

Sherman Reservoir 2012 Fall Survey Summary



Brad Eifert, Fisheries Biologist

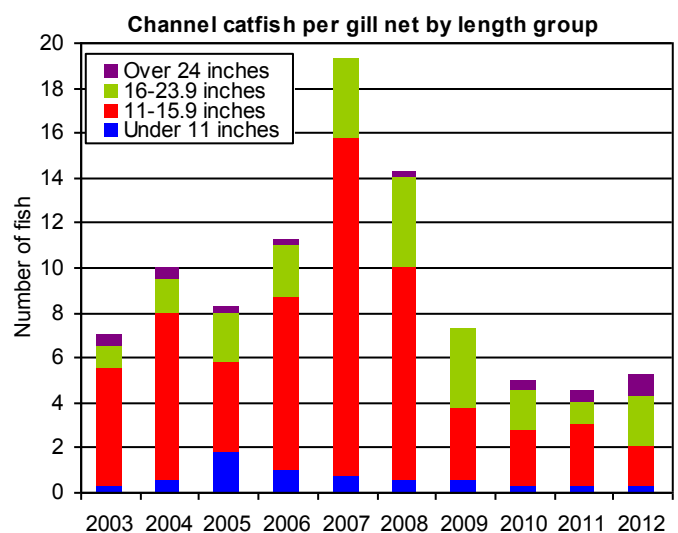
The following text and graphs are the result of netting surveys completed during September 2012 at Sherman Reservoir. For comparative purposes it also shows results from previous years. Fish populations are sampled each fall at Sherman using gill and frame nets. Gill nets are used to sample fish species 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

The catch of channel catfish has been consistent the past three years, but remains lower than the ten year average of 9.2 catfish/net. Fish were sampled in all length categories, with the majority of the catch ranging from 15 to 20 inches. The abundance of fish greater than 24 inches was slightly higher this year. The average length of catfish was 18.1 inches and the largest fish collected was 29 inches.

Anglers targeting channel catfish should find good angling opportunities for intermediate size catfish. Abundance of large fish is higher, which should allow for improved chances to catch a trophy channel catfish.

The statewide daily bag limit for channel catfish on reservoirs is five fish per day.

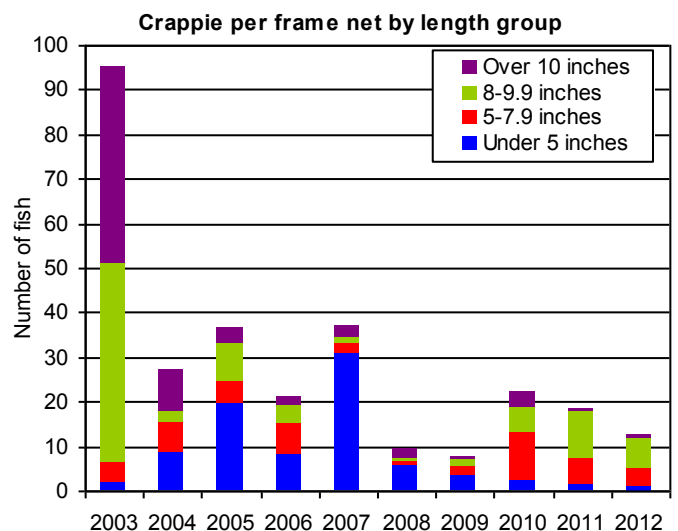


Crappie

Low water levels during the fall of 2012 hindered sampling efforts for crappie, as many of the coves were too shallow to properly place sampling gear. Therefore, netting results from last fall probably do not accurately reflect the current crappie population and likely underestimate total abundance. Netting resulted in only 12.7 crappie/net, the lowest sample since 2009. Most of the crappie collected ranged from 5 to 9.9 inches, with only a small percentage greater than ten inches. The average length of white crappie caught in the survey was 8.5 inches.

According to 2012 angler survey results, crappie fisherman had a record year for crappie catch, but most of the fish were below the 10-inch minimum length limit. Many of these fish are currently 9 to 9.5 inches and should contribute to the harvest during 2013.

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

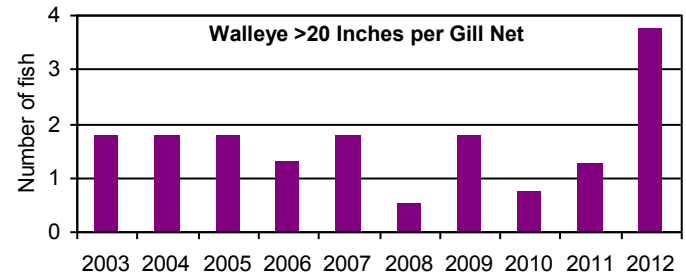
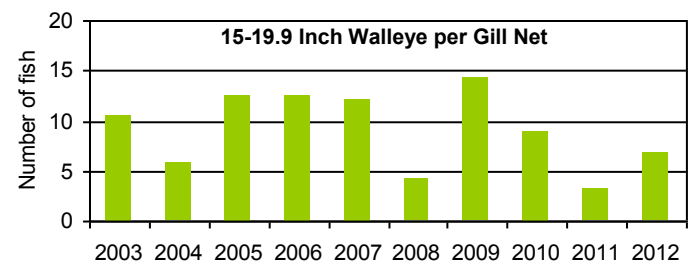
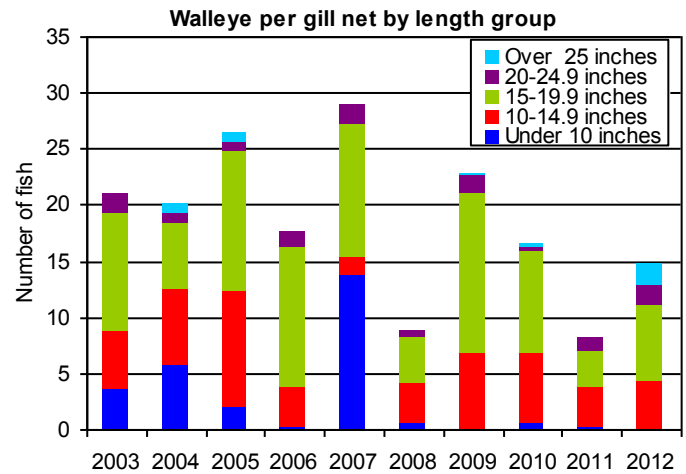


Walleye

Following two years of declining gill net catch for walleye at Sherman, a modest rebound was observed in 2012 results. With the exception of fish less than 10 inches, walleye were caught in all size categories. Fish in the 10 to 15 inch size category have been consistent the past four years, which indicates stable recruitment and helps to ensure that enough fish will reach the harvest slot to provide good fishing opportunities. Most of the fish in this category range from age-1 through age-3. Although the majority of angler harvest is directed at the fish in the 15 to 20 inch length category, there was a slight increase in abundance of these fish. Fish in this size group comprised approximately 46% of the walleye collected in the 2012 survey. While there was only a slight increase in fish between 20 and 25 inches, the number of fish greater than 25 inches was a highest recorded in the past ten years. Overall, the number of fish greater than 20 inches is three times higher than what was observed in 2010. The average length of walleye collected in the survey was 17.7 inches, an increase of over two inches from 2011 results.

At this time, it appears that positive benefits are being seen from the new walleye regulations. Anglers have harvested more walleye the past four years than what was harvested in any of the previous ten years. In addition, an increase in larger fish is becoming noticeable. Anglers should continue to find ample harvest opportunities, as well as improved chances for catching large walleye during 2013.

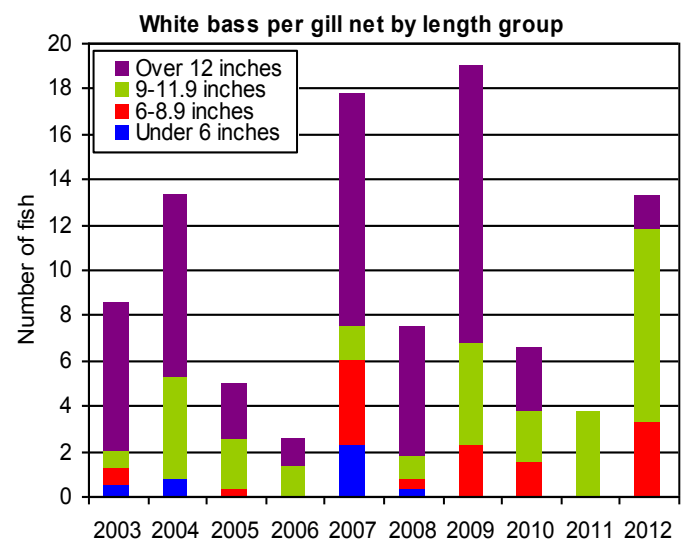
The walleye regulation for Sherman includes a daily bag limit that may include two walleye greater than 15 inches but less than 20 inches and one walleye over 28 inches. There is a slot limit protecting walleye 20 through 28 inches.



White Bass

After having two years of low white bass catch, 2012 survey results indicate an improvement in abundance. The catch of 13.25 white bass/net was the highest since 2009. Fish in the 9 to 12 inch length category were most abundant, due primarily to successful 2009 and 2010 year-classes. The 2011 year-class also appears strong and helped contribute to an improvement in catch of fish in the 6 to 9 inch length category. There was a slight increase in fish greater than twelve inches, but densities of these fish remain lower than average. The average length of white bass collected in the survey was 10.3 inches, with the largest fish approaching 14 inches.

Success has been marginal the past two years for anglers pursuing white bass at Sherman, but this should improve in 2013. There appears to be three relatively strong year-classes that should provide good opportunities for catch and harvest.



Although abundance of fish greater than twelve inches remains lower than average, anglers should find increased numbers of 10 to 12 inch fish this year.

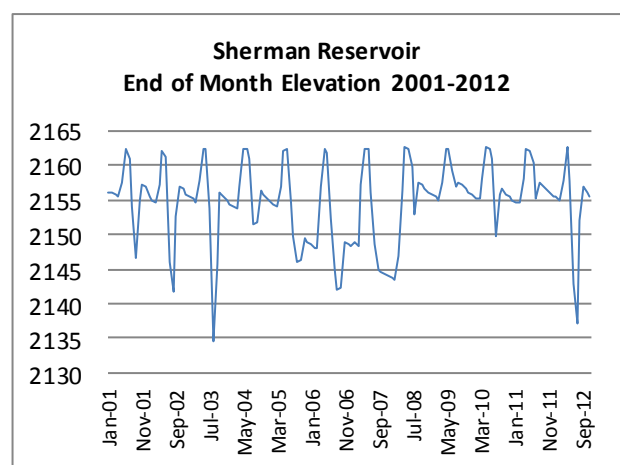
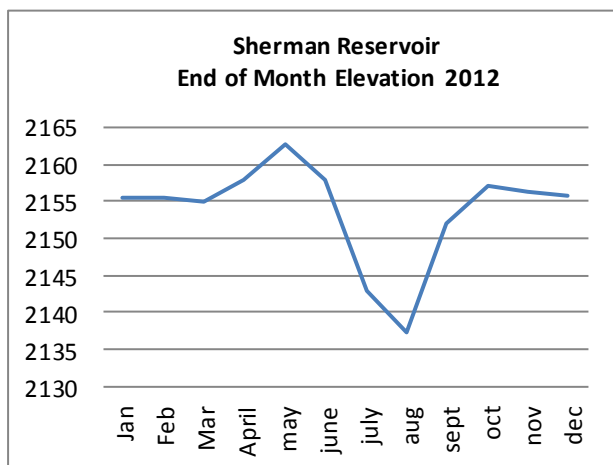
Sherman Reservoir — Additional Information

Fisheries Division will once again be conducting walleye spawn collections at Sherman during 2013. Depending on weather conditions, spawn collection will begin 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 2012, there were approximately 266 quarts of eggs collected during the spawn collection at Sherman Reservoir. This number represents about 28% of the total eggs collected Statewide. Eggs were also collected at McConaughy and Merritt Reservoirs. 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.

Current lake elevations can be found on Farwell Irrigation District's website: <http://www.farwellid.com/index.html>. Extreme drought conditions and high temperatures during the summer of 2012 created great demand for irrigation water in the Sherman Irrigation District. This resulted in a summer drawdown of approximately 25 feet, the greatest since 2003.



Boaters at Sherman Reservoir are reminded to use caution to avoid the rock structures placed in the reservoir, especially during high water when structures may be partially under water. White posts with reflective tape mark all structures, with buoys and lights added at some sites.

An angler survey will be completed at Sherman Reservoir from April through October 2013. 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. Results from the 2012 creel survey can be found here: <http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/fishing/programs/sampling/default.asp>



Scheduled fish stockings for 2013 include 140,000 walleye fingerlings.



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>

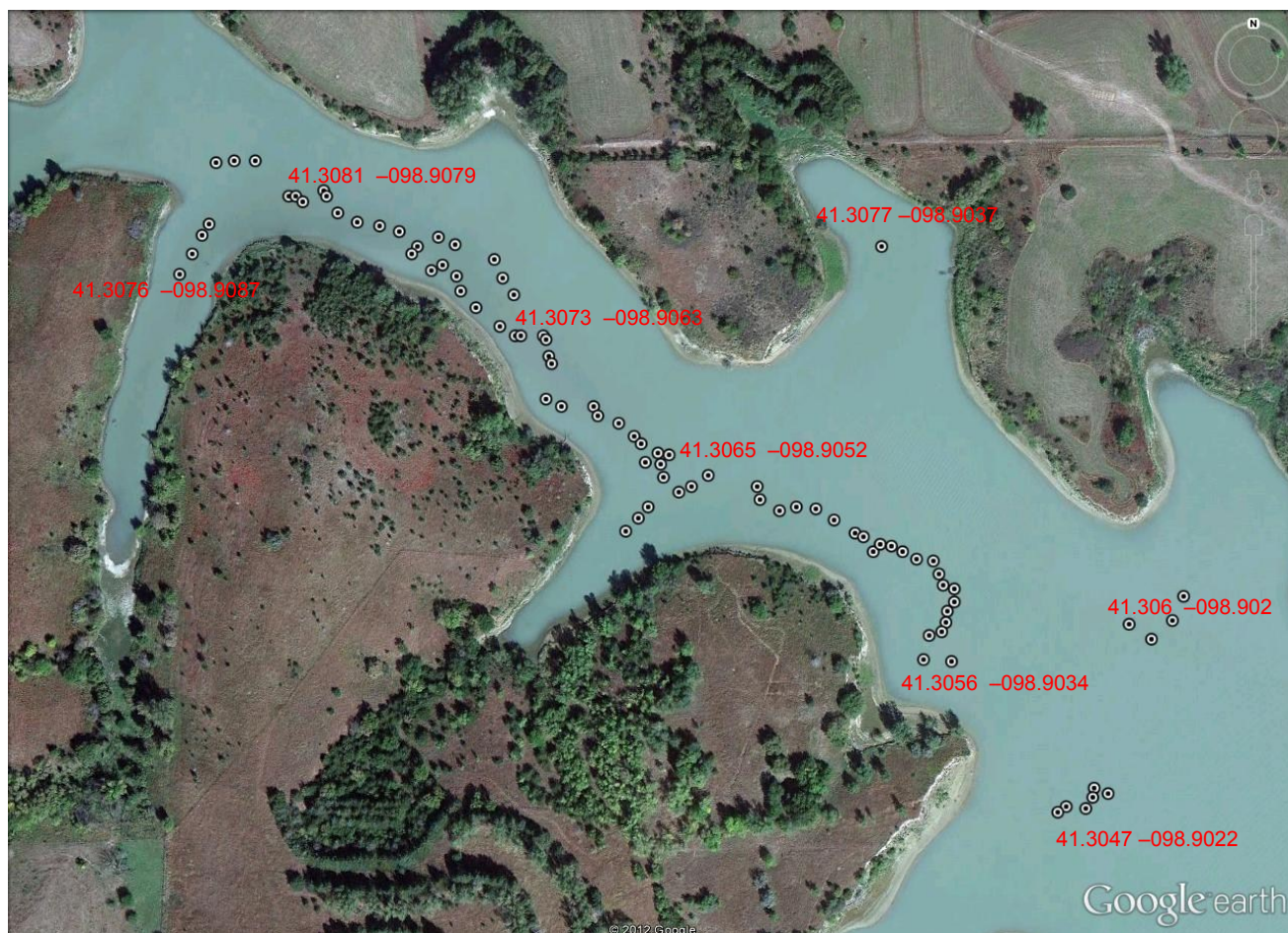
Anglers and boaters using Sherman and other Nebraska waters this season need to be aware of new regulations dealing with aquatic invasive species. Starting January 1, 2013 the following regulations went into effect to help prevent the spread or introduction of unwanted species in Nebraska waters.

- Any watercraft that has been on a Nebraska waterbody must drain the lake water from their compartments, equipment or containers before leaving the launch area. It is still illegal to dump baitfish into a Nebraska waterbody.
- Livewells need to be drained prior to leaving a launch area: plan ahead and bring a cooler for harvested fish.
- All aquatic vegetation from that waterbody attached to the watercraft and/or trailer must be removed before leaving the launch area.

Anglers and boaters are encouraged to educate themselves on aquatic invasive species. An excellent source of information regarding invasive species can be found on the University of Nebraska's Invasive Species Project website: <http://snr.unl.edu/invasives/>.



Approximately 200 cedar trees were placed as fish attractors in Trail 5 while the lake was low during August.



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.

District Supervisor: Brad Newcomb, brad.newcomb@nebraska.gov
Biologist: Brad Eifert, brad.eifert@nebraska.gov