



Vermillion River (Illinois River Drainage)

FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

The Vermillion River originates at the confluence of the 36.1-mile North Fork Vermillion River and the 28.2-mile South Fork Vermillion River in Livingston County. From this point, the Vermillion River flows in a north-northwest direction for 75.9 miles to the Illinois River, near Oglesby. The Vermillion River basin drains approximately 1,331 square miles. The river is characterized by many short rapids separated by intervals of gently flowing water. Much of the Vermillion River and North Fork Vermillion River have been channelized, dating back to 1955. The Vermillion River is impounded by a series of three dams near Pontiac, which range in height from 1.5 to 7.0 feet, a 30-foot high dam southeast of Streator, and a partially destroyed dam near Oglesby.

Access – The Vermillion River is limited in the number of public access points it has to offer. There are public boat ramps located in Streator and Pontiac. The lower part of the river is also a popular destination for canoeing and kayaking. There are also a few additional bridge crossings and roadside areas that are popular with local residents.

Status of the Sport Fishery – The Vermillion River has a diverse sport fishery including channel catfish, flathead catfish, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, and bluegill (see summaries below).

Channel Catfish – Electrofishing surveys in 2009 produced an average 10.25 channel catfish per hour at the Vermillion River sites. Highest catch rates were taken near Sandy Ford Nature Preserve between Oglesby and Streator in LaSalle County. The largest channel catfish of the 2009 surveys was 22 inches, collected from that same site.

Flathead Catfish – Flathead Catfish were only collected at two of the Vermillion River sites in 2009, Sandy Ford Nature Preserve and Streator. The largest was from the Streator site at 21.9 pounds.

Smallmouth Bass – The Vermillion River produced 18.75 smallmouth bass per hour of electrofishing in 2009. Smallmouth bass were most abundant at Humiston Woods between Streator and Pontiac in Livingston County. The largest smallmouth bass of the 2009 surveys was 14.7 inches and 1.3 pounds, collected from the site at Streator. The Vermillion River has been stocked annually since 1999 with 1 to 2-inch smallmouth bass, averaging 27,941 per year. This significant stocking effort supplements naturally produced numbers in the river.

Largemouth Bass – The Vermillion River sites averaged 5.0 largemouth bass per hour of electrofishing in 2009. They were most abundant at Houser Cemetery, southeast of Pontiac in Livingston County. The largest one at 17.9 inches and 3.4 pounds also came from that site.

Bluegill – 113 bluegill were collected in the 2009 surveys. The Vermillion River sites averaged 7.5 bluegill per hour of electrofishing. They were most abundant at the Houser Cemetery site in Livingston County. The largest one collected was 7 inches, collected at the site near Sandy Ford Nature Preserve in LaSalle County.

Fishing Regulations: Statewide regulations apply for all species in the Vermillion River. This includes a daily catch limit of 6 bass, either singly or in the aggregate, with no more than 3 smallmouth bass in the daily creel. There is also a closed season for smallmouth bass in which all smallmouth bass must be immediately released between April 1 and June 15 to protect them during the spawning season. There is no size limit for bass. See Illinois Fishing Information Booklet for regulations and www.ifishillinois.org for complete fishery reports.