

Red Willow Reservoir

2008 Fall Survey Summary



Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Caleb Huber, Fisheries Biologist

The following text and graphs are the result of netting surveys completed during 2008 at Red Willow Reservoir. For comparative purposes it also shows results from previous years. Fish populations are sampled each fall at Red Willow using gill nets, a method commonly used to sample fish found primarily in open water, such as walleye, white bass, and wipers.

Wiper populations are strong at Red Willow and should provide good angling opportunities for those in search of trophy fish. Walleye numbers have been down the last couple of years but anglers are still having success in spite of decreased net catches. White bass and catfish numbers are also good with moderate numbers and size structure. Red Willow also has a strong pike population with fish up to 30 inches. We have been stocking pike every third year and those fish are growing nicely. The “Willow” also has seen an increase in crappie numbers due to recent high water events and the newly flooded brush. Although water levels may drop in 2009 due to anticipated irrigation releases.

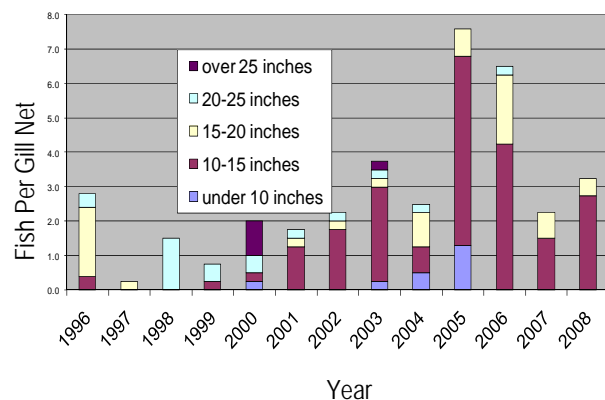
NGPC regularly stocks fish in Red Willow to maintain and augment the fish population. There will be 1.1 million walleye fry, 5,750 wipers, and 5,750 northern pike stocked in 2009.

The following graphs show the total number of fish caught per net and the relative abundance of fish within several length categories as well as annual mean elevation and storage capacity. The text provides a brief explanation of the information shown in the graphs.

Walleye

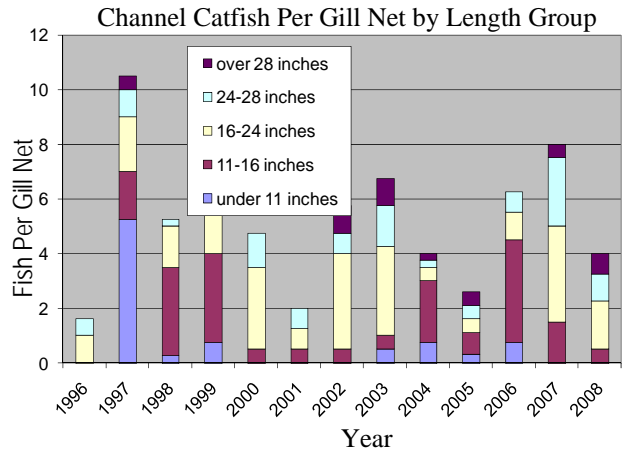
Catch rates of walleye in 2008 are still down compared to catch rates in '05 and '06. Although numbers appear to be down they are comparable to past years and are close to the ten year . Most of the fish sampled were smaller than the 15-inch length limit but there are plenty of legal fish available. The average length of walleye sampled via fall gill nets was 15.3 inches. Red Willow receives annual walleye stockings in order to augment natural reproduction and maintain a fishable population of walleye.

Walleye Per Gill Net by Length Group



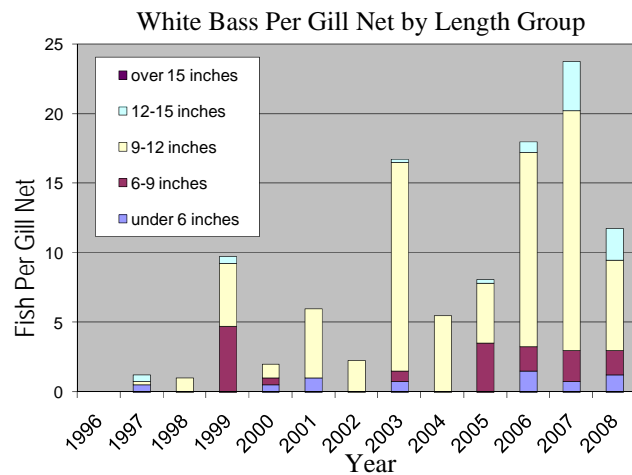
Channel Catfish

Channel catfish numbers appear to be down in 2008. Catch rates have been somewhat cyclical at Red Willow and we might be on the way down. We captured four fish per net in 2008. Size structure remains good with approximately half of captured fish > 16 inches. Red Willow is stocked with catfish on an every other year rotation and received 6700 fish in 2008



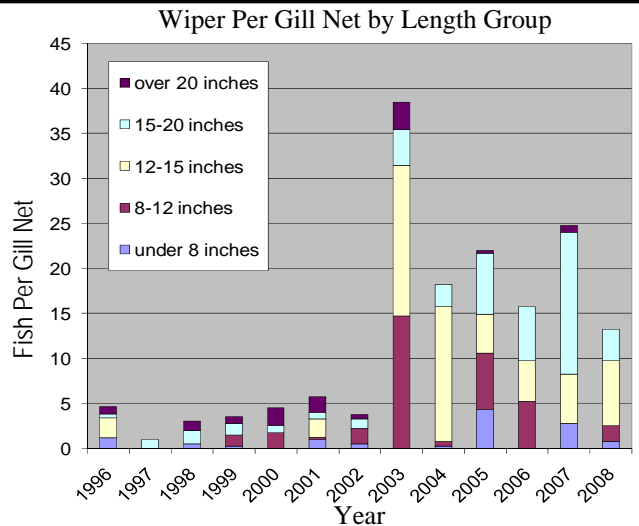
White Bass

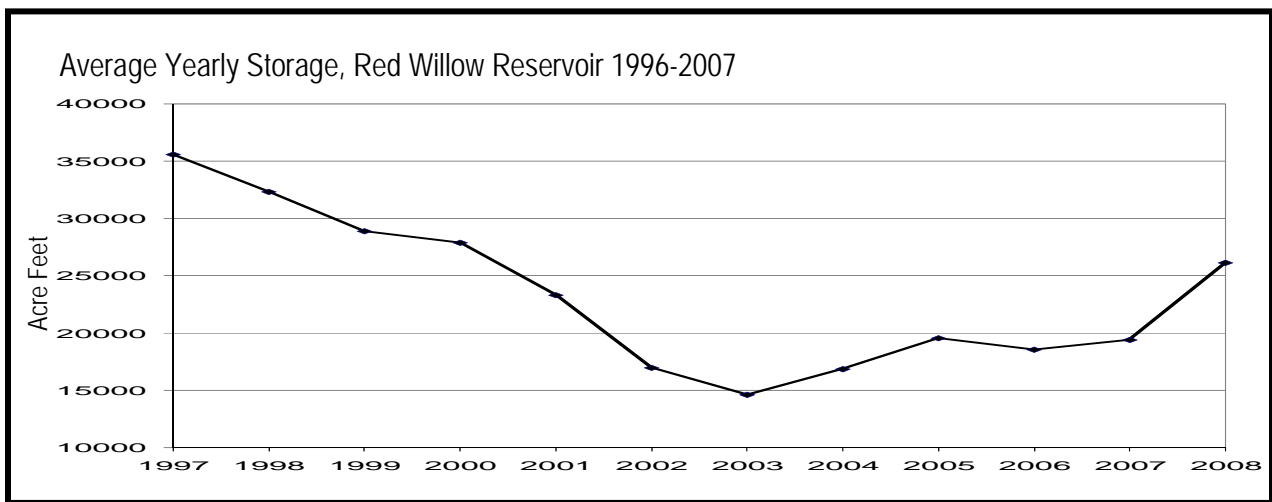
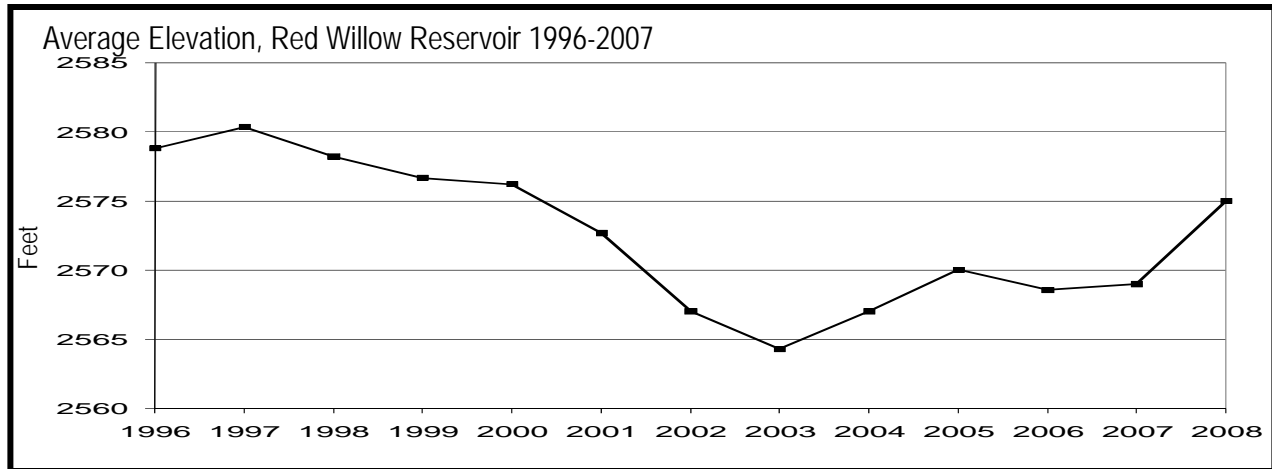
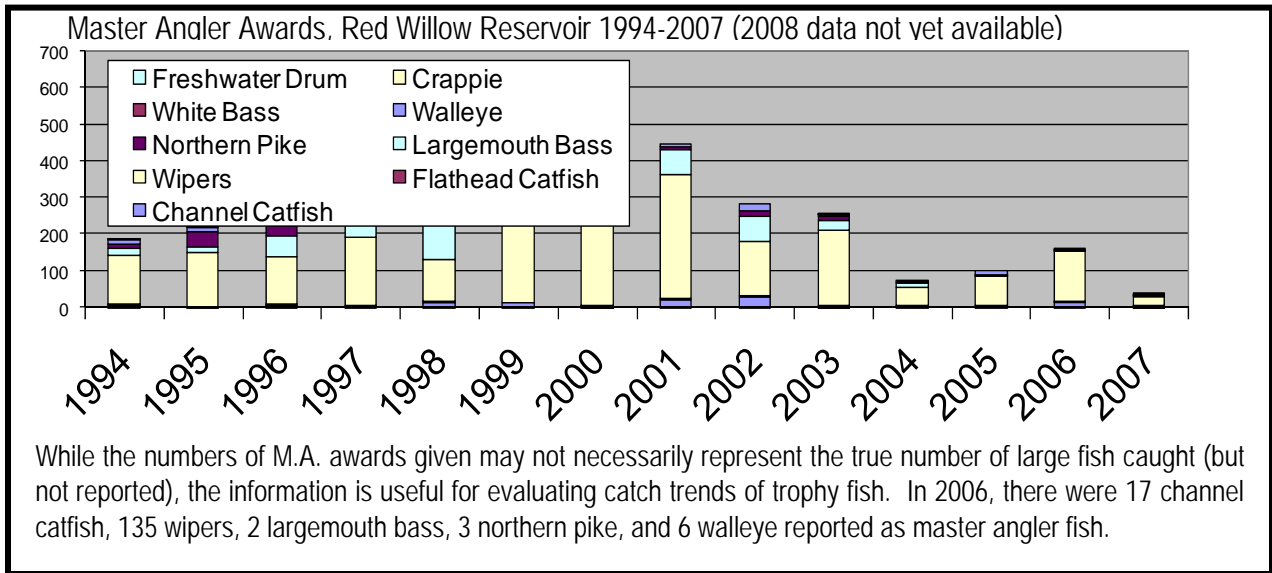
White bass numbers have been outstanding at Red Willow since 2006. Numbers have dropped to 12 fish per net in 2008. Most of the fish captured were 9-12 inches long. Currently NGPC is trying to maintain strong wiper numbers at Red Willow so white bass stockings will be minimal. However numbers will be monitored and fish will be stocked if it becomes necessary.



Wipers

Red Willow is the best wiper lake of the four southwest reservoirs. Numbers have been strong is good numbers over 15 inches. The numbers in 2008 are down a bit but there are still plenty of fish and good numbers of large fish available. Red Willow is stocked with wipers annually and is scheduled to receive 7,000 fish in 2009





For additional information on fisheries management at Red Willow Reservoir contact:

Darrol Eichner, District Mgr. 308-284-8803, darrol.eichner@Nebraska.gov
 Caleb Huber, Biologist 308-535-8025, caleb.huber@Nebraska.gov
 Mark Staab, Cons. Tech. 308-535-8025, mark.staab@Nebraska.gov