

# Medicine Creek

## 2016 Survey Summary – GAME



PARKS –

Caleb Huber, Fisheries Biologist

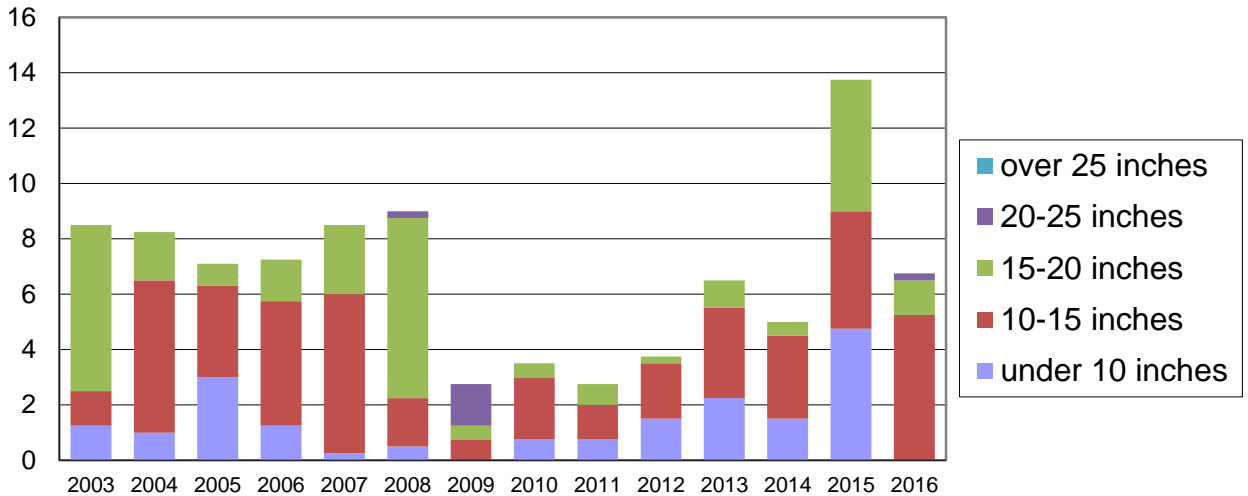
Fish populations are sampled each fall at Medicine Creek Reservoir using gill nets, a method commonly used to sample fish found in open water, such as walleye, white bass, channel catfish and hybrid striped bass. Gill nets are set on approximately the same dates and locations each year to reduce variability.

Walleye catch rates have been recovering following a sharp decline in 2009. Biologist sampled almost 14 walleye per net in 2015 but that number fell to 7 walleye per net in 2016. Though lower than last year, the 2016 survey is on par with long term average and much better than catch rates observed from 2009-2012. Walleye fingerlings are stocked annually at Medicine Creek due to lack of natural reproduction. Wiper numbers also appear to be much improved at Medicine Creek. Wiper stockings were reinstated in 2013 and have been requested regularly. Currently there are good numbers of 12-15 inch wipers, which should provide excellent angling opportunities in the future. The 2016 wiper survey had the highest catch rate in the state. Given enough time, anglers should see a handful of trophy wipers in the coming years. White bass are also present in Medicine Creek and are often easily confused with smaller wipers. White bass numbers have been lower but stable at Medicine Creek since 2012. Personnel sampled 5 white bass per net in 2016 with all fish sampled less than 12 inches. White bass are prone to boom and bust cycles but it may be necessary to consider supplemental stockings if numbers drop any lower.

Channel catfish are popular sport fish for anglers at Medicine Creek Reservoir. Biologists surveyed 10 fish per net in 2015 with the majority of sampled fish falling in the 16-24 inch size class. There were also several catfish in the 24-28 inch length class and a handful of trophy fish in excess of 28 inches. Channel catfish are not stocked at Medicine Creek because there is strong natural recruitment. 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 will be managed as a trophy fish. There is no minimum length limit but there is 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. In addition to the species discussed above, crappie anglers experience limited success and common carp are plentiful throughout the waterbody.

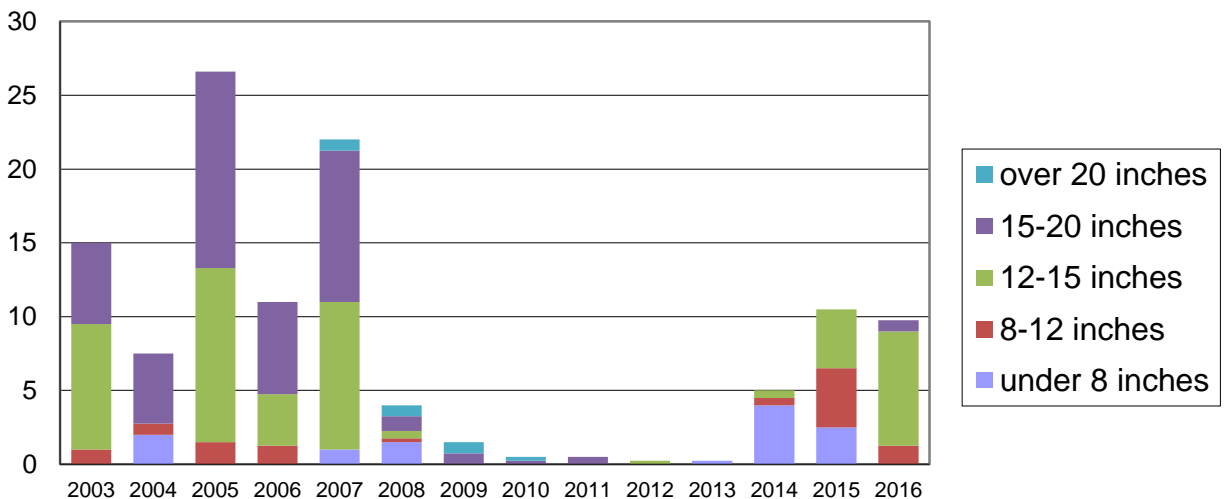
The following graphs show the average number of fish caught per net and the relative abundance of fish within several length categories. The text provides a brief explanation of the information shown in the graphs. Also included are 2016 summary graphs of some local waterbodies for comparison.

## Walleye Catch Per Unit Effort



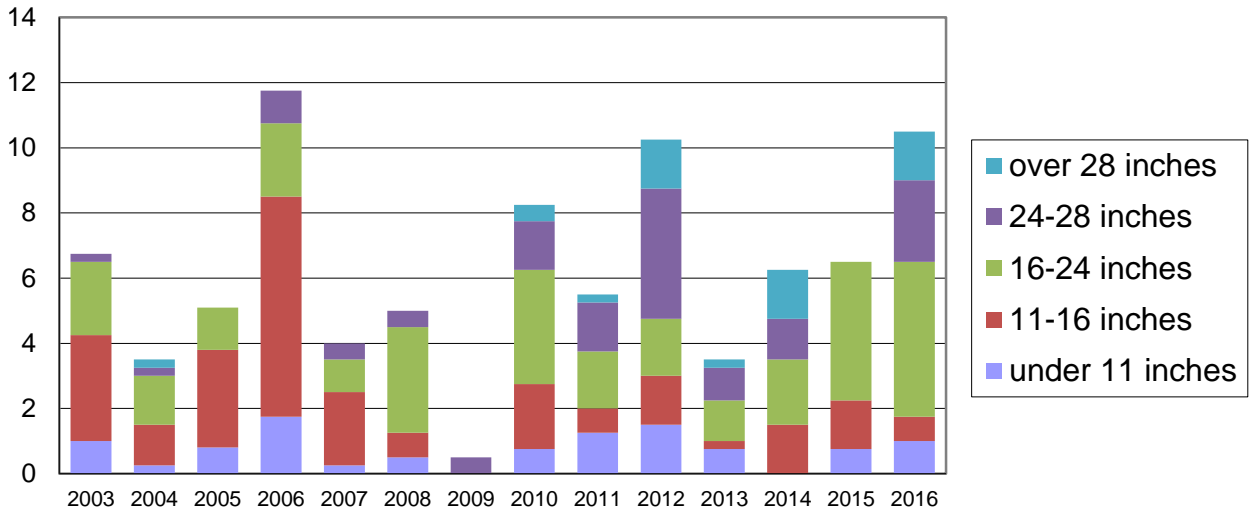
Walleye numbers spiked in 2015 but dropped to a more average number of 7 walleye per net in 2016. Even though this is a drop from last year's survey results it is still an improvement over the levels seen from 2009-2012. Most of the fish surveyed in 2016 were less than 15 inches but that just means there are good numbers of young fish that will be available to anglers in coming years. Walleye fingerlings were stocked in 2016 and are requested again in 2017.

## 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 2016 which is the same catch rate recorded in 2015. The 2016 wiper survey had the highest catch rate of any other wiper survey in the state. The notable difference in 2016 is that the size structure of the wipers is increasing. Most of the fish sampled in 2016 were in the 12-15 inch length class. There were even a few fish greater than 15 inches. Wipers were not stocked in 2016 but wiper fingerlings are requested in 2017.

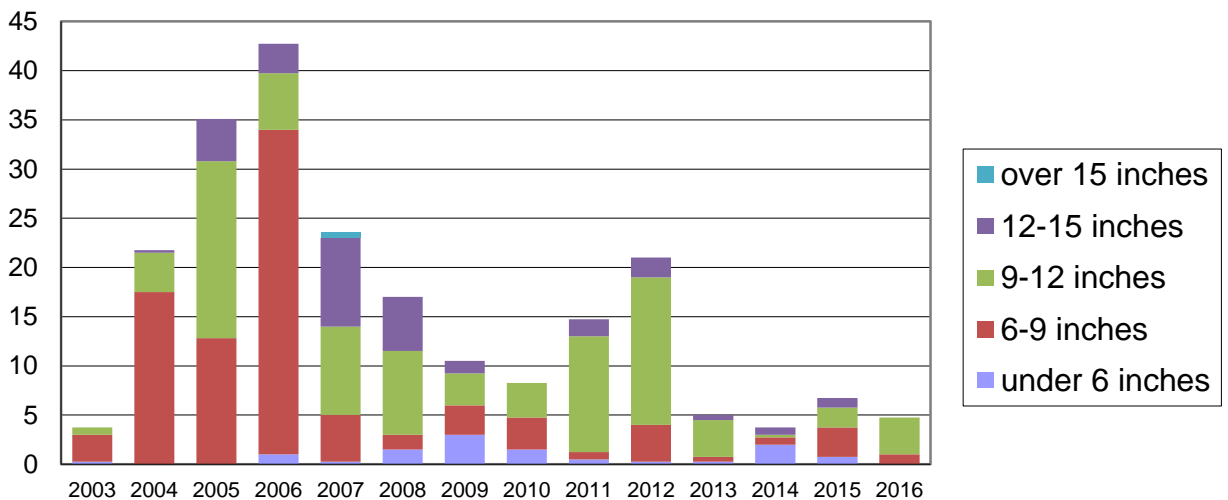
## Channel Catfish Catch Per Unit Effort



Channel catfish populations tend to be fairly stable at Medicine Creek, ranging normally between 4 and 8 fish per net. Catfish reproduce naturally in Medicine Creek and thus are not stocked. Biologists sampled 10 channel catfish per net in 2016 which is greater than the average catch rate. There were good numbers of 16-24 inch fish in the surveys which are what most anglers prefer for table fare and even a few trophies 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.

**Note: Blue catfish have been introduced to Medicine Creek and are managed under different regulations that channel catfish.**

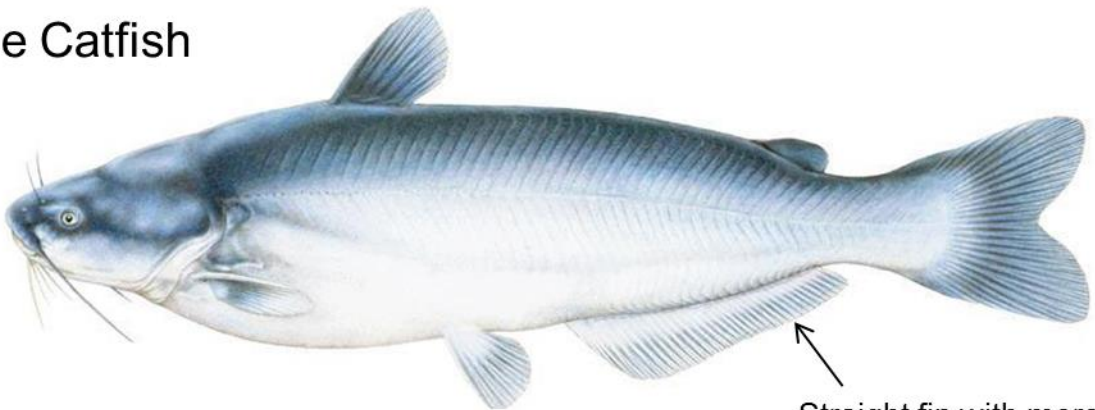
## White Bass Catch Per Unit Effort



White bass population numbers were down again in 2016. Biologists sampled roughly 5 fish per net in 2016. White bass numbers fell in 2013 and have remained consistently around the 5 fish per net level. Most of the fish sampled were between 9-12 inches in length. White bass are prone to boom and bust cycles, but if numbers don't improve it may be necessary to stock fish in an effort to rebuild the population.

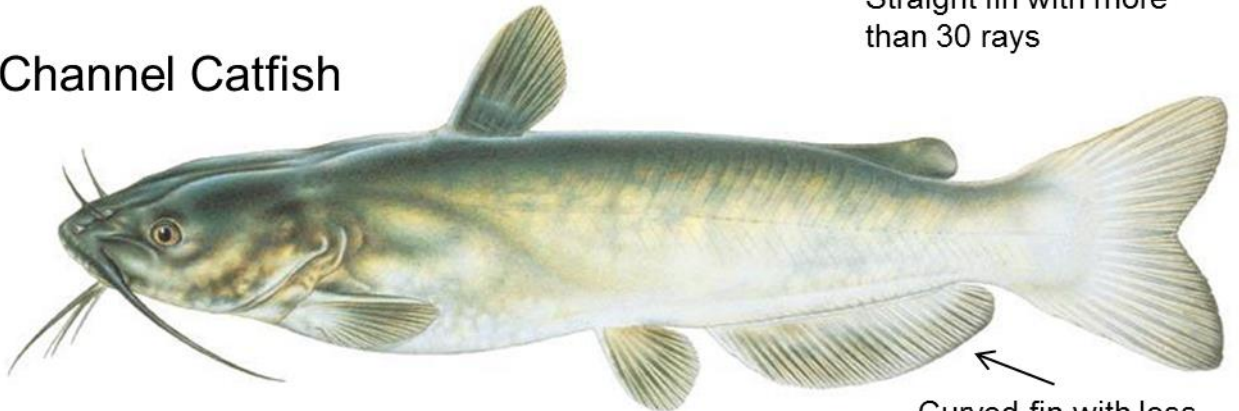
Blue Catfish were introduced into Medicine Creek Reservoir in 2015. Personnel stocked 8,850 fish that were approximately 10 inches long during the fall of 2015. And additional 5075 were stocked in the spring of 2016. Blue cats were introduced based on success at Swanson reservoir and a strong existing 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. In order for the blue catfish to reach their potential it will be necessary for anglers to allow time for fish to grow.

## Blue Catfish



Straight fin with more than 30 rays

## Channel Catfish



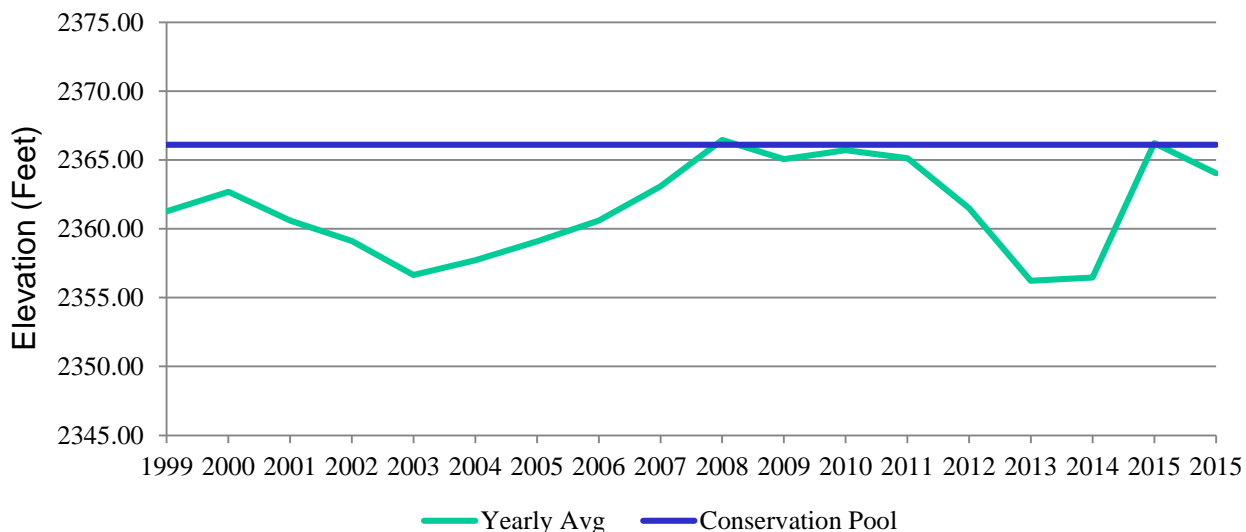
Curved fin with less than 30 rays

# Medicine Creek Fish Stocking Summary

Year	Walleye	Wiper	White Bass	White Crappie	Blue Catfish
2016	144,840 (1.5")				5075 (5")
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")				

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



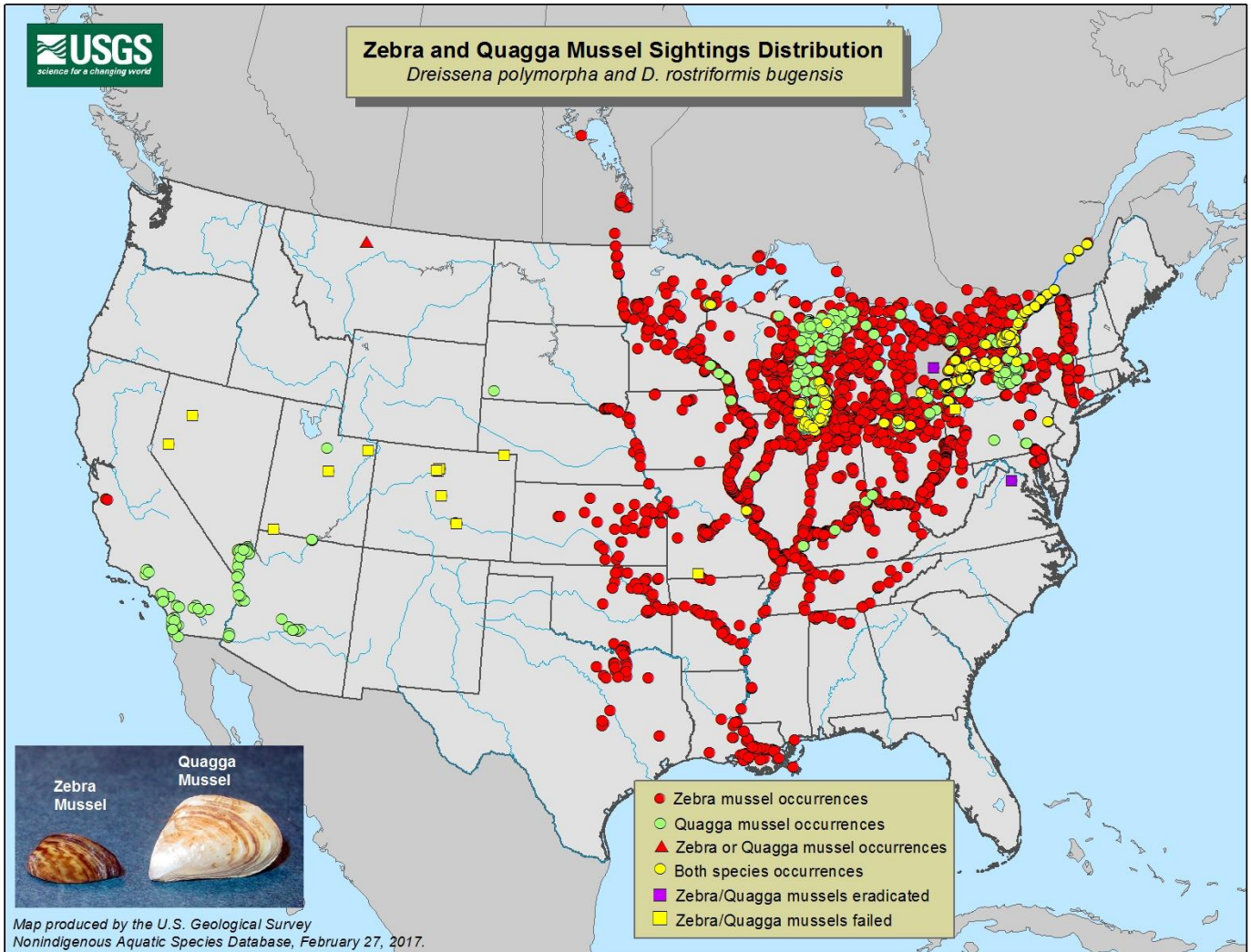
Medicine Creek is the only Southwest reservoir that irrigates annually but also refills annually due to higher inflows and the NCORPE stream augmentation project. The graph above is a graphical representation of annual mean elevations. The graphical depictions can be somewhat misleading if there are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



# STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!™

Prevent the transport of nuisance species.  
Clean all recreational equipment.

[www.ProtectYourWaters.net](http://www.ProtectYourWaters.net)



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.



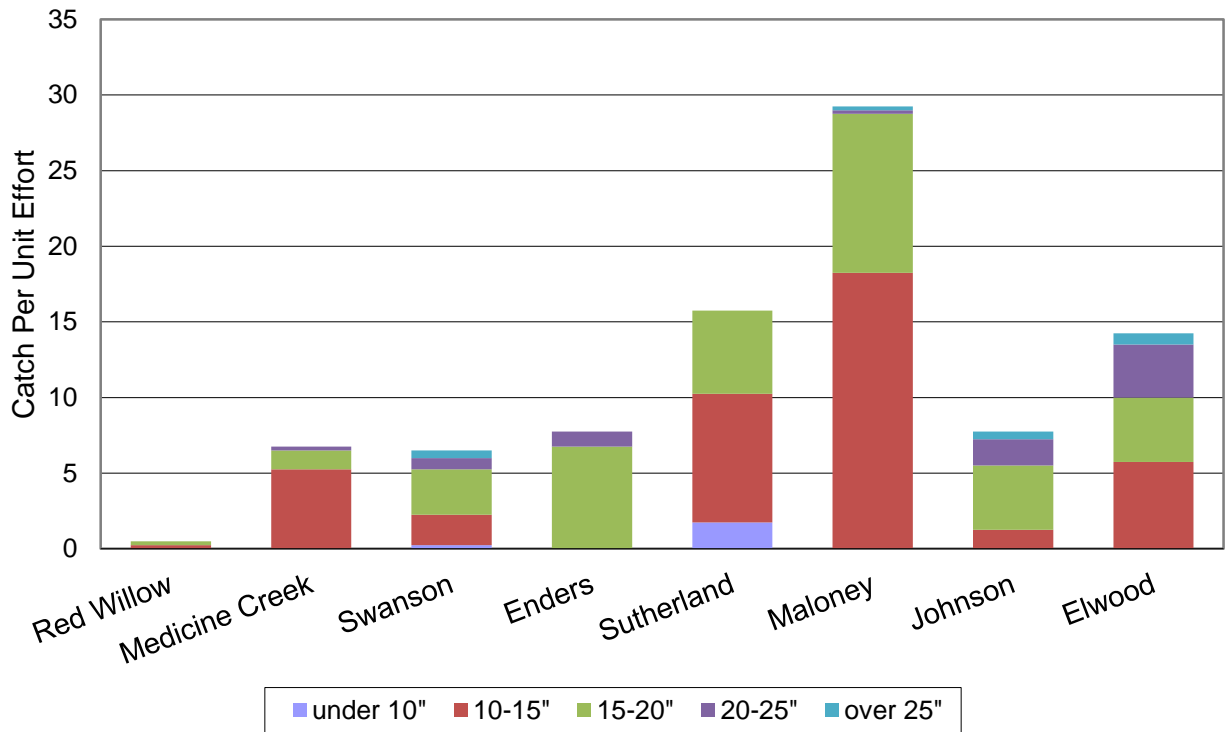
- Boat inspections for AIS prior to launch in Nebraska are NOT mandatory at this time.
- Personal watercraft registered outside of Nebraska must have this stamp.
- Non-motorized craft registered in any state are exempt from the stamp.
- Stamps are not required for boats registered in Nebraska. A \$5 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](http://OutdoorNebraska.org) or at Nebraska Game and Parks permitting offices.

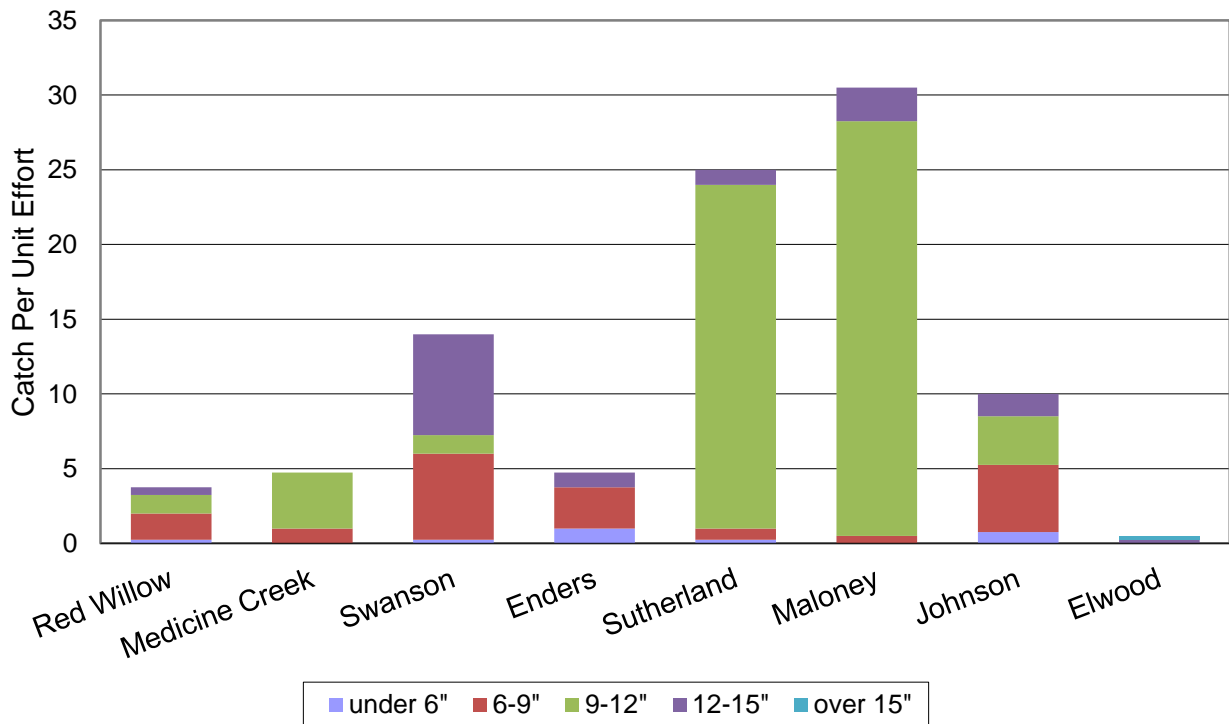
Learn more about invasive species at [neinvasives.com](http://neinvasives.com).



## 2016 North Platte Area Walleye Survey Summary

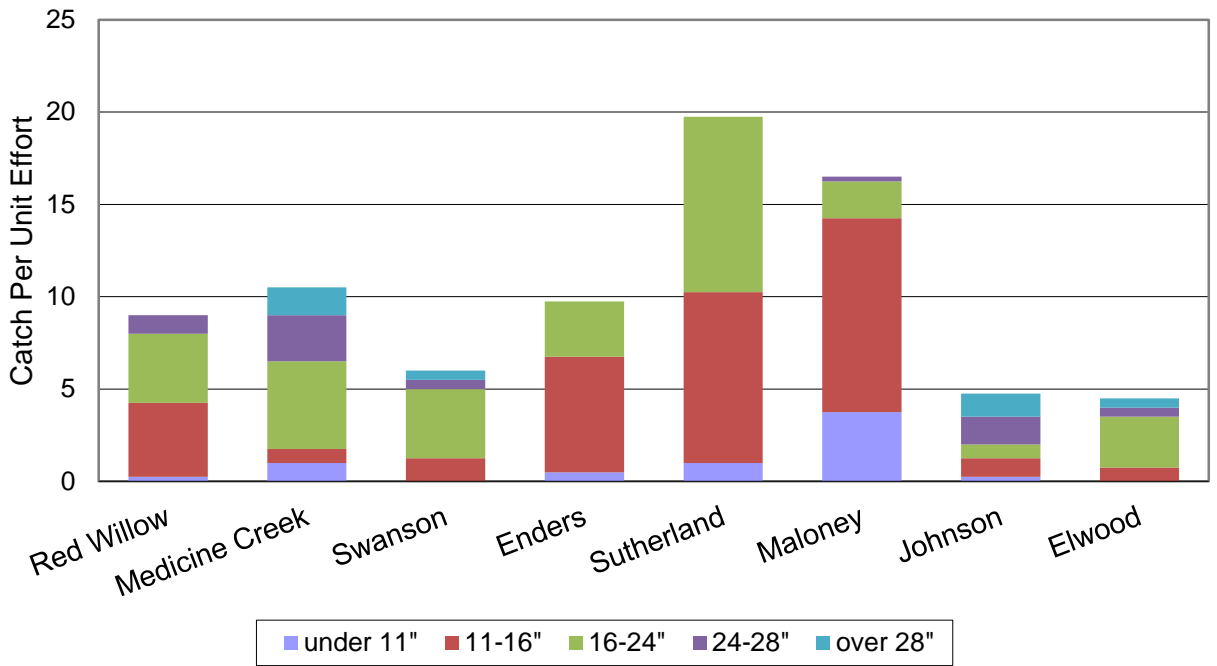


## 2016 North Platte Area White Bass Survey Summary





## 2016 North Platte Area Channel Catfish Survey Summary



## 2016 North Platte Area Wiper Survey Summary

