceeded 18”. Bass over 15” were in good condition. Bass numbers below the slot remained high and body condition was still poor but should improve with time and increased harvest. For 2024, the majority of bass below the slot should range from 0.5 – 1.5 pounds, while those exceeding 18” should be 3 pounds or greater. **Harvest of bass below the slot limit (less than 15”) is encouraged.**

**Bluegill:** The size structure of the bluegill population remained poor. All the bluegill in the sample were less than 7” in length. Body condition remained stable, but poor, and growth rates remained below average. The bluegill population in this lake will likely always be hindered by the presence of gizzard shad. Anglers can expect to catch an abundance of fish 5” – 7” in length.

**Crappie:** Both black and white crappie are present in Lake Sara, but white crappie are the dominant species. Data collected from the 2023 survey indicated that 31% of the adult white crappie were greater than 10” in length and 69% were in the 8” – 10” size range. Average body condition for white crappie remained below the lake management plan target. Black crappie collected in 2023 also had poor body condition and all black crappie collected were less than 9.5” in length. Crappie fishing in the coming year should remain good with most fish weighing 0.2 – 0.5 pounds.

**Channel Catfish:** Channel catfish numbers are low in Lake Sara due to low natural recruitment. Recent supplemental stocking may help to improve numbers in the coming years. In 2023, average body condition was below the lake management plan target. Anglers can expect to see most fish in the 1 – 3 pound range.

**White Bass:** White bass numbers increased in 2023 and they remained abundant. Average body condition fell below the lake management plan target. Angling opportunities for white bass should be fair/good in 2024 with most larger fish between 10” – 14” long and weighing 0.5 – 1.1 pounds. **Harvest of white bass in Lake Sara is encouraged.**

**Fishing Regulations:** Pole and line fishing only; no more than two poles with two or less hooks or lures per pole. Bowfishing allowed. (Beginning April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024)

Species	Daily Creel Limit	Slot Length Limit
Largemouth Bass	6	15” – 18” protected slot
White, Black, or Hybrid Crappie	25 collectively	

**Additional Regulations:** Boat permits are required and may be purchased at either of Lake Sara’s two Marinas, the Mach 1 gas station on Route 33, or Lake Sara Marina in Effingham. EWA and IDNR tournament permits are required.

**Contacts:** Effingham Water Authority 217/868-2787; IDNR Fisheries 618/393-6732

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