

# Interstate 80 Lakes Chappell to Gothenburg 2024 Fall Survey Summary



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There are 15 Interstate 80 (I-80) Lake fisheries between Chappel and Gothenburg that are actively managed by NGPC's Southwest District personnel. These lakes range from 6 to 53 surface acres, and most are managed as a Wildlife Management Area (WMA). For more information concerning I-80 Lakes consult NGPC's [Fishing the Interstate](#) publication and the [2025 Fishing Guide](#). Statewide harvest regulations apply at most I-80 Lakes in this region, but West Brady and East Hershey are Catch & Release Only.

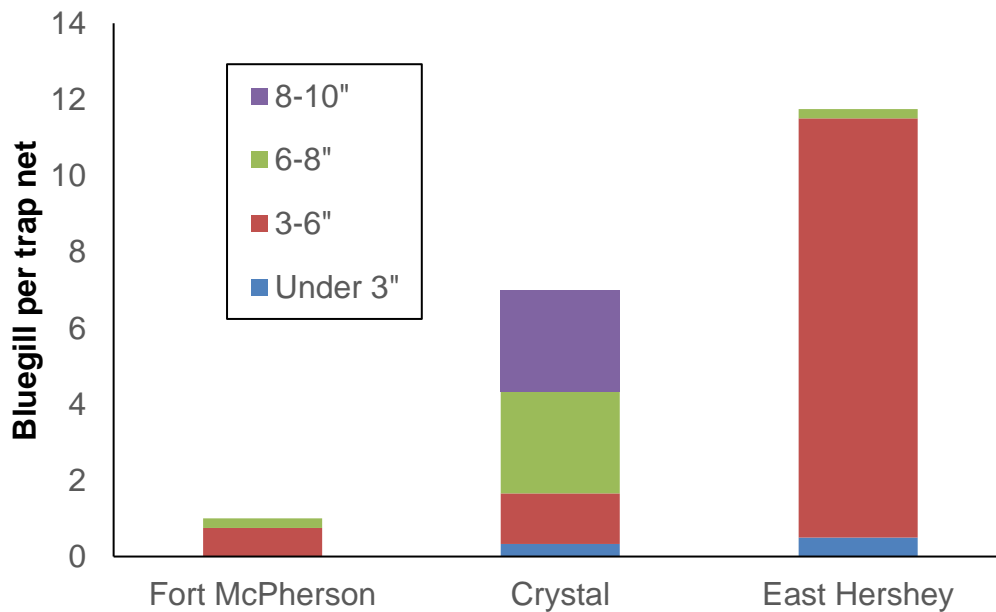
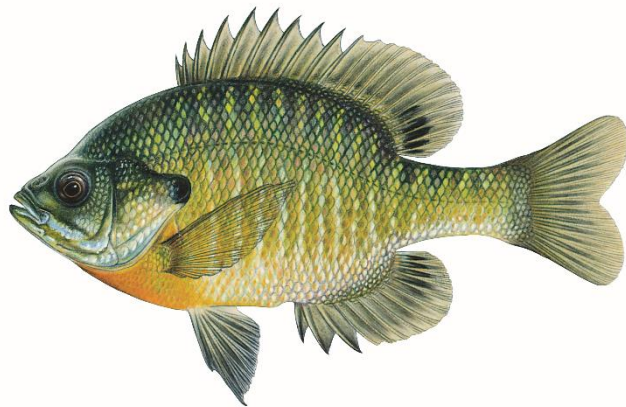
Please don't litter as there is no designated litter control method at many of these I-80 Lakes. Investigate [WMA Regulations](#) as camping has been prohibited or more stringently regulated at many of these locations. Investigate the [2025 Boating Guide](#) for boating restrictions.

On average, four of these I-80 Lake Fisheries are sampled per year. During the spring, nighttime boat electrofishing is used to sample largemouth bass while trap nets are used to sample other shoreline-oriented species such as bluegill. For past survey information investigate [Survey Summaries](#) on NGPC's website.

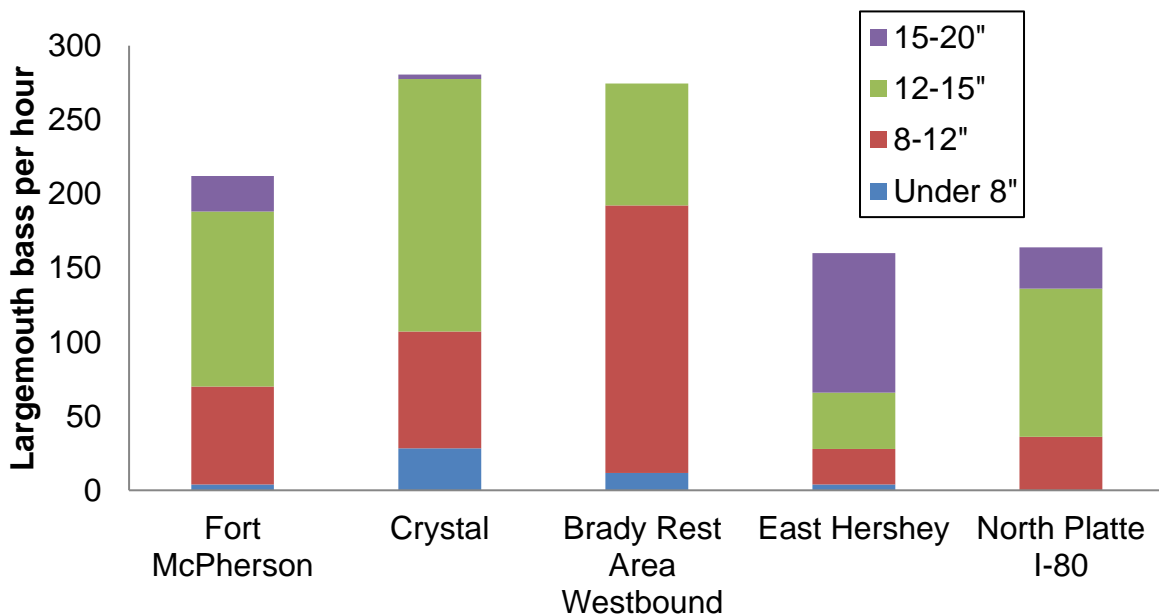
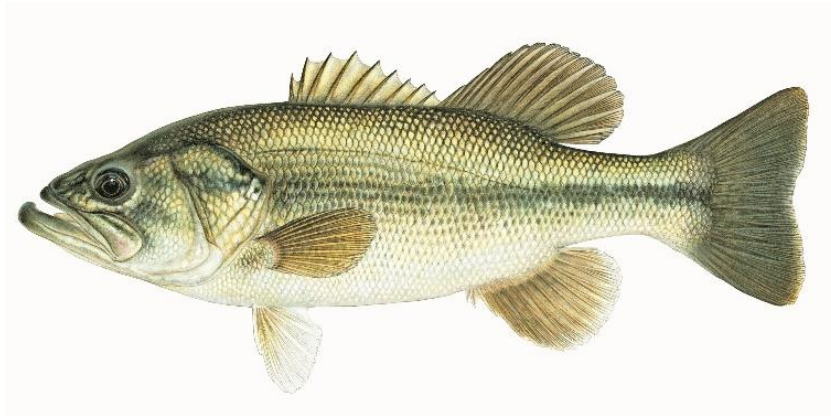


**Bluegill** are prevalent in many I-80 Lakes and serve as the primary prey item for predatory species. For their size, bluegill are “scrappy” fighters, especially on light tackle. Their tendency to inhabit shoreline habitats make them a good target for bank anglers.

Bluegill were sampled in three I-80 Lakes during 2024. Fort McPherson revealed the lowest catch, Crystal revealed larger specimens, and East Hershey showed the most abundant catch made up of small individuals. Statewide harvest regulations apply at many I-80 Lakes, but West Brady and East Hershey are Catch & Release Only.



**Largemouth bass** are the main predatory species in many I-80 Lakes. The 2024 survey revealed that Crystal and Brady Rest Area had the highest catches although these fish were small. Fort McPherson and North Platte's largemouth bass populations showed less abundance but more quality. East Hershey revealed the lowest abundance but the largest specimens. Statewide harvest regulations apply at many I-80 Lakes, but West Brady and East Hershey are Catch & Release Only.



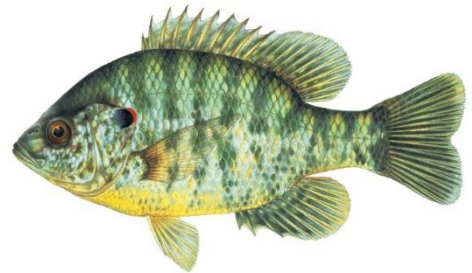


**Other species** are available in the I-80 lakes for individuals looking for different angling opportunities. Refer to the [Public Fishing Areas](#) section of the 2025 Fishing Guide for waterbody specific species information. Statewide harvest regulations apply at many I-80 Lakes, but West Brady and East Hershey are Catch & Release Only for all species.

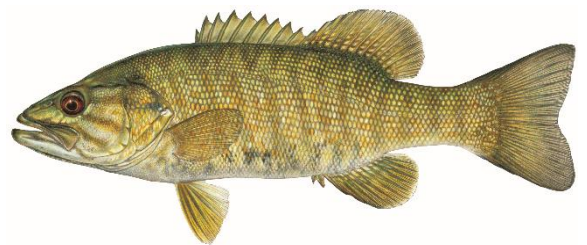
**Crappie** offer an opportunity at several I-80 Lakes, but their populations are typically small. In recent years, hybrid crappie have been stocked into Brady and West Brady.



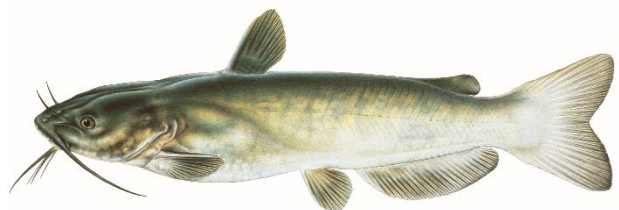
**Redear sunfish** were stocked in many I-80 Lakes during 2009. This “Southern” species has found a habitat niche in several I-80 Lakes and provides substantial angling opportunities.



**Smallmouth bass** were stocked into East Sutherland following the renovation in 2021. Current survey data indicates that these smallmouth in East Sutherland are growing and reaching lengths greater than 15”.



**Channel Catfish** offer another angling opportunity in many I-80 Lakes. They are raised to 10” before being stocked to limit predation and are stocked in many I-80 Lakes on a rotating schedule to maintain fishable populations. The statewide harvest regulation of 1 over 30” applies to I-80 Lake Channel catfish.



**Saugeye** have recently been stocked into East Sutherland and initial surveys show good growth and survival. Further stockings will be made to sustain this species.

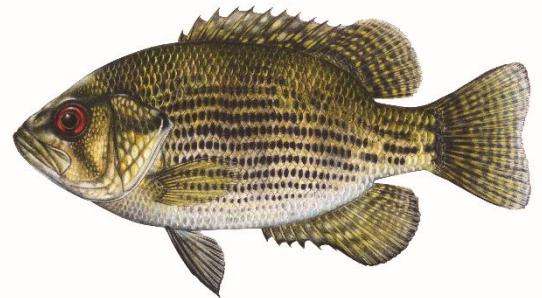


## Other species (continued)

**Rainbow trout** are stocked into Birdwood and North Platte I-80 Lake to provide seasonal fishing opportunities.



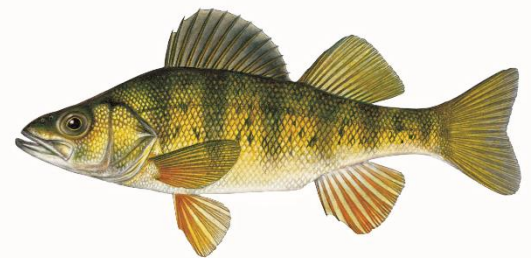
**Rock bass** is a unique species that does well in some I-80 Lakes such as Hershey. Rock bass have recently been stocked into East Sutherland.



**Flathead catfish** were stocked into Brady to supplement predation. This species exists in low densities at Hershey.



**Yellow perch** were recently stocked into East Sutherland. Yellow perch also exist in other I-80 Lakes at low densities such as Hershey, Fremont Slough, and Birdwood.



**Tiger muskellunge** were recently stocked into Pawnee Slough. This species is a relative to northern pike who reside in low densities at some I-80 Lakes such as Fremont Slough and East Hershey.



# Stocking

The I-80 Lakes between Chappel and Gothenburg receive stockings from NGPC's Hatchery System every year depending on necessity. In many cases, stocking requests come to fruition, but many dynamics can affect the outcome and for this reason future stocking requests are tentative (\*). For more stocking details access [NGPC's Stocking Database](#).

I-80 Lake	Species	Size	Number	When
*North Platte I-80 Lake (aka Iron Horse)	Rainbow Trout	12"	4,050	April
*Birdwood	Rainbow Trout	12"	3,000	October
*West Gothenburg	Channel catfish	10"	375	August
*Fremont Slough	Northern pike	10"	150	September
*Brady	Smallmouth bass	10"	200	May
*Brady	Flathead catfish	10"	100	July

# Aquatic Vegetation

During 2024, North Platte I-80 Lake (aka Iron Horse City Park) hybrid watermilfoil (Eurasian x Northern) was chemically treated. This treatment looks to have been successful and additional monitoring of this site will continue. Additional vegetation treatments at other I-80 Lakes are planned for 2025.





# Angler Access

Over the last several years, NGPC has improved angler access at several I-80 Lakes in various ways. Many of these sites are described as “Family Friendly” and/or “Accessible” due to these improvements and are highlighted in the [Public Fishing Areas](#) section of the 2025 Fishing Guide.



# Events

During 2024, a Community Fishing Night (CFN) was held at North Platte I-80 Lake. These events are great for youth and introducing new anglers to the activity. When attending a CFN, look for the Family Fishing Trailer to locate the site. Rods and reels are loaned, and bait and fishing instruction are given for free. Please utilize [NGPC's Schedule](#) to learn about 2025's Community Fishing Nights. In addition to CFN's there will be a [Trout in the Classroom](#) (TIC) event at North Platte I-80 Lake during spring 2025.



# Fish Attractors

Cedar trees were sunk in Fremont Slough I-80 Lake on April 10, 2024. These trees may congregate game species for anglers to target. When possible, trees are removed from shorelines to improve bank angler access during these projects.



Site Description	Location
2 Trees	N 41°05.877' W 100°40.183'
3 Trees	N 41°05.794' W 100°39.985'
3 Trees	N 41°05.799' W 100°40.057'
4 Trees	N 41°05.853' W 100°40.142'
5 Trees	N 41°05.826' W 100°39.820'



# Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

**Eurasian watermilfoil** is an invasive aquatic plant and is now found in many waterbodies across Nebraska including **East Hershey, Hershey, and Birdwood I-80 Lakes**. In many cases, this vegetation hybridizes with native Northern watermilfoil, grows aggressively and is costly to manage.

This plant spreads through tiny fragments and can grow up to 20 feet deep. New infestations are often caused by boaters not following the **Clean, Drain, and Dry** protocol and introducing fragments into new lakes. Make sure you clean all aquatic vegetation from your boat to prevent this invasive aquatic plant from spreading to new waterbodies.

**To report AIS, utilize 402-471-7602 or [ngpc.ais@nebraska.gov](mailto:ngpc.ais@nebraska.gov).**

