

Harlan Reservoir

2012 Angler Survey Summary

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Brad Newcomb, District Manager



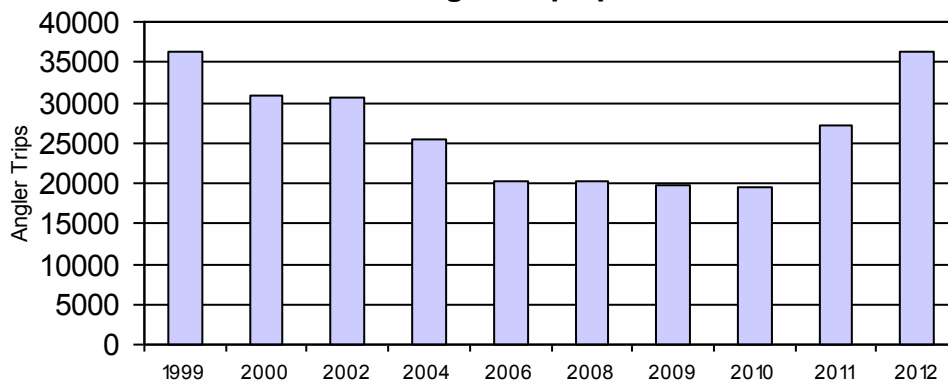
An angler survey was completed at Harlan Reservoir from April through October 2012. During that time period, angler counts and interviews were completed on 20 days per month, which included 14 weekdays and 6 weekend days. A total of 138 days were surveyed with 1,092 interviews. Angler surveys provide estimates of angling effort, catch and harvest, catch per hour, and sizes of fish caught. From 1990 to 2000, angler surveys were completed annually, but changed to an alternate year format from 2002 to 2008. Starting in 2009, a contract for annual angler surveys at Harlan was planned through 2013.

The following text and graphs contain this year's survey information with comparison to past years.

Fishing Effort Summary

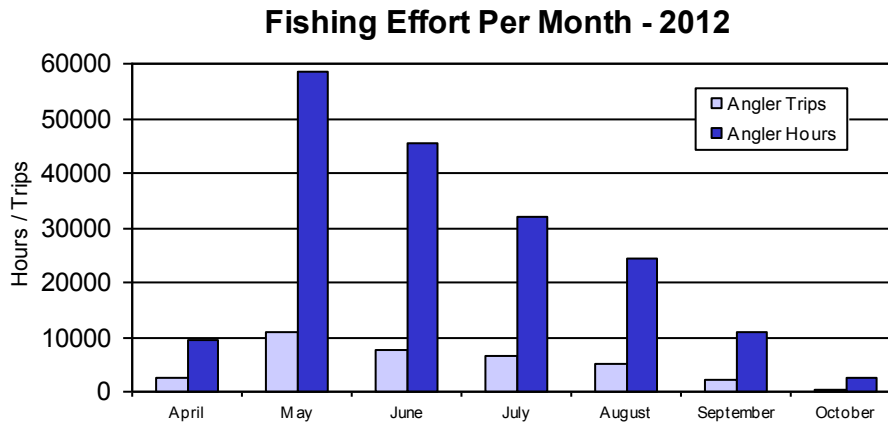
An estimated 36,229 angler trips were made to Harlan Reservoir during the seven month survey period in 2012, which continued an upward trend the last two years. Anglers spent 183,292 hours fishing (14hrs/acre), with the average trip lasting 5.0 hours. The following Nebraska counties contributed the most Harlan anglers: Harlan (18%), Adams (15%), Buffalo (15%), Lancaster (6%), Phelps (7%), Franklin (4%), and Hall (4%). Non-residents made up 4% of all anglers.

Total Angler Trips per Year



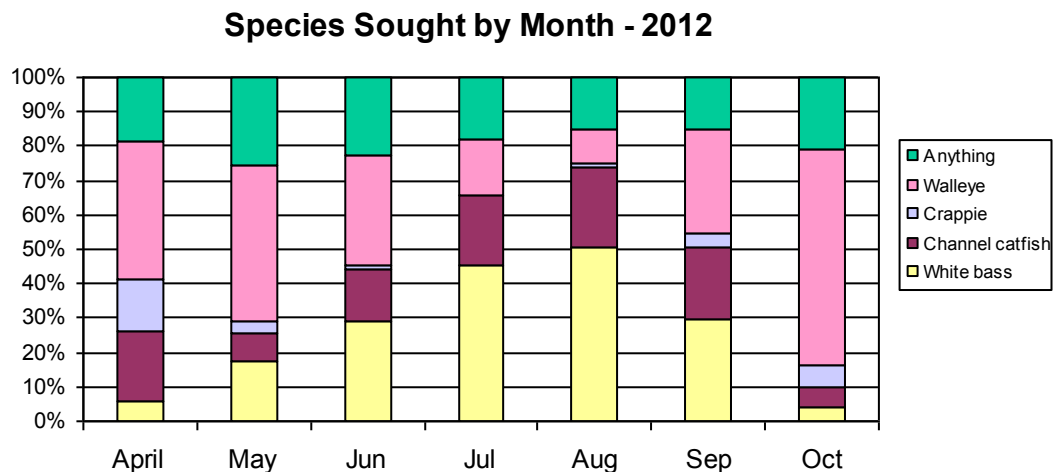
Fishing Effort by Month

May and June had the highest angler use, and the months of May through August accounted for 97% of the fishing effort during the seven month survey period. Excellent white bass fishing throughout the spring and summer months contributed to high fishing pressure in May through August.



Fish Species Sought by Anglers

Fish species sought by anglers varied by month, with many anglers seeking walleye early. Most anglers sought white bass in July and August. Over the entire survey period, 28% of Harlan anglers sought white bass, 31% sought walleye, 16% sought channel catfish, 3% sought crappie, and 20% fished for anything.

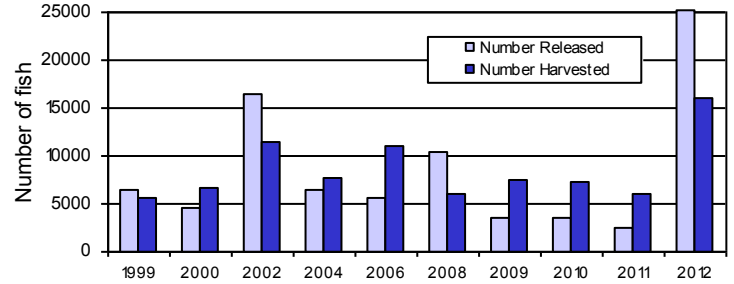


Channel Catfish

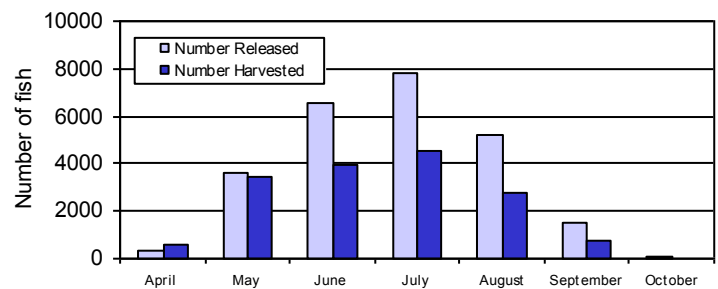
Harvest and release of channel catfish in 2012 was much higher than the previous few years. A total of 16,113 catfish were harvested and 25,148 released. There were 836 catfish measured during the survey, with an average length of 19 inches, and range of 8 to 30 inches. The total catch rate for anglers seeking channel catfish was 0.91 fish/hour, with a harvest rate of 0.43 fish/hour.

Monthly catch of catfish peaked in July, with the best catches in May through August.

Channel Catfish Caught Per Year



Channel Catfish Caught Per Month - 2012

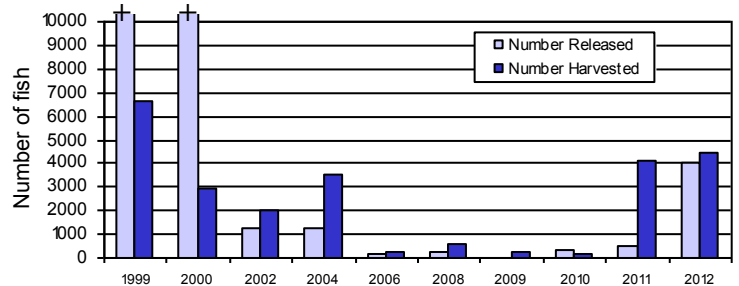


Crappie

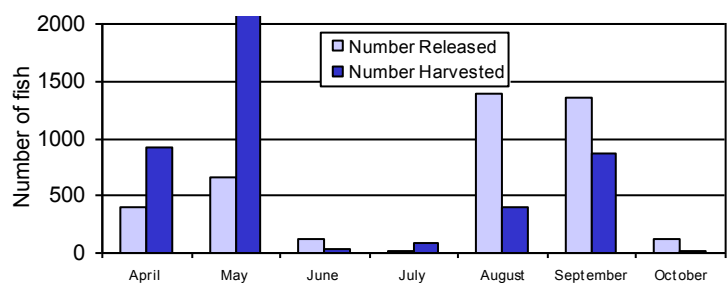
Anglers harvested about the same number of crappie in 2012 as the previous year, and at a much higher level from the period from 2006 through 2010. Estimated crappie harvest in 2012 was 4,448, with 4,051 released. Crappie anglers caught 1.94 crappie per hour, and harvested 1.1 crappie per hour. There was excellent crappie recruitment with high water levels from 2007 to early 2012. Lower water levels at the end of 2012 may have negative impacts on future crappie recruitment and affect distribution of crappie for anglers.

Crappie catch had two peaks in 2012, with good success early in April-May, then again in August-September. Because of lower water levels toward the end of 2012, there was reduced late season (October) success at the dam, Gremlin Cove, and Patterson Harbor compared to the previous year.

Crappie Caught Per Year



Crappie Caught Per Month - 2012



Walleye

Angler walleye catch improved again in 2012. Estimated harvest (4,863) was the highest recorded from the last 10 angler surveys. Estimated release (6,165) was also higher than the last few years. Catch per hour for walleye anglers was 0.21 walleye per hour with a harvest rate of 0.07 fish per hour. That equates to walleye anglers averaging 4.7 hours to catch a walleye, and 14.3 hours to harvest a walleye. Improved walleye recruitment from 2009 through 2012, and reduced flooded vegetation over time will contribute to good walleye fishing success in future years.

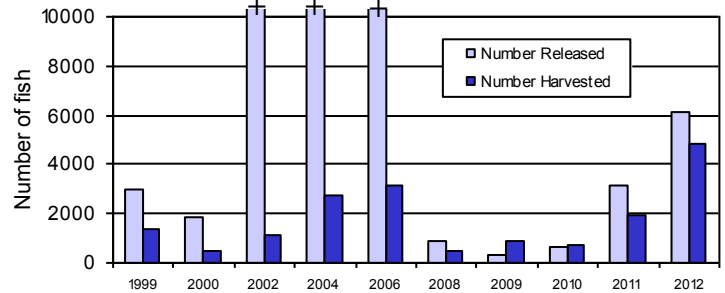
May was easily the best walleye fishing month in 2012, followed by June and July. May contributed 44% of the walleye harvested and released for the survey period in 2012.

This graph contains lengths of walleye collected by the creel survey clerk. Harvested walleye ranged from 15 to 31 inches, with an average of 18.8 inches (252 walleye were measured).

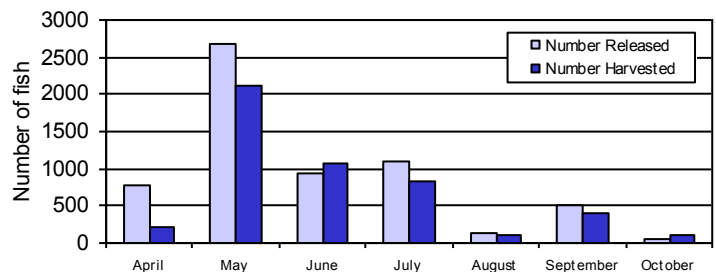
Compliance with the walleye size limit was very good, with only two harvested walleye under 15 inches encountered during the angler survey.

Walleye from 15-18 inches made up 55% of the harvest and 41% of released walleye.

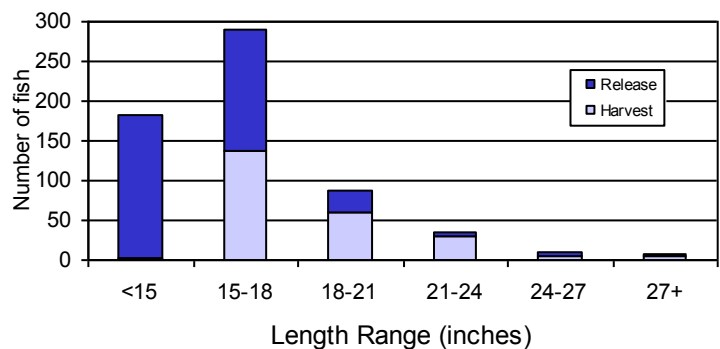
Walleye Caught Per Year



Walleye Caught Per Month



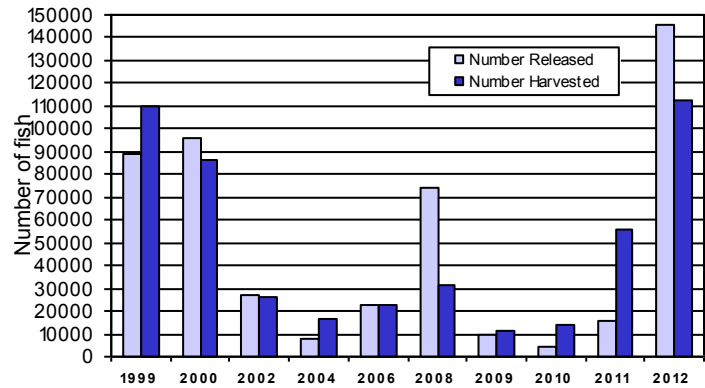
Walleyes Lengths - 2012 Angler Survey



White Bass

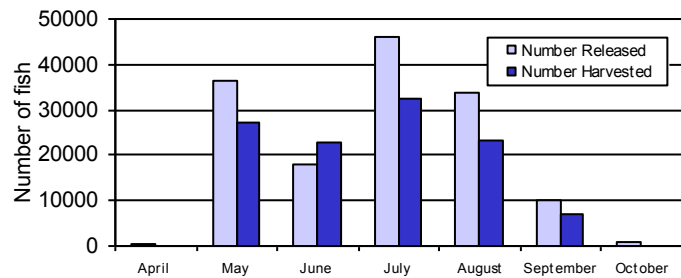
There was an extremely high catch and harvest of white bass in 2012. Both number of released and harvested white bass were the highest from the last ten angler surveys. There were an estimated 112,751 white bass harvested, and 145,696 released in 2012. Catch rates for anglers seeking white bass were also very good, with 2.75 fish caught per hour and 1.30 harvested per hour. Despite the high harvest, NGPC survey work from the fall of 2012 indicates consistent white bass recruitment and a high population with good sizes available. Anglers should expect good white bass fishing in future years.

White Bass Caught Per Year



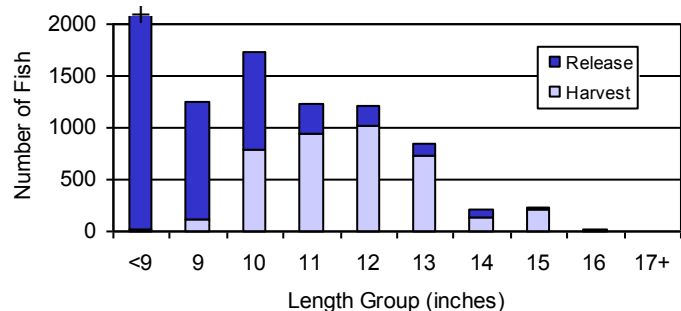
White bass fishing was extremely good in May through August, with the peak in July.

White Bass Caught Per Month - 2012



This graph contains lengths of white bass collected by the creel survey clerk. Harvested white bass ranged from 8 to 17 inches, with an average of 11.8 inches (3,818 measured). White bass from 10-12 inches made up 56% of the harvest in 2012. White bass over 12 inches made up 41% of the harvest.

White Bass Lengths - 2012 Angler Survey

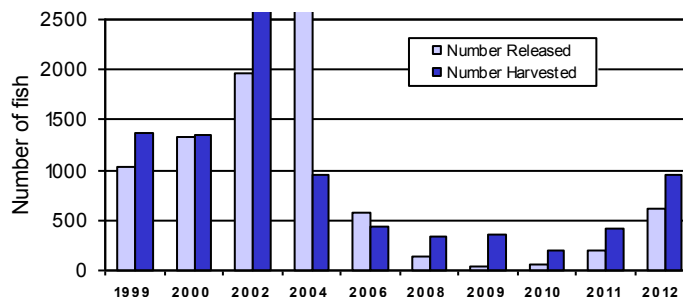


Wipers

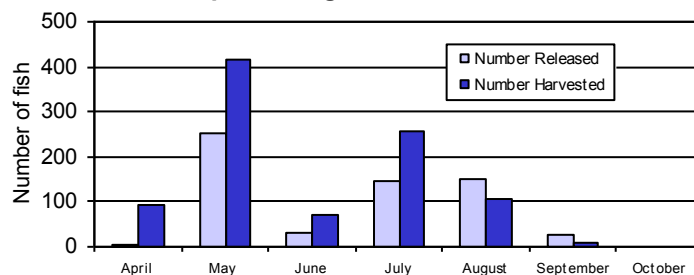
Angler catch and harvest of wipers continued an upward swing in 2012. Low wiper catches from 2006 through 2010 were the result of no wiper stockings from 2000 through 2004. Recent wiper stockings in 2005, 2008, and 2011 are resulting in improved wiper fishing. In 2012, there was an estimated 952 wipers harvested and 613 released. Harvested wipers ranged from 13 to 28 inches long, with an average of 20.5 inches (42 measured).

May was the best month for wiper fishing, with July and August both contributing good catches.

Wipers Caught Per Year



Wipers Caught Per Month - 2012



New Fishing Regulations for 2013

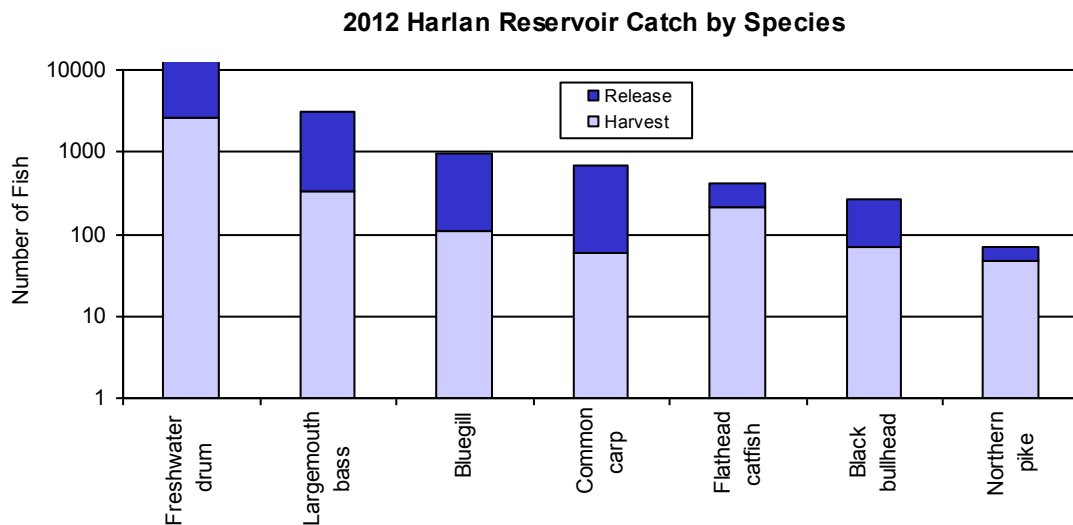
Several new fishing regulations went into effect on January 1, 2013 that may effect Harlan anglers:

- **White bass, striped bass, and striped bass hybrids:** The one-over daily bag restriction was lowered from 18 inches to 16 inches to provide more protection for wipers. The new regulation states the daily bag limit for white bass, striped bass, and their hybrids (combined) can contain only one fish 16 inches or longer - statewide.
- **Channel catfish:** The daily bag limit for channel catfish was increased to 10 on rivers, streams, and canals, but the daily bag limit of five was retained on reservoirs, lakes, and ponds. The possession limit for channel catfish was increased from 10 to 20.
- **Aquatic Invasive Species:** Any conveyance (boat) that has been on a waterbody must **drain all water** from their compartments, equipment, or containers before leaving the launch area. All aquatic vegetation from that waterbody must be removed before leaving the launch area.

Please refer to a current copy of the Nebraska Fishing Guide for more information.

Miscellaneous Species

Seven other fish species were well-represented in the 2012 angler catch, with freshwater drum the most numerous. Largemouth bass and bluegill catch were higher than past surveys, likely a result of high water levels and improved shoreline habitat. The improved largemouth bass population has generated increased fishing pressure for bass, including several tournaments. In 2012, anglers harvested 331 largemouth bass and released 2,694 largemouth bass. Anglers seeking bass caught 0.56 fish per hour.



For additional information about fisheries management at Harlan Reservoir, please contact the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission office in Kearney at 308-865-5310 or by email at the addresses listed below.

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Biologist: Brad Eifert: brad.eifert@nebraska.gov