

Sherman Reservoir 2015 Fall Survey Summary

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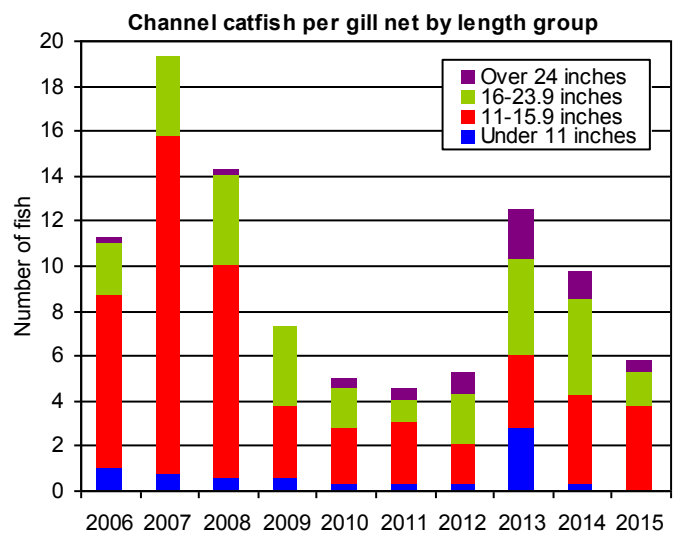
The following text and graphs are the result of netting surveys completed during October 2015 at Sherman Reservoir. For comparative purposes it also shows results from previous years. Fish populations are sampled each fall at Sherman using gill and frame nets. Gill nets are used to sample fish species 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

The gill net catch of channel catfish declined for the second consecutive year. While no catfish less than 11 inches were sampled, there was a good representation of catfish in the other size categories. Catfish ranged in length from 12.5 to 27.0 inches, with an average length of 17 inches.

Although catfish abundance is slightly lower, catfish anglers should still expect to find good fishing opportunities during 2016, with a variety of sizes available.

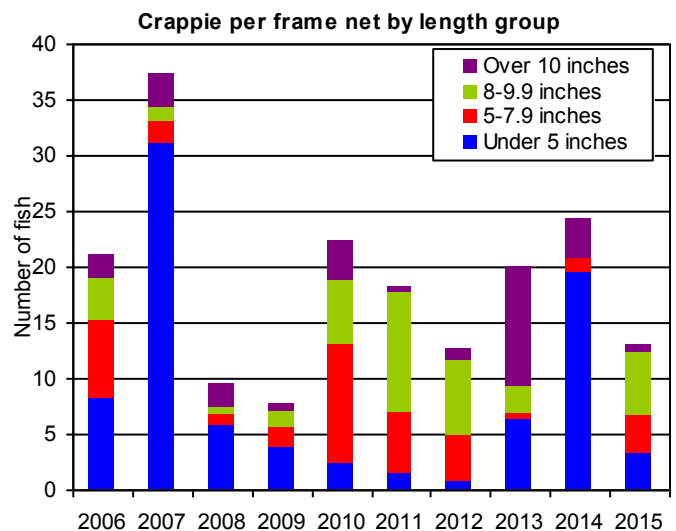
The daily bag limit for channel catfish on Sherman Reservoir is five fish per day.



Crappie

After two years of above average crappie catch at Sherman, the catch declined in 2015. While crappie were sampled in all size categories, noticeable declines were seen in the abundance of fish less than five inches and fish greater than 10 inches. The abundance of crappie from 5 to 9 inches showed improvement from results seen the past two years. Crappie recruitment has been stable at Sherman the past several years which should translate into consistent fishing opportunities in the future. With fewer fish over 10 inches present in the population, anglers seeking crappie during 2016 will likely have a more difficult time finding legal-sized fish, but overall catch rates should remain good.

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



Walleye

The gill net catch of walleye has remained stable at Sherman over the past four years, hovering around 14 to 15 walleye per net. The ten year average gill net catch is 16 walleye per net.

While walleye from the 2015 sample ranged from 11 to 28 inches, most of the fish captured in the nets were less than 20 inches. The majority of these fish were from the 2013 and 2014 year-classes, both of which were successful and appear to contain an above average number of walleye. The average length of walleye collected during the survey was 14.8 inches.

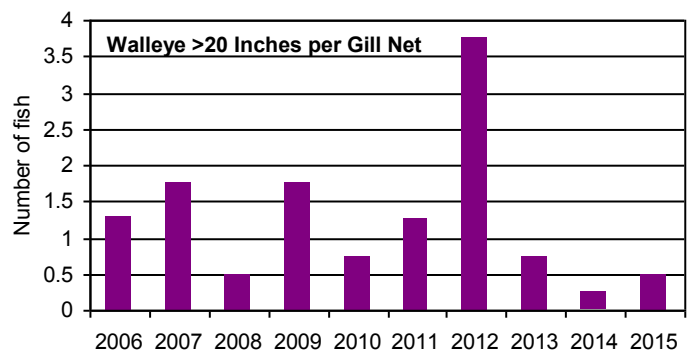
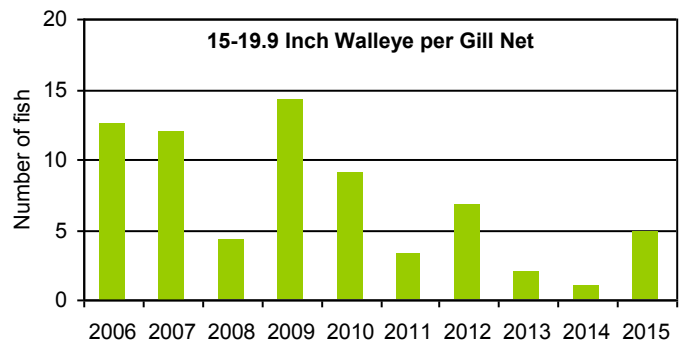
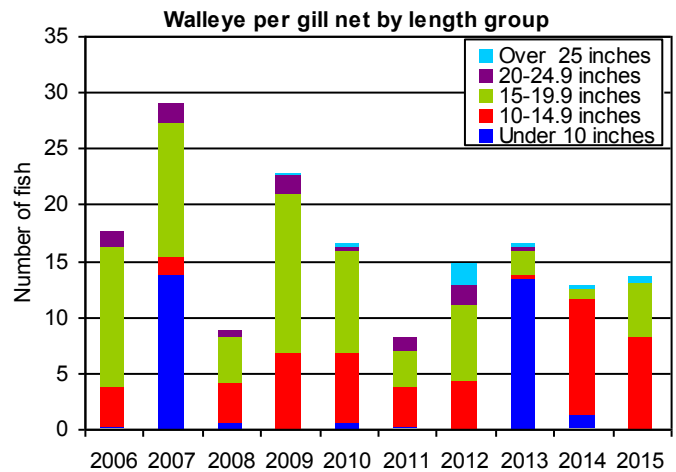
Current walleye regulations only allow the harvest of two 15 to 19.9 inch walleye. Abundance of fish in this size category has been lower than average the past two years, but a slight increase was seen last fall. The increase can be attributed to the 2013 year-class recruiting into this size category, as many of these fish reached 15 inches during the fall of 2015. The abundance of fish in this size category will continue to increase in 2016 as the fish from the 2013 year-class continue to mature.

Walleye over 20 inches continue to be difficult to capture utilizing our standard fall gill nets. Even though these fish are protected from angler harvest, our fall gill netting efforts are not indicating an increase in the abundance of these fish. Conversely, netting and shocking efforts completed during the spring spawning period have shown dramatic improvements in the abundance of fish greater than 20 inches. We have also seen an increase in the number of fish greater than 20 inches being caught and released by anglers from the data we collect in our annual angler survey. Therefore, while the fall gill nets are not necessarily telling the whole story, it appears that the Sherman walleye population is responding favorably to the special regulations that are currently in place.

Anglers seeking walleye have caught plenty of fish the past two years, but the number of harvested fish has been below average due to lower abundance of fish in the harvest slot. This trend started to change during late 2015 as more walleye started to recruit into the harvest slot. Anglers should see much improved chances of harvesting walleye during 2016 and chances of catching large trophy quality walleyes will continue to be good.

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The walleye regulation for Sherman includes a daily bag limit that may include two walleye greater than 15 inches but less than 20 inches and one walleye over 28 inches. There is a slot limit protecting walleye 20 through 28 inches.

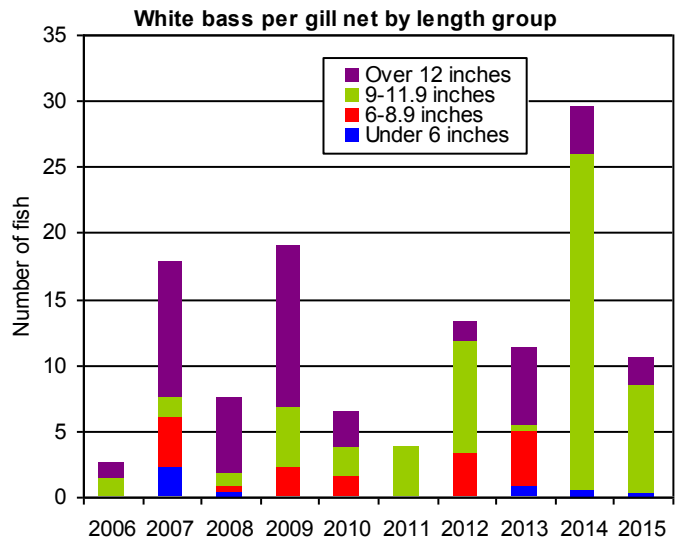


White Bass

After having an abundant catch of white bass in 2014, the catch during the 2015 fall survey dropped to more average levels. While the catch was lower, most of the sampled fish were larger than 10 inches. White bass recruitment has been good the past three years, which has resulted in multiple year-classes present in the current population. In addition, fish from the large 2013 year-class are most numerous and range from 10 to 12 inches.

The average length of white bass sampled was 11.2 inches, while the largest fish were just over 14 inches.

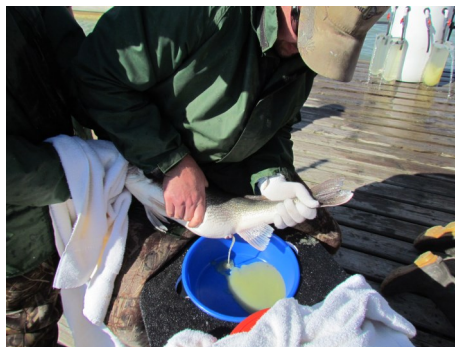
White bass angling success was exceptional during 2015 and anglers should expect to see similar results in 2016.



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 will be conducting walleye spawn collection at Sherman during 2016. Depending on weather conditions, spawn collection begins the last week of March or the first week of April and normally lasts for one to two weeks. Walleye are collected along the dam at night and disturbance to anglers is minimal. During 2015, fisheries staff collected approximately 560 female and 1,000 male walleye for spawning purposes during the seven day operation. Eggs and milt were collected from the brood fish and the fish were then returned to the lake. In all, crews collected approximately 280 quarts of eggs from Sherman. Walleye eggs were also collected at Merritt Reservoir and Lake McConaughy. 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 2016 include 284,000 walleye fingerlings during June.

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

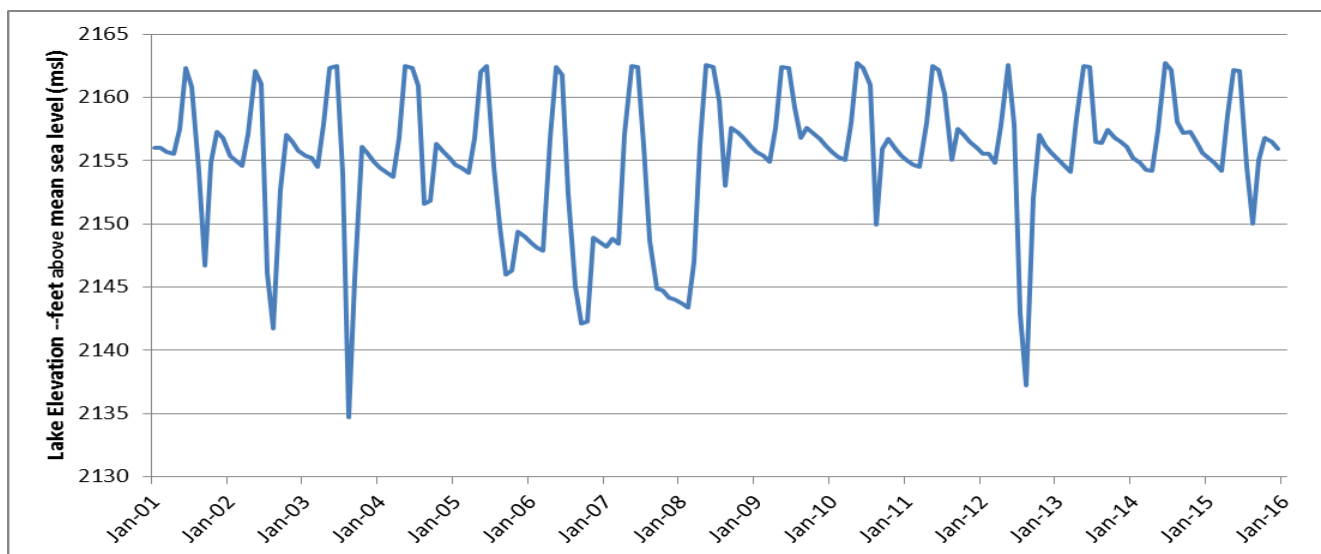
An angler survey will be completed at Sherman Reservoir from April through October 2016. This survey is done in cooperation with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The survey has been on-going since 1996 and has provided valuable information on angling pressure, catch rates, harvest rates, and numbers and types of fish caught. Anglers are encouraged to take the time to answer the questions from the creel clerk. Preliminary results from the 2015 angler survey indicated that there were 14,885 hours of angling effort from bank anglers and 50,032 hours of angling effort from boat anglers during the seven month survey period. Catch of various game fish species can be seen in the table below.

Species	Harvested	Released
Channel catfish	904	698
Northern Pike	0	382
White bass	10,911	7,744
Crappie	18,045	6,659
Walleye	1,767	21,488



Current lake elevations can be found on Farwell Irrigation District's website: <http://www.farwellid.org/index.html>. Drier conditions during the summer of 2015 resulted in the lake dropping approximately 14 feet during the irrigation season.

Sherman - End of Month Elevations 2001-2015



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. Monthly monitoring completed at many Nebraska reservoirs during the last five years have not shown any new evidence of zebra mussels.

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.
- Livewells 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/resources/stop-aquatic-hitchhikers/>

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 in 2016:



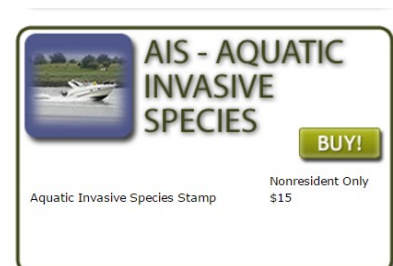
Boaters whose motorized watercraft are registered in any state other than Nebraska will be required to display a \$15 Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp each year they boat in Nebraska.

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 and at some agency offices.

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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