

Sherman Reservoir

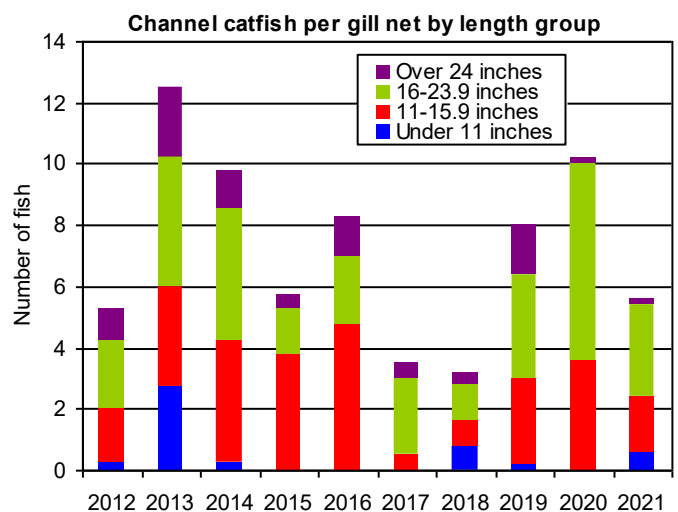
Fisheries Update — Spring 2022

Brad Eifert, Fisheries Biologist

The following text and graphs are the result of netting surveys completed during 2021 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

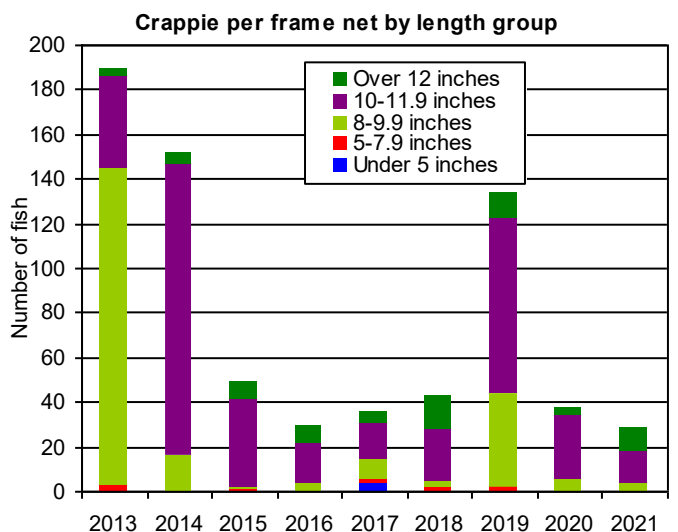
Channel catfish abundance was lower last fall at Sherman, as the catch of 5.6 catfish/net was slightly below the ten year average of 7.2 fish/net. There was a small increase in abundance of catfish smaller than 11 inches, but we saw a decline in catfish from 12 to 24 inches. The numbers of large catfish appeared to remain unchanged. Catfish collected in the netting survey ranged in length from 7.5 to 25.0 inches and had an average length of 16.4 inches. In an effort to increase abundance, 32,000 4-inch channel catfish were stocked at Sherman during the spring of 2021. Catfish anglers should continue to experience good angling opportunities at Sherman during 2022.



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

Crappie

The spring frame net catch of crappie has varied greatly the past nine years, ranging from a high of 189 to a low of 28 fish/net. While the 2021 catch was on the low end of the spectrum, most of the crappie sampled were larger than 10 inches and many were greater than 12 inches. The average length of crappie was 11.2 inches. While the spring sampling didn't reveal it, there were higher than average numbers of 5 to 7 inch crappie captured in gill nets during the 2021 fall survey. These fish won't contribute to the harvest in 2022, but should provide good angling opportunities in future years. It is expected that anglers will find fewer harvestable crappie at Sherman during 2022, but overall catch should remain high due to more small fish in the population.



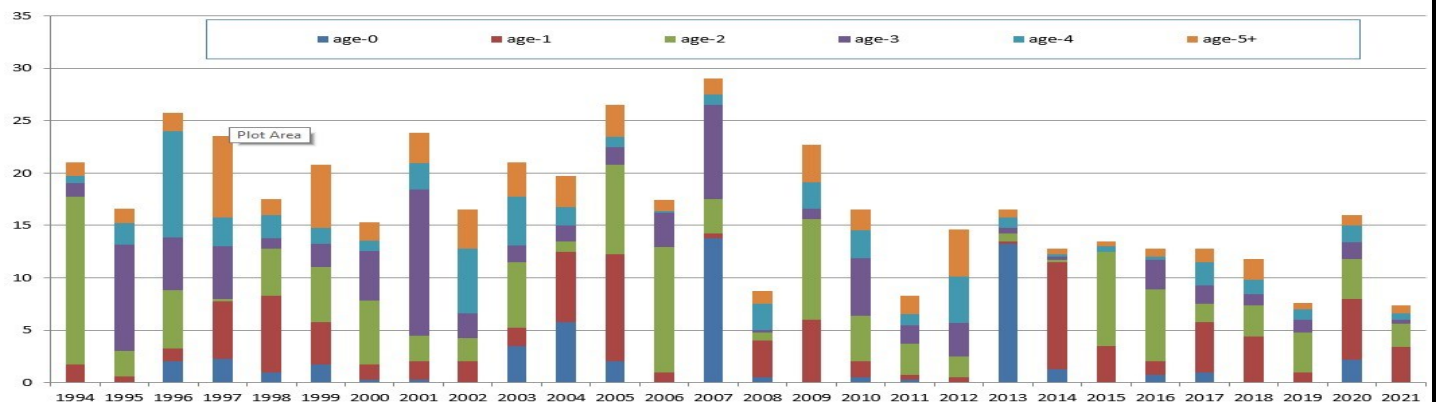
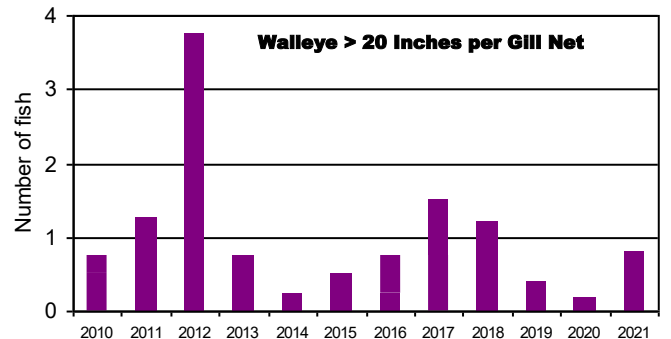
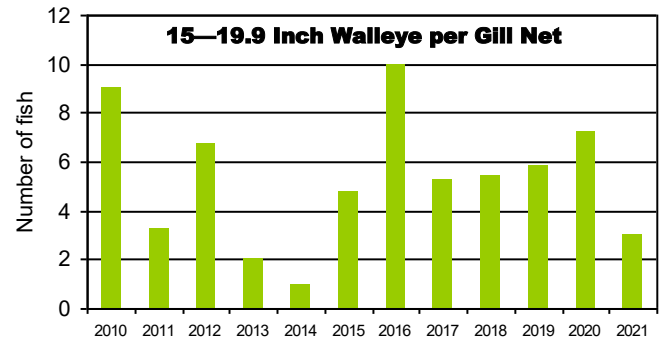
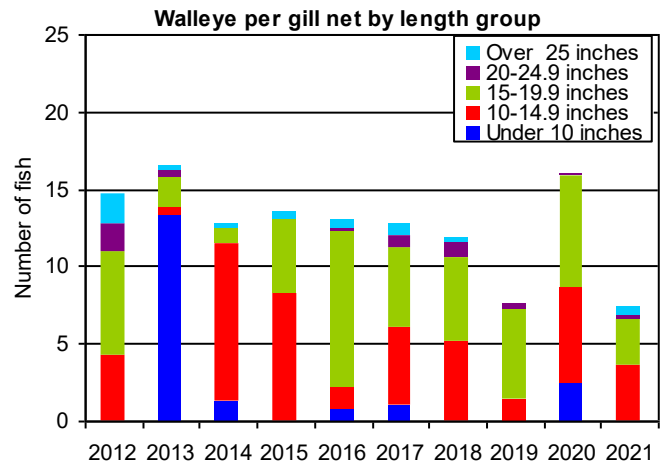
Crappie regulations for Sherman Reservoir include a 10-inch minimum length limit and a daily bag limit of 15 fish.

Walleye

Walleye catch dropped in 2021, as there were 7.4 fish per net sampled. In comparison, the ten year average gill net catch at Sherman is 12.6 walleye/net and the long term (32 years) average catch is 16.6 walleye/net.

Walleye captured in the 2021 gill netting survey ranged from 11.0 to 27.5 inches and the average length was 15.3 inches. There were seven age-classes of walleye sampled; age-1 comprised 46% of the sample and age-2 fish made up 30%. Age-3 and age-4 fish made up about 14% of the sampled fish. Fish older than age-5 comprised 10% of the catch.

Current regulations only allow the harvest of 15 to 19.9 inch walleye at Sherman Reservoir. Since this regulation was implemented in 2009, the yearly net catch of 15 to 19.9 inch walleye has averaged 6.0 fish/net. The 2021 catch of 3 fish/net was the lowest observed since 2014. This decline is likely due to the combination of a poor 2018 year-class and high angling related mortality the past two years. The gillnet catch of fish greater than 20 inches was slightly improved last fall, as 0.8 fish/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 current size limit was enacted in 2009 has been 1.1 fish/net. High angling mortality of 15-20 inch walleye is a large factor in determining how many fish successfully making it into the protected slot each year. While we are seeing slight improvements the abundance of larger fish in the population, the process has been slow.



Walleye angling success was fair in 2021 and anglers should be prepared to see similar results again in 2022. The abundance of fish in the 15-20 inch harvest slot is the lowest it's been since 2014, but a year-class of 12-14 inch fish will find their way into the harvest slot by fall. Large fish abundance appears to be slightly better and stories of anglers catching several walleye over 24 inches per day are becoming more common.

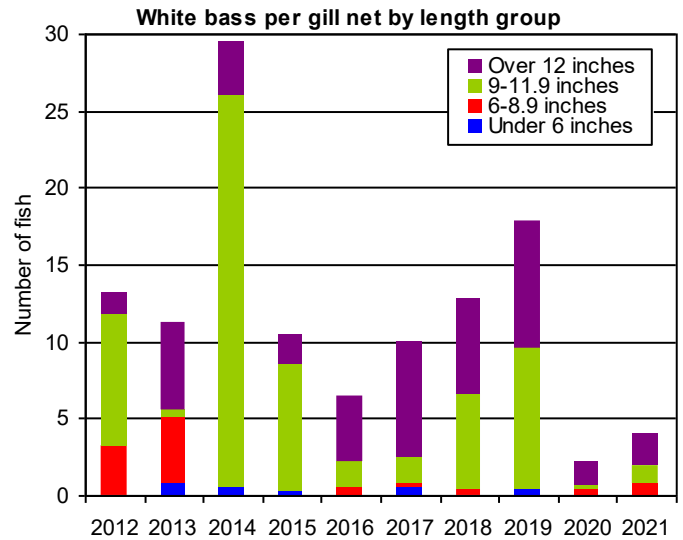
The walleye regulation for Sherman includes a daily bag limit that can include two walleye between 15 inches and not greater than 20 inches and one walleye longer than 28 inches. There is a slot limit protecting walleye 20 through 28 inches.

White Bass

After observing the white bass population trend upwards from 2017 to 2019, the catch the past two years has been significantly lower than the ten year average of 11.8 fish/net. Fish sampled during the 2021 fall survey ranged from 8.1 to 14.2 inches and had an average length of 10.9 inches. About 40% of the catch consisted of white bass larger than 12 inches. The remaining fish were primarily age-1 and ranged from 8 to 9 inches. This year-class appears to be relatively strong, which should translate into higher bass abundance in the next couple years.

Due to lower than average numbers, anglers targeting white bass anglers will quite possibly see lower catch during 2022. Opportunity exists to catch large white bass and an up and coming year-class of smaller fish should provide for additional harvest later in the year.

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

There has been no walleye egg collection efforts completed at Sherman during the past two springs, primarily due to concerns regarding the Covid-19 virus. Walleye eggs needed for production purposes have been collected at Merritt and McConaughy the last two years. Plans are still being developed and it is currently uncertain if spawning efforts will be conducted at Sherman during 2022.

Anglers should 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.

Walleye are the only fish species currently scheduled for stocking in 2022 at Sherman. The stocking strategy will be slightly altered in 2022 as both fry and fingerlings will be stocked for the first time. This stocking scenario has shown good success at nearby Davis Creek and Calamus Reservoirs the past few years. Tentative plans call for the stocking of 2.8 million fry (1000/acre) in late April and 144,000 (50/acre) fingerlings in early June.

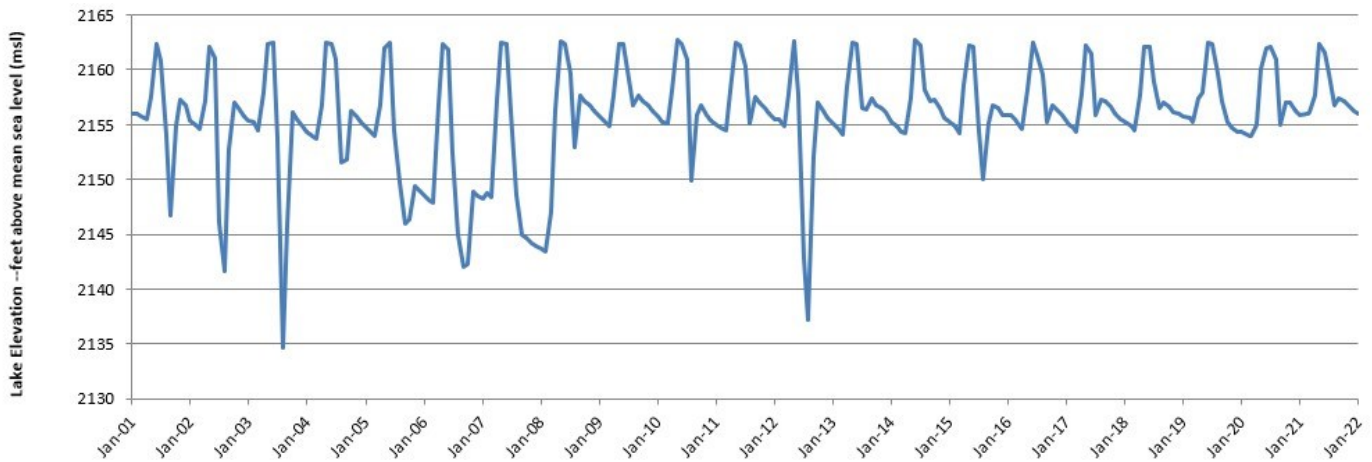
A detailed contour map of Sherman Reservoir can be found on Nebraska Game and Parks Commission website: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/>

A new Barracuda fish cleaning station was installed at the Marina Bay in the spring of 2021. These units feature industrial grinders that allow nearly all sizes and species of fish to be processed. In addition, these units are much quieter and require less maintenance than the old garbage disposal type of units. They have proven to be a popular angler amenity and a timesaver for park personnel who have to maintain them. An additional Barracuda fish cleaning unit is planned for installation at Thunder Bay during the spring of 2022.



Lake levels remained fairly constant during the summer of 2021, as the reservoir only dropped about seven feet during the irrigation delivery season.

Sherman- End of Month Elevations 2001-2022



Work was completed on one of large breakwaters near the Trail 5 point this fall to repair damage done by a 2020 summer storm. This breakwater was originally installed as part of a three year aquatic habitat project (2005-2007) to reduce shoreline erosion and protect the mouths of several coves at Sherman Reservoir.



Boaters and anglers are reminded to remain vigilant when it comes to aquatic invasive species, especially zebra mussels. The Game and Parks Commission routinely conducts sampling at Sherman Reservoir to look for mussels and other invasive species. Fortunately they have not been detected in the reservoir. Anglers and boaters are reminded to educate themselves on the regulations regarding invasive species and should take the necessary precautions to prevent the introduction or spread of invasive species. Information regarding aquatic invasive species and the regulations that boater and anglers must follow can be found at <http://outdoornebraska.gov/aquaticinvasivespecies/>



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



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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