

Medicine Creek

2015 Survey Summary – GAME



PARKS –

Caleb Huber, Fisheries Biologist

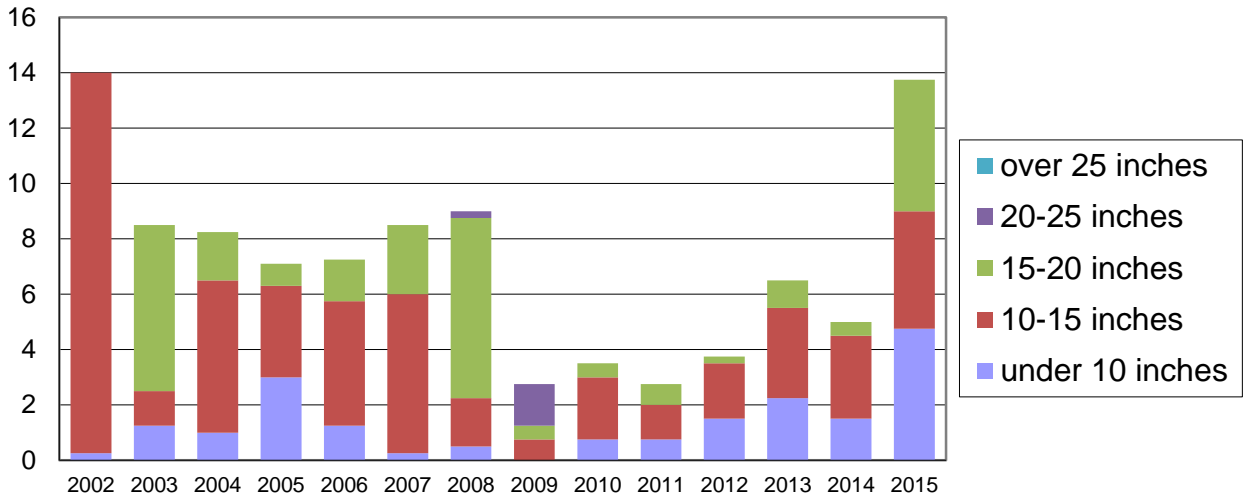
Fish populations are sampled each fall at Medicine Creek Reservoir using gill nets, a method commonly used to sample fish found in open water, such as walleye, white bass, channel catfish and hybrid striped bass. Gill nets are set on approximately the same dates and locations each year to reduce variability.

Walleye catch rates have been recovering following a sharp decline in 2009. Biologist sampled almost 14 walleye per net in 2015. This is a huge jump from previous years and is the best walleye survey in over 10 years at Medicine Creek Reservoir. In addition to high catch rates, there are multiple year classes present which indicates good recruitment and good angling in the coming years. Wiper numbers have also started to rebound in recent years due to an increase in stockings. There are good numbers of fish less than 15 inches but trophy sized fish appear to be missing from the population. Those fish will return in the coming years if anglers practice catch and release to give the young wipers time to mature and reach their trophy potential. Walleye and wiper fingerlings are stocked annually at Medicine Creek Reservoir.

Channel catfish are popular sport fish for anglers at Medicine Creek Reservoir. Biologists surveyed 6 fish per net in 2015 with the majority of sampled fish falling in the 16-24 inch size class. Channel catfish are not stocked at Medicine Creek because there is strong natural reproduction. Nebraska Game and Parks introduced blue catfish to the reservoir in 2015. Blue catfish were introduced in order to provide trophy fishing opportunity in the future and are managed as a trophy fish. There is no minimum length limit and a daily bag limit of one (1) fish for blue catfish statewide. There is a graphic at the end of this summary to aide anglers when identifying blue catfish and channel catfish. White bass are another popular sportfish that are very popular with anglers at Medicine Creek. Personnel surveyed just over 5 white bass per net in 2015 which is a slight increase compared to previous years but down from what we would like to see in the reservoir. There was a good size distribution with some individuals up to 15 inches long. White bass populations probably suffered due to a prolonged draw down but will hopefully rebound with the increased inflows and reservoir elevation. In addition to the species discussed above, crappie anglers experience limited success and common carp are plentiful throughout the waterbody.

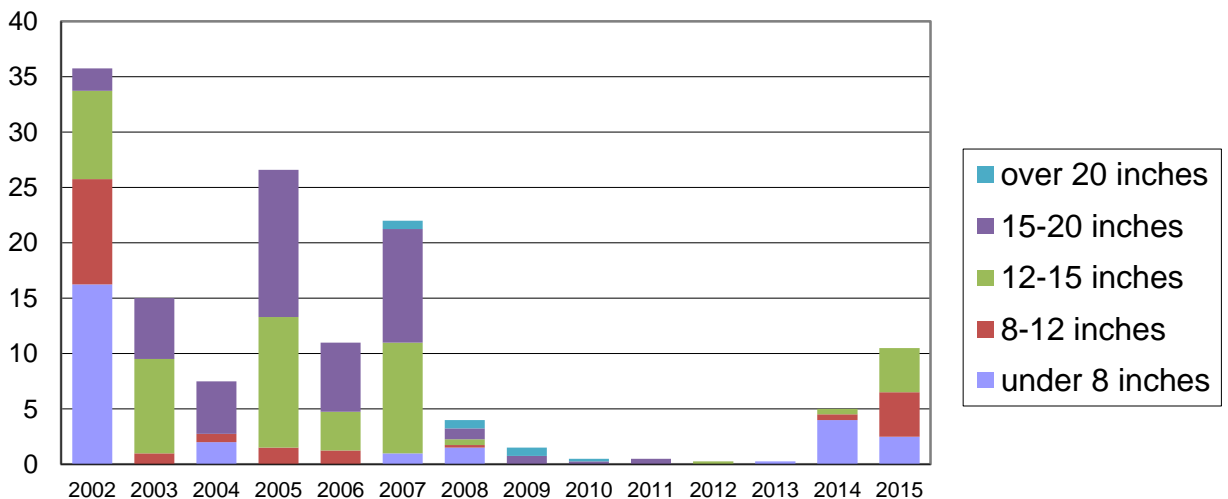
The following graphs show the average number of fish caught per net and the relative abundance of fish within several length categories. The text provides a brief explanation of the information shown in the graphs. Also included are 2015 summary graphs of some local waterbodies for comparison.

Walleye Catch Per Unit Effort



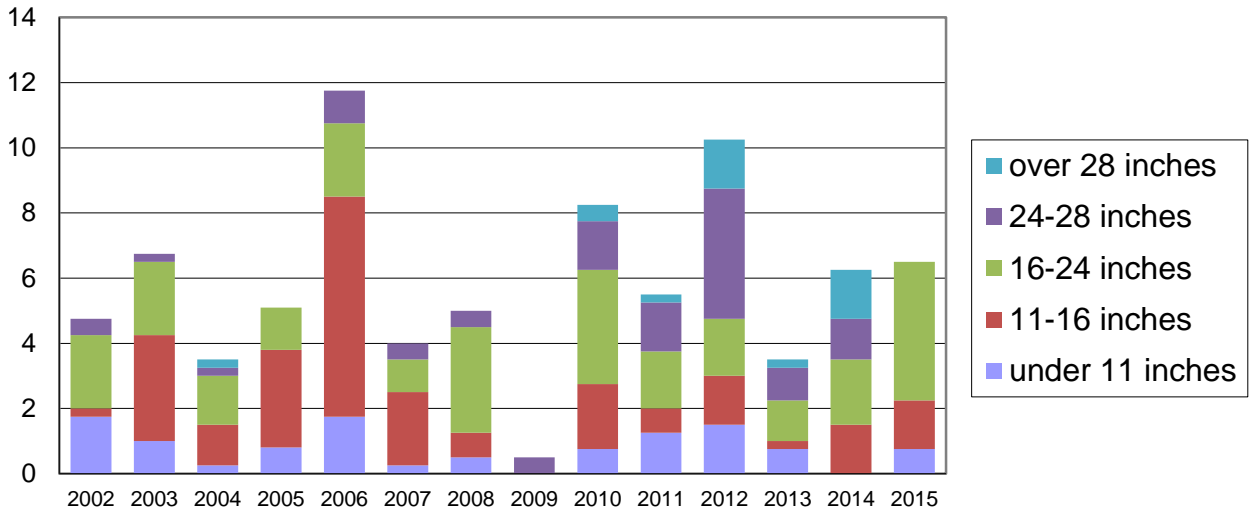
Walleye numbers appeared to drop markedly in 2009 but have been recovering in recent years and jumped sharply in 2015. Biologists sampled 13 fish per net in 2015 which is the best survey seen in over 10 years. Approximately a third of the walleye sampled were harvestable fish greater than 15 inches long. There is every reason to believe that walleye fishing will be great in 2016 and the coming years based on the number and size range of fish sampled in 2015.

Wiper Catch Per Unit Effort



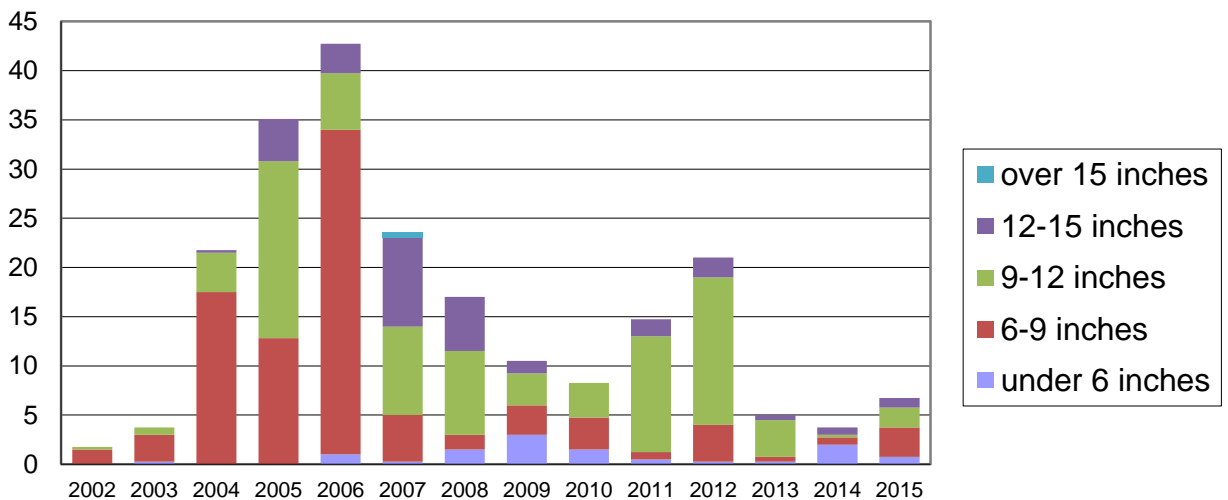
Wiper numbers have been down at Medicine Creek due to a temporary suspension in stocking. Wiper stockings were reinstated in 2013 and 2014 and there has been a positive population response. Biologists sampled 10 fish per net in 2015 which is double the catch rate of the 2014 surveys. There are decent numbers of 12-15 inch wipers available now but no trophy fish. It will take some time for fish to mature enough to really reach their size potential. Wipers are requested again for 2016.

Channel Catfish Catch Per Unit Effort



Channel catfish populations tend to be fairly stable at Medicine Creek and tend to range between 4 and 8 fish per net annually. This is probably due to reliable inflows and strong natural reproduction. Biologists sampled 6 channel catfish per net in 2015 which is just above the average. There were good numbers of 16-24 inch fish in the surveys which are what most anglers prefer for table fare. Even though they were absent in the 2015 survey, Medicine Creek Reservoir has a few trophy sized fish in excess of 28 inches. This is a great destination for anglers seeking catfish both for the freezer and the chance to catch a trophy.

White Bass Catch Per Unit Effort



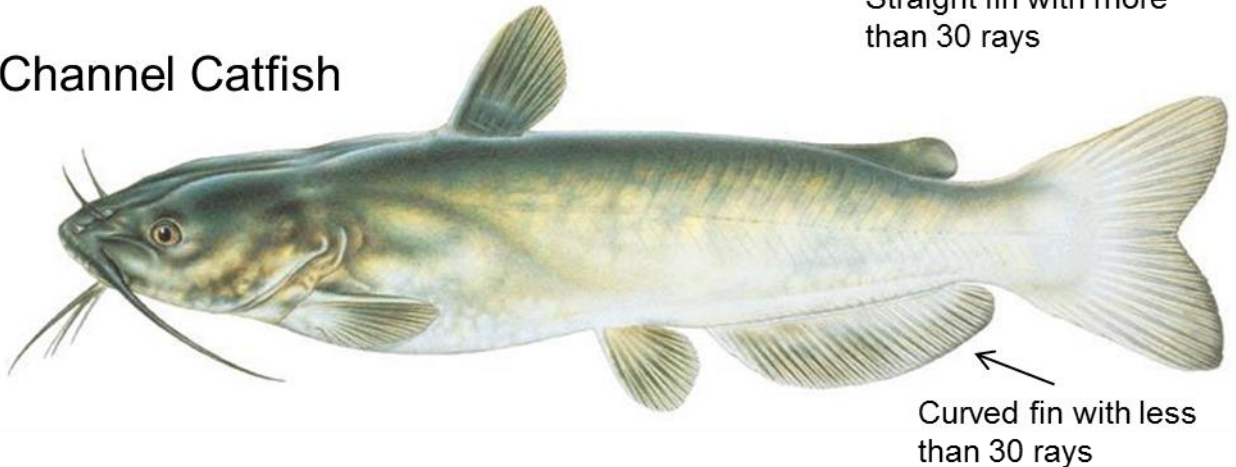
White bass numbers have been down a little bit at Med Creek beginning in 2013 and this remains the trend in 2015. Biologists caught 6 white bass per net in 2015. One bright spot in the survey data is that there seems to be a good size distribution including fish in the 12-15 inch range. There are plenty of mature fish in the population to act as brood fish for the reservoir and hopefully environmental conditions will lead to a good spawn and strong recruitment. White bass anglers will have some success during the 2016 season including the chance for quality fish.

Blue Catfish were introduced into Medicine Creek Reservoir in 2015. Personnel stocked 8,850 fish that were approximately 10 inches long during the fall. Blue cats were introduced based on success at Swanson reservoir and a strong existing catfish fishery at Medicine Creek. The long-term goal of this introduction is to increase the trophy fishing opportunities in the Southwest District and provide unique opportunities for anglers. Blue catfish are known to grow in excess of 80lbs and are a very popular species for some catfish anglers. It is important to point out that there is a **1(one) fish daily bag limit** for blue catfish statewide. Anglers will need to take care to properly identify their catch before harvesting any catfish species at Medicine Creek. The most foolproof method to distinguish between the species is to look at the anal fin. Blue catfish have a straight anal fin with more than 30 rays while channel catfish have a curved anal fin with fewer than 30 rays. There are other cosmetic differences such as body shape, color, and spots but those differences can be misleading depending on the environment and individual fish.

Blue Catfish



Channel Catfish

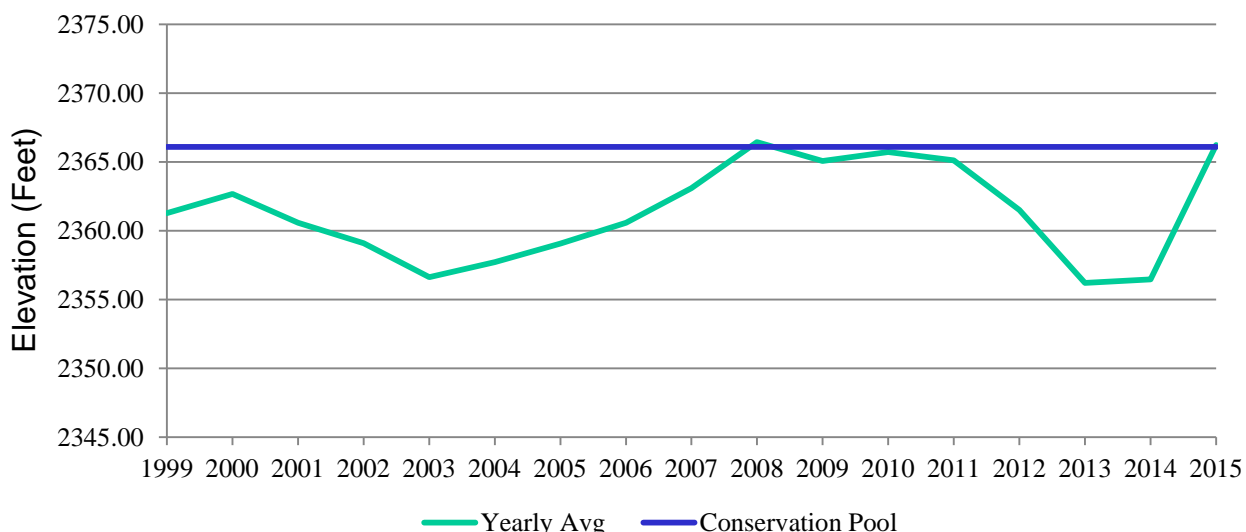


Medicine Creek Fish Stocking Summary

Year	Walleye	Wiper	White Bass	White Crappie	Blue Catfish
2015	138,000 (1.5")	13,875 (1.4")			8,850 (9.9")
2014	75,250 (1.3")	10,300 (1.3")			
2013	139,434 (1.25")	19,265 (1.2")			
2012	131,081 (1.2")				
2011	93,556 (1.25")		10,230 (2")	9,985 (5.5")	

Above is a table of fish stockings for the last 5 years at Medicine Creek Reservoir. The species stocked, number stocked, and fish size are presented in the table. Multiple species are stocked annually and a comprehensive database of fish stockings can be found at the Nebraska Game and Parks website or by following the link below. [Stocking Database](#)

Average Annual Elevation, Medicine Creek Reservoir 1999-2014



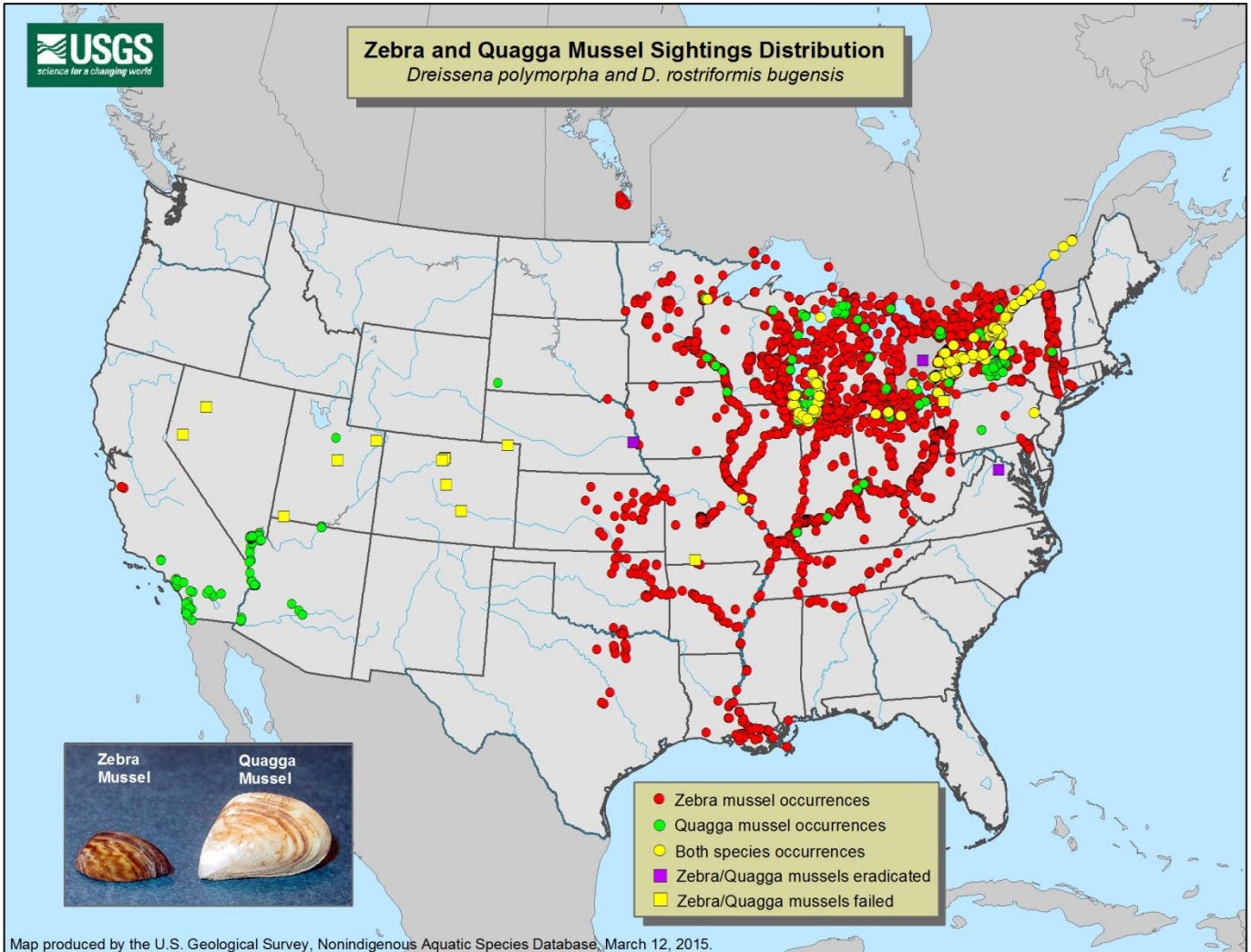
Medicine Creek is the only Southwest reservoir that irrigates annually but also refills annually due to higher inflows and the NCORPE stream augmentation project. The graph above is a graphical representation of annual mean elevations. It can be somewhat misleading if there are large swings in elevation. For current lake elevations visit this webpage: [Current Elevation](#)



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Aquatic invasive species (AIS) have reached Nebraska. Zebra mussels are currently established in Lewis and Clark Reservoir, Offut AFB pond, and the Missouri River. Beginning in 2016 anglers and boaters should be on the look out for personnel performing boat inspections and decontaminations statewide. The spread of AIS can be prevented using the Clean, Drain, and Dry technique. Before leaving any water body make sure to drain or dump any standing water and remove debris that might be attached to the boat or trailer. If possible allow the watercraft to completely dry before launching at another area. Follow the link: [Nebraska Invasives Species Program](#) or call 402-472-3133 to report any possible AIS sightings or for more information about AIS in Nebraska.

Attention motorboat owners operating in Nebraska:

Starting in 2016, boaters whose motorized watercraft are registered in any state other than Nebraska must purchase and display a \$15 Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Stamp each year they launch their boat in Nebraska. The stamp will help fund AIS education and inspection programs.



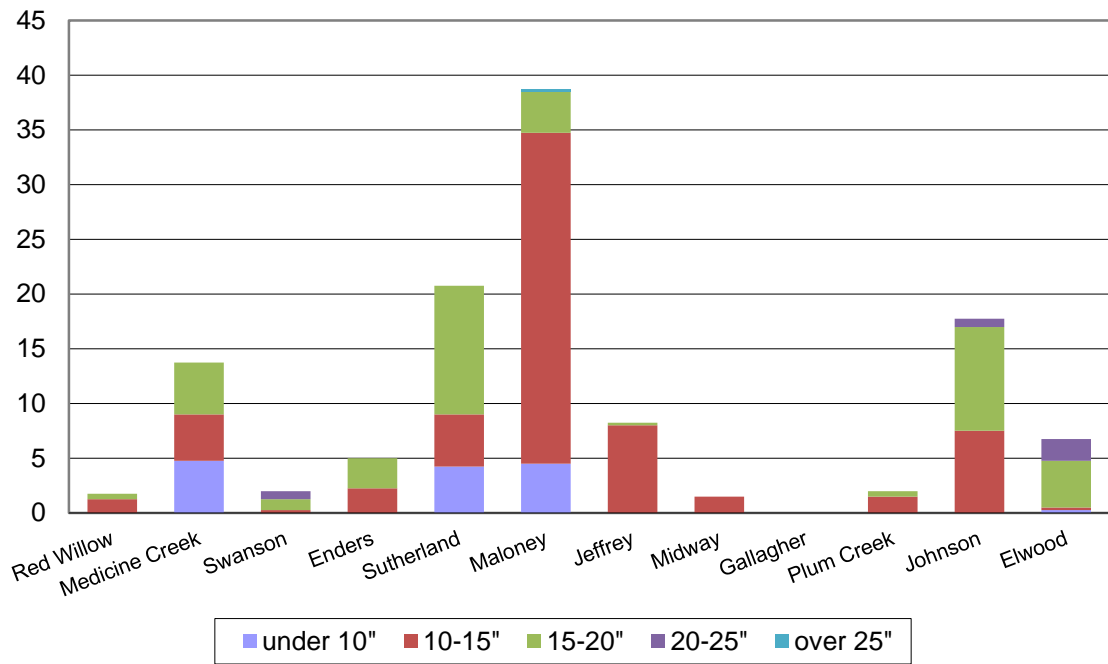
- Boat inspections for AIS prior to launch in Nebraska are NOT mandatory at this time.
- Personal watercraft registered outside of Nebraska must have this stamp.
- Non-motorized craft registered in any state are exempt from the stamp.
- Stamps are not required for boats registered in Nebraska. A \$5 AIS fee is included on the residents' three-year boat registrations.
- Residents who register their boats in other states must have this stamp before launching in Nebraska.

This stamp is available online at OutdoorNebraska.org or at Nebraska Game and Parks permitting offices.

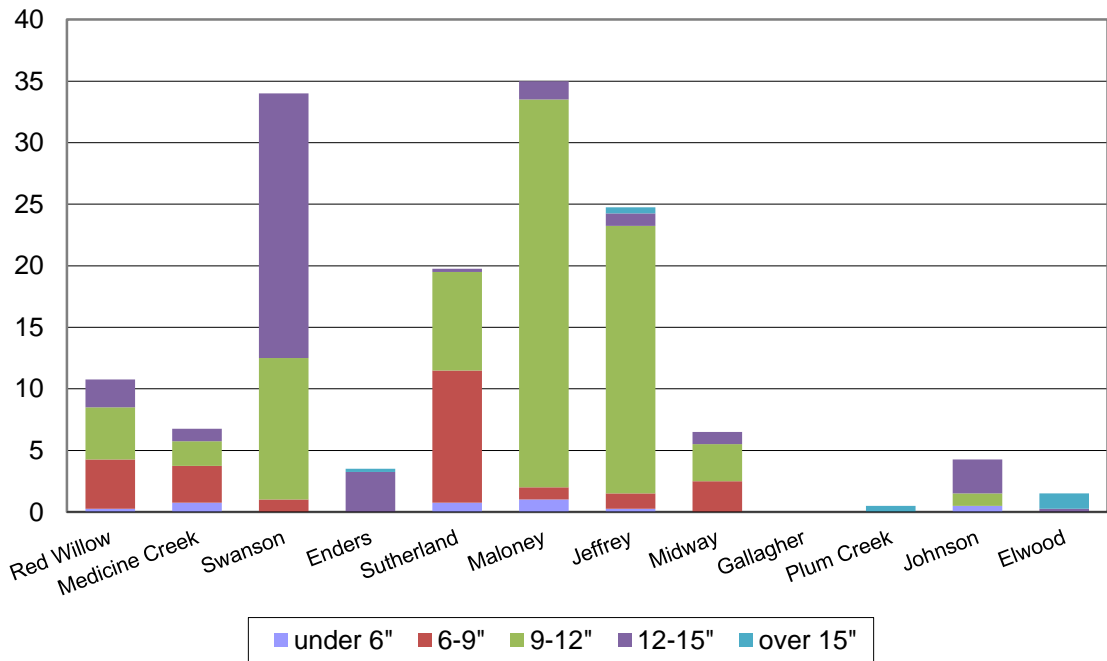
Learn more about invasive species at neinvasives.com.



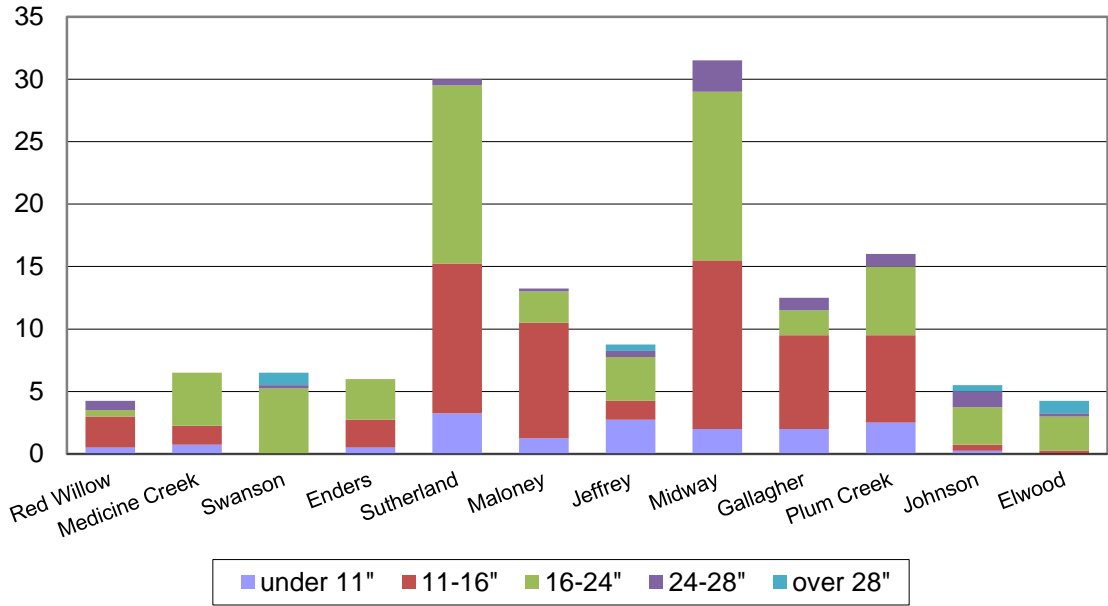
2015 Southwest District Walleye Catch



2015 Southwest District White Bass Catch



2015 Southwest District Channel Catfish Catch



2015 Southwest District Wiper Catch

