

PYRAMID STATE PARK – WESSELN LAKE



2024 FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

LOCATION: Pyramid State Park is located south of Pinckneyville in Perry County. To reach Wesseln Lake, head west on Galum Church Road from State Route 127, then turn south onto Pyramid Park Road.

DESCRIPTION: Wesseln Cut is a 35-acre strip mine lake that has existed since the 1950s. There is a gravel boat launch and dock, in addition to a camping area next to the lake.

STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY – The following is a summary of sport fish species based on a 2022 fish population assessment. The assessment consisted of a spring electrofishing survey and fall netting survey.

Largemouth Bass – The Largemouth Bass population in Wesseln Lake is impressive, demonstrating very good growth and abundance. Bass were captured at a rate of 102/hour, of which 50% were over 15 inches and 26% were over 18 inches. Relative weights were very good among most larger size classes, but low among size classes under 12 inches. All 34 bass were retained for otolith extraction and aging; growth is somewhat sluggish during the early life stage, but rapidly accelerates after age 3. Sluggish growth during the early life stage is likely a consequence of the dense stock of Gizzard Shad in the lake, which compete with juvenile bass and other game fishes for zooplankton. However, high shad abundance is also a strong driver of bass growth once gape limitations are overcome at larger sizes.

Black Crappie – A total of 24 Black Crappie (8/net night) were collected in fall-set trap nets and ranged in length from 6-12 inches. Mean relative weight of fall-sampled Black Crappie was right at the management goal of 90, suggesting that growth is not stunted. Relative weights remained relatively stable among all size classes. Population size structure was desirable and met all management goals. Anglers should expect to find quality angling opportunities for Black Crappie in Wesseln Lake.

Bluegill and Redear Sunfish – Size structure and relative weights were poor for both spring and fall sampled Bluegill and Redear. No preferred-size individuals (Bluegill $\geq 8''$, Redear $\geq 9''$) were collected for either species, indicating poor growth. Poor sunfish growth is likely a consequence of competition with Gizzard Shad, which are very abundant in Wesseln Lake.

Channel Catfish – Given the small size of Wesseln Lake, it is unlikely that Channel Catfish recruit naturally. Therefore, Channel Catfish have been stocked annually since 2020. A total of 16 Channel Catfish (8/net night) were collected in fall-set experimental gill nets. Catfish ranged in size from 11-21 inches, the largest weighing nearly 3 lbs. Abundance and size structure should continue to improve as older age classes become established.

Fishing regulations:

Species	Creel Limit	Size Limit
Largemouth Bass	6	None
Channel Catfish	6	None
Bluegill or Redear Sunfish	25	None
Crappie	25	None
All Fish	2 Pole and Line Fishing Only	

RECREATIONAL USE RESTRICTIONS – There are no motor horsepower restrictions, but the entire lake is a no wake zone.

CONTACT INFO – IDNR Fish Biologist – Nick Abell 618-967-0952, nicholas.abell@illinois.gov. Pyramid State Park 618-357-2574.