Lewis and Clark Lake 2009 Fishing Forecast

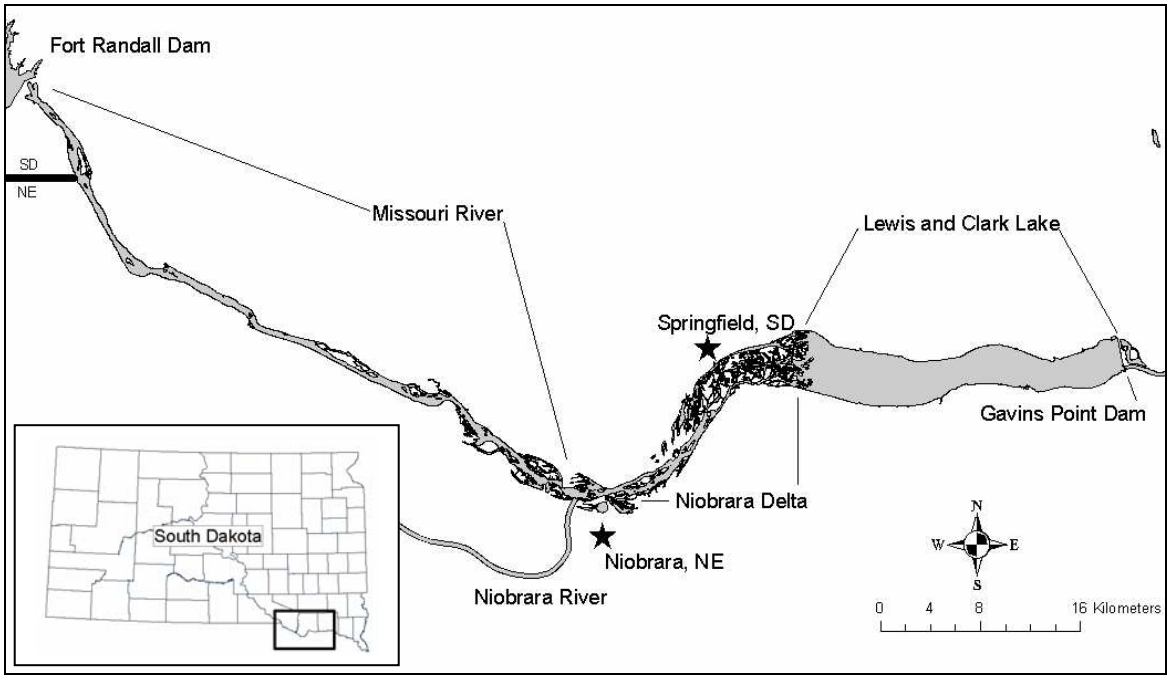
Annual fisheries surveys take place on Lewis and Clark Lake to monitor trends in fish populations. Electrofishing, gill netting, hoop netting, and seining are used to collect information that helps biologists monitor trends in numbers and sizes of fish of each species. Angler surveys are conducted during some years to gather information on angler use and harvest. These long-term trends in fish population status and angler use are used by biologists to make management decisions and determine regulations.

With the information gathered from these surveys, predictions can be made about fishing on Lewis and Clark Lake in 2009.

Key Issues in 2009 for Lewis and Clark Lake

- Sedimentation is the most influential process occurring on Lewis and Clark Lake. Large amounts of sediment are deposited by the Niobrara River which contributes to the growing delta area near Springfield. As the physical characteristics of Lewis and Clark Lake change over time, anglers will need to adjust their fishing strategies.
- Annual netting surveys indicate that walleye abundance has been increasing and many are in the 15 to 22 inch range.
- The Lewis and Clark Lake sauger population continues to boast an excellent size structure with 40% of the sauger sampled during fall gill netting above 15 inches in length.
- Channel catfish numbers are down from 2007 but remain near the 5 year average and size structure remains excellent.
- Angling success is annually affected by the number of gizzard shad present. During years with good numbers of gizzard shad throughout the summer/fall seasons, angling success can decline due to the amount of food present.

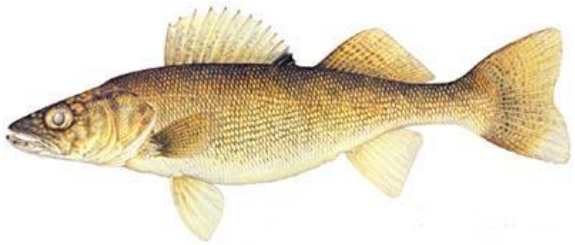
Lewis and Clark Lake



Additional information can be obtained by contacting:

Missouri River Fisheries
1550 East King Avenue
Chamberlain, SD 57325
(605) 734-4548
www.sdgfp.info

Lewis and Clark Lake Walleye, Sauger, and Hybrids



Did you know that the spawning seasons of walleye and sauger naturally overlap and they sometimes spawn together, forming hybrids? Walleye/sauger hybrids can also spawn. Of all four Missouri River reservoirs in South Dakota, Lewis and Clark Lake has the highest percentage of walleye/sauger hybrids. This means many of the fish caught by anglers in Lewis and Clark Lake that look like pure walleye or sauger are in fact hybrids.

Lewis and Clark Lake Walleye/Sauger/Hybrid Regulations (For more information on Missouri River Regulations, see 2009 Fishing Handbook, pages 20-23)

*These regulations apply to waters of the Missouri River from Gavins Point Dam upstream to the SD-Nebraska border to the point where the river becomes entirely in SD.

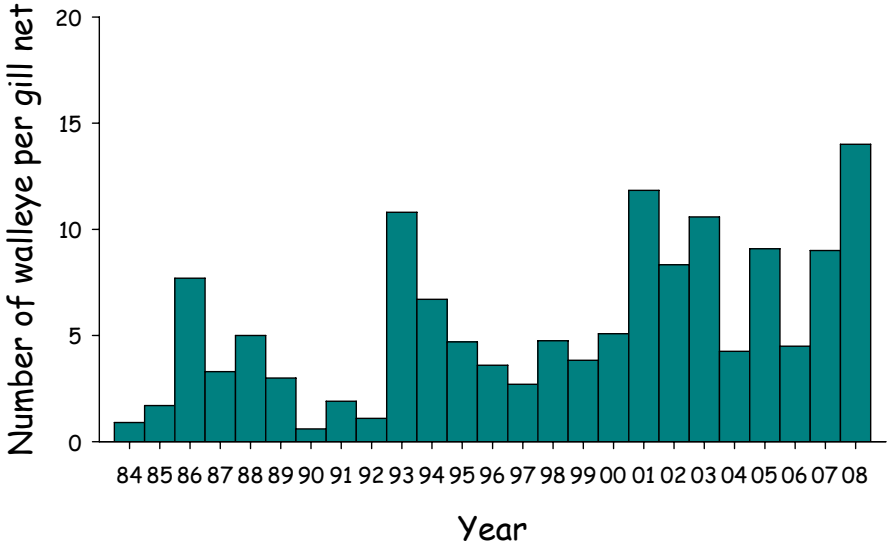
- *4 fish daily/8 possession*: Walleye/Sauger/Hybrid (in any combination)
- *Minimum length 15 inches year-round*

Note: There is **NO one fish over 20 inch regulation on the previously mentioned portion of the Missouri River due to its status as a border water with Nebraska.*

Walleye

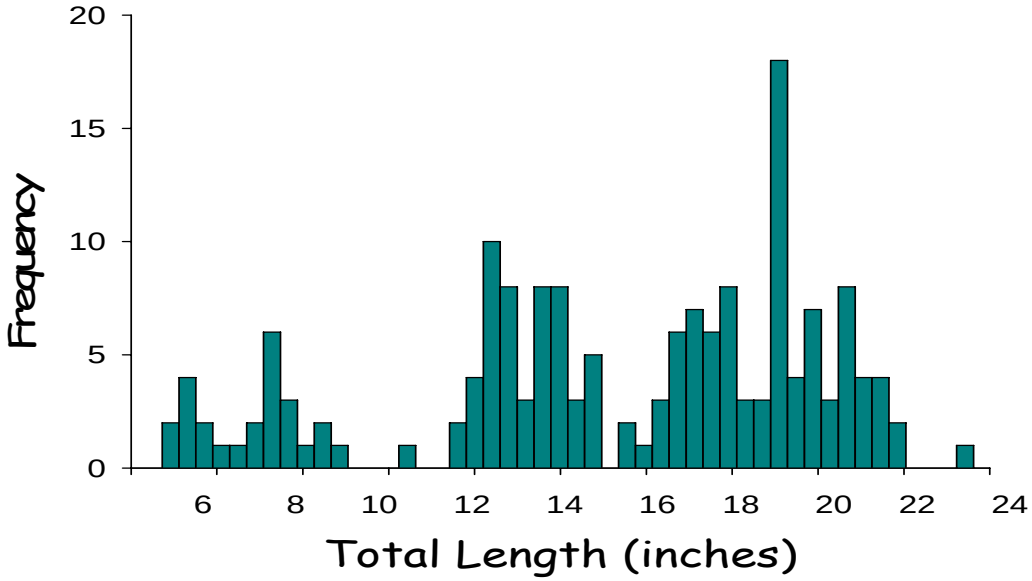
Walleye abundance is monitored through an annual September gill net survey. The average number of walleyes per gill nets is compared with the data from previous years to detect changes in abundance. The overall trend in Lewis and Clark Lake has been a slow increase in abundance over the last 20 years, with the highest abundance occurring in 2008.

Walleye Relative Abundance 1984 - 2008



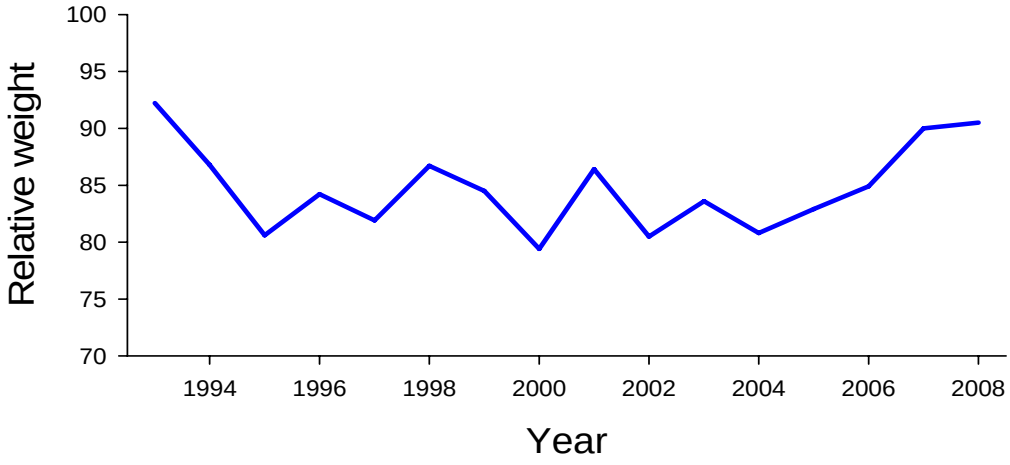
The young walleye produced during each year are referred to as that year's year class of fish. The majority of the population is from the 2003 - 2007 year classes with a few fish from older year classes. The 2007 and 2005 year classes were especially strong, however, the 2007 year class won't be large enough to harvest until later in the summer of 2009.

Almost half of the walleyes sampled in 2008 were longer than the 15 inch minimum size limit!



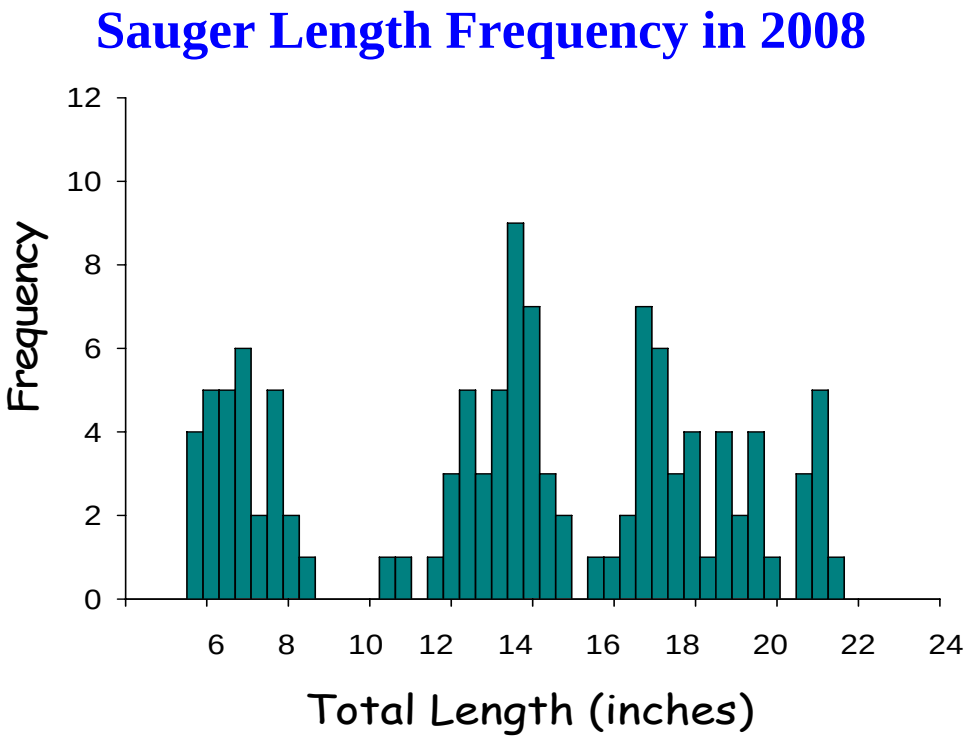
Relative weight is an index used to describe if fish are in good condition. High values indicate that the fish are plump and healthy, while low numbers can indicate an imbalance between walleye and its prey. Walleye relative weight values in 2008 were at the high end of the normal range for Lewis and Clark Lake indicating the walleye population was in good condition at the time of sampling.

Walleye condition in 2008 was similar to 2007



Sauger

Lewis and Clark Lake contains the most abundant sauger population in the state. The number of sauger caught per gill net in 2008 was above average and the sample had a balanced age distribution, indicating the relative stability of the population. Sizes of sauger available to anglers for 2009 are excellent, with 40% above the 15 inch minimum. As with walleye, sauger relative weights are within the standard range of 80 to 90.



Points to Ponder

Gizzard shad are a seasonally available prey species. With South Dakota located on the northern edge of the gizzard shad range, a high number of the juveniles present after the spawn will not survive through the winter. However, enough adults do survive to produce a year class of gizzard shad the following spring. This can lead to large quantities of gizzard shad available to predators, such as walleye and sauger, through out the summer and fall months. Anglers can experience decreased success due to the amount of prey fish available, dependent upon the size of the year class of gizzard shad present. Late summer and early fall sampling in 2008 revealed abundant gizzard shad throughout much of Lewis and Clark Lake. Even with good numbers of harvestable sized predator species such as walleye, sauger and channel catfish present, angling success may have been affected by the abundant numbers of gizzard shad.

Lewis and Clark Lake Catfish

Lewis and Clark Lake Channel and Flathead Catfish Regulations (For more information on Missouri River Regulations, see 2009 Fishing Handbook, pages 20-23)

*These regulations apply to waters of the Missouri River from Gavins Point Dam upstream to the SD-Nebraska border to the point where the river becomes entirely in SD.

- *5 fish daily/ 10 possession- channel and flathead catfish (each)*

Channel catfish may be the best kept secret of the Missouri River reservoirs! Lewis and Clark Lake is no exception with excellent numbers and sizes present. Channel catfish were sampled up to 30 inches long weighing almost 10 pounds during 2008. Angling opportunities for channel catfish are available throughout the entire Lewis and Clark reservoir system.

Flathead catfish are also present in Lewis and Clark Lake and can provide angling opportunities for those willing to search for them. During 2008, flathead catfish up to 24 inches in length were sampled; however, the sampling method used often times does not adequately sample larger sized catfish. Larger flathead catfish likely roam Lewis and Clark Lake waters!

Harvesting catfish or other species instead of walleye will help protect our walleye population as the number of anglers continues to increase.

Lewis and Clark Lake Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass

Lewis and Clark Lake Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass Regulations
(For more information on Missouri River Regulations, see 2009 Fishing Handbook, pages 20-23)

*These regulations apply to waters of the Missouri River from Gavins Point Dam upstream to the SD-Nebraska border to the point where the river becomes entirely in SD.

- *Smallmouth/Largemouth Bass (in any combination)-5 fish daily/10 Possession*

Largemouth bass were sampled by electrofishing backwater areas in the Niobrara Delta. Number of largemouth per hour of electrofishing was just above average and included fish up to 18 inches long. Traditionally, the best largemouth bass angling on Lewis and Clark Lake has been found in areas of the Niobrara Delta containing aquatic vegetation.

Smallmouth bass are abundant throughout the reservoir from Gavins Point Dam to the Fort Randall tailwaters. Most of the population is young and tends to be on the small side; however, some smallmouth bass up to 19 inches were sampled in 2008.

Other Species

Additional opportunities for anglers pursuing other gamefish species exist on Lewis and Clark Lake. White bass congregations can be found at certain times of the year with many in the 10 to 15 inch length range. Crappie holes

exist in the area near Springfield, SD known as the Niobrara delta. Once located, crappie fishing can be excellent in these areas.