Sherman Reservoir
2014 Fall Survey Summary

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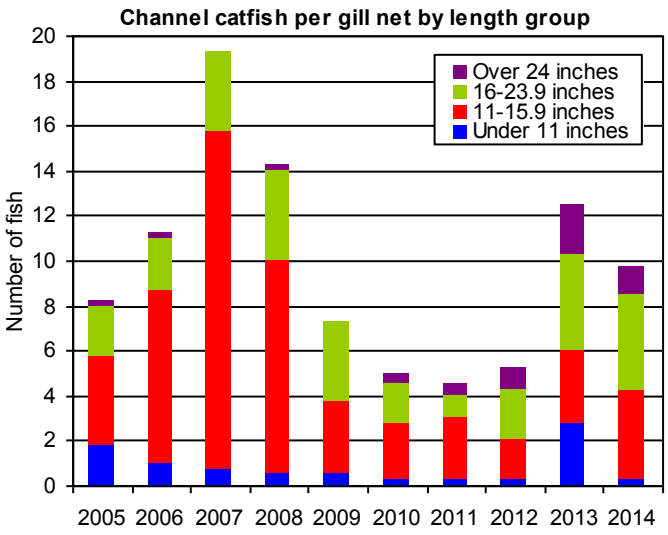
The following text and graphs are the result of netting surveys completed during October 2014 at Sherman Reservoir. For comparative purposes it also shows results from previous years. Fish populations are sampled each fall at Sherman using gill and frame nets. Gill nets are used to sample fish species 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

Although abundance was slightly lower, the channel catfish catch remains above the long-term average. Catfish of all sizes were sampled, but fish from 13 to 20 inches were most abundant. The catch of fish larger than 24 inches remains very good. The average length of catfish was 18.0 inches and the largest fish collected during the survey was 32 inches.

Anglers targeting channel catfish should find an abundance of catfish and angling success should be similar to 2014 results. Various sizes of catfish will provide anglers excellent opportunities to pursue either “pan-sized” or trophy channel catfish.

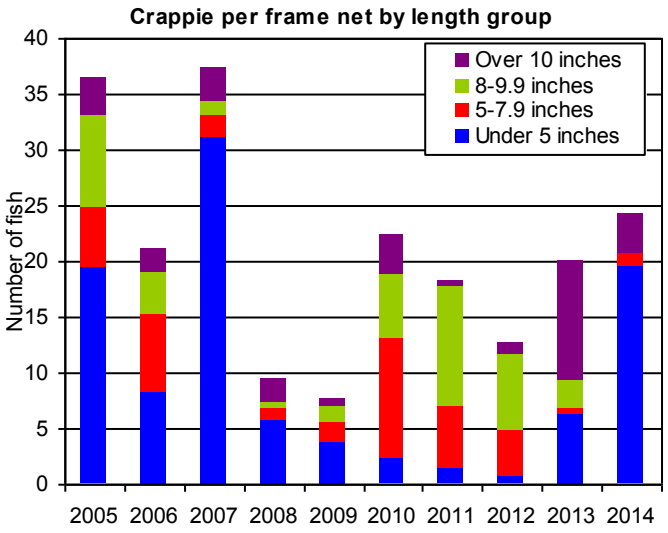
The daily bag limit for channel catfish on Sherman Reservoir is five fish per day.



Crappie

There was a slight improvement in crappie catch this year, with the increase contributed to a very high catch of young-of-the-year fish (less than 5 inches). Once again, there were few 5 to 10 inch crappie sampled, resultant of poor recruitment in 2011 and 2012. The lack of intermediate sized crappie is concerning and could cause poor fishing opportunities in the next couple years. Abundance of fish greater than 10 inches declined, but remains close to the ten-year average catch.

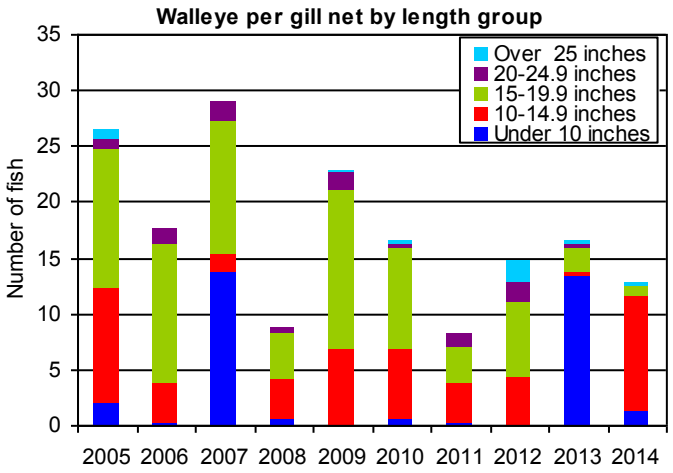
Anglers have had excellent crappie fishing the past two seasons at Sherman, resulting in high harvest mortality and a reduction in the abundance of crappie larger than 10 inches. The legal-sized crappie remaining in the lake have increased in average size (11 to 12 inches). Therefore, anglers might experience lower harvest rates, but size of the harvested fish should be improved.



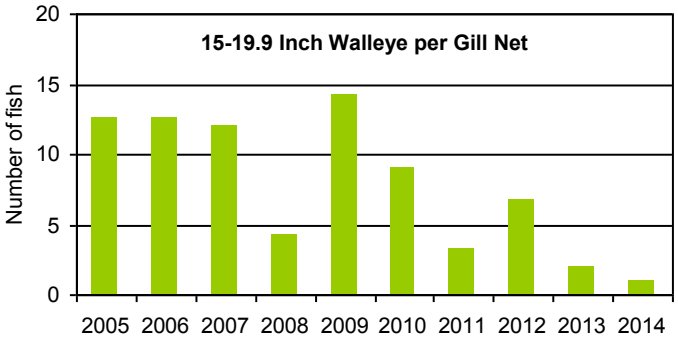
Crappie regulations for Sherman Reservoir include a 10-inch minimum length limit and a daily bag limit of 15 fish.

Walleye

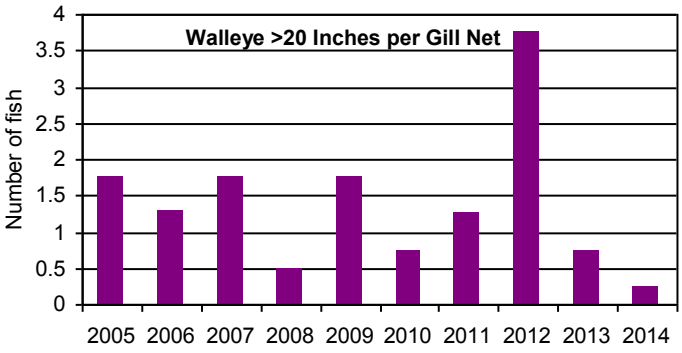
Walleye catch was slightly lower during the 2014 netting survey, as the gill net catch dipped to 12.8 walleye per net. Over the past ten years, catches have ranged from a high of 29.0/net to a low of 8.3/net. The average catch during that ten year period is 17.3 walleye per net.



Most of the walleye catch consisted of fish in the 10 to 15 inch size category. These fish were all from the large 2013 year-class and ranged in length from 11.0 to 13.5 inches. This year-class comprised 80% of the sample and should contribute greatly to the walleye fishery in the coming years. Fish less than 10 inches were the second most abundant size group of fish collected. The catch of these young-of-the-year fish was higher than average, indicating the possibility of another strong year-class. The prospect of another good year-class is good news, as poor 2011 & 2012 year-classes have resulted in fewer fish recruiting to the 15 to 20 inch size category. When the poor year-classes are combined with angler harvest mortality, the result is the lowest catch of 15 to 20 inch fish sampled in years. There were no walleye sampled in the 20 to 25 inch size category, while the catch of fish greater than 25 inches was similar to 2014 results.



The average length of walleye captured during the survey was 12.7 inches and the largest walleye was 26 inches.

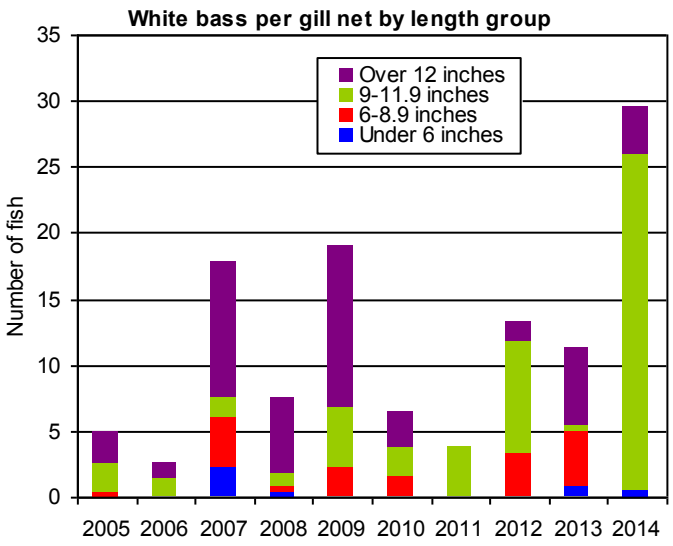


While the fall gill netting survey indicated that abundance of fish greater than 20 inches is declining, both angler catch and the female walleye sampled during spawn collections indicate otherwise. Therefore, it is believed that these larger walleye were concentrated either in shallow water or in other locations within the reservoir and were missed by gill netting efforts during the past couple fall surveys. Sampling efforts conducted during the spring walleye egg collection process continue to show that the abundance and size structure of the female walleye population has improved since the current walleye length limit was enacted in 2009. During this same time frame, we have witnessed a decline in the abundance of male walleye in the population. Male walleye seem to be more impacted by the size limit than females, as they do not grow as quickly and spend more of their lifetime in the 15 to 20 inch harvest slot, increasing their vulnerability to angler harvest. In addition, small year-classes from 2008-2012 have reduced the number of available walleye in the reservoir and the fish available for harvest. Currently, the 2013 year-class is the largest produced at Sherman since 2007 and fish from this class will begin to recruit into the 15 to 20 inch harvest slot during 2015. These fish should provide very good angling opportunities and will help to increase walleye abundance at Sherman Reservoir for the next several years.

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

The white bass catch was excellent during the 2014 fall netting survey, as total catch was the highest in the past ten years. While five year-classes of white bass were collected, fish from the highly successful 2013 year-class comprised a high percentage of the sample. These fish ranged from 9.5 to 11 inches and made up 86% of the white bass collected. The 2012 year-class was unsuccessful due to the large drawdown experienced during that summer, but there was good representation of fish from the 2009, 2010 & 2011 year-classes, which currently range from 12 to 15 inches.



The average length of white bass sampled was 10.9 inches, while the largest fish were just over 15 inches.

Success for white bass anglers should be improved during 2015, as there is currently an abundance of white bass in the reservoir. While most of the fish are currently less than 12 inches, good numbers of larger fish are also present.

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

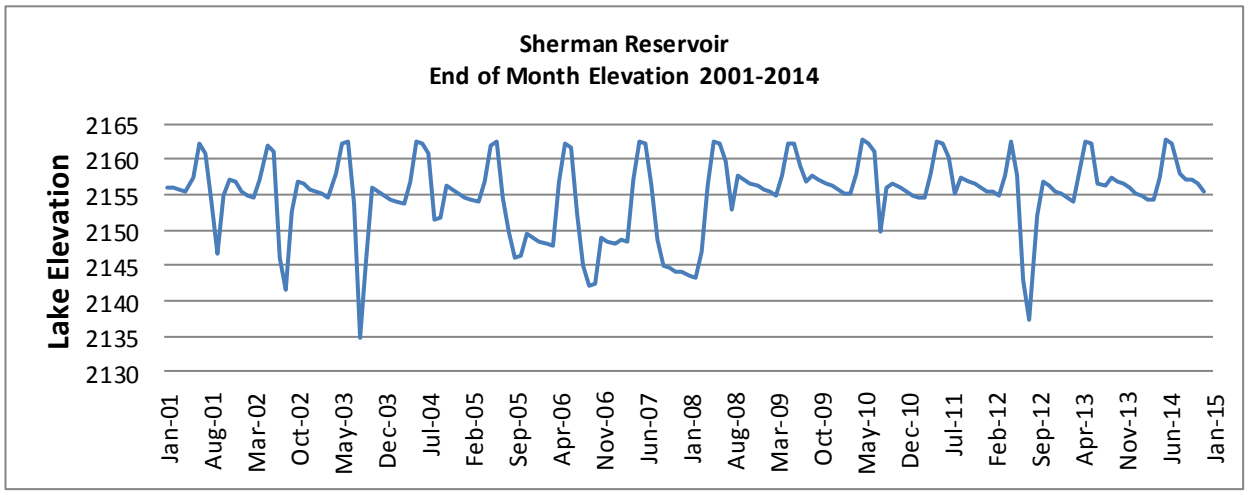
Fisheries Division will once again be conducting walleye spawn collection at Sherman during 2015. Depending on weather conditions, spawn collection begins the last week of March or the first week of April and normally lasts for one to two weeks. Walleye are collected along the dam at night and disturbance to anglers is minimal. During 2014, fisheries staff collected approximately 480 female and 1,000 male walleye for spawning purposes during the four night operation. Eggs and milt were collected from the brood fish and the fish were then returned to the lake. In all, crews collected approximately 345 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 new walleye spawning reef near the west end of the dam is closed to all fishing from sunset to sunrise beginning April 1 and ending April 20.

An angler survey will be completed at Sherman Reservoir from April through October 2015. 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.

Scheduled fish stockings for 2015 include 140,000 walleye fingerlings during June and 950 twelve inch northern pike in September.

A detailed bathymetric map of Sherman Reservoir can be found on Nebraska Game and Parks Commission website: **http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/Fishing/programs/lakemapping/lakemapping.asp**

Current lake elevations can be found on Farwell Irrigation District's website: **http://www.farwellid.org/index.html**. Timely rains and cooler than average summer temperatures resulted in a minimal irrigation drawdown of only 6.5 feet during 2014.



Aquatic nuisance species, especially zebra and quagga mussels, continue to be a serious threat to Nebraska waters. Monthly testing during the summer months at most Nebraska reservoirs is currently done to monitor the spread of invasive mussels. Currently, there are three locations that are positive for zebra mussels in Nebraska; Offutt Air Force Base Lake, the Missouri River, and most recently Lewis and Clark Reservoir. Unfortunately, nearly all of the States surrounding Nebraska have multiple lakes that have tested positive for either zebra or quagga mussels. Therefore, anglers who travel out of state to fish need to educate themselves on invasive species and need to learn the proper way to decontaminate their equipment before using it in Nebraska waters. An excellent source of information regarding invasive species can be found on the University of Nebraska's Invasive Species Project website: **http://neinvasives.com/resources/stop-aquatic-hitchhikers/**

Anglers and boaters using Sherman and other Nebraska waters need to be aware of recently enacted regulations that are designed help prevent the spread or introduction of unwanted species in Nebraska waters.

It is now 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. Before leaving a waterbody, drain water on site.

Anglers should also remember that all aquatic vegetation from that waterbody attached to the watercraft and/or trailer must be removed before leaving the launch area.

Livewells should also be drained prior to leaving the launch area: plan ahead and bring a cooler for harvested fish.


Comparison of quagga (left) and zebra (right) mussel. Michigan Sea Grant.

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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