

Lake McConaughy 2024 Survey Summary

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Fish populations are sampled each fall at Lake McConaughy using gill nets, a method commonly used to sample fish such as walleye, white bass, channel catfish and wipers. Gill nets are set on approximately the same dates and locations each year to reduce variability.

After concerns for a population dominated by older fish, walleye stocking strategies were adjusted in 2022 to try to boost recruitment at Lake McConaughy. The new strategy includes stocking walleye at three different developmental sizes: fry (3 to 5 days old), fingerling (1 to 1.5 inches), and fingerling+ (1.5 to 2 inches). Early results have been encouraging with walleye catch improving in 2024 to slightly over the 15-year average with just under 23 per net surveyed. The number of fish observed between 10-15 inches was the highest since 2016. The current plan is to continue to evaluate the new stocking strategy for two more years and then make changes if deemed necessary. There are 23,000,000 fry, 920,000 fingerlings, and 230,000 fingerling+ walleye requested for 2025.

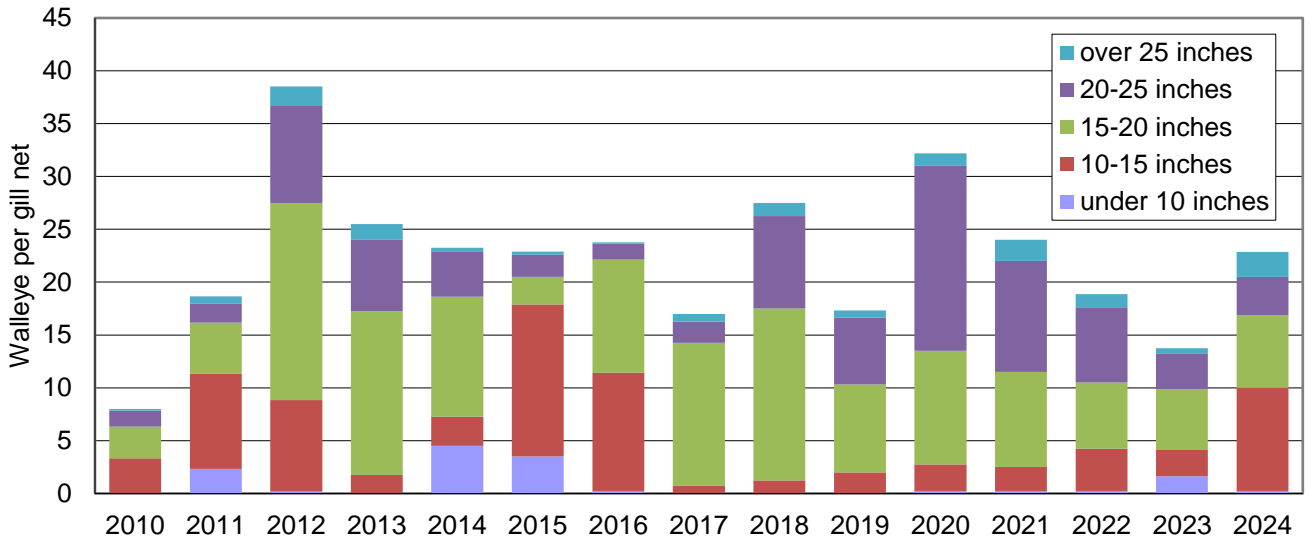
White bass catch can often be variable and continued to be low in 2024, with just over 1 fish per net observed. While catch was low, we did see multiple year classes and had the highest catch since 2017. After trying to supplement white bass recruitment with stocking for several years, the program has been discontinued due to the relative difficulty to culture them in a hatchery.

After seeing the highest wiper catch since 2002 in 2023, catch dipped to just over 1 per net in 2024. The low catch in 2024 is not a reason for concern at this time and wipers will continue to be an important fishery in Lake McConaughy, providing anglers with a trophy opportunity. Wiper stocking was temporarily paused while walleye stocking evaluations were ongoing. To maintain the fishery and keep an opportunity present, there are 23,000 wiper fingerlings requested for the spring of 2025. The overall goal is to maintain a low-density, trophy population of wiper in Lake McConaughy, and a low stocking rate will help with achieving that goal. Evaluations will continue and stocking rates will be adjusted if deemed necessary.

Channel catfish were surveyed at just over 6 per net in 2024. Within the catch was a good mix of trophy fish and smaller individuals for anglers looking to harvest. Channel catfish maintain their population naturally in Lake McConaughy and will provide a good opportunity in 2025.

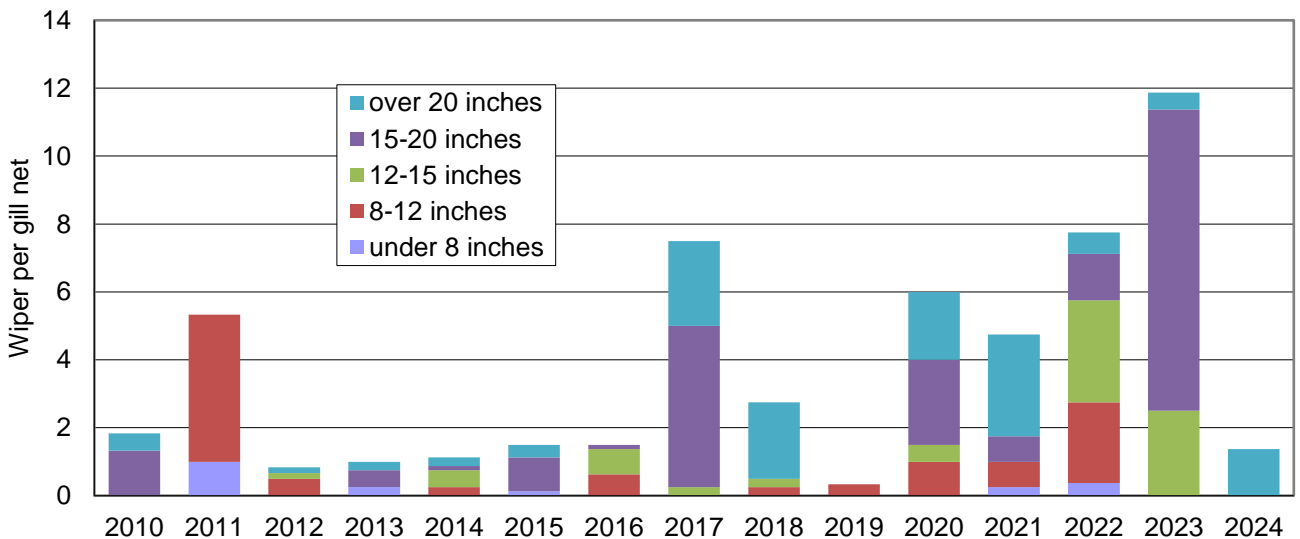
The following graphs show the average number of fish caught per net and the relative abundance of fish within several length categories. The text provides a brief explanation of the information shown in the graphs.

Walleye



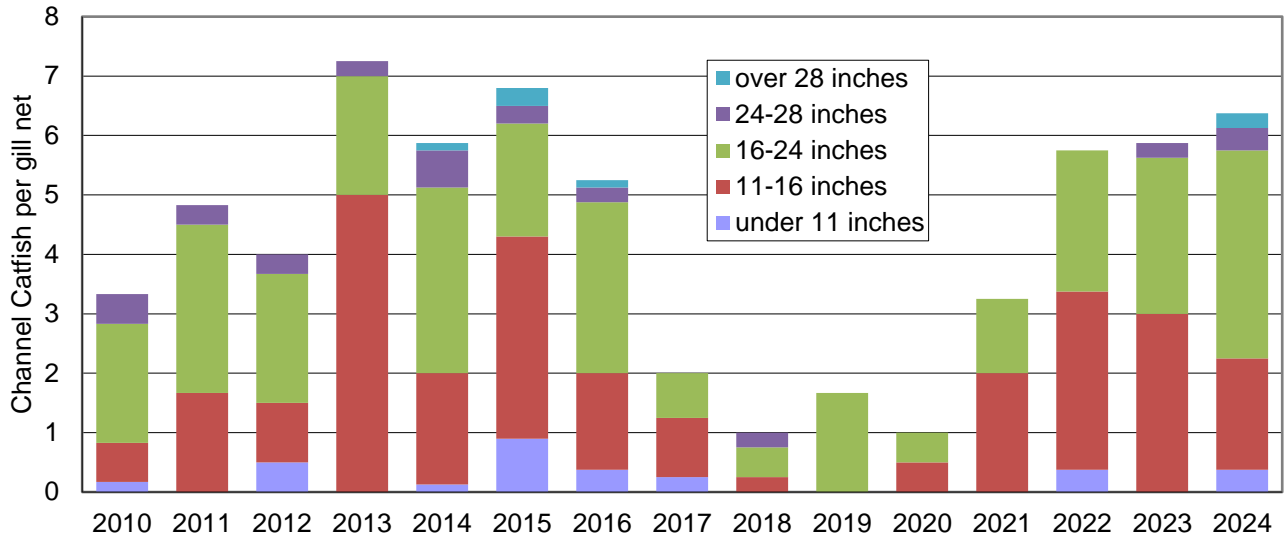
Just under 23 walleye per net were sampled in 2024. The number of fish sampled between 10-15 inches was the highest since 2016, showing a strong 2023 year-class. There are 23,000,000 fry, 920,000 fingerling, and 230,000 fingerling+ walleye requested for 2025.

Wiper



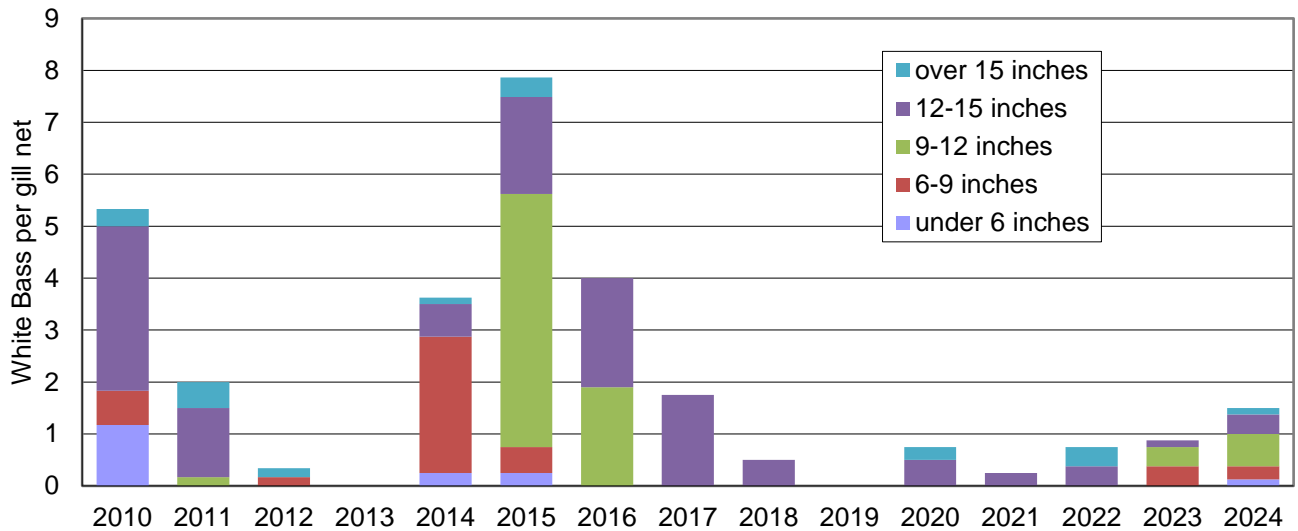
Wiper catch dipped to just over 1 per net in 2024 after seeing the highest catch since 2002 in 2023. At this time, there is not much concern for the population, but we will continue to monitor catch moving forward and will adjust stocking rates if deemed necessary. There are 23,000 wiper fingerlings requested for late spring 2025.

Channel Catfish



Channel catfish catch continued to increase in 2024 with just over 6 per net sampled. Included in the catch was a good mix of trophy fish over 28 inches and fish between 16-24 inches for people who want to harvest fish for the frying pan. Channel catfish maintain their populations naturally in Lake McConaughy and provide a good opportunity for anglers.

White Bass



White bass catch continued to be low in Lake McConaughy with just over 1 per net sampled in 2024. However, multiple year classes were observed, suggesting some recent recruitment occurred. High spring river flows generally provide a better opportunity for white bass natural recruitment and changes to North Platte River flows may be contributing to their inability to reproduce at a higher rate. There are no white bass requested for 2025.

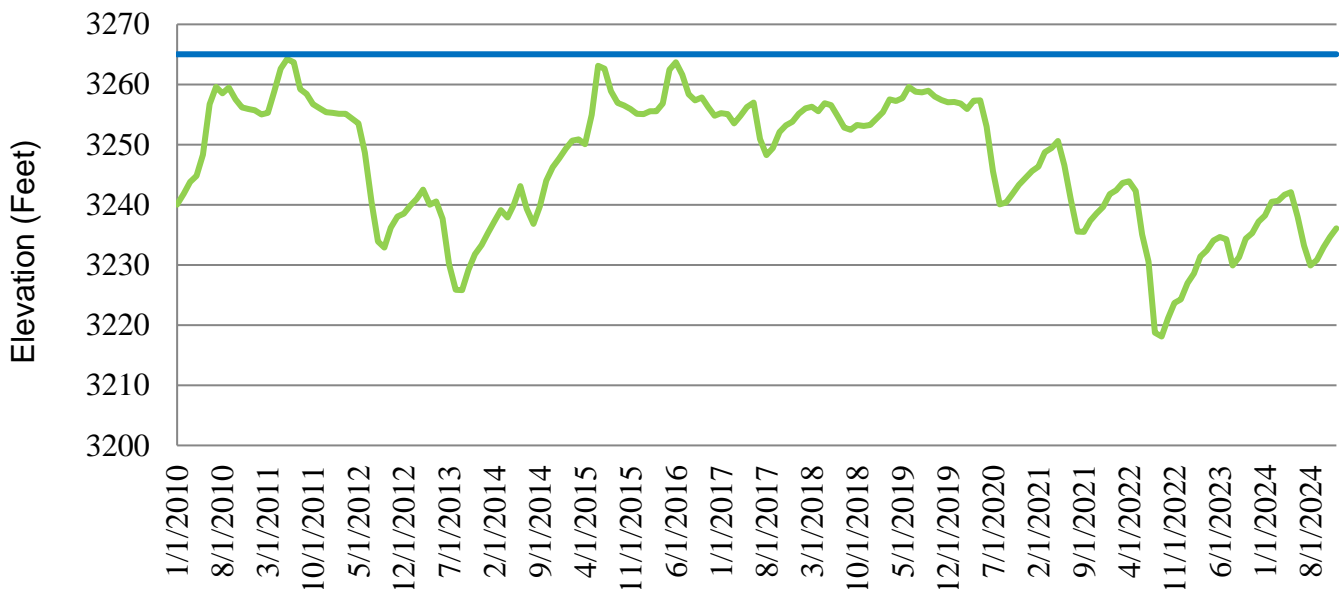
Lake McConaughy Fish Stocking Summary

Year	Walleye (Fry)	Walleye (Fing.)	Walleye (Fing +)	Wiper	White Bass
2024	20,205,421	749,547	180,118		
2023	20,990,175	841,029	200,981		
2022	26,022,507	1,330,934	279,374		
2021		1,733,314		33,570	239,736
2020		1,558,722		91,448	

Above is a table of fish stockings over the last 5 years at Lake McConaughy. The species stocked, number stocked, and fish size are presented in the table. Multiple species are stocked regularly in Lake McConaughy and a comprehensive database of fish stockings can be found at the Nebraska Game and Parks website or by following this link.

[Stocking Database](#)

Lake McConaughy Water Elevation 2010-2024



Water elevation is a constant management concern at Lake McConaughy. The dark blue line indicates the full pool elevation of 3,265 feet and the green line indicates the reservoir water elevation. More detailed information and current reservoir elevation data can be obtained by following this link: [Current Elevation](#)



Aquatic invasive species (AIS) have reached Nebraska! Zebra mussels are currently established in Lewis and Clark Reservoir, Lake Yankton, Offutt AFB pond, Beaver Lake, and the Missouri River. Anglers and boaters should be on the look out for personnel performing boat inspections and decontaminations statewide. Please email: ngpc.ais@nebraska.gov or call 402-471-7602 to report any possible AIS sightings or for more information about AIS in Nebraska.

Preventative Steps and Regulations

- It is unlawful for a boat to arrive at or leave any body of water in Nebraska with water other than from a domestic source except for fire-fighting purposes. Drain water before leaving an area
- It is unlawful for a boat or trailer to arrive or leave a launch area with any aquatic vegetation from that waterbody still attached. Boat blinds cannot use plants listed as invasive species or noxious weeds
- Wash mud off waders. Felt-sole waders are not allowed

Nonresident Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp

Motorized watercraft registered outside Nebraska are required to purchase and display the Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp before launching from any Nebraska boat ramp. Stamps must be affixed on the starboard side toward the rear of the boat above the waterline. The fee for each stamp is \$18 dollars and includes the \$3 issuing fee. Stamps can be purchased online or at Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Offices.



Left: Zebra Mussel
Right: Quagga Mussel