

Sherman Reservoir

Fisheries Update — Spring 2020

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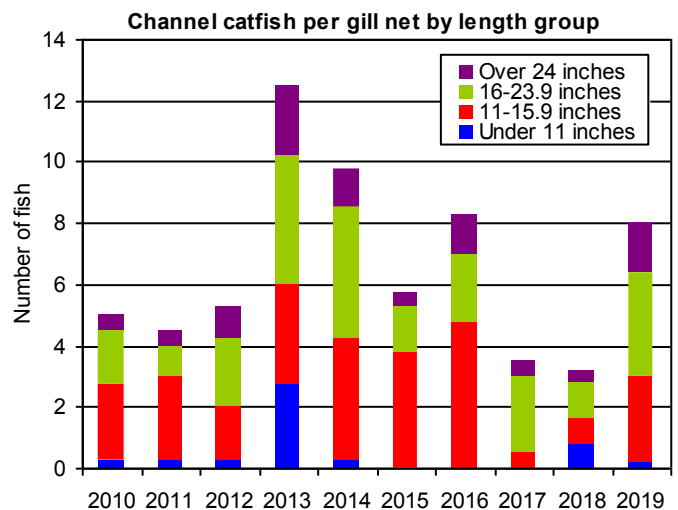
The following text and graphs are the result of netting surveys completed during 2019 at Sherman Reservoir. For comparative purposes it also shows results from previous years. Major sportfish populations are sampled each year at Sherman using gill and frame nets. Gill nets are used to sample fish species found primarily in open water, such as walleye, while frame nets are used to sample shoreline oriented species, such as crappie. The nets are set each year at approximately the same locations and dates as previous years. This reduces variability and allows for trend comparisons of species abundance and size distribution. The following graphs show the total number of fish caught per net and the relative abundance of fish within several length categories. The text provides a brief explanation of the information shown in the graphs.

Channel Catfish

After lower than average catch of channel catfish the past two years, survey results from 2019 showed a substantial increase. The catch of 8.0 catfish per net is slightly better than the ten year average gill net catch of 6.5 fish/net. Increases were noticed in most size categories, but were most apparent in the abundance of larger catfish. Catfish collected in the netting survey ranged in length from 10.6 to 33.0 inches, with an average length of 17.9 inches.

Catfish anglers should continue to see good catfish angling opportunities at Sherman Reservoir during 2020 and the chances of hooking into trophy sized catfish looks to be improved as well.

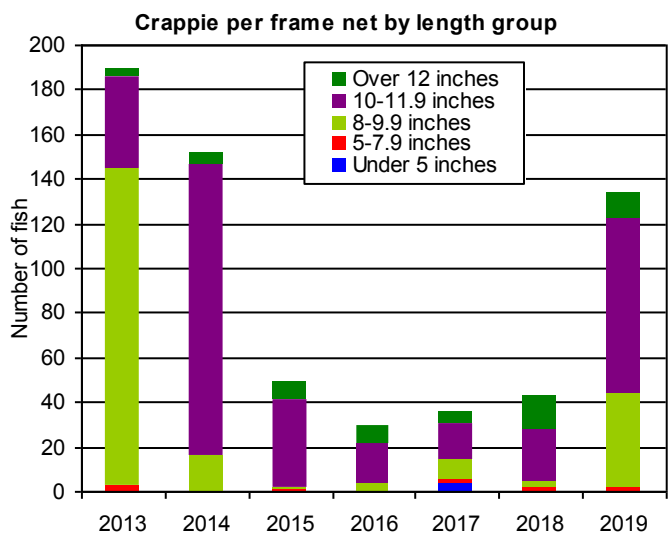
The daily bag limit for channel catfish on Sherman Reservoir is five fish per day.



Crappie

The crappie sample was the third best recorded since the switch to spring netting in 2013. Crappie were well represented in all size groups, but increases were most apparent in the 8-9.9 and 10-12 inch length categories. Stable water levels the past five years have been a major factor in improving crappie recruitment. The increase in abundance of smaller crappie should translate into great fishing in future years. Higher than average abundance of larger crappie will provide anglers with excellent angling opportunities during 2020. Approximately 68% of the crappie sampled during the spring of 2019 were larger than 10 inches and this percentage will be slightly higher by the spring of 2020 as growth occurs. Sampled crappie ranged from 3 to 13.8 inches. The average crappie measured 10.0 inches.

Crappie regulations for Sherman Reservoir include a 10-inch minimum length limit and a daily bag limit of 15 fish.



Walleye

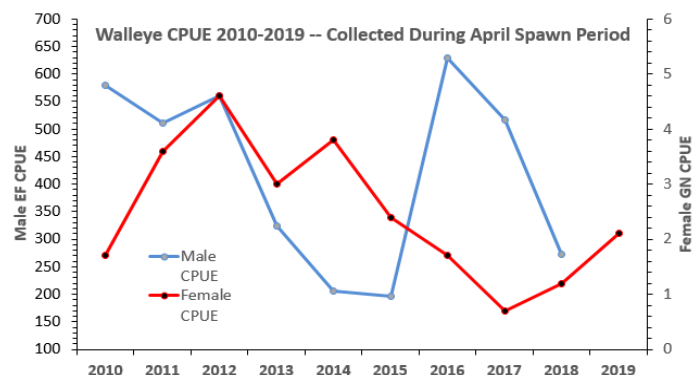
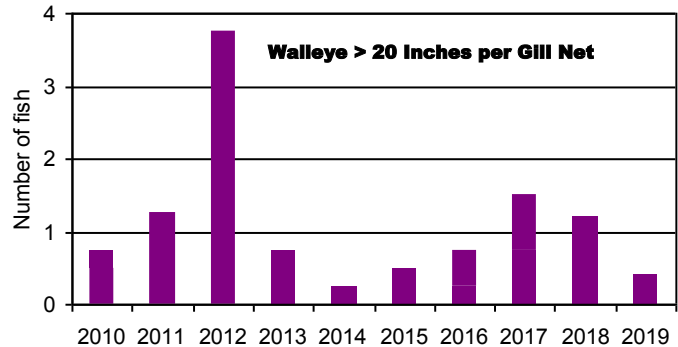
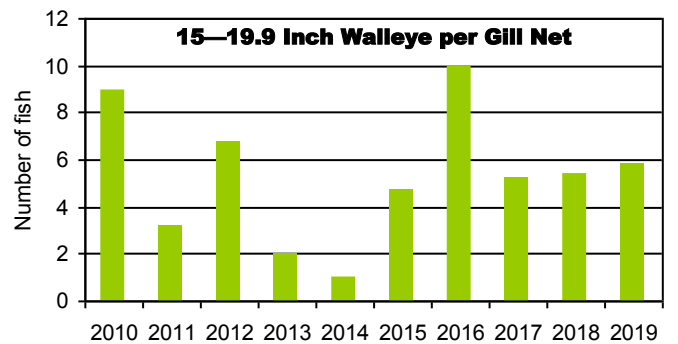
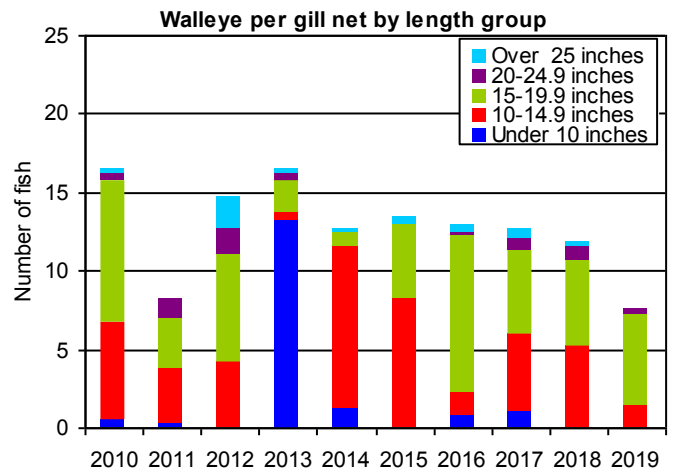
The walleye gill net catch has remained relatively stable at Sherman over the past eight years, but 2019 saw a decline in total catch. Last fall's gillnet catch was 7.6 fish per net, which is slightly lower than the ten year average of 12.7 walleye per net.

Walleye captured in the 2019 netting survey ranged from 10.6 to 22.4 inches, with most fish in the sample (97%) measuring less than 20 inches. The average length of walleye collected was 16.3 inches. Age-2 walleye were the most abundant age class, comprising 50% of the sample. Age-3 fish made up 16%, while age -1 and age-4 each contributed to 13% of the sample. Age-5 and older fish comprised only 8% of the total catch. There were no age-0 walleye sampled, but most of the fish in this age class are generally too small to be efficiently captured in the gill nets.

Current regulations only allow the harvest of 15 to 19.9 inch walleye. Since this regulation was implemented in 2009, the yearly net catch of 15 to 19.9 inch walleye has averaged 6.1 fish/net. The 2019 catch was slightly below the average and was 5.8 fish/net. The gillnet catch of fish greater than 20 inches was considerably lower this year, as only 0.4 fish per net were sampled. The average catch of walleye larger than 20 inches from 1990 to 2008 was 1.9 fish per net, while the average catch since the size limit was enacted in 2009 has been 1.2 fish per net. Although fall netting results have not indicated an increase in the abundance of walleye greater than 20 inches, the past angler surveys have documented that anglers are catching more of these large fish since the regulation change. Netting results from the annual walleye spawning operation in April indicate that the number of female walleye, which make up most of the population of walleye greater than 20 inches in the reservoir, has fluctuated greatly since 2009. Results from the past two years indicate a slight improvement in catch of these large females since the low was reached in 2017. It is not known why the abundance of large fish was on a downward trend 2012 to 2017.

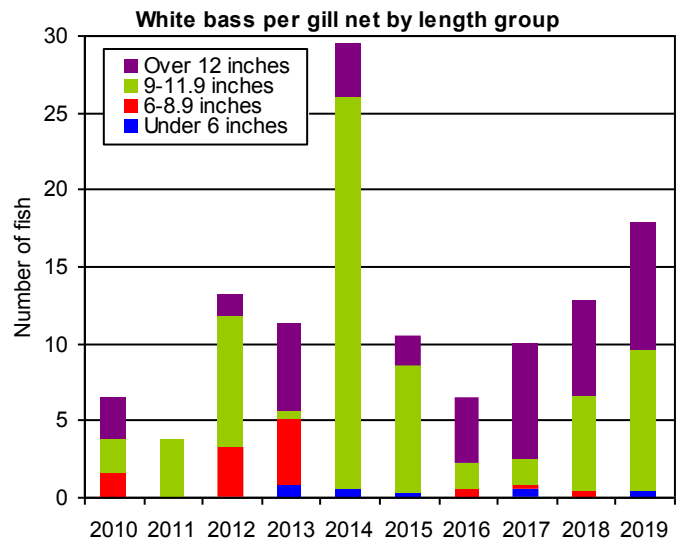
Although overall abundance of walleye is slightly lower, numbers of 15 to 19.9 inch walleye remain similar to the past several years and anglers should find good opportunities for harvest. The abundance of walleye in the protected slot appears to be slightly lower than average, but anglers should find enough fish to create some memorable days on the water.

The walleye regulation for Sherman includes a daily bag limit that can include two walleye between 15 inches and not greater than 20 inches and one walleye longer than 28 inches. There is a slot limit protecting walleye 20 through 28 inches.



White Bass

White bass catch has been on an upward trend the past three years at Sherman. The gill net catch of 18 fish/net was the highest observed since 2014. The ten year average catch is 12.2 fish per net. Most of the sample consisted of fish ranging from 9.5 to 13.5 inches. Two strong year-classes from 2017 and 2018 comprised most the smaller fish in the sample, while most of the larger fish were from the 2014 year-class. The catch of white bass greater than 12 inches was the highest documented in the past ten years and approximately 38% were larger than 12 inches. The average length of white bass sampled in the survey nets was 11.3 inches, while the largest fish were just shy of 16 inches.



White bass angling has been fantastic the past couple years and results in 2020 should continue to remain excellent. A high abundance of 9.5 to 12 inch fish will provide ample catch and harvest opportunities and the presence of large fish should provide anglers with some memorable sized fish.

The statewide daily bag limit for white bass is 15 fish per day, with only one fish greater than 16 inches.

Sherman Reservoir — Additional Information

Fisheries Division staff will be conducting walleye spawn collection at Sherman during 2020. Depending on weather conditions, spawn collection begins the last week of March or the first week of April and normally lasts for approximately one week. Walleye are collected using gill nets and electroshocking along the dam at night and disturbance to anglers is minimal. During 2019, fisheries employees spent four nights netting and collected approximately 337 female walleye, of which 173 were spawned. Eggs and milt were collected from the brood fish and the fish were then returned to the lake. In all, crews collected approximately 237 quarts of eggs from Sherman. Walleye eggs were also collected at Merritt Reservoir. Anglers should also be aware that the water within 150 feet of the dam and the walleye spawning reefs near the west end of the dam are closed to all fishing from sunset to sunrise beginning April 1 and ending April 20.



Scheduled fish stockings for 2020 included 284,000 walleye fingerlings which will be stocked during June. Northern pike that were scheduled to be stocked in 2019 were cancelled due to a shortage of pike in the hatchery system. Future pike stocking is uncertain at this time.

A detailed contour map of Sherman Reservoir can be found on Nebraska Game and Parks Commission website: <http://maps.outdoornebraska.gov/lakemaps/>

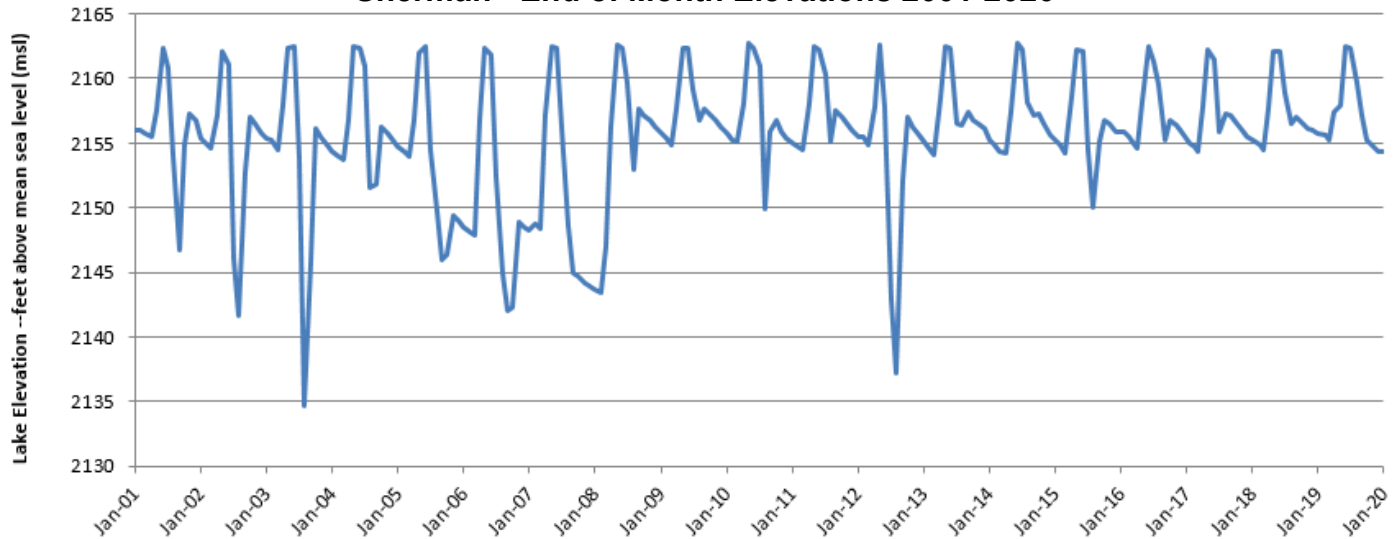
The wave attenuator located in the mouth of the marina bay was removed in late 2018 for inspection and repair of worn and damaged parts. Repairs were finished in late 2019 and the attenuator will be placed back in the reservoir once the ice leaves the lake during the spring of 2020. Since it's placement in 2007, the attenuator has done a relatively good job of reducing wave action in Marina Bay, making it a safer place for boaters during times when the wind blows from the west or southwest.



There was no angler survey conducted at Sherman during 2019.

Current lake elevations can be found on Farwell Irrigation District's website: <http://www.farwellid.org/index.html>. Abnormally wet conditions during the summer of 2019 resulted in the lake only dropping approximately six feet during the irrigation season.

Sherman - End of Month Elevations 2001-2020



Aquatic Invasive Species – Zebra Mussels

Anglers and recreational boaters should be aware of the threat of zebra and quagga mussels while using Nebraska waters. Currently in Nebraska, zebra mussels have been documented at Offutt Air Force Base, the Missouri River, and Lewis and Clark Lake. Invasive mussels have been documented in most of Nebraska's neighboring states, including over 20 locations in Kansas. Most recently, zebra mussels were found in Cunningham Reservoir in Omaha in 2018. Efforts are currently underway to reduce lake levels in an attempt to freeze the mussels during the winter months.

Anglers and boaters using Nebraska waters need to be aware of **current regulations** dealing with aquatic invasive species. The following regulations are in effect to help prevent the spread or introduction of unwanted species in Nebraska waters.

- Any watercraft that has been on a Nebraska waterbody must drain the lake water from their compartments, equipment or containers before leaving the launch area. It is illegal to dump baitfish into a Nebraska waterbody.
- Live wells need to be drained prior to leaving a launch area: plan ahead and bring a cooler for harvested fish.
- All aquatic vegetation from that waterbody attached to the watercraft and/or trailer must be removed before leaving the launch area.
- It is unlawful to arrive at or leave any waterbody in Nebraska with water other than from a domestic source (such as a water supply system, well, or bottled), except for fire-fighting purposes. This applies especially to boats, their compartments, equipment or containers that may hold water.

A good source of information about invasive species can be found on the University of Nebraska's Invasive Species Project website: <http://neinvasives.com/home>

Technicians have been hired the past few years to conduct interviews of boaters and help provide more information about aquatic invasive species.



Comparison of quagga (left) and zebra (right) mussel. Michigan Sea Grant.

Attention motorboat owners operating in Nebraska

Boaters whose motorized watercraft are registered in any state other than Nebraska will be required to display a \$15 Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp each year they boat in Nebraska.

This stamp will help fund Aquatic Invasive Species education and inspection programs.

- Note that boat inspections to launch in Nebraska are NOT mandatory at this time.
- This applies to all *motorized* watercraft. Non-motorized craft are exempt.
- Personal watercraft (Jet Ski, Waverunner, Sea Doo, etc.) are required to have this stamp.
- Boats registered in Nebraska pay the fee via their registrations and are exempt from displaying the sticker.



This stamp is available online at www.outdoornebraska.org



From the “Buy A Permit” page, look for this link:

For additional information about fisheries management at Sherman Reservoir please contact the NGPC Kearney office at 308-865-5310 or by email at the addresses listed below.

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