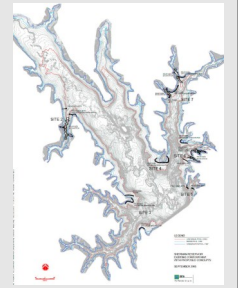


Sherman Reservoir

2012 Angler Survey Summary

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Brad Eifert, Fisheries Biologist



An angler survey was completed at Sherman Reservoir in 2012 from April through October. During the survey, anglers were counted and interviewed on 6 week days and 4 weekend days per month. In total, there were 85 days surveyed and 557 interviews completed during the seven month time period. A total of 1,148 anglers were contacted during the interviews. Angler surveys provide estimates of fishing effort, catch and harvest rates, catch per hour, and size structure of the fish caught. Starting in 2009, a contract for annual angler surveys at Sherman was planned through 2013.

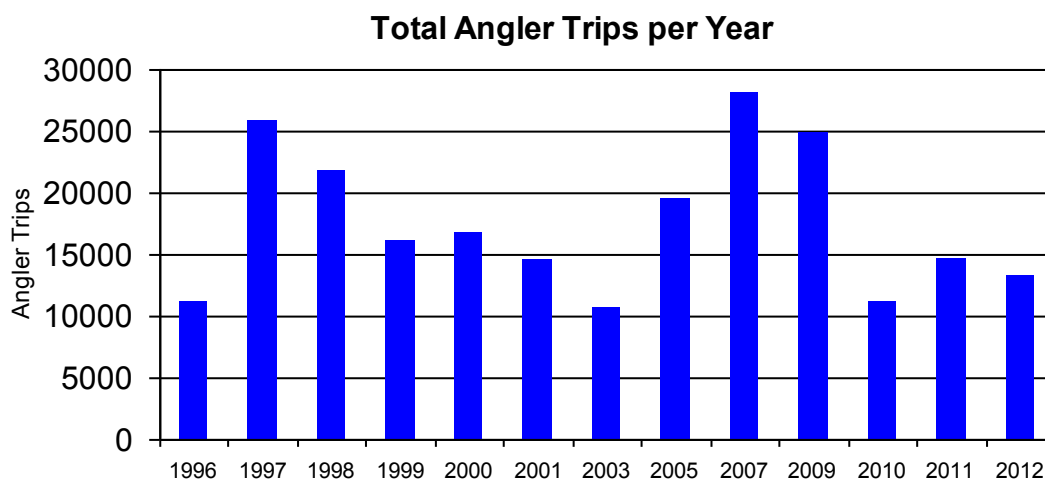
The following text and graphs provide summaries of the 2012 survey with comparison to previous years.

Fishing Effort Summary

The extremely hot and dry summer of 2012 resulted in Sherman water levels dropping 25 feet. The decline caused boat ramps to become unusable for approximately five weeks and also made shoreline access difficult. The low water levels had a substantial impact on recreational users at the reservoir and resulted in fewer trips to the lake, especially during the month of August and first two weeks of September.

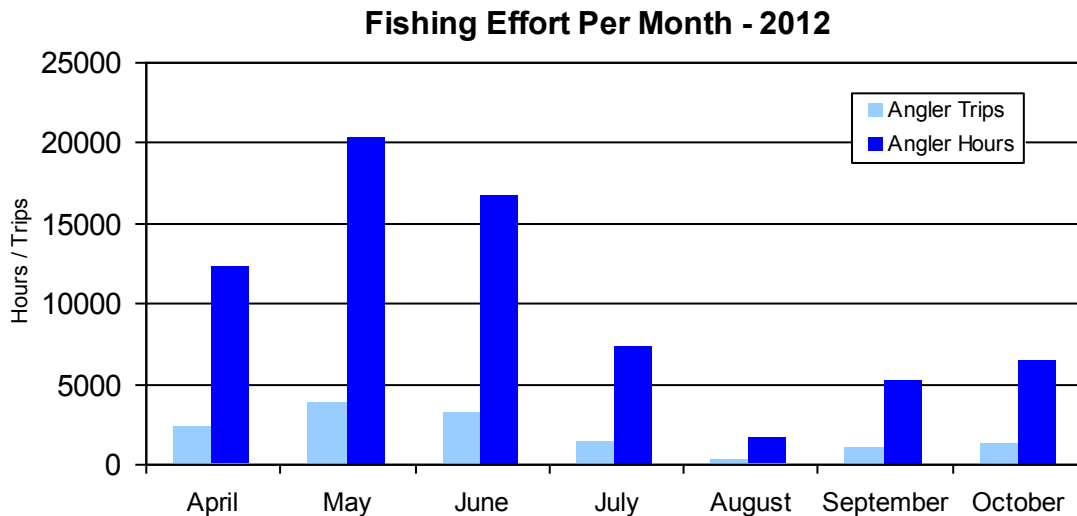
An estimated 13,250 angler trips were made to Sherman Reservoir during the seven month survey period in 2012. This was the fourth lowest number of angler trips recorded since the inception of the angler surveys in 1996. The average number of angler trips since 1996 is 17,562 and 2007 had the most trips with 28,038.

Anglers spent 69,873 hours fishing (25 hrs/acre), with the average trip lasting 5.3 hours. Boat anglers comprised 46% of the total trips and bank anglers constituted 54% of the trips. The following Nebraska counties contributed the most angler trips: Hall (30%), Buffalo (16%), Sherman (9%), Custer (8%), Howard (7%), Lancaster (4%), and Hamilton (3%). Anglers came from five other states (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Washington) during 2012, but the non-resident anglers only made up 2% of all anglers utilizing the reservoir.



Fishing Effort by Month

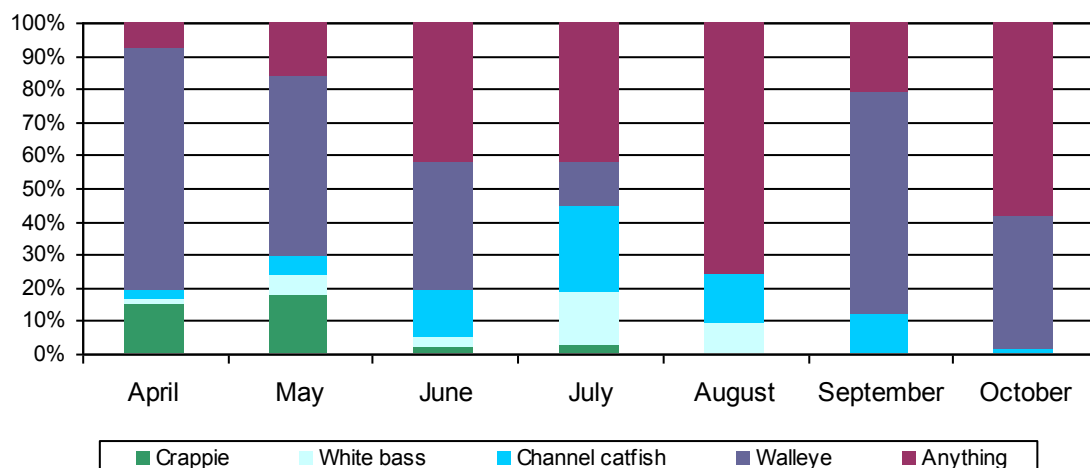
Fishing pressure was highest during the months of April, May and June. Falling reservoir levels during July and August caused boat ramps to go out of service and resulted in fewer fishing trips during the summer months. Raising water levels in September and pleasant fall weather conditions throughout October resulted in good fall fishing and increased angler trips during these two months.



Fish Species Sought by Anglers

Walleye were the most sought species during the months of April, May, June and September. Crappie fishing effort was highest in April and May. White bass were most sought during the months of July and August. Channel catfish angling effort was highest during the months of June, July and August. Walleye were once again the most sought after species at Sherman Reservoir during the entire angler survey period. Overall, 52% of Sherman anglers sought walleye, 11% sought crappie, 8% channel catfish, 4% white bass, and 23% fished for anything that they could catch.

Species Sought by Month and Entire Survey - 2012



Channel Catfish

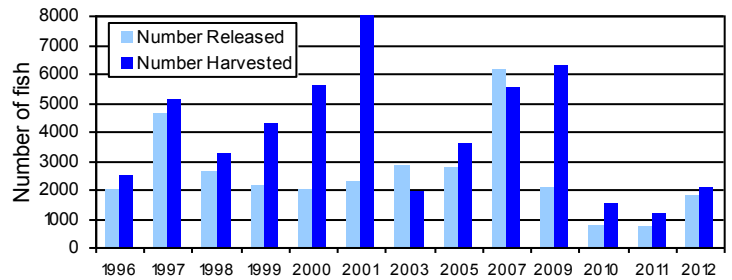
2012 Regulations: *No length limit, 5 fish daily bag*

The total catch of catfish was improved and the harvest was the highest recorded since 2009. A total of 2,035 catfish were harvested and 1,771 were released. The average length of harvested catfish was 18.7 inches and the average weight was 1.5 pounds. The catch rate for anglers seeking channel catfish was 0.2 fish per hour, with the harvest rate of 0.14 fish per hour.

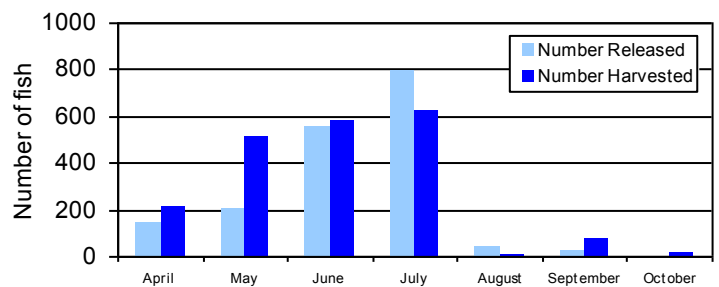
Catfish catch was very good during the spring and early summer, peaking in July. Catch and harvest was very low during the remaining months of the survey, primarily due to low water levels and poor access.



Channel Catfish Caught Per Year



Channel Catfish Caught Per Month

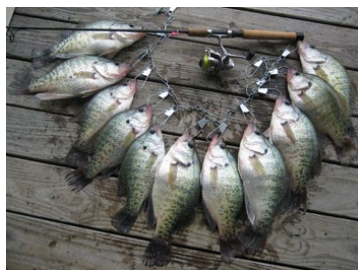


Crappie

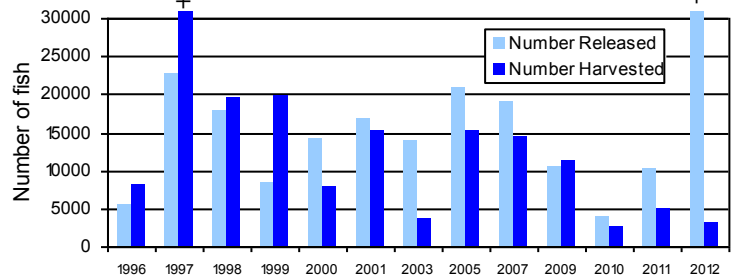
2012 Regulations: *10-inch minimum length limit, 15 panfish daily bag*

Crappie catch was the highest recorded since 1997, but most of the fish caught were below the ten inch minimum length limit and had to be released. There was an estimated harvest of 3,231 crappie, while 42,908 were released. Slightly more than half the released crappie measured 9 to 9.9 inches and should contribute to the harvest during 2013. The average length of harvested crappie was 10.9 inches. Anglers targeting crappie caught 4.0 crappie per hour, but were only able to harvest 0.19 crappie per hour. Angler compliance remains good, as only 2% of the harvested fish were less than the ten inch minimum length limit.

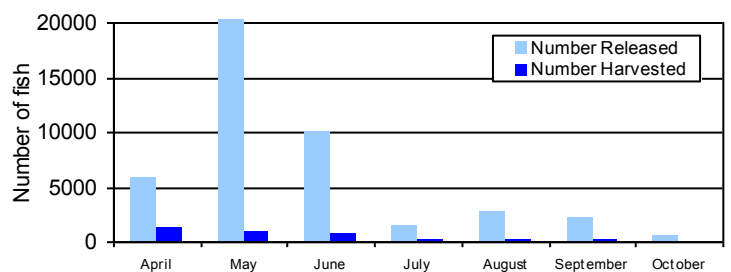
Crappie catch was highest during the month of May, but harvest remained consistent from April through June.



Crappie Caught Per Year



Crappie Caught Per Month



Walleye

2012 Regulations: Daily bag limit may include 2 walleye greater than 15 inches but less than 20 inches and 1 walleye over 28 inches. There is a slot limit protecting walleye 20 through 28 inches.

Walleye catch remained good at Sherman Reservoir during 2012. While the number of released fish (8,018) was lower than the long term average, the number of harvested fish (4,673) was the third highest recorded in the history of the angler survey. Walleye anglers had a catch rate of 0.34 walleye per hour and a harvest rate of 0.12 fish per hour.



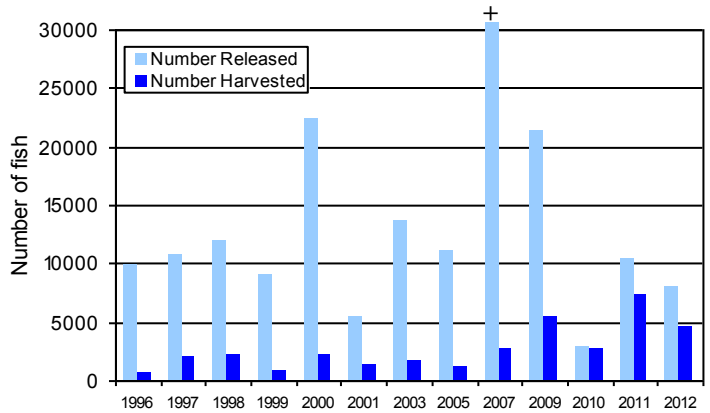
Walleye angling success was excellent during the months of April, May and June, with May providing the highest catch and harvest. Angling success was also very good during late September and throughout October.

With the special walleye regulations in place, nearly 96% of the harvested walleye were between 15 and 20 inches. The average length of harvested walleye was 17.3 inches, which was nearly identical to 2011 results. Only 2% of the harvest consisted of fish greater than 28 inches. For released fish, 50% were less than the 15 inch minimum length, 28% were in the 15-20 inch size category, and 22% were in the 20-28 inch protected slot.

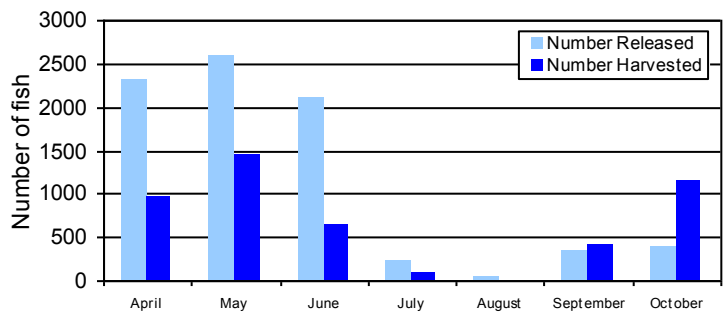
Angler compliance with the walleye size limit was very good; no walleye under the legal length limit of 15 inches were observed, but there were some fish (2% of total harvest) in the protected slot of 20 to 28 inches that were illegally harvested.



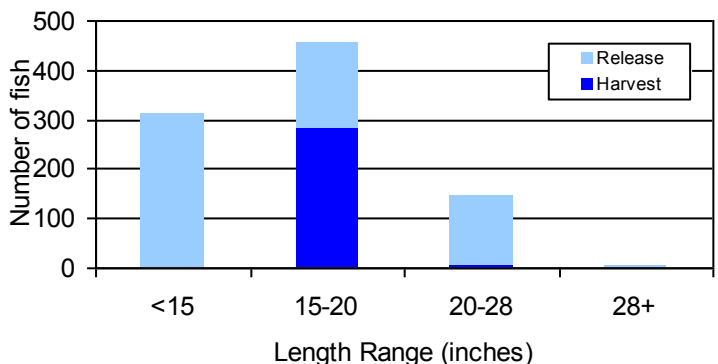
Walleye Caught Per Year



Walleye Caught Per Month



Size of Walleyes Caught by Anglers



White Bass

2012 Regulations: 15 fish daily bag, no more than one fish over 18 inches in daily bag

Low water levels and poor access conditions contributed to lower than average success on white bass during the 2012 fishing season. There were 3,230 white bass harvested, the lowest since 2003. The number of released white bass was slightly improved, as anglers caught and released 5,396 fish. Catch rates for anglers seeking white bass continued to be lower than average, as the total catch rate was 0.47 fish per hour and the harvest rate was 0.36 fish per hour.

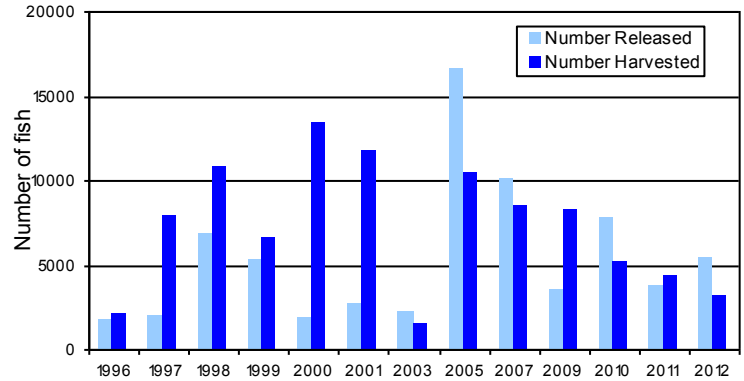


The best month for white bass success was in May, but success improved again during the fall months.

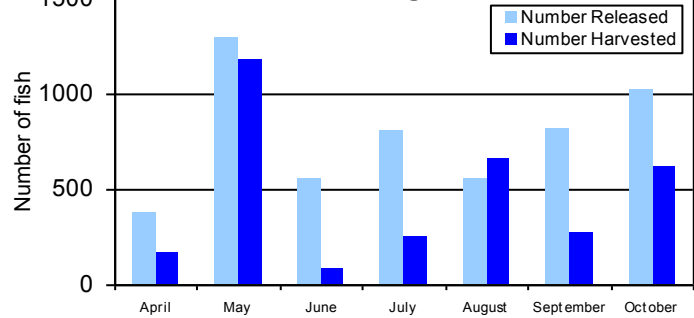
Harvested white bass ranged from 7 to 15 inches. The average length of white bass harvested during the survey period was 11.6 inches.



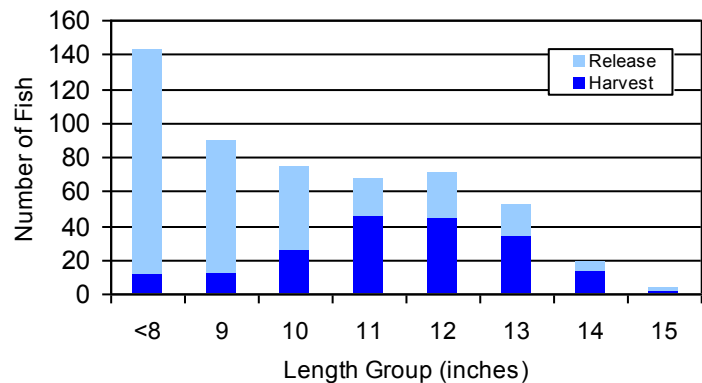
White Bass Caught Per Year



White Bass Caught Per Month



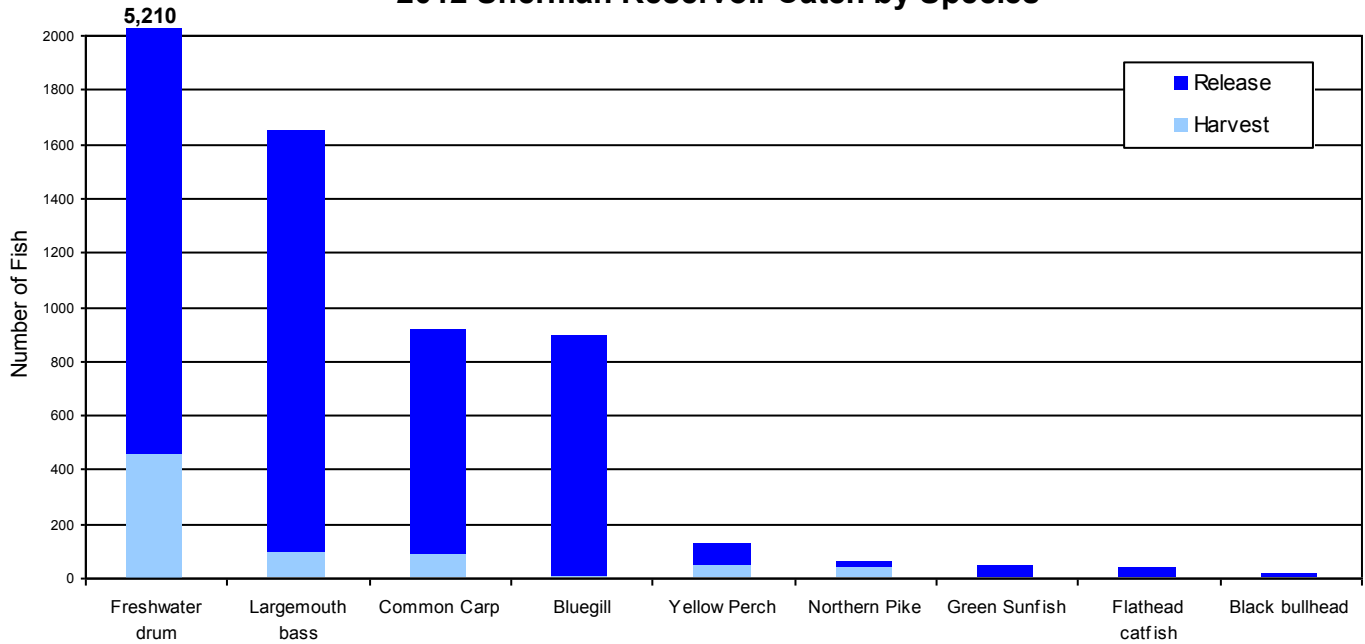
Size of White Bass Caught by Anglers



Miscellaneous Species

There were nine other fish species represented in the 2012 angler catch. Freshwater drum were most commonly caught, followed by largemouth bass, common carp and bluegill.

2012 Sherman Reservoir Catch by Species



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.

District Manager: Brad Newcomb: brad.newcomb@nebraska.gov

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