



2012 Northeast District Flood Control Reservoir Survey Results

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
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Several flood control reservoirs dot the landscape of the Northeast District ranging in size from approximately 25 to 700 surface acres. The primary species making up the fish communities in most of these lakes are largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, and channel catfish. However, Willow Creek Reservoir near Pierce is the largest of the flood control reservoirs in the Northeast District and management is geared toward a large reservoir fishery that includes walleye, wipers, white bass, and channel catfish. It also provides some very good opportunities for crappie anglers. Walleye are found in some of the smaller reservoirs also but in relatively low numbers. Most of these lakes receive annual stockings of channel catfish and about half are stocked with walleye on an annual basis. Species in these lakes other than the channel catfish and walleye maintain their populations through natural reproduction and recruitment.

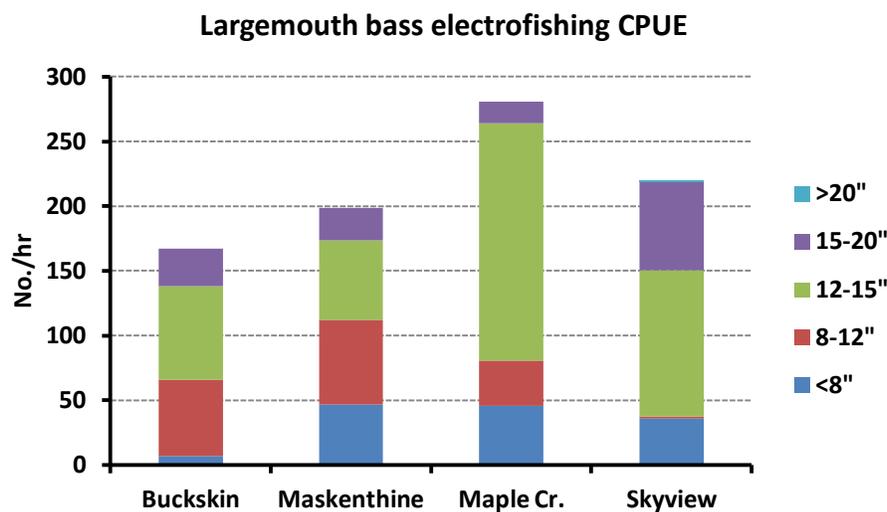
Within a year or so another flood control reservoir will be added to the pool of fishing opportunities in this part of the state. Pigeon-Jones (also referred to as Kramper Lake or Danish Alps Recreation Area), is located just outside of Hubbard. When this lake is open to the public has yet to be determined. This new reservoir will encompass approximately 250 surface acres and will be initially stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, channel catfish, and walleye.

Not all lakes are sampled annually and the following charts provide information on select fish species from lakes sampled in 2012. Many of the Northeast District Lakes contain dense beds of aquatic vegetation on a seasonal basis. Curly-leaf pondweed is found in this area and is classified as an Aquatic Invasive Species (**see note below**). More information for Northeast District lakes such as location, boat ramps, species present, special regulations etc. can be found in the Nebraska Fishing Guide.

****Special Note to Boat Anglers****—>As of January 1, 2013, new regulations require that any boat that has been on a waterbody must drain all water from all compartments, equipment, or containers before leaving the launch area and that all

aquatic vegetation must be removed from the boat and trailer before leaving the launch area. These new regulations are meant to control the spread of aquatic invasive species such as zebra mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil, and curly-leaf pondweed to name a few. Additional information about aquatic invasive species and preventing their distribution can be found in the 2013-2014 Nebraska Fishing Guide (pp. 28-29) and at the University of Nebraska Invasive Species website: <http://snr.unl.edu/invasives/>.

Largemouth bass

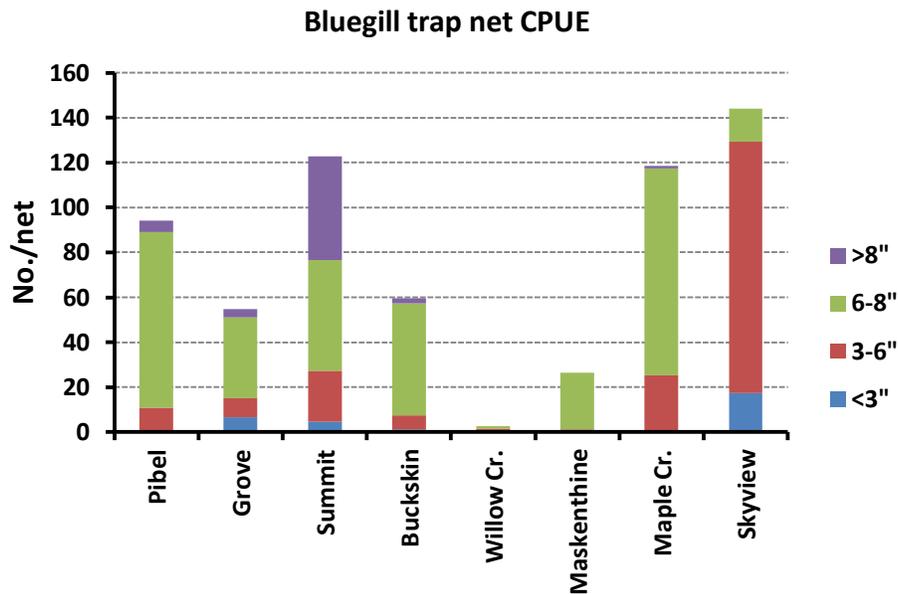


Four flood control reservoirs were sampled for largemouth bass in 2012 including Buckskin Hills near Newcastle, Maskenthine near Stanton, Skyview on the west side of Norfolk, and Maple Creek, a new lake on the northwest side of Leigh. Bass are collected by night-time electrofishing efforts that are conducted in the spring of the year. A catch rate of at least 150 bass per hour of electrofishing is desirable. This minimum catch rate not only equates to good catch rates for anglers seeking bass but also limits panfish recruitment so that desirable growth rates and size structure on those panfish can be maintained.

Each of the lakes sampled should provide some great opportunities for anglers seeking bass in 2013. Good size distribution was apparent at each of the lakes, including some larger fish. However, Skyview Lake appeared to be missing a year class or two as indicated by very few 8-12 inch bass in the sample. Other reservoirs in the Northeast District that should provide good bass angling opportunities that were not sampled in 2012 include Pibel, Grove, Summit, and Chalkrock Lakes. Of the four lakes sampled, Buckskin and Skyview are managed

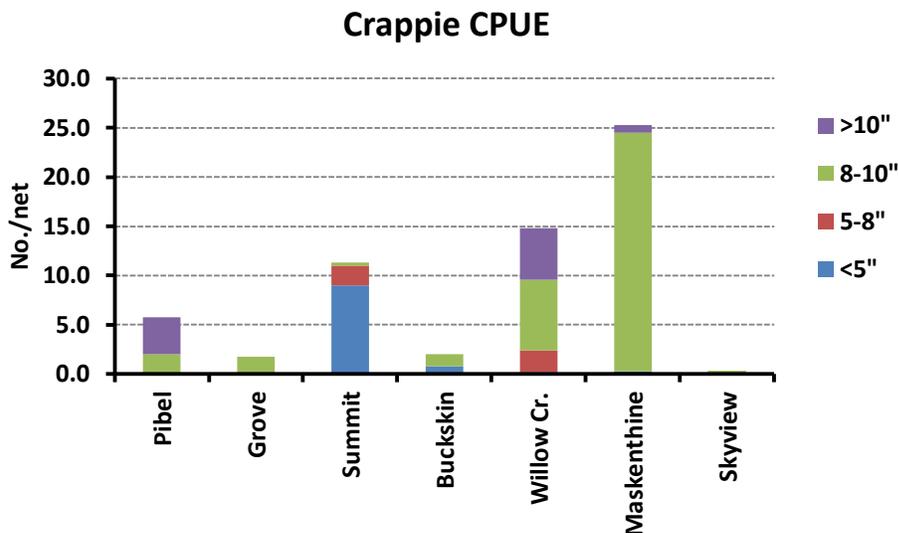
with a 21-inch minimum length limit while the other two fall under the statewide 15-inch minimum length limit.

Bluegill



Bluegill sampling also takes place in the spring, from late April through June, with eight reservoirs having been sampled in 2012. Netting efforts at Pibel, Grove, Summit, and Buckskin Hills revealed populations with excellent size structure as indicated by a fair catch of bluegill exceeding 8 inches. Summit Lake led the way by far with a catch of 46 per net that were 8 inches or longer. Anglers shouldn't overlook Maskenthine and Maple Creek reservoirs though, they may not have had many of those 8-inch bluegill but they do have a good number just under it. Maple Creek Reservoir is a very recent addition to the suite of opportunities in the Northeast District and the fishery is still in the developing stage which typically means excellent growth rates and resulting size structure.

Crappie



Sampling at Willow Creek, near Pierce, revealed the best crappie fishing opportunity in the District with a fair catch of 10-inch and longer fish. Pibel Lake, a 25-acre lake just off of Highway 281 south of Bartlett, should also provide some nicer crappie. The crappie fishery at Maskenthine was comprised of a single year class that was hovering around 9 inches at sampling time while young-of-the-year dominated the Summit Lake crappie population which could bode well for crappie anglers there in a couple of years. Some of the lakes such as Grove, Buckskin Hills and Summit contain higher numbers of crappie than the netting data suggests. Dense stands of vegetation hamper crappie sampling at times and spring sampling of crappie can be hit or miss depending on spawning activity. Angler reports from Grove and Buckskin Hills indicate good crappie fishing opportunity.

Other Species

Anecdotal information indicates good numbers and size structure of **channel catfish** are present in most all of the flood control reservoirs in the district with many fish in the 15 to 20 inch range. With the exception of Maple Creek, which has only received two catfish stockings since the dam closing, all of the lakes have the potential to produce some larger catfish. Fall gill netting is the standard method for sampling channel catfish population but manpower constraints do not allow for this sampling on a routine basis. Instead, we rely on catfish collection data and observation while using other gear to gauge population density and general size distribution.

Willow Creek is the only reservoir on the list that could be considered a "**walleye lake**" but there are a few others that do provide some opportunity. Summit Lake has provided some good walleye at times and a fair number of age-1 walleye were observed at Maple Creek while spring electrofishing for bass. The 2012 drought has affected several of the reservoirs substantially. Willow Creek was down approximately 8 feet which reduced the surface area to about half that of full conservation pool which is 700 acres. Sampling for walleye and channel catfish did not occur in 2012 in Willow Creek for that reason.

White bass have been introduced into Willow Creek Reservoir and have survived and are offering some fishing opportunity. If water levels return to full pool there should be some natural reproduction occurring in 2013. The objective of the white bass introduction is to provide a self-reproducing population of white bass to provide summertime fishing and take advantage of the shad prey base.