

STATUS OF THE WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY



**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES**

DIVISION OF FISHERIES

MARCH 2007

STATUS OF WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION I

DISTRICT 1: JO DAVIESS, STEPHENSON, WINNEBAGO, BOONE, DEKALB, OGLE, AND CARROLL COUNTIES

SHABBONA LAKE - Shabbona Lake is located in the 1,550-acre Shabbona Lake State Park in the DeKalb area. The lake was built in 1974 and first opened to fishing in 1977.

Walleye stocking was initiated in 1975 but reliable, yearly stocks began in earnest in 1983 from the state hatchery system, rearing ponds, and local sportsmen's club donations.

From 1992 through 2006 small fingerlings have been added yearly from the state hatchery system, and 19,915, 4-8" large fingerlings have been periodically stocked through angler donations and from a rearing pond located in the park. Additional large fingerlings were stocked in late 2002 through Sportsmen's Club donations.

Creel census data were taken in 1988, 1990, 1997 and 2002.

The 1988 creel revealed a harvest of 10.2 pounds per acre of walleye that averaged 1.25 pounds under a catch rate of .038 fish per hour. With this catch rate and the publicity it generated, 1989 was a banner fishing year. The 1990 creel census found a lesser harvest of 2.6 pounds per acre of slightly smaller fish that averaged 1.17 pounds under a catch rate of .01 fish per hour.

The 1997 creel data found an estimated 1,623 walleye caught (5.3 per acre) that weighed 1316.4 pounds (4.3 pounds per acre) of fish that averaged .81 pounds. Seventeen and one-half percent of these fish were harvested or an estimated 284 walleye (1 per acre) that weighed 763 pounds (2.5 pounds per acre) of fish that averaged 2.7 pounds. In 2002 anglers caught 11 pounds per acre. The average size of harvested walleye was 1.6 pounds.

Shabbona Lake was first explored as a source for brood fish in 1989 when 192 walleye were netted and electrofished in April. The lake became a reliable source of brood fish in 1995 when 42 females between 2.5 to 11 pounds and 107 males between 15.5 to 25.9" up to 6 pounds were taken as brood stock to the LaSalle Hatchery.

From 1996 through 2001, 360 males and 293 females produced 15.9 million walleye and saugeye fry at the LaSalle Hatchery. With other lake being explored as a source of brood fish, Shabbona Lake's 25 females produced 1,498,000 fry in 2002, and 14 females produced 1,040,000 fry in 2003. A total of 3,024,772 fry were produced in 2004. Shabbona was not used as a brood lake in 2005 or 2006 after the State closed Spring Grove Hatchery. Walleye were brought down from the Chain of Lakes.

The lake's largest walleye at 9.9 pounds was taken in 2001 with good catches made throughout 2003, and a very good outlook expected for 2007. Most walleye will again be taken on the outer edge of the weed line, in deep timber, and along the dam. There is a minimum size limit of 18" with a catch limit of six per day.

PIERCE LAKE - Pierce Lake is a 162-acre impoundment in the 3,092-acre Rock Cut State Park located northeast of Rockford. The lake was built in 1960 and completely rehabilitated in 1970 following the entire lake drainage due to a faulty valve.

Walleye stocks were sporadic until 1985 when they began appearing on a yearly basis. A walleye study was initiated in 1987 and a muskie study initiated in 1990 by the Illinois Natural History Survey.

From 1992 through 2002, the lake has been stocked with 78,704 - 1 to 2" fingerlings.

A creel survey in 1999 found a harvest of 6.49 pounds per acre of walleye that averaged 1.57 pounds under a catch rate of .013 fish per hour.

Fall day electrofishing typically produces from 5 to 20 walleye per hour. Night electrofishing typically produces about 60 walleye per hour. An April netting survey was first conducted in 2002 to determine if brood fish could be collected. A total of 113 walleye were collected with one female weighing in at 13 pounds. The 2003 survey produced 150 walleye providing nearly 2,000,000 eggs.

One survey below the dam in the tailwaters in July 1998 found 74 walleye up to 22", two surveys in 1999 produced 61 walleye up to 25.7", and three surveys in 2000 again found 61 walleye up to 28.0". With low discharges in 2001 and a 3' drawdown, only 5 walleye were collected below the dam, but the 2002 collections found 55 walleye below the dam with most of them taken after the heavy rain in June. The dry conditions in 2003 with little lake discharge found only one walleye in the tailwaters.

Fishing should be good at Pierce Lake for walleye in 2005 with the best catches off the gravel points, off the submerged island, and along the dam.

DISTRICT 2: ROCK ISLAND, HENRY, BUREAU, LASALLE, LEE, AND WHITESIDE COUNTIES

LAKE CARLTON - Lake Carlton is a small 78 acre lake that has gained its reputation as being the premiere muskie lake in the State. Although the lake has an excellent muskie fishery, it also has a fairly good saugeye fishery. Lake Carlton was stocked annually with 1,900 - 4 inch walleye or 25 per acre until 1992. In 1992, this changed as the lake became a saugeye research lake. Since 1992, the lake has been stocked annually with approximately 25 - 50, 4 inch saugeye per acre. The creel report conducted in 1994 reported 606 man-hours per acre fishing pressure.

Only 122 walleye were caught in 1994 of which 15 were harvested. They averaged 4.9 pounds. Saugeye in the fall of 1997 were collected by night electrofishing at a rate of 13 fish per hour. This is the highest rate walleye or saugeye had been collected. In 1998, saugeye were collected at a new high rate of 37.5 per hour. In 1999, saugeye were

collected at a new night rate of 51 fish per hour. In 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004, saugeye were collected at 40, 20, 26, 58, and 25 fish per hour, respectively. Lake Carlton will be stocked with saugeye again in 2007. The numbers of quality-size saugeye are improving and 2007 should provide anglers with an excellent saugeye fishery.

LAKE GEORGE - Lake George is a 167 acre lake in Rock Island County. Lake George is developing into one of the premiere muskie lakes in the state. The lake also has a fair population of large walleye. The fishing pressure derived from creels conducted in 1989, 1993, and 1994 reported the fishing pressure to be about 200 man-hours per acre. The creel survey in 1993 reported 86 walleye caught and only 31 harvested. Harvested walleye averaged over 6 pounds.

Lake George was trap-netted for 4 nights in the Spring of 1996. This resulted in the collection of 30 walleye between 1.9 and 9.0 pounds. In 1998, 25 walleye between 3 and 7 pounds were caught in only 10 trapnets. The night electrofishing survey resulted in a record 35 walleye per hour. In 2002, 28 trapnets set overnight resulted in the collection of 45 walleye greater than 14.5 inches.

The walleye population appears to be improving as a result of the lake being stocked annually with approximately 6,680 - 2 inch walleye. Angler harvest has been hampered by someone stocking gizzard shad in the lake in 1990. The shad population has exploded. As a result, the walleye are well-fed and more difficult to catch. Trophy walleye should be available in Lake George in 2007. This lake has a 14 inch minimum length limit with a statewide 6 fish per day creel limit.

DISTRICT 4: PEORIA, FULTON, AND STARK COUNTIES

BANNER MARSH - In 2002, the water level of Banner Marsh remained at approximately 1,200 acres. The three major lakes are Johnson (600 acres), Wheel (350 acres), and Shovel (100 acres). All have concrete boat access ramps and a 25 hp limit.

Walleye have been stocked in Johnson Lake each year since 1987. Fisheries data from 1995-2006 spring trapnet surveys indicate an average walleye population exists. In Johnson Lake, 8 walleye from 16 to 24 inches were sampled with 20 net nights of effort in 2006.

Johnson Lake has clear water, extensive aquatic vegetation, rocky points and water depths up to 60 feet. In 2004, the walleye should average 2-7 pounds, with a 10 pound fish possible! A 14 inch minimum length limit and the statewide 6 fish per day creel limit is enforced.

STATUS OF THE WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 2

DISTRICT 7: LAKE COUNTY

FOX CHAIN O'LAKES - Walleye have been collected in the Chain by IDNR staff since 1954. Fry stockings were initiated in 1978 to supplement any natural reproduction that sustained the population up to then and to help expand the fishery. Since 1984 brood stock from the Fox Chain O' Lakes were used by the State Hatchery System for walleye production. Peak spawning trap net catches now exceed 21 fish per trap net night and overall catch rates exceed 8 fish per trap net night for netting over the entire spawn. Both catch rates exceed management objectives of 2.5 fish per trap net night.

The slot limit established in 1996 appears to be doing its job of protecting female walleye while allowing harvest of smaller, more abundant male fish. Females averaged 21.0" and males 14.1" in 2005. Both sizes fit nicely into the goals of the protective slot limit.

Since the Chain is a "brood-lake," it is important to continue to protect female walleye of quality reproductive size. The walleye regulation on the Chain O' Lakes allows the harvest of 2 fish between 14" and 18" and 1 over 24". In 2006, 7.3 million eggs were collected and 4.5 million fry were hatched. Of those 3.0 million fry were stocked in the Chain along with 364,639 (1.3" to 1.6" fingerlings) were stocked in the Chain. The remaining fingerlings were distributed throughout northern Illinois to provide and enhance those fisheries.

STERLING LAKE - This 74.4 acre lake is managed in cooperation with the Lake County Forest Preserve District and began receiving fingerling stockings in 1985 with the goal of establishing a walleye fishery. In 2001, the length limit was raised to 16 inches from 14" to provide an additional year of predation on forage species. Sterling Lake receives annual stockings of 2" fingerlings to maintain their presence. In 2006 Sterling Lake was stocked with 9,972 two inch fingerlings. A recent creel report ranked walleye as the most sought after game fish in the lake. Crappie and bluegill were ranked higher. The concession stand has been closed so bait will have to be purchased off-site and no boat rental is available.

DISTRICT 8: COOK COUNTY

BUSSE RESERVOIR (Main & South Pools) - Busse Lake Main and South Pools are some of the best places to target walleye in Cook County. The supplemental stocking of walleye in Busse Lake has been very successful. Initial stockings took place in 1986 and over the years Busse Lake has developed into a respectable walleye lake. Recent survey data indicates a well structured population represented by several year classes present. Busse Main (410.0 acres) lake is larger than the South Pool (146.0 acres) and offers more desirable habitat and subsequently better walleye fishing. The lake has an 18 inch length limit and a 2 pole and line limit on gear. Walleye larger than 18 inches are present and were collected in recent surveys, fish over 6 pounds are present. To maintain the fishery approximately 21,000 two inch fingerlings are stocked annually.

Busse Lake is located in northwestern Cook County and is heavily utilized by recreationists including sailboats, canoes and fishermen. There are several parking lots offering access

to different parts of the lake. Electric motors are allowed but gas powered motors must be removed from a boat. A concessionaire offers boat rentals, bait and food.

TAMPIER LAKE - Tampier Lake has one of the best walleye populations in Cook County. It has been stocked with walleye fry and fingerlings since 1986 and offers the opportunity to catch fish over 10 pounds. Walleye can be difficult to catch because of the abundance of forage in Tampier, but they're there. The primary forage is gizzard shad. Many walleye collected during surveys are found in 3 - 4 feet of water directly in weed beds so boat fishing may be one of your best bets. There is an 18 inch minimum length limit and a 2 pole and line limit on gear. Tampier Lake is stocked with approximately 7200 two inch fingerlings annually to maintain their presence and fry when the CCFPD collects eggs from their fish and hatchery space is available.

SKOKIE LAGOONS - Skokie Lagoon's was rehabilitated in 1994 to remove rough fish and give the system a fresh start. Since then the Lagoons have received annual stockings of walleye fingerlings to build and maintain a strong predatory base and provide a quality sport fishery. Gizzard shad are the dominant forage. Walleye were very abundant during the last survey, some fish exceeded 4 pounds with bigger reported by local fishermen. Fish are found along weed edges in shallow water and around the many fish attractors placed near the sides of the main channels. The lake has an 18" length limit as well as a 2 pole and line gear limit like all Cook County Forest Preserve District lakes.

WOLF LAKE - Wolf Lake has been stocked on and off with walleye fry/fingerlings since 1979. Since Indiana has recently concentrated on stocking walleye on their side of the lake and Illinois stocks close to 18,000 two inch fingerlings on our side of the line the walleye fishery should be expanding nicely. Walleye are difficult to collect during summer surveys so little data exists and much of the information we have is based on fishermen's catches. Fishermen generally concentrate on current areas and constrictions between pools to find fish. Some really nice fish have been reported by local fishermen, some fish exceeding 10 pounds. Wolf Lake has a 14 inch minimum length limit and six fish per day creel for walleye (Statewide Regulations). Motor size is not restricted on Wolf Lake but boats with motors over 10 hp are restricted to no wake.

DISTRICT 9: GRUNDY, KENDALL, KANKAKEE, AND WILL COUNTIES

HEIDECKE LAKE - This 1,955 acre cooling lake located in Grundy County 2½ miles southeast of Morris has received annual stockings of walleye since 1980. During this time period both fry and fingerlings have been released but it is difficult to quantify the success of one type of stocking over the other. Marked fingerlings were utilized to compare the success of one stocking regime to the other with inconclusive results. Walleye fry stockings at Heidecke were eventually discontinued in 1996 in favor of fingerling stockings. Since 2002, annual stockings have average 56 fingerlings per acre. Heidecke Lake generally develops a strong plankton bloom in the early spring and also supports a thriving gizzard shad population which has been documented to show multiple spawn pulses. These shad spawns, while benefitting the feeding success and growth of walleye can make angling

extremely tough.

The fall 2006 survey ranks as the top producer of walleye in any IDNR standardized survey, surpassing the 2004 collection by more than five times. Catch rates by gear type greatly exceeded long-term averages as daylight electrofishing results were nearly 12 times the average and gill netting efficiency was more than doubled. Combined sampling effort yielded a total of 182 walleye ranging from 7.9" to 23.6" and averaging 16.0". Annual stockings, which have averaged 56 fingerlings per acre since 2002, have recruited very well and yield excellent size distribution. Generally speaking, walleye attain legal size (16.0") by their third growing season. Walleye rated as the top fish caught during the 2006 creel survey at an estimated frequency of 0.102 fish per hour of fishing effort. Of those anglers who expressed a preference, walleye were far and away the most sought-after species. Compared to the 1997 creel, more than three times as many walleye were caught in 2006 and these fish had an average weight of 0.9 pounds. In terms of harvest, walleye ranked third overall with an estimated harvest of 2.09 pounds per acre with the average size harvested walleye weighing 2.42 pounds (roughly a 19 inch fish). A secondary source of walleye broodstock, Heidecke Lake walleye harvest is regulated by a 16 inch minimum length limit with a daily creel limit of three (3) fish.

Heidecke Lake is a perched cooling lake and can become very hazardous in windy conditions. Impounded in the late 1970's, it once served as a cooling reservoir for Midwest Generation's Collins Station, a fossil fuel peaking plant. However, the generating station was decommissioned in December 2004 which has eliminated thermal loading as well as any current which was created by the circulation of cooling water through the plant. Due to the cessation of water circulation and the reappearance of zebra mussels, water clarity has markedly increased, which could lead to an increase in aquatic plant growth. Heidecke Lake is open to fishing from April 1st until ten days prior to the opening of the North Zone waterfowl season. The lake is open daily at 6:00 a.m. and closes at sunset. A concessionaire located at the boat ramp offers bait and tackle as well as boat and motor rentals. There is no boat motor horsepower restrictions but boats must have a working gas-powered motor. The bank fishing area access is located at the eastern side of the lake and is handicapped accessible, featuring a barrier-free fishing pier.

STATUS OF THE WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 3

DISTRICT 10: CHAMPAIGN, DEWITT, FORD, IROQUOIS, LIVINGSTON, MCLEAN, PIATT, AND VERMILION COUNTIES

CLINTON LAKE - In 2006, the State Hatchery System stocked approximately 104,662 1.3-inch walleye and 75,256 1.5-inch walleye. The catch rate for walleye during the 2003 survey was the second highest catch rate in 10 years. The catch rate in 2004 was the

third highest catch rate in 11 years; however, the catch rate in 2005 declined to the lowest level in over 10 years. Unfortunately the catch rate in 2006 declined even more. The fishing regulation for walleye is a 14" minimum length limit with a 6 fish daily creel limit. Major access areas have bulletin boards with area rules, fish creel and size limit regulations and other visitor information posted. All state boating, hunting, fishing and park regulations remain in full force where applicable. Various portions of the lake are designated as no-wake, electric motor only, or no boat areas for safety and security reasons. Areas closed to public access include: the water intake area for the power plant, the spillway and dam areas east of the spillway, and the bank of water surface of the discharge flume (ditch). Boats and fishermen are not allowed in designated swimming areas when swimming is permitted. Please pay special attention to such areas designated by the maps, posted signs, and buoys. The entire portion of the lake between the DeWitt County Highway 14 Bridge and the Illinois Route 48 Bridge is designated as a fish and water fowl refuge and is closed to all public use for the period of October 10th. Through March 31. The land portions of the site in this designated area will still be open for authorized hunting activities (except waterfowl) during this time period. As on all large lakes, Clinton Lake can become very rough when the wind exceeds 15 m.p.h. All boaters are advised to be aware of the weather. Although there is no horsepower or speed limit on Clinton Lake, shallow areas and underwater hazards do exist in numerous portions of the lake. Boaters should operate their craft accordingly.

LAKE BLOOMINGTON - Walleye were first stocked into this lake in 1984 and has received approximately 25,000 two inch walleye every year, except in 1985. Starting in 1998, 2400 8-inch walleye have been stocked each year. The 2006 night survey resulted in 31 walleye per hour of sampling. Based on the 2006 survey, size structure is dominated by smaller walleye. Only 10% of the walleye collected were larger than 15 inches. There have been several 10 pound plus walleye caught in Lake Bloomington since 2001. The fishing regulation for walleye is a 14" minimum length limit with a 6 fish daily creel limit. Lake Bloomington has one boat ramp and charges an access fee. Boats are limited to 40 horsepower. For information on fees and Lake Bloomington call 309/747-2615.

EVERGREEN LAKE - Home of the current State Record Saugeye! The State Record Saugeye was caught in 2001. The lake still holds fish capable of breaking the new record. This lake was selected for experimental stocking of saugeye. The saugeye is a hybrid made by crossing female walleye with male sauger. The saugeye is suppose to be more adaptable to turbid conditions and easier to catch than walleye. The saugeye appear to have adapted quite well to Evergreen Lake. Stocking of this hybrid started in 1992 and the lake has been stocked every year since. Anglers really started catching saugeye in 1998. In 2006, a night survey was conducted and resulted in 78 saugeye per hour of electrofishing. Of the saugeye collected in the survey, 2 percent were larger than 15", and none were larger than 20". The fishing regulation for saugeye is a 14" minimum length limit with a 6 fish daily creel limit. Evergreen Lake has two boat ramps and has a 10 horsepower limit on all boats. In order to launch a boat on Evergreen Lake, a sticker must be purchased. The stickers can be purchased at the boat ramps, Comlara Park Visitor's Center, or by calling 309/726-2022.

DAWSON LAKE - A good walleye fishery exists on Dawson Lake. In 2003, the walleye stocking program was switched to a saugeye fishery. The saugeye favors more turbid water and tolerates eutrophic waters better than walleye. Night electrofishing surveys are conducted each fall to assess the fishery. In 2006, 61 walleye/saugeye were collected per hour of sampling. The largest walleye collected was 24 inches. The walleye/saugeye population at Dawson Lake is a great fishery in a small lake. Dawson Lake has a 14" minimum length limit and a harvest limit of 3 per day on walleye and saugeye.

DISTRICT 11: CLARK, COLES, CUMBERLAND, DOUGLAS, EDGAR, MACON, MOULTRIE, AND SHELBY COUNTIES

LAKE DECATUR - Is located on the east side of the City of Decatur, in Macon County. The lake covers 3,093 surface acres with a maximum depth of 22 feet and average depth of six feet. Several public boat launching facilities are available and the City of Decatur (217-424-2837) collects a boating access fee. The statewide 14 inch minimum length limit and creel limit of six fish daily is in effect.

An abundance of gizzard shad forage in Lake Decatur allows for the stocking of additional predator species to diversify the fishery. The stocking of 2-inch fingerling walleye from 2000 through 2006 appears to be developing a good fishery. Collection rates for fall 2006 (26+/hr.) and 2005 (37+/hr.) exceeded standard goals and were significantly higher than catch rates on Lake Shelbyville for these two years. Walleye collected were scattered along the rip-rap shorelines on or near bridges. The walleye collected ranged from 10 to 22+ inches, with numerous 14 to 20 inch fish collected. The angler creel survey conducted in 2006 revealed that fishermen are not taking advantage of this fishery. Although the average fish harvested weighed 2 pounds, no fishermen indicated that they were fishing for walleye. Angler catch rates were 0.001/hr and the harvest rate was 0.01 lbs/acre. In previous years, numerous reports of fishermen catching walleye were received in fall '02 and summer '03. Walleye fishing prospects for Lake Decatur are rated as fair to good for 2007.

CHARLESTON SIDE CHANNEL LAKE - Is located approximately three miles southeast of Charleston, in Coles County. The lake covers 330 surface acres with a maximum depth of 16 feet and average depth of 7.7 feet. Free public boat launching facilities are available. There is a no wake regulation in effect on the entire lake. The statewide 14 inch minimum length limit and creel limit of six fish daily is in effect.

Saugeye (sauger X walleye hybrid) have been stocked annually since summer 2000. The collection rates from fall 2006 (26+/hr.) and 2005 (11/hr.) met standard stocking success goals. Numerous saugeye from 12 to 23+ inches were collected in this survey. Although catch rates were lower in 2006, numerous saugeye were reported caught by fishermen in late spring '05 and fall '05. Catches of 20+ saugeye per day were reported in fall 2005. Saugeye fishing prospects are rated as fair to good in 2007.

LAKE SHELBYVILLE - Is located in Shelby and Moultrie Counties in east-central Illinois. This lake has a surface area of 11,100 acres, with a maximum depth of 67 feet, and an

average depth of 18.9 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available, with a fee assessed on U.S. Army Corp of Engineers' (217-774-3951) boat ramps, and free access on state or gravel ramps. The statewide 14 inch minimum length limit and creel limit of six fish daily is in effect.

Consistent stockings of fingerling walleye since 1994 has resulted in the development of a good to excellent walleye fishery. In recent years, knowledgeable fishermen have been able to catch limits of fish from April through mid-June. Some fishermen believe that July and August are the better months, but most reports of good catches are from earlier months. Good numbers of fish to 25 inches are present with fish over eight pounds collected in the 2003 stocking success survey. Survey results were hindered in 2006 by strong thunderstorms with high winds. Catch rates during the 2006 (11+/hr.) and 2005 (24/hr.) stocking success survey exceeded standard stocking success goals. The walleye collected ranged from 8 to 18+ inches, with numerous 12 to 16-inch fish collected. This fishery is becoming increasingly popular with walleye fishing prospects for Lake Shelbyville are rated as good to excellent for 2007.

STATUS OF WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 4

DISTRICT 12: ADAMS, BROWN, CALHOUN, HANCOCK, MORGAN, PIKE, AND SCHUYLER COUNTIES

PITTSFIELD LAKE - Walleye continue to do well in this 240 acre city owned lake. Maximum depths to 34 feet offshore of the west bank provide ideal conditions for this species. This lake has received annual, supplemental stockings of 2 inch walleye fingerlings since 1985. These stockings have produced multiple year classes resulting in a well structured population. During the spring netting survey in 2006, a small sample (n = 19) was collected. This may have been due to the warmer temperatures experienced at the time of the survey. During the 2006 survey, seventy-eight percent (78%) of the walleye collected ranged in length from 22.8 - to 27 inches. Twelve (12) of the nineteen (19) walleye collected (63%) were positively identified as females. The largest individual collected measured 27 inches in length. The heaviest fish (female) weighed eight (8) pounds. Although Pittsfield Lake maintains a good, strong walleye population, fishing for this species is fairly light. Most walleye are incidentally caught by anglers fishing for crappie. A 14" minimum length limit and 6 fish per day creel limit is in effect. There is a 25 horsepower, "NO WAKE" motor restriction.

DISTRICT 17: CLINTON, MONROE, RANDOLPH, AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

CARLYLE LAKE - The sauger population is really taking hold in the lake. During our population survey we collected 32 fish, a three-fold increase compared to the past 5 year average. The fish ranged in length from 5 to 19 inches, and 6 year classes were observed. Fifty-three percent of the stock was 15 inches or greater in length. Some very nice fish were collected in the 16 to 19 inch length range weighing 1.4 to 2.3 pounds. Condition of the sauger has improved substantially due to the abundance of available forage. In

addition to the lake, the spillway/tail-water area supports a dense concentration of sauger and offers excellent fishing for this species. Twelve to thirteen million fry are stocked annually in the lake. Fishing for this species is rated as good in the lake and excellent in the spillway area. A 6 fish daily creel and 14 inch minimum length limit applies.

RANDOLPH COUNTY LAKE - The saugeye population in this clear water/steep sided lake can be difficult to assess with electrofishing gear, but many are caught by anglers who are fishing for species such as crappie in the spring and fall. Some anglers specialize in catching this species, using trolling methods in the lake to target this species with good success. During our population survey, we collected 5 fish which is pretty typical for a survey in this lake. The average size was 15" and 1.1 lbs. There are larger saugeye present. We have collected them up to 4 lbs in weight during past surveys. Fishing is rated as good for this species, especially if traditional walleye/sauger angling methods are used. A 6 fish daily creel limit and 14 inch minimum length limit applies.

STATUS OF WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 5

DISTRICT 18: CLAY, EFFINGHAM, FAYETTE, JEFFERSON, MARION, AND WAYNE COUNTIES

FORBES LAKE - The fishery for saugeye appears to be doing well in this 525 acre impoundment, as 5 year classes of fish were collected during both of the 2006 spring and fall surveys. The lake was stocked with 22,192 fingerlings averaging 1.4 inches since reproduction is not expected. Of all the saugeye sampled 96% were legal size, most ranged was made since Fish ranging from 13 to 16 inches were the most abundant, with most ranging from 16 to 19 inches. The largest collected was 23 inches and 4.6 lbs.

DISTRICT 21: ALEXANDER, JACKSON, PERRY, PULASKI, AND UNION COUNTIES

KINKAID LAKE - Walleye stockings over many years have periodically produced good years classes of 14 to 16-inch walleye. Growth has been excellent. In the past, walleye would commonly reach 2 to 2.5 pounds and exit the lake via the spillway during spawning season which corresponds to periods of heavy water flow over the spillway. The construction of a spillway barrier was completed in the fall of 1998 and should alleviate escapement of walleye just as they reach quality size. An effective spillway barrier should provide quality walleye fishing opportunities in the next 3 to 5 years depending on the amount of stocked walleye which survive.

The majority of walleye sampled in nets are typically in front of the spillway during heavy water flow in late March and early April. Spring gill netting (1-2 hour sets at day break) will continue to assess walleye populations and the effectiveness of the spillway barrier and

the resultant effect on the Lake's walleye population.

The largest walleye collected by IDNR biologists was collected during 2002 and weighed just over 10 pounds. During 2006, eight walleye (23-25 inches) were collected from trap nets and sixty-three (13-28 inches) were collected in gill nets.

During the spring of 2006 55,000 two inch walleye were stocked into Kinkaid Lake. An additional stocking of 1300 six-inch fish was completed in September 2006. More and more reports of walleye catches are being reported each year.

MALLARD LAKE - This 50 acre strip cut is located in the Denmark Area of Pyramid State Park in Perry County. Walleye were first stocked in August 2002 and have been stocked annually since that time. This lake is still in the process of filling with water. As a result this lake does not have a boat ramp. No other information is available for the walleye in this lake.

GREEN WING LAKE - This 50 acre strip cut is located in the Denmark Area of Pyramid State Park in Perry County. Walleye were first stocked in August 2002 and have been stocked annually since that time. This lake has a concrete boat ramp and a 10 HP motor limit. No other information is available for the walleye in this lake. An attempt to sample the walleye in this lake will be made in the spring of 2007.

STATUS OF WALLEYE AND SAUGER FISHERY IN ILLINOIS RIVERS

ILLINOIS RIVER - The sauger population on the Illinois River continues to expand, both in quality and quantity. While not as numerous as in the middle and lower reaches of the River, anglers can still expect to find good numbers of sauger and walleye in the upper pools below the dams at Dresden and Marseilles. The major portion of the sauger population lies below the Starved Rock Dam and extends all the way down to the Mississippi River. The area around the Starved Rock Dam receives a lot of media attention owing to the very successful tournaments held there, but there our sampling indicates that much stronger numbers of fish are found farther downstream. CPUE's in the lower part of Peoria Pool in the Narrows were as high as 147.5 fish/hour.

Tournament anglers have had, and continue to have a very good year. At the MWC tournament held at Spring Valley in March, 2001, 205 boats brought in 1,395 fish that weighed in at 3355.85 pounds - not bad for a 5 fish per day limit per boat. In 2002, 208 boats caught 1,420 fish that weighed 3508.36 pounds. In 2003, 210 boats brought in 1,148 fish that weighed a total of 2049.19 pounds. Tournaments continue to enjoy good fishing even during the fall and winter months. At a recent tournament in that same area, the winning total of 5 fish weighed in at 14.6 pounds, with the big fish coming in at 3 pounds, 13.5 ounces.

Sampling this fall, many smaller fish were collected indicating that the population should remain strong for the next several years. We also collected some of the bigger walleye

that we have ever taken at Starved Rock with several fish ranging from 23 to 27 inches in length. There is a 14 inch size limit on walleye and sauger in the Illinois River. The creel is six fish per day.

ROCK RIVER - Walleye were collected by night electrofishing on October 23, 24, and November 8, 2006. In addition, incidental walleye were collected and recorded during the smallmouth bass survey in September 2006. The combined data are presented below.

Station	Total #	Stock >250mm (10 in.)	Quality >380mm (15 in.)	Mature > 410mm (16 in.)
Oregon	54	30	9	6
Dixon	77	48	17	13
Sterling	4	2	0	0
Prophetstown	12	13	13	12
Total	148	93	39	31

PSD - $39/93 \times 100 = 42\%$ (Target 40 - 60%)

RSD16 = $31/93 \times 100 = 33.3\%$ (Target 10%)

Total shock time: 339 minutes CPUE = $148/339 = .44$ fish / minute.

The data seems to indicate excellent numbers of mature fish in the population which is surprising since the 2004 data showed good numbers of smaller fish but few fish larger than 16". The PSD in 2004 was 29.5%, quite a bit lower than the 42% found this year. The CPUE in 2006 of .44 fish/ minute was lower than the .96 fish/ minute seen in 2004. This could perhaps be attributed to the colder than average fall temperatures which may have changed the movement patterns of the fish, i.e. the fish may have been holding in deeper water making them more difficult to collect. Regardless, the walleye in the Rock River appear to be doing well. Good numbers of both young and mature fish are present, indicating the stocked fish are surviving and growing well. It is impossible to determine if any naturally reproduced fish are present in the population since the stocked fish are not marked. Perhaps a marking program should be undertaken to assess the abundance of naturally reproduced fish in the population.

KANKAKEE RIVER - The Kankakee River was once known for its walleye fishery and in fact still holds the state record of 14 pounds caught back in 1961. Survey records from 1975 through 1999 indicated that the catch per hour electrofishing for walleye exceeded 2.5 (1979) only once during this time period. Anglers and sportsmen organizations recognized the need for help in restoring the walleye population in the Kankakee River and asked if the DNR could initiate a stocking program using the native walleye that occur in the river. An effort was initiated in 2000 to collect adult walleye from the Kankakee River, spawn them at the LaSalle State Fish Hatchery and stock the fingerlings back into

the river. The Kankakee River walleye restoration program began in 2000 with the collection of 27 walleye. The catch per effort for walleye in 2000 was only 1.6, though 78,000 2 inch fingerlings were stocked into the river in May. In 2001 the catch per hour increased to 10, of which 50% were fingerlings stocked in 2000. In 2001 the river was stocked with 85,000 fingerlings. Due to high water in 2002 walleye could not be collected, however in 2003 the catch per hour of walleye increased to 23.3. In 2003 the hatchery was able to stock 94,195 fingerlings, plus Indiana was given 23,000 fingerlings to stock in their portion of the Kankakee River. In 2004 the catch per hour of walleye increased to a high of 26.7 and 80,200 fingerlings were stocked into the river from the hatchery. Also an additional 20,000 fingerlings were given to Indiana. In 2005 the catch per hour for walleye was 26.5, similar to what was found in 2004. The hatchery stocked 90,000 fingerlings in Illinois and gave Indiana 28,290 to stock in their portion of the Kankakee River. In 2006 the catch per hour for walleye increased to 77.1. The hatchery stocked 97,000 fingerlings in Illinois and gave Indiana 13,770 to stocking in their portion of the Kankakee River.

Growth rates of walleye examined in 2005 and 2006 exceeded the state average indicating that the density is not surpassing the forage supply in the river. Average length of males ages 3 through 5 was 17, 19 and 20 inches respectively. Females which grow faster than males had lengths of 18, 21 and 25 inches at ages 3 through 5 respectively.

Fishing for walleye should continue to improve in the Kankakee River. The regulation for walleye in the Kankakee and Iroquois rivers is 3 per day and they must be longer than 16 inches.

The goal of this project is to build the walleye population up to the point where it can sustain itself through natural reproduction.

FOX RIVER - Walleye were sampled at 8 locations in 2004 as part of the fall smallmouth bass survey. The sampling stations, located between Elgin and Oswego, were also sampled in fall of 2001. Additional walleye samples were taken at a different set of stations during the 2002 Fox River Basin Survey.

The total abundance of walleye was somewhat lower in 2004 compared to the previous years (see table below). However, catch rate of the larger size groups has not changed much since 2001. These results suggests lower abundance of small individuals in 2004. Reproduction of walleye in the medium-sized rivers of Northern Illinois like the Fox, Rock and Kankakee Rivers is known to be very sporadic. Natural reproduction in the upper and mid Fox River may be supplemented by downstream migration of walleye from the Fox Chain-O-Lakes, which has an intensive stocking program.

Number of walleye collected per hour in the Fox River				
SIZE CLASS	LENGTH RANGE	2001	2004	2002
Total	All sizes	9.78	4.18	7.35

Stock	>10 in.	2.78	2.46	1.80
Quality	>15 in.	1.45	1.84	1.20
Preferred	>20 in.	0.13	0.25	0.90

Since 1999, annual stocking of 20,000 - 30,000 walleye fingerlings (2 in) have been made in the free-flowing sections of the Fox River in Kendall County. Electrofishing catch rates of walleye in Kendall County have been similar to those found in upstream areas, ranging from 4-12 per hour. Anglers have also reported reasonably good success, with most fish in the 14-18 inch range.

DES PLAINES RIVER - The lower Des Plaines River and Salt Creek continue to yield consistent walleye catch rates. In 2004, electrofishing catch rates were higher than previous years, with a total of 18 walleye collected per hour. Fish ranged in size from 12 to 20 inches with most in the 17-20 inch size, weighing up to 3.3 lbs. The source of these walleye is most likely Busse Lake on upper Salt Creek, where they are stocked by Cook County Forest Preserve District. In contrast to smallmouth bass, walleye are quite tolerant of degraded water quality conditions which are common in Salt Creek and the Des Plaines River.

The Des Plaines River IDNR sauger stocking program has been very successful so far, based on recent collections and angler reports. A total of 12,021, 2-in. sauger were stocked into the Des Plaines at Riverside in 2001, with another 28,000 released between Riverside and Hodgkins locations in 2004. Electrofishing at Riverside yielded a very high catch rate of 67 sauger per hour. Fish from both 2001 and 2004 were present in the collection. Individuals from the 2001 stocking averaged 16 inches in length; within the average growth rate for Illinois sauger. Fish from the 2004 stocking were an average of 8 inches in length. All fish appeared to be very robust and healthy. Electrofishing catch rates were lower in the Hodgkins area (5 per hour) but fish were similar in size to those found in the Riverside area. Anglers have also reported catching many of the stock sauger.

UPPER SANGAMON RIVER - A basin survey was conducted in 2003 on the Sangamon River Basin. Walleye were collected at three mainstem sites upstream from Lake Decatur. Average size was about two pounds. The largest walleye collected was 3.4 pounds at Mahomet. Catch rates were also highest at Mahomet, yielding three walleye per hour.

2005 sampling in the tailwaters of Lake Decatur produced six walleye per hour. The fish averaged two pounds with a maximum of 3.5 pounds. Walleye fishing in the tailwaters of Lake Decatur should be good in the Spring and Fall.

2005 sampling in Salt Creek in the tailwaters of Clinton Lake produced twelve walleye per hour, all were in the one to three pound range. Tailwater fishing should be good here in the Spring and Fall also.

KASKASKIA RIVER - Fishermen continue to report extremely high catch rates for walleye and sauger below the Lake Shelbyville Dam. Although native to the river, sauger are presumably moving up the river from Carlyle Lake and walleye are escaping from Lake Shelbyville, where they are stocked. These fish stack up in the tailwaters of Lake Shelbyville, where fishermen frequently catch their limit in the Spring and Fall. Numerous legal-sized walleye and sauger are often observed during our supplemental surveys downstream of Lake Shelbyville. Sauger are only found downstream of Lake Shelbyville in the Kaskaskia River and are not present upstream of the lake.

During 2005 sampling, an 11-inch walleye was collected upstream of Lake Shelbyville at Chesterville. In the Middle Kaskaskia River, four sauger per hour were collected at Cowden, all were about one pound each. Six sauger per hour were collected at Vandalia, all were about a pound each with the largest being over two pounds.