

Wehrspann Lake

2008 Fisheries Survey Summary

By Larry Pape, Fisheries Biologist



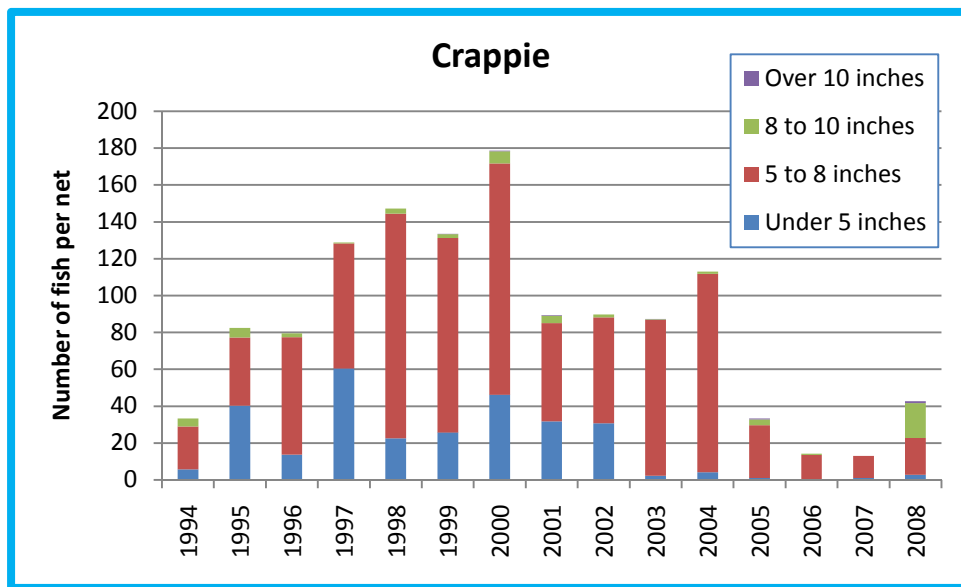
Located on the western edge of the Omaha metropolitan area, Wehrspann is a 245 acre flood-control reservoir built in 1983, and opened to the public in 1988. The recreation area, known as Chalco Hills, is operated by the Papio-Missouri Natural Resource District, and includes hiking trails, baseball fields, and picnicking areas. The lake has a handicap accessible boat ramp, fishing pier, and many shorelines appropriate to comfortable fishing.

The fishery is diverse, with many species to try and catch. Crappie, largemouth bass and channel catfish are the most popular and sought after species, but the lake also contains decent populations of walleye and blue catfish. Because of its urban setting and high use, NGPC fisheries management activity has been diligent and constant, to ensure an ongoing and quality fishery: Fish surveys are conducted on an annual basis, spring and fall. Fish stocking of popular species, such as catfish, are made annually to keep up with angler harvest. Special regulations are used to spread the wealth of catch on abundant species, such as crappie.

Crappie

Regulations: 10 inch minimum length, except during the month of April when any sized crappie may be kept. Bag limit of 10 crappie in combination with all panfish, year-round.

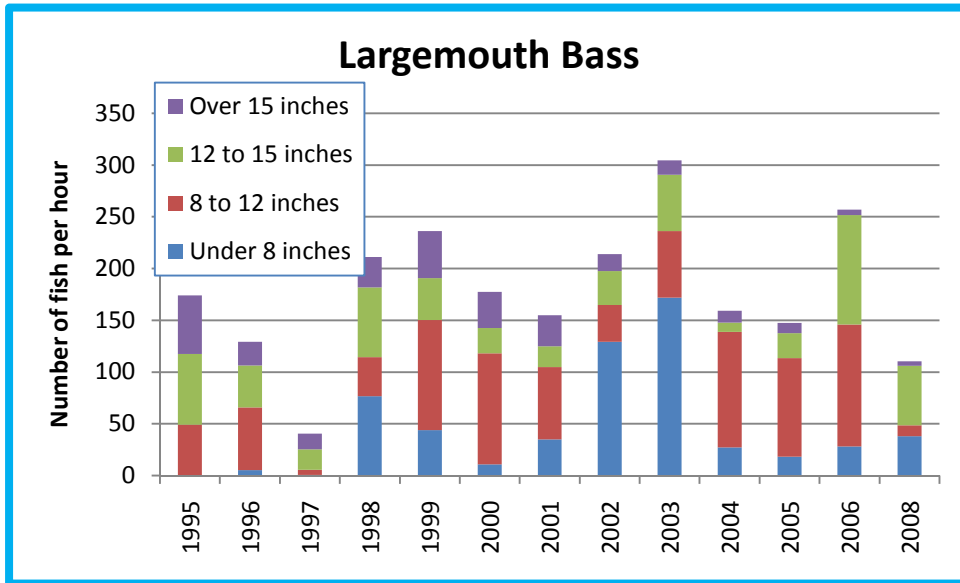
A special regulation allowing anglers to keep any-length of crappie in April was enacted in 2000 in response to a stunted and starving crappie population. It was hoped, the harvest of crappie during April, would reduce crappie numbers, without overharvest, and allow the remaining fish the opportunity to grow to more desirable sizes. It appears this approach worked, as numbers declined and health indexes used by the Fisheries Division showed more robust fish. It is likely though, that lower water during the drought of 2000 through 2005 may have also reduced reproduction and contributed to the success. Sizes of crappies increase in 2008, and should offer good fishing opportunity with improved numbers. It has been decided to retain the April season, at least into the near future, and keep a close watch on the crappie population since the lake levels have returned to normal levels.



Largemouth Bass

Regulations: 21 inch minimum length limit.

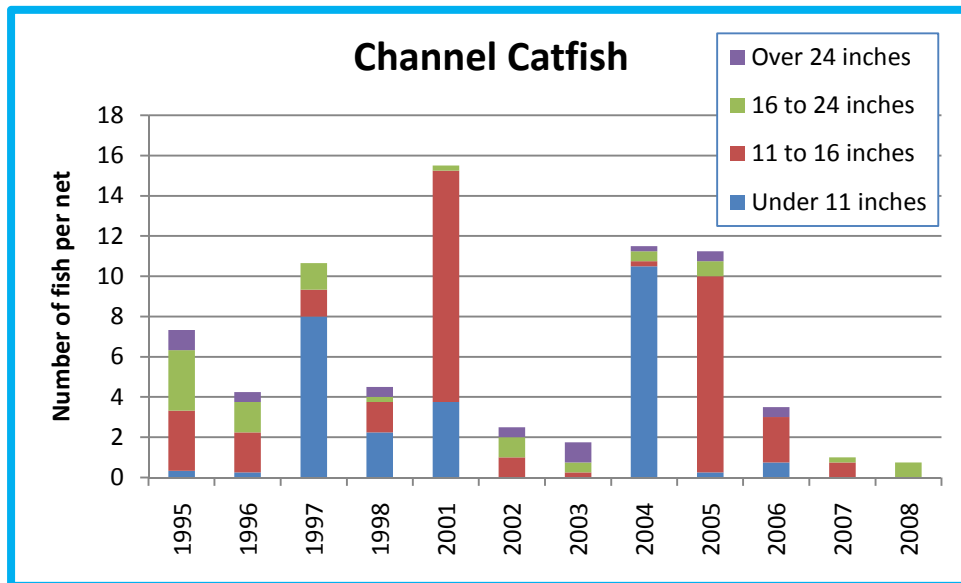
The largemouth bass population has seen a decline, but still has decent total numbers of fish, but the size structure has declined over the past five years, with fewer larger fish over 15 inches. Hopefully, the strong population of 12 – 15 inch fish present will produce some trophy fish in the near future.



Catfish

Regulations: Blue catfish – 1 daily bag, 2 possession. Channel Catfish – 10 daily bag, 20 possession. Recent years and number of fish stocked: 2000-7,500 channel catfish, 2002-7,690 blue catfish, 2004-7,350 channel catfish, 2005-1,450 blue catfish, 2006-3,850 channel catfish, 3,500 blue catfish, 2007-6,724 blue catfish.

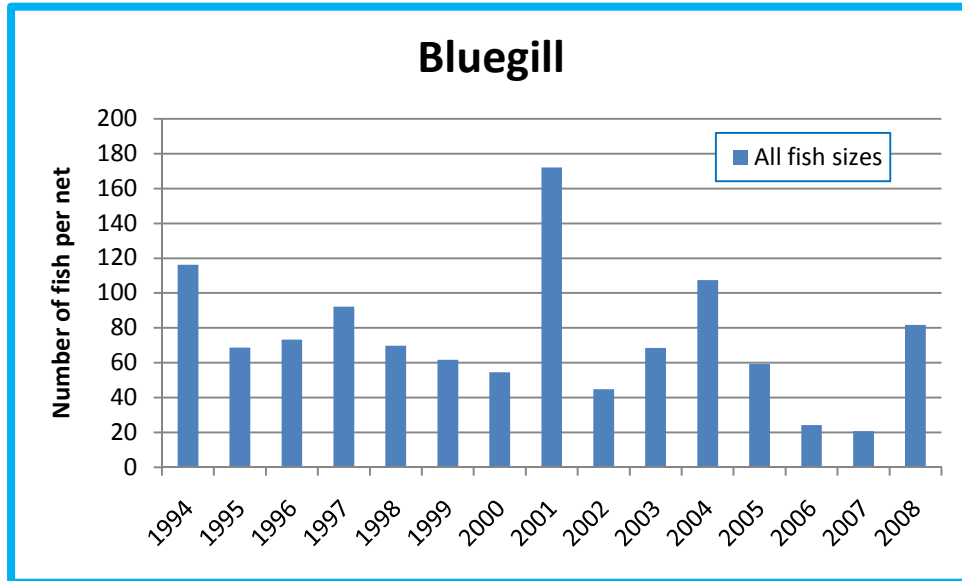
Channel catfish are one of the most sought after fish species in Wehrspann Lake. As a result, their presence in catchable numbers is dependent upon stocking. (Note: Because of the high density of largemouth bass, catfish do not successfully reproduce in Wehrspann Lake.) We have determined that an annual stocking program will avoid the peaks and valleys of their numbers, allowing anglers to catch channel catfish more consistently from year to year. Although blue catfish stockings were fairly successful, the numbers caught and harvested by anglers was much lower proportional to stocking numbers when compared to channel catfish. Blue catfish are also very expensive and not consistently available. Blue catfish will no longer be stocked in Wehrspann. Channel catfish are presently at low numbers, but stocking in 2009 should begin to repair the population. Currently there are decent numbers of small blue catfish and a few larger channel catfish.



Bluegill

Regulations: 10 fish bag limit in combination with all panfish (including crappie).

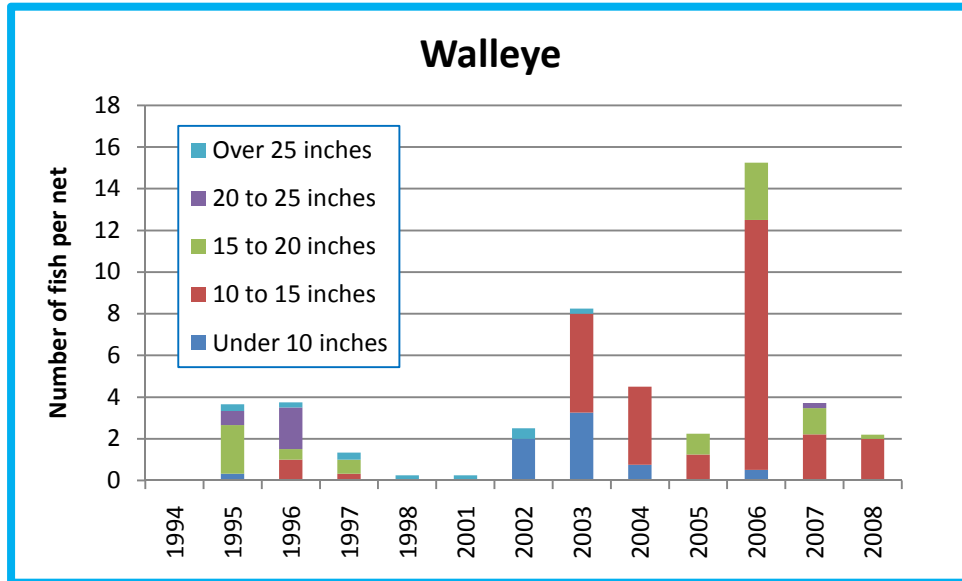
Bluegill numbers declined in the past several years, with a population of smaller fish. Most likely this is due to low water levels reducing reproduction. In 2008, the numbers increased, but the fish are still generally small (less than 6 inches). An improvement of size and numbers may be observed in the near future with the recent increase of water levels.



Walleye

Regulations: 15 inch minimum. 4 daily bag, 8 possession, with only one fish over 22 inches in daily bag.

The number of walleye in Wehrspann increased after 2001 and the stocking of larger fish (5 to 8 inches). Due to budget constraints, Wehrspann has been stocked with smaller fish since 2007. While leading to fewer walleye in the lake, they will still remain as a fishable option, and should be found in acceptable numbers.



For additional information about fisheries management at Wehrspann Lake please contact the NGPC District V Fisheries Office at 402-471-7647 or by email at the addresses listed below.

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