

Lewis and Clark Lake 2008 Fall Survey Summary

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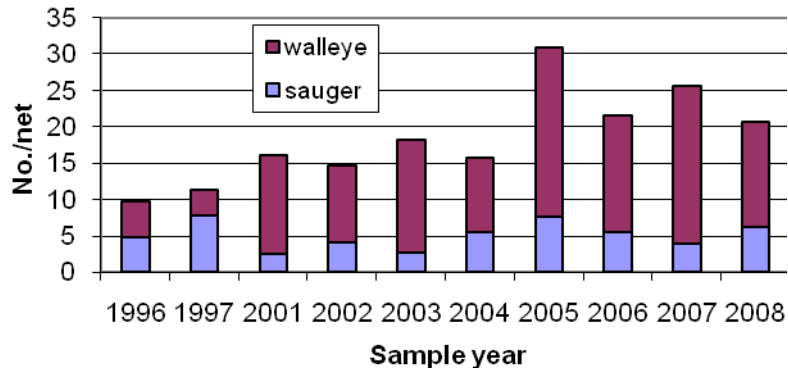
The following text and graphs are the result of the fall 2008 fish sampling conducted on Lewis and Clark Lake. Fall sampling consists of 5 to 8, 150 foot long experimental mesh gill nets set the first week of October. During the same time frame and weather permitting, night time electrofishing for young-of-the-year walleye, sauger and white bass is conducted at 4 to 5, 15 minute stations along the north side bluffs, hobie cat beach and along the dam. Smallmouth bass fall electrofishing sampling is also performed as time and weather permits. A minimum of one hour of electrofishing time is expended. Sampling locations, sampling gear and time of the year is nearly the same every year to standardize the sampling so as to reduce any factors which could bias the catch data.

Walleye and Sauger

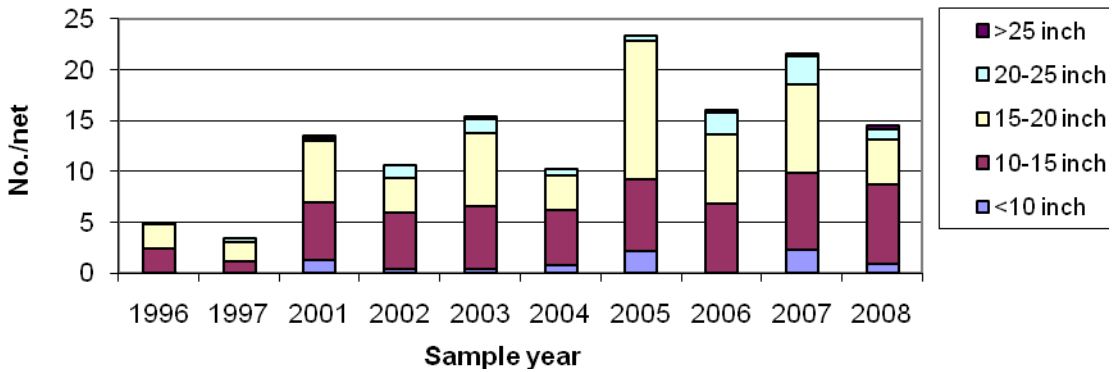
The combined catch-per-net for walleye and sauger in 2008 was 20.7. This is about 20% below the 25.6 recorded in 2007 sampling. The highest catch recorded was 31 per net in 2005 and the five year average (2004-2008) is 22.9 per net. In 2008, walleye comprised 70% of the sample or 14.5 per net while sauger was 30% at 6.2 per net. Lewis and Clark Lake contains a very good walleye/sauger population that has increased since the mid to late 1990's. Although the walleye catch was down about 30% from 2007, the population remains strong and is near the five year average of 17.1 per net. Angling opportunity should be good in 2009 as 40% of the 2008 sample consisted of fish over the 15 inch minimum size limit along with about 10% over 20 inches. Growth rates are very good with fish reaching 15 inches between age 2 and 3. Walleye production was very good in 2008 with the second highest young-of-the-year catch since we have been doing the sampling.

Walleye numbers and size structure has been good since 2001. A couple of factors are contributing to the improved walleye population. A 15 inch minimum length limit went into effect in 2000 for the Missouri River upstream of Gavins Point Dam and drought hit the Upper Missouri Basin. The 15 inch minimum size limit was adopted because creel surveys showed anglers harvesting fish as small as 12 inches. It was felt that a minimum size limit would improve fish numbers and size structure. The mid to late 1990's saw years of record precipitation and high flows on the Missouri River. The high flows meant high releases out of Gavins Point Dam and a high turnover rate in Lewis and Clark Lake. This resulted in flushing walleye from the reservoir into the river below the dam. Sauger do not appear to be as affected by the high flows and their numbers pre 2000 are similar to the numbers found post 2000. The 2000's thus far have seen drought conditions and record low releases from Gavins Point Dam so in effect less flushing of fish is occurring. Past research has documented fish being flushed through the dam during high water release years.

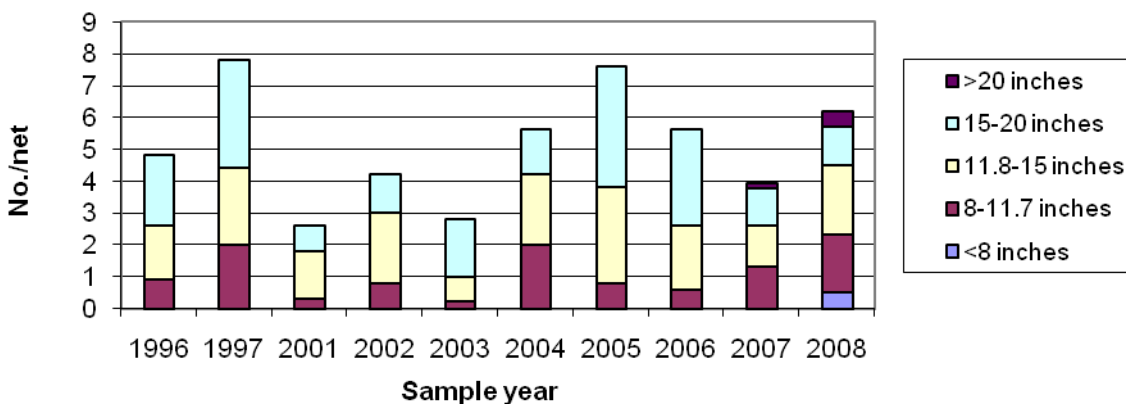
Lewis and Clark Lake fall gillnet samples



Lewis and Clark Lake fall walleye gillnet sample



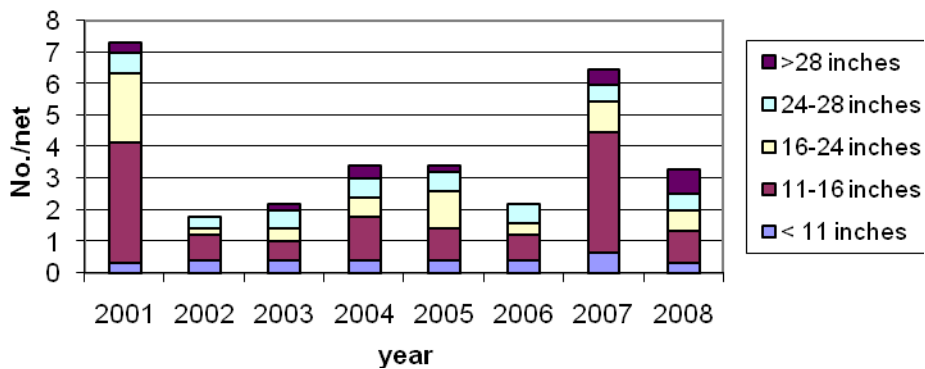
Lewis and Clark Lake fall sauger gillnet sample



Channel Catfish

The number of channel catfish collected in 2008 was down from the 2007 survey but near average for this reservoir. Although catfish net catch numbers are lower in Lewis and Clark than other smaller reservoirs in Northeast Nebraska, Lewis and Clark Lake offers some fine catfishing opportunity. The catfish net catch statistics is likely not a good indicator of population size because the areas sampled with gill nets are not necessarily the best catfish areas. There are catfish of various sizes in the reservoir with some large trophy fish present.

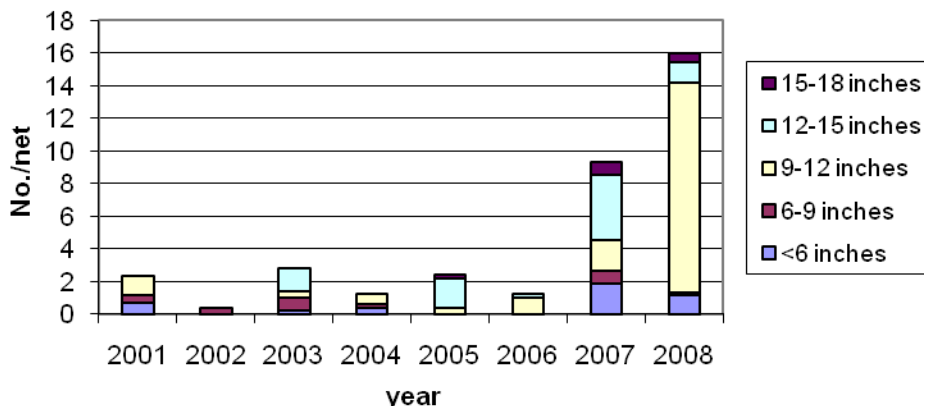
Lewis and Clark Lake
fall channel catfish gillnet sample



White Bass

The white bass catch in 2008 was nearly double that seen in 2007 and the highest we have seen in 8 years of netting at Lewis and Clark Lake. The increase in white bass numbers is due to a very strong 2007 year class which accounted for 81% of the total catch. In addition, it appears the 2008 year class is very strong also. This is good news for the angler and will mean excellent white bass fishing in 2009. The 2007 year class will make up the bulk of the white bass harvest for the next couple of years. White bass growth rates remain good with fish reaching 13 inches by age 3.

Lewis and Clark Lake
fall white bass gillnet sample



Fall electrofishing and young-of-the-year sampling

Fall night time electrofishing was conducted the first week of October. Too few smallmouth bass were captured in 2008 to present data here. Although Lewis and Clark Lake continues to offer good smallmouth bass angling, the fish were not “in-shore” when we conducted our fall electrofishing and were non vulnerable to capture with our gear.

We did collect high numbers of young-of-the-year walleye and white bass. Sauger young-of-the-year numbers were about normal. White bass numbers were the highest seen during 8 years of fall electrofishing surveys. While white bass reproduction appears to be an every other year success, the past two years show excellent reproduction back to back. With the fast white bass growth rates in Lewis and Clark Lake, this will equate to very good white bass angling the next few years. Walleye numbers were the second highest we had seen during fall young-of-the-year sampling. Reproduction for all three species shown in the graph is quite good and hopefully will translate into good fishing in the next few years. Once again, low releases through Gavins Point Dam likely contributed to high numbers of young-of-the-year fish remaining in the reservoir.

