

Lewis and Clark Lake 2007 Fishing Forecast

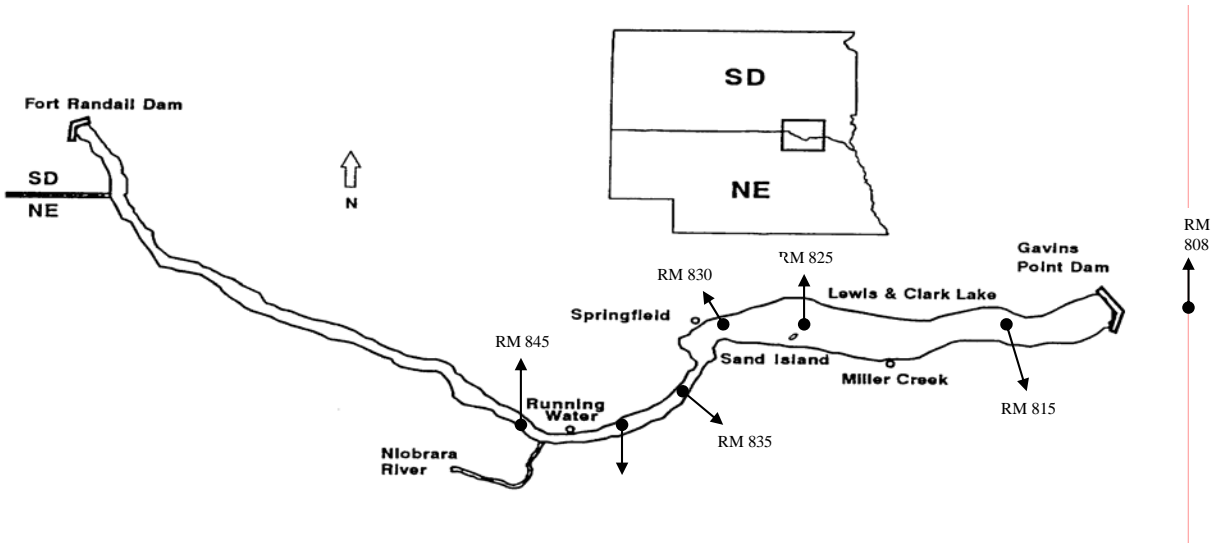
Annual fisheries surveys take place on Lewis and Clark Lake to monitor trends in fish populations. Electrofishing, gill netting, hoop netting, and seining are used to collect information that helps biologists monitor trends in numbers and sizes of fish of each species. Angler surveys are conducted during 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 2007.

Key Issues in 2007 for Lewis and Clark Lake

- Habitats in Lewis and Clark Lake are continuously changing due to reservoir ageing (Niobrara Delta). Anglers will need to adjust their fishing strategies as habitat changes.
- Production of young walleyes was high from 2001 to 2003 and will provide excellent numbers of fish larger than 15 inches in 2007.
- Sauger were more abundant than walleye in gill net samples in 2006.
- Sizes of sauger in Lewis and Clark are excellent, with nearly 50% of sauger sampled in 2006 being longer than 15 inches.
- An excellent channel catfish fishery exists with good numbers and sizes of fish present.

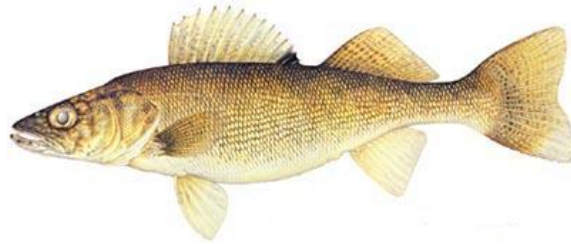
Lewis and Clark Lake



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 2007 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*

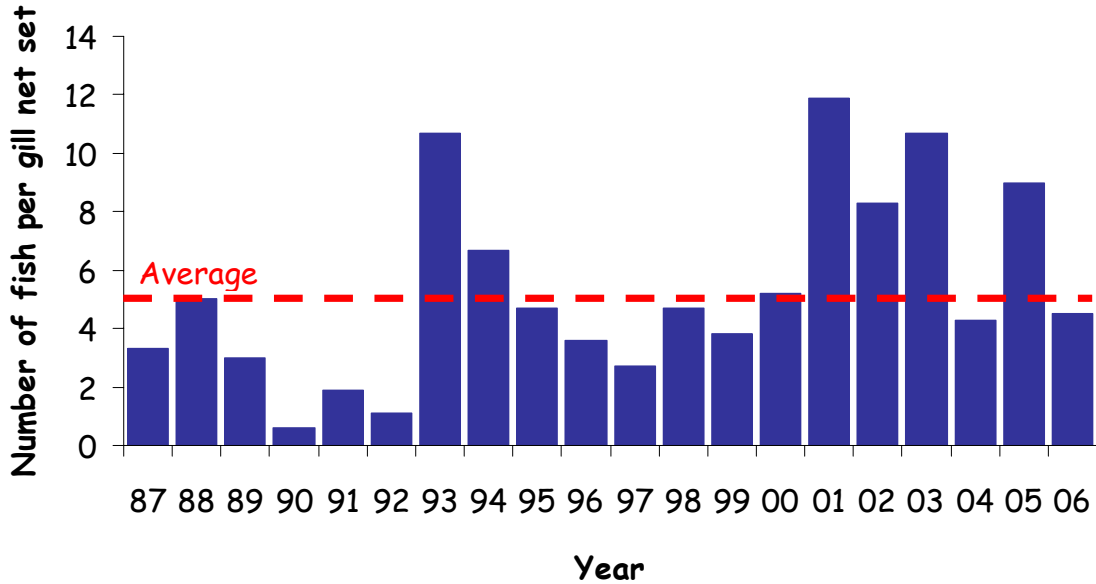
Note: There is **NO one fish over 20 inch regulation on the previously mentioned portion of the Missouri River due to its status as a border water with Nebraska.*

Walleye

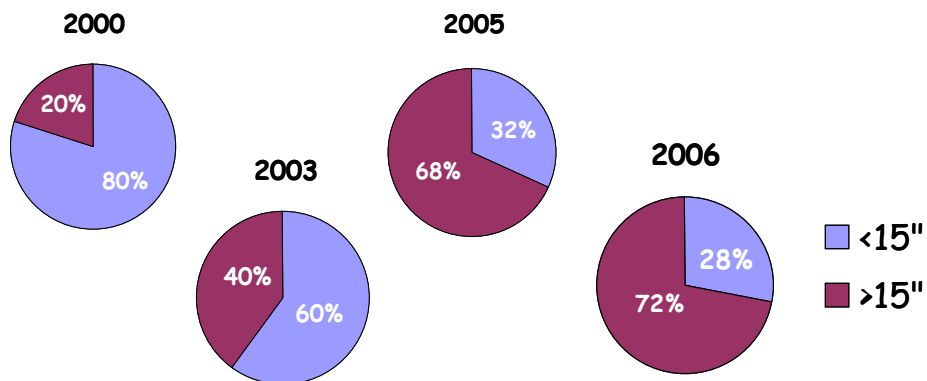
The young walleye produced during a year are referred to as that year's year class of fish. There are currently three large year classes of walleye in Lewis and Clark Lake that were produced from 2001-2003. The percentage of walleye longer than 15 inches has increased each year since 2000 due to growth of fish in these year classes. This indicates that the number of fish

above 15 inches available to anglers should be higher in 2007 than 2006. Walleye production during 2004-2006 has been below average, therefore once the 2001-2003 year classes move through the population, numbers of fish above 15 inches will decline.

Lewis and Clark Lake walleye abundance near long-term average

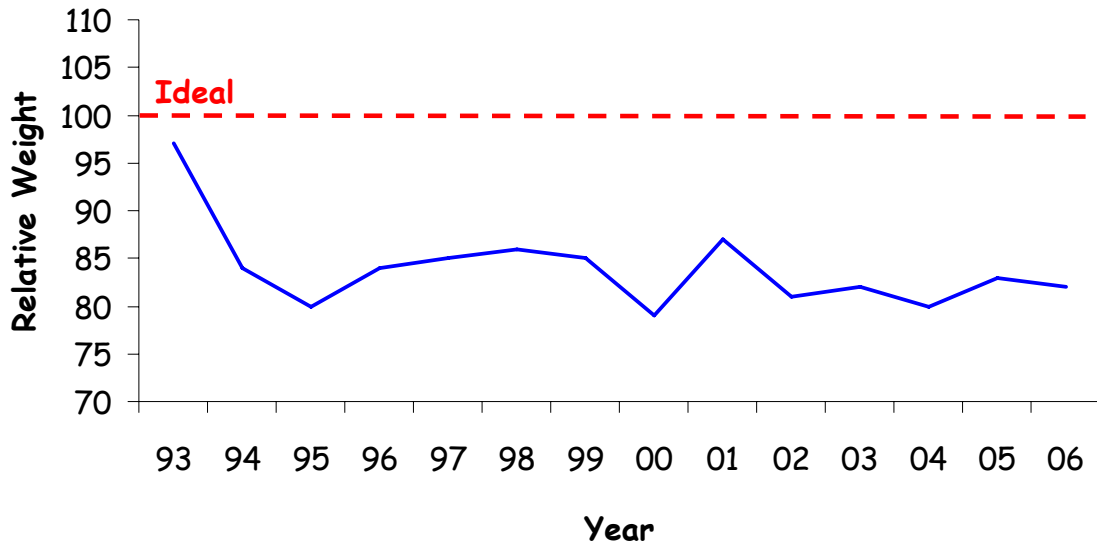


Percentage of walleye sampled over 15 inches increased in 2006



Relative weight is an index used to describe if fish are in good condition. Values well below 100 for an individual or size-group indicate problems may exist in food or feeding conditions. Walleye relative weight values in 2006 were within the standard range of 80 to 85 for Lewis and Clark Lake.

Walleye condition in 2006 was similar to 2005



Sauger

The number of sauger caught per gill net set has remained the same for the past three years. The total number of sauger sampled in 2006 was higher than the number of walleye, indicating an extremely healthy population of sauger exists in Lewis and Clark Lake. Sizes of sauger available to anglers for 2007 is excellent, with nearly 50% of sampled sauger above the 15 inch minimum. Fish above 18 inches composed nearly 20% of the sampled sauger with fish up to 21 inches present! As with walleye, sauger relative weights are within the standard range of 80 to 85.

Points to Ponder

Reservoir ageing, more specifically sedimentation and delta formation, is an ongoing issue in Missouri River reservoirs. As these systems age, the amount of sediment present increases, leading to decreased capacity for water storage and access issues for recreational use. The Niobrara River Delta on Lewis and Clark Lake has been expanding and will continue to expand over time. The full impact of this habitat on the fish communities present in Lewis and Clark Lake is yet unknown. Research has shown that fish habitat use for certain species has changed over time as the habitats themselves have changed. As this process continues to occur, fish locations will undoubtedly change as well. Successful anglers on Lewis and Clark Lake now and in the future will have to adapt to the changing nature of the fishery. Locations that held fish in previous years may be poor fish habitat today. Willingness to adapt and explore new locations may increase an anglers ability to routinely catch fish on this ever-changing reservoir.

Lewis and Clark Lake Catfish



Lewis and Clark Lake Channel and Flathead Catfish Regulations (For more information on Missouri River Regulations, see 2007 Fishing Handbook, pages 20-23)

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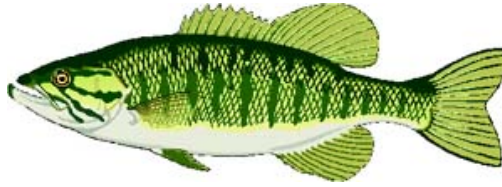
- *5 fish daily/ 10 possession- channel and flathead catfish (each)*

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. The average channel catfish from 2006 gill net samples was nearly 20 inches in length and weighed 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, with the largest fish sampled weighing in at nearly 10 pounds!

Flathead catfish are also present in Lewis and Clark Lake and can provide angling opportunities for those willing to search for them. During 2006, flathead catfish up to 23 inches in length were sampled; however, the sampling method used often times does not adequately sample larger sized catfish. Larger flathead catfish may roam Lewis and Clark Lake waters!

Harvesting catfish 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 2007 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 catch per unit effort, or number of fish sampled per hour of electrofishing, decreased from 2005 to 2006. The majority of largemouth bass sampled during 2006 ranged in length from 11 to 17 inches.

- The best largemouth bass angling on Lewis and Clark Lake can be found in areas of the Niobrara Delta containing aquatic plants.

Smallmouth bass catch per unit effort, or number of fish sampled per hour of electrofishing, also decreased from 2005 to 2006. Smallmouth bass sampled during 2006 were represented by all length categories up to 14 inches.