



# MAZONIA STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AREA

## Ponderosa Lake FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

**LOCATION:** Ponderosa Lake is located within the Mazonia State Fish and Wildlife Area South Unit, 2 miles northeast of South Wilmington in Kankakee County off West 5000 Road.

**DESCRIPTION:** Ponderosa Lake is the largest impoundment within the Mazonia complex, covering 148.9 surface acres with depths to 60 feet. It is isolated from all other water areas. Likely one of the most scenic of the Mazonia lakes, Ponderosa is characterized by cedar-lined shorelines, gin-clear water and a myriad of coves, cuts and large bays. Ponderosa Lake also supports a diverse aquatic plant community. A two-lane unimproved gravel ramp serves as boat access. Very little shore access is available.

**HISTORY AND STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY:** Surveys are conducted on Ponderosa Lake on an alternating year basis. The lake currently receives Channel Catfish on a routine basis (triennial). Both Bluegill and Redear Sunfish have been supplementally stocked as they become available. Northern Pike, Yellow Perch, and Walleye have been historically stocked but were later terminated due to poor success.

*A special mercury advisory is in effect for Largemouth Bass  $\geq$  15-inches which limits consumption to one meal per week for both the most sensitive and general population.*

**LARGEMOUTH BASS:** The 2021 Spring nighttime survey resulted in an improvement in the Largemouth Bass catch rate (1.1 fish/min). Average fish length remained unchanged (10.7 inches). The proportion of adult fish over 12 inches slightly declined (36%) but the proportion over 15 inches increased to 7%. Age data revealed slow growth, which is corroborated by fair body condition (values for most size groups were below the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile). Growth is expected to be somewhat limited due to the unproductive, oligotrophic nature of this lake.

**BLUEGILL:** Bluegill catch rate improved in the 2021 Spring nighttime survey but was still quite low (0.63/min). Average length remained unchanged (4.1 inches). The proportion of adult fish over 6 inches increased to 33% and the proportion over 8 inches was 19%. However, the sample size was quite small (number of fish  $\geq$  Stock size was 21). Age data revealed slightly above average growth despite the lake's poor productivity.

**REDEAR SUNFISH:** The number of Redear Sunfish collected in the 2021 Spring nighttime survey improved from previous surveys (n = 64) and was the highest on record. Average length was 7.0 inches. Size structure was excellent, with 56% of the adult fish over 7 inches and 10% over 9 inches. Despite the good size structure, age data suggests that growth may be somewhat limited. Growth is expected to be somewhat limited due to the unproductive, oligotrophic nature of this lake.

**CHANNEL CATFISH:** Surveys tend to produce a very low number of Channel Catfish and the 2021 Spring nighttime electrofishing survey was no different (only two Channel Catfish were collected [8 and 11 inches]). Electrofishing is not typically used to evaluate Channel Catfish

populations, and as such this survey does not provide a good assessment of the fishery. Channel Catfish are stocked biennially.

**CRAPPIE:** Crappie were absent from the 2021 Spring nighttime survey.

**YELLOW BULLHEAD:** Seven Yellow Bullhead were collected ranging from 8 – 11 inches. Despite their underutilization, Bullhead offer anglers another excellent sportfish to catch.

**FISHING REGULATIONS:** Swimming is prohibited. Gasoline motors (unlimited horsepower) are permitted on Ponderosa Lake with a no wake regulation in effect. Ponderosa Lake closes 10 days prior to the opening of the Central Zone Duck Season and reopens (7-days a week) after the season ends. **Statewide fishing regulations apply.**

**Additional Site-Specific Fishing Regulations:**

All Fish: 2 Pole and Line Fishing Only

Bluegill or Redear Sunfish: 10 Fish Daily Harvest Limit

Channel Catfish: 6 Fish Daily Limit

Large or Smallmouth Bass: 15-inch Minimum Length Limit (3 Fish Daily Harvest Limit)

White, Black, or Hybrid Crappie: 10 Fish Daily Harvest Limit

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