

**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
CREEL SURVEY REPORT**

**BIG STONE, DEER, AND DOG LAKES
(Three Lakes Chain)**

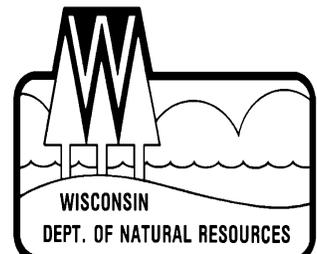
ONEIDA COUNTY

2014-15



Treaty Fisheries Publication

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INTRODUCTION

Fish populations can fluctuate due to natural forces (weather, predation, competition), management actions (stocking, regulations, habitat improvement), inappropriate development (habitat degradation), and harvest impacts. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources fisheries crews regularly conduct fishery surveys on area lakes and reservoirs to gather the information needed to monitor changes, identify concerns, evaluate past management actions, and to prescribe fishery management strategies. Netting and electrofishing surveys are used to gather data on the status of fish populations and communities (species composition, population size, reproductive success, size/age distribution, and growth rates). The other key component of the fishery that we often need to measure is the harvest.

On many lakes in the Ceded Territory of northern Wisconsin, harvest of fish is divided between sport anglers and the six Chippewa tribes who harvest fish under rights granted by federal treaties. The tribes harvest fish mostly using a highly efficient method, spearing, during a relatively short time period in the spring. Every fish in the spear harvest is counted – a complete “census” of the harvest.

We measure the sport harvest to assess its impact on the fishery. However, it would be highly impractical and very costly to conduct a complete census of every angler who fishes on a lake. Therefore, we conduct creel surveys.

A creel survey is an assessment tool used to sample the fishing activities of anglers on a body of water and make projections of harvest and other fishery parameters. Creel survey clerks work on randomly-selected days and shifts, forty hours per week during the open season for gamefish from the first Saturday in May through the first Sunday in

March. Creel surveys are not conducted in November when fishing effort is low and ice conditions are often unsafe. The survey is run during daylight hours, and shift times change from month to month as day length changes.

Creel survey clerks travel their lakes using a boat or snowmobile to count the number of anglers at predetermined times, and to interview anglers who have completed their fishing trip. Data is collected on what species they fished for, catch, harvest, lengths of fish harvested, marks (fin clips or tags), and hours of fishing effort. Collecting completed-trip data provides the most accurate assessment of angling activities, and it avoids the need to disturb anglers while they are fishing.

A computer program is used to make projections of total catch and harvest of each species, catch and harvest rates, and total fishing effort by month, and for the year in total. Keep in mind that these are only projections based on the best information available, and not a complete accounting of effort, catch, and harvest. Accurate projections require that we sample a sufficient and representative portion of the angling activity on a lake. The accuracy of creel survey results, therefore, depends on good cooperation and truthful responses by anglers when a creel clerk interviews them.

You may have encountered a DNR creel survey clerk on a recent fishing trip. We appreciate your cooperation during an interview. The survey only takes a moment of your time and it gives the Department valuable information needed for management of the fishery.

This report provides projections of:

1. Overall fishing effort (pressure)
2. Fishing effort directed at each species
3. Catch and harvest rates
4. Numbers of fish caught and harvested

Also included are a physical description of Big stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes; discussion of results of the survey; and detailed summaries, by species, of fishing effort, catch and harvest.

GENERAL LAKE INFORMATION



Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes (Three Lakes Chain)

Location

Big stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes are part of the Three Lakes Chain of Lakes, located in Oneida County near the Town of Three Lakes.

Physical Characteristics

Big stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes have a combined area of 997 acres which accounts for 17% of the total chain acreage. Littoral substrates consist primarily of sand, with lesser amounts of muck, and gravel. These lakes are soft water lakes with slightly acidic, slightly stained waters.

Seasons Surveyed

The period referred to in this report as the 2014-15 fishing season ran from May 3, 2014 through March 1, 2015. The open water creel survey ran from May 3 through October 31, 2014 and the ice fishing creel survey ran from December 1, 2014 through March 1, 2015. Deer and Dog Lakes were not surveyed in the winter.

Weather

Ice-out on Big stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes was around May 5, 2013. Fishable ice formed on these lakes in late November.

Fishing Regulations

The following seasons, daily bag limits, and length limits were in place on Big stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes during the 2014-15 fishing season:

Species	Season	Bag Limit	Min. Size
Largemouth Bass	5/3-3/1	5	14"
Smallmouth Bass	5/3-6/20	Catch & Release	
	6/21-3/1	5	14"
Musky	5/24-11/30	1	40"
Northern Pike	5/3-3/1	5	none
Walleye	5/3-3/1	3*	
	No Minimum, 1 > 14"		
Panfish	year round	25	none
Rock Bass	year round	none	none

*Due to tribal declarations and harvest, walleye bag limits were initially set at 2 on each of these lakes, and then revised to 3 for Big Stone Lake and 5 for Deer and Dog Lakes on May 23rd.

SPECIES CATCH AND HARVEST INFORMATION

Angling effort, catch, and harvest information is summarized for each species in Tables 2-4 and Figures 1-10. Tables 2-4 also include a comparison of these statistics with the previous creel survey. Information presented about species whose fishing season extends beyond March 1 should be considered minimum estimates. Each species page has up to five graphs depicting the following:

- 1. PROJECTED FISHING EFFORT**
Total calculated number of hours during each month that anglers spent fishing for a species.
- 2. PROJECTED SPECIFIC CATCH AND HARVEST RATES**
Calculated number of hours it takes an angler to catch or harvest a fish of the indicated species. Only information from anglers who were specifically targeting that species is reported.
- 3. PROJECTED CATCH AND HARVEST**
Calculated number of fish of the

indicated species caught or harvested by all anglers, regardless of targeted species.

4. LENGTH DISTRIBUTION OF HARVESTED FISH

All fish of a species that were measured by the clerk during the entire creel survey season.

5. LARGEST AND AVERAGE LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH

Monthly largest, and average length of, harvested fish of a species. Only those fish measured by the creel survey clerk are reported.

CREEL SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Survey Logistics

The creel survey went well. We encountered no unusual problems conducting the survey or calculating the projections contained in the report. This was the second time the department has conducted a creel survey on Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes. The last creel survey took place in 1994-95. Deer and Dog Lakes were surveyed during both summer and winter seasons in 1994-95, but only during the summer season in 2014-15. Therefore, fishing effort, catch, and harvest statistics are not directly comparable.

General Angler Information

Anglers spent 14,656 hours or 14.7 hours per acre fishing Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lake during the 2014-15 season (Table 1). That was less than the Oneida County average (33.7 hours per acre), as well as the 1994-95 creel survey which estimated 36.7 hours per acre of fishing effort within the respective lakes. August was the most heavily fished month (3.5 hours per acre). Fishing effort was lightest in October (1.7 hours per acre) for those months when the entire month was creeled on all three lakes.

The creel clerks were able to conduct 233 interviews throughout the survey.

RESULTS BY SPECIES

Walleye (Tables 2-4, Figure 1)

Walleyes received the most fishing effort during the 2014-15 season. Anglers spent 3,092 hours targeting walleyes for all three lakes combined. The greatest fishing effort for walleyes was in May (1,346 hours). December and January had no observed walleye effort.

Total catch of walleyes was 5,551 fish with a harvest of 1,203 fish. Highest catch (1,933 fish) and harvest (362 fish) occurred in May. Anglers fished 1.2 hours to catch, and 5.1 hours to harvest, a walleye during the 2014-15 season. The mean length of harvested walleyes was 11.2 inches, and the largest walleye measured was a 15.6-inch fish caught on Deer Lake.

Northern Pike (Tables 2-4, Figure 2)

Fishing effort directed at northern pike was 657 hours during the 2014-15 season. Northern pike fishing effort was greatest in September (402 hours). Total catch of northern pike was 235 fish with a harvest of 22 fish. There was only one northern pike measured in the survey (24.6 inches), which was caught on Big Stone Lake.

Muskellunge (Tables 2-4, Figure 3)

Anglers spent 3,728 hours targeting muskellunge during the 2014-15 season. Muskellunge fishing effort was greatest in October (1,082 hours). Total catch of muskellunge was 117 fish, and the highest catch (53 fish) occurred in July. Anglers fished 23.9 hours to catch a muskellunge, and there was no documented harvest during the 2014-15 season.

Smallmouth Bass (Tables 2-4, Figure 4)

Fishing effort targeted at smallmouth bass was 491 hours during the 2014-15

season. Smallmouth bass fishing effort was greatest in August (158 hours). Total catch of smallmouth bass was 529 fish with 22 fish harvested. Highest catch (480 fish) occurred on Big Stone Lake. Anglers fished 5.4 hours to catch a smallmouth bass during the 2014-15 season.

Largemouth Bass (Tables 2-4, Figure 5)

Fishing effort directed at largemouth bass was 339 hours during the 2014-15 season. Largemouth bass fishing effort was greatest in August (184 hours). Total catch of largemouth bass was 339 fish with no documented harvest. Highest catch (222 fish) occurred on Dog Lake. Anglers fished 5.7 hours to catch a largemouth bass during the 2014-15 season.

Panfish (Table 2-4, Figures 6-10)

Black crappies were the most sought after panfish species during the survey. Fishing effort directed at black crappies was 4,416 hours. Anglers caught 4,756 black crappies and harvested 2,273 fish. The mean length of black crappies harvested was 9.7 inches, with the highest harvest (978 fish) occurring on Big Stone Lake.

Bluegills were the second most sought after panfish species during the survey. Fishing effort directed at bluegills was 2,060 hours. Total catch of bluegills was 821 fish with 109 being harvested. The mean length of bluegills harvested was 7.3 inches, with the highest harvest (44 fish) occurring on Big Stone Lake.

Yellow perch were the third most sought after panfish species during the survey. Fishing effort directed at yellow perch was 1,272 hours. Total catch of yellow perch was 1,400 fish with 387 being harvested. The mean length of yellow perch harvested was 8.0 inches, with the highest harvest (174 fish) occurring on Big Stone Lake.

Pumpkinseeds and rock bass were

also caught during the 2014-15 season, however no fish were observed in the harvest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completion of this survey was possible because of the efforts of the following Fisheries Management and Treaty Fisheries staff: Lawrence Eslinger, Jeff Blonski, Joelle Underwood, Jason Halverson, John Kubisiak, Steve Timler, Jonathan Pyatskowitz, and Dennis Scholl. John Logan, Andrew Disch, Shae Flood, Rich Cechal, John Davis, Bob Consolo, Ben Hines, David Gunderson, and Marty Kiepke were the creel clerks on the Three Lakes Chain during the survey period.

We also thank all the anglers who took the time to offer information about their fishing trip to the survey clerks. Without their cooperation the survey would not have been possible.

The Department thanks all of the cooperators, the (Ruth Ann) Davis Family, John Schmidt, Watercraft Sales, the Levendoski Family, Paul, Peggy, Bill, and Karen of Anchor Marina and Sunset Grill, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Cottingham, Justin and Ginger Millis of Pine Isle Sports Bar and Grill, Russell and Cindy Habeck, and Lee and Gail Sucharda, who generously allowed the Department to keep a boat and/or snowmobile on their property during this survey.

This creel report was reviewed by Lawrence Eslinger and John Kubisiak of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Additional copies of this report, and those covering other local lakes, can be obtained from the Woodruff DNR or online at:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Fishing/north/trtycrclsrvys.html>

Table 1. Sportfishing effort summary, the Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), 2014-15 season

Month	Number of Angler Party Interviews	Total Angler Hours	Total Angler Hours/Acre	1994-95 Total Angler Hours/Acre	Oneida County Average Hours/Acre	Ceded Territory Average Hours/Acre
May	46	2033	2.0	16.3	4.8	5.0
June	37	2327	2.3	3.7	6.4	6.4
July	41	2944	3.0	6.6	7.3	6.8
August	61	3495	3.5	4.2	5.7	5.5
September	22	2061	2.1	3.2	3.4	3.3
October	24	1741	1.7	1.8	1.6	1.5
*December	0	15	0.0	0.3	1.2	1.1
*January	0	0	0.0	0.4	1.5	1.6
*February	2	40	0.0	0.2	1.5	1.6
*March	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.2
**Summer Total	231	14600	14.6	35.8	29.2	28.5
**Winter Total	2	55	0.1	0.9	4.5	4.5
Grand Total	233	14656	14.7	36.7	33.7	33.0

*Big Stone was the only lake creeled during Winter of the 2014-15 season. All three lakes were creeled during the Winter of 1994-95.

**"Summer" is May-October; "Winter" is December-March

Number of Angler Party Interviews is the number of groups of anglers interviewed by the creel clerk. A party is considered the members of a group who fish together in the same boat, ice shanty, or from shore. The clerk fills out one interview form for each group of anglers. The number of individual anglers actually contacted by the clerk is usually much greater than the number of groups listed in this table since most groups consist of more than one angler.

Total Angler Hours is the estimated total number of hours that anglers spent fishing on the Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes) during each month surveyed.

Total Angler Hours/Acre is the total angler hours divided by the area of the lake in acres. This is useful in order to compare effort on Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes) to other lakes.

1994-95 Total Angler Hours/Acre is the total angler hours divided by the area of the lake in acres. This is from the previous creel survey that took place on the Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes).

County Average Hours/Acre is the average angler effort in hours per acre for county lakes that have been surveyed since 1990. This value is useful for fishing pressure comparisons with other waters.

Ceded Territory Average Hours/Acre is the average angler effort in hours per acre for inland lakes in the ceded territory that have been surveyed since 1990. This value can be used to compare Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes) to other lakes in northern Wisconsin.

Table 2. Comparison of creel survey synopses, Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), 2014-15 and 1994-95 fishing seasons.

CREEL YEAR: 2014-15

SPECIES	DIRECTED EFFORT (Hours)	PERCENT OF TOTAL	TOTAL CATCH	SPECIFIC CATCH RATE (Hrs/Fish) *	TOTAL HARVEST	SPECIFIC HARVEST RATE (Hrs/Fish) **	MEAN LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH
Walleye	5551	29.98%	5123	1.2	1203	5.1	11.2
Northern Pike	657	3.55%	235	7.7	22		24.6
Muskellunge	3728	20.14%	117	23.9	0		
Smallmouth Bass	491	2.65%	529	5.4	22		17.8
Largemouth Bass	339	1.83%	348	5.7	0		
Yellow Perch	1272	6.87%	1400	1.8	387	5.2	8.0
Bluegill	2060	11.13%	821	4.1	109	31.9	7.3
Pumpkinseed	0	0.00%	17		0		
Rock Bass	0	0.00%	614		0		
Black Crappie	4416	23.85%	4756	1.0	2273	2.2	9.7

9 * A blank cell in this column indicates that no fish of a given species were caught by anglers who specifically targeted that species.

** A blank cell in this column indicates that no fish of a given species were harvested by anglers who specifically targeted that species.

CREEL YEAR: 1994-95

SPECIES	DIRECTED EFFORT (Hours)	PERCENT OF TOTAL	TOTAL CATCH	SPECIFIC CATCH RATE (Hrs/Fish)	TOTAL HARVEST	SPECIFIC HARVEST RATE (Hrs/Fish)	MEAN LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH
Walleye	10673	27.20%	2887	3.7	783	13.6	11.7
Northern Pike	2542	6.48%	792	3.2	111	22.9	21.4
Muskellunge	6250	15.93%	203	30.8	0		
Smallmouth Bass	482	1.23%	100	4.8	6	80.3	15.5
Largemouth Bass	1035	2.64%	108	0.0	21	49.3	12.4
Yellow Perch	6393	16.29%	6845	0.9	1918	3.3	8.1
Bluegill	4209	10.72%	3212	1.3	1413	3.0	7.3
Pumpkinseed	241	0.61%	71	3.4	42	5.7	7.2
Rock Bass	125	0.32%	458	0.3	134	0.9	7.4
Black Crappie	7296	18.59%	2295	3.2	1198	6.1	10.5

Table 3. Comparison of creel survey synopses, Big Stone Lake, 2014-15 and 1994-95 fishing seasons.

CREEL YEAR: 2014-15

SPECIES	DIRECTED EFFORT (Hours)	PERCENT OF TOTAL	TOTAL CATCH	SPECIFIC CATCH RATE (Hrs/Fish) *	TOTAL HARVEST	SPECIFIC HARVEST RATE (Hrs/Fish) **	MEAN LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH
Walleye	3092	36.42%	3328	1.0	815	4.1	11.0
Northern Pike	581	6.84%	118	26.2	22		24.6
Muskellunge	2200	25.91%	71	30.9	0		
Smallmouth Bass	350	4.12%	480	2.5	22		17.8
Largemouth Bass	144	1.70%	74	4.2	0		
Yellow Perch	410	4.83%	643	2.0	174	7.0	7.8
Bluegill	243	2.86%	166	2.3	44	0.0	7.4
Pumpkinseed	0	0.00%	0		0		
Rock Bass	0	0.00%	517		0		
Black Crappie	1471	17.32%	1927	0.9	978	2.0	9.6

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** A blank cell in this column indicates that no fish of a given species were harvested by anglers who specifically targeted that species.

CREEL YEAR: 1994-95

SPECIES	DIRECTED EFFORT (Hours)	PERCENT OF TOTAL	TOTAL CATCH	SPECIFIC CATCH RATE (Hrs/Fish)	TOTAL HARVEST	SPECIFIC HARVEST RATE (Hrs/Fish)	MEAN LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH
Walleye	4498	30.81%	1542	2.9	215	21.0	11.5
Northern Pike	483	3.31%	164	8.9	1	454.5	23.0
Muskellunge	3110	21.30%	87	51.0	0		
Smallmouth Bass	246	1.69%	24	0.0	0		
Largemouth Bass	286	1.96%	11	27.0	11	27.0	12.6
Yellow Perch	2030	13.91%	1107	2.5	200	11.5	8.4
Bluegill	1716	11.76%	1013	1.8	359	4.9	7.2
Pumpkinseed		0.00%					
Rock Bass	30	0.21%	52	3.5	0		
Black Crappie	2199	15.06%	139	23.4	102	38.2	10.5

Table 4. Comparison of creel survey synopses, Deer and Dog Lakes combined, 2014-15 and 1994-95 fishing seasons.

CREEL YEAR: 2014-15*

SPECIES	DIRECTED EFFORT (Hours)	PERCENT OF TOTAL	TOTAL CATCH	SPECIFIC CATCH RATE (Hrs/Fish) **	TOTAL HARVEST	SPECIFIC HARVEST RATE (Hrs/Fish) ***	MEAN LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH
Walleye	2459	24.53%	1794	1.4	388	6.3	11.7
Northern Pike	76	0.76%	117	0.7	0		
Muskellunge	1528	15.24%	46	33.2	0		
Smallmouth Bass	141	1.41%	48	2.9	0		
Largemouth Bass	195	1.95%	274	0.7	0		
Yellow Perch	862	8.60%	758	1.1	213	4.1	8.2
Bluegill	1817	18.13%	655	2.8	65	28.1	7.0
Pumpkinseed	0	0.00%	17		0		
Rock Bass	0	0.00%	97		0		
Black Crappie	2945	29.38%	2829	1.0	1294	2.3	10.1

* These results are from the summer creel season only; no winter creel occurred

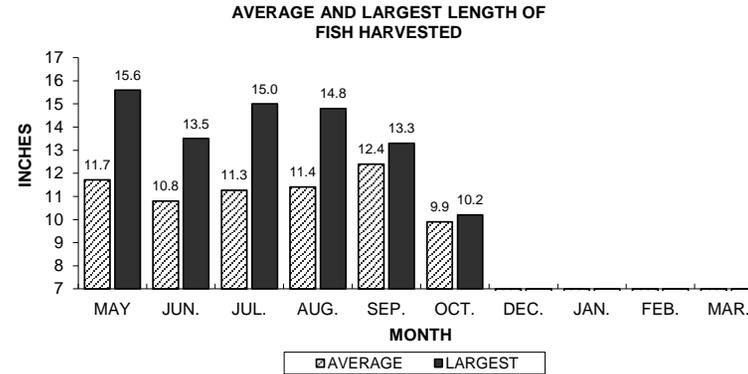
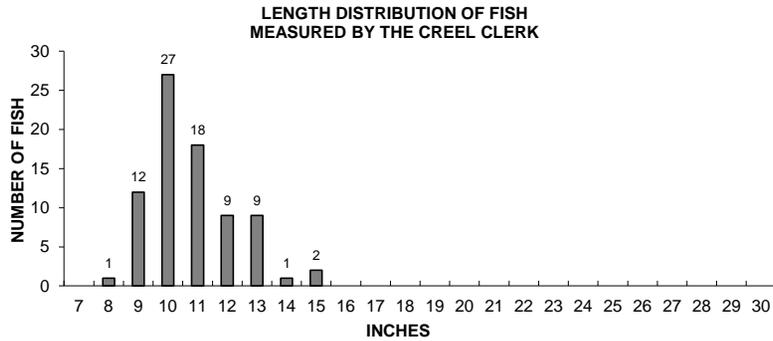
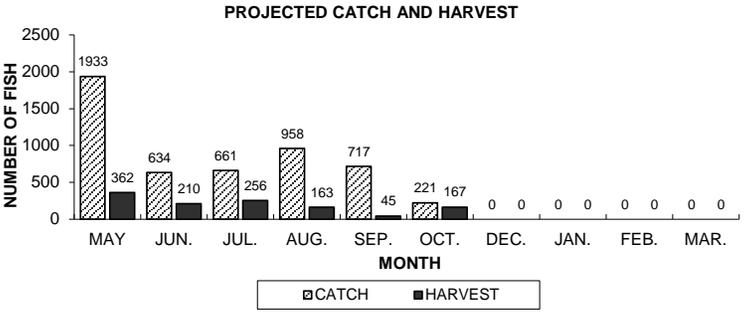
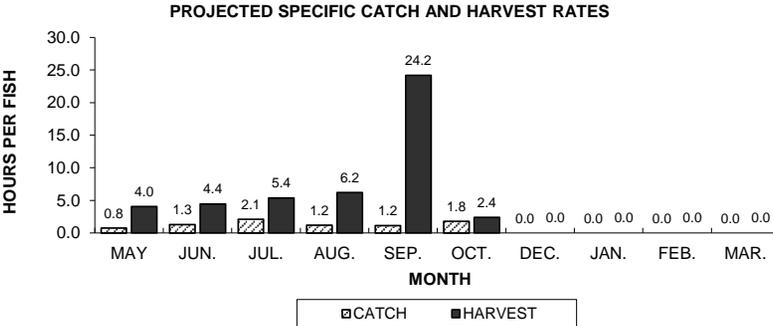
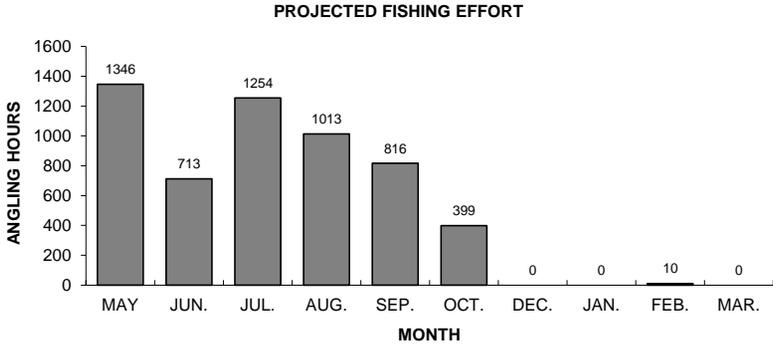
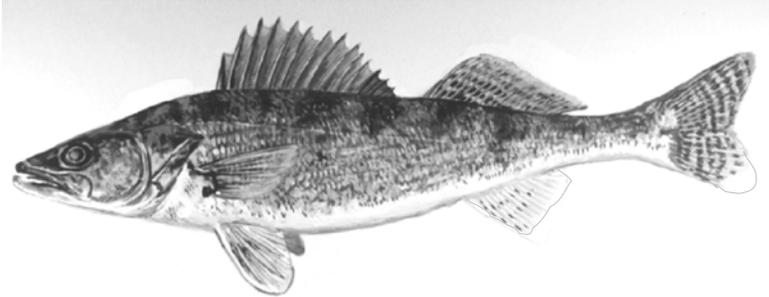
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CREEL YEAR: 1994-95

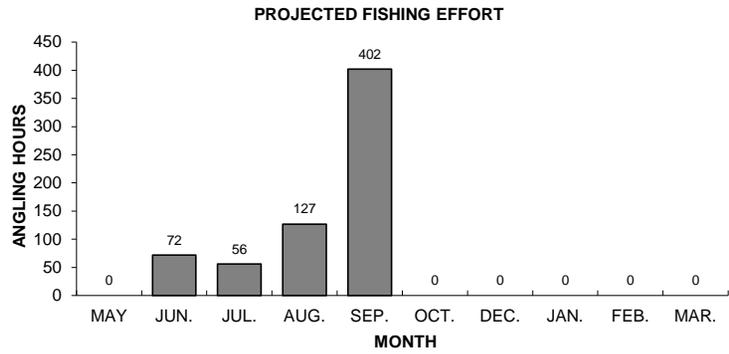
SPECIES	DIRECTED EFFORT (Hours)	PERCENT OF TOTAL	TOTAL CATCH	SPECIFIC CATCH RATE (Hrs/Fish)	TOTAL HARVEST	SPECIFIC HARVEST RATE (Hrs/Fish)	MEAN LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH
Walleye	6175	25.05%	1345	5.0	568	11.1	11.9
Northern Pike	2059	8.35%	628	6.5	110	25.8	19.9
Muskellunge	3140	12.74%	116	41.2	0		
Smallmouth Bass	236	0.96%	76	13.5	6	0.0	15.5
Largemouth Bass	749	3.04%	97	11.7	10	0.0	12.2
Yellow Perch	4363	17.70%	5738	0.9	1718	3.1	7.8
Bluegill	2493	10.11%	2199	1.2	1054	2.4	7.4
Pumpkinseed	241	0.98%	71	4.3	42	8.1	7.2
Rock Bass	95	0.39%	406	4.4	134	6.2	7.4
Black Crappie	5097	20.68%	2156	2.4	1096	4.7	10.5

WALLEYE



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Figure 1. Walleye sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), during 2014-15.



NORTHERN PIKE

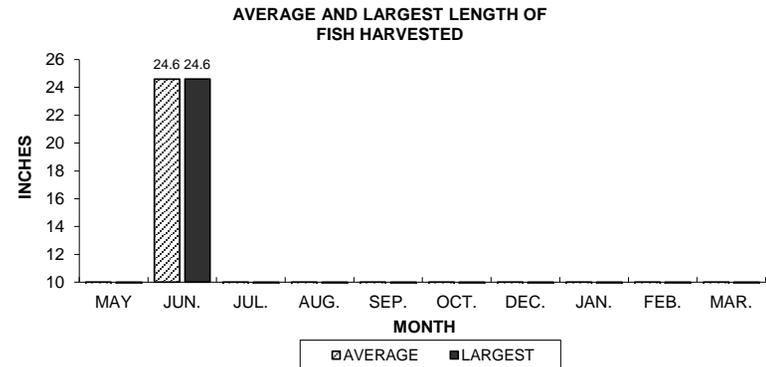
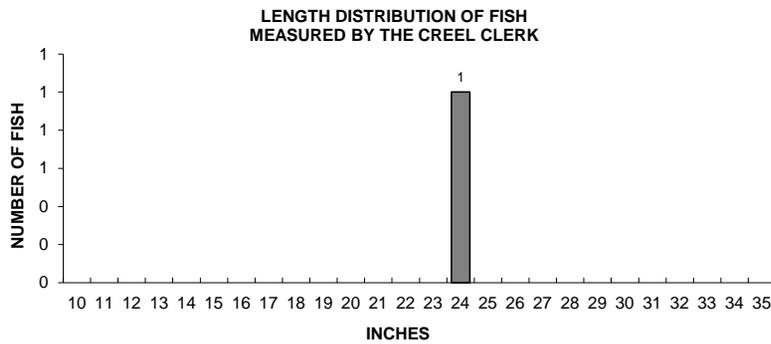
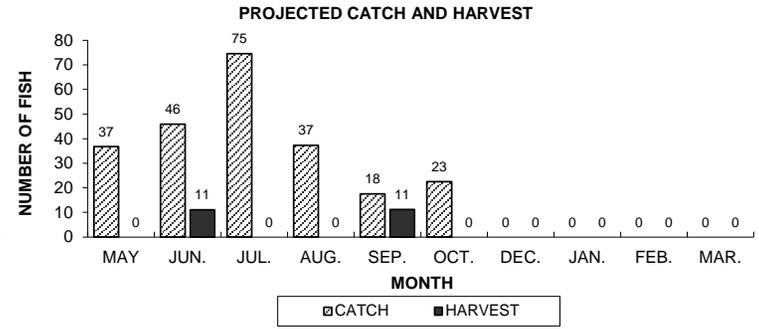
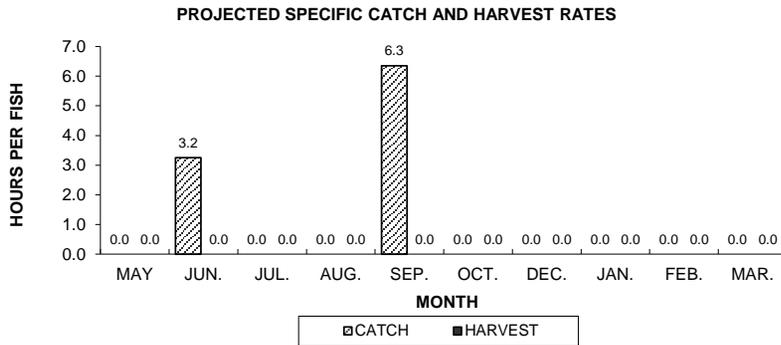
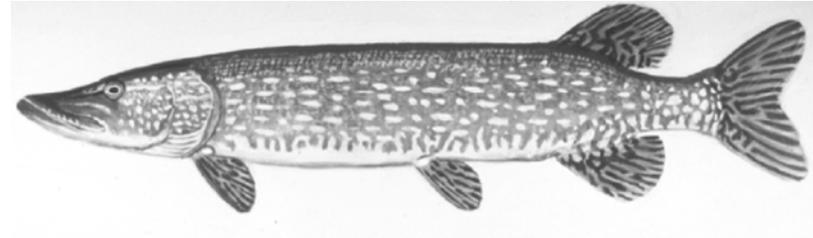
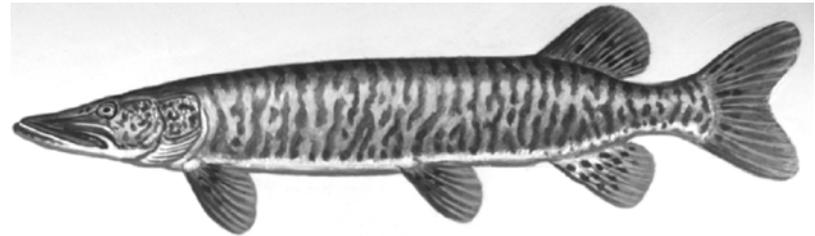
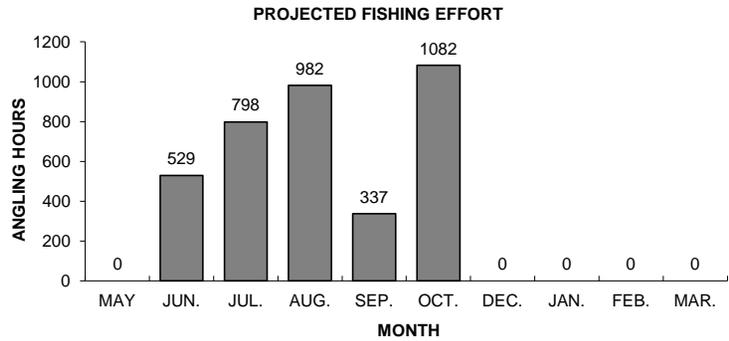


Figure 2. Northern pike sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), during 2014-15.

MUSKELLUNGE



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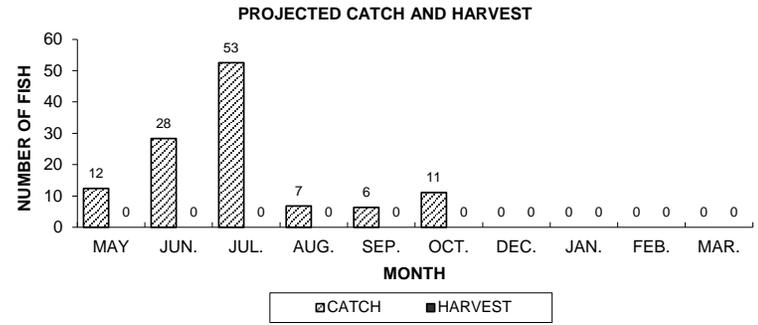
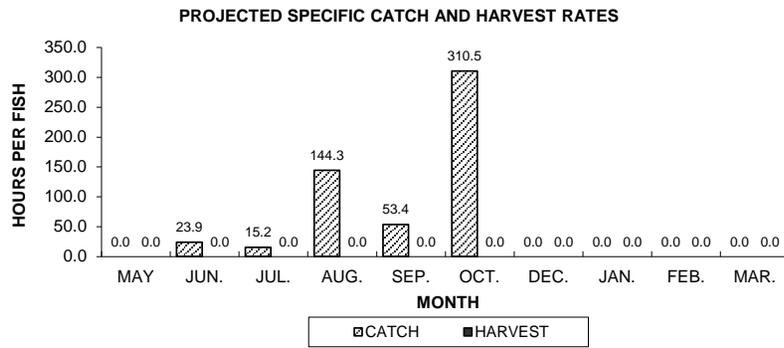


Figure 3. Muskellunge sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), during 2014-15.

SMALLMOUTH BASS

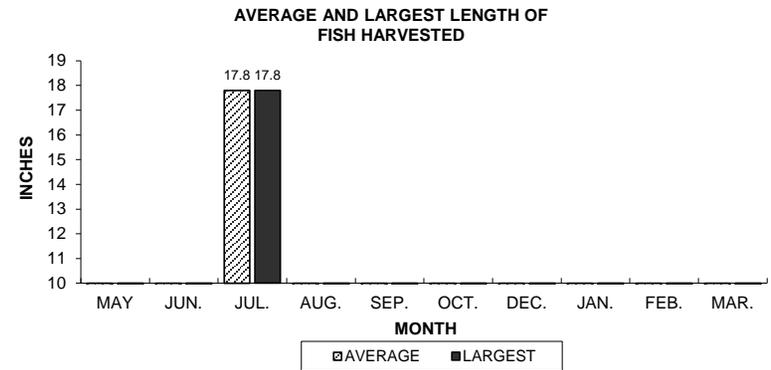
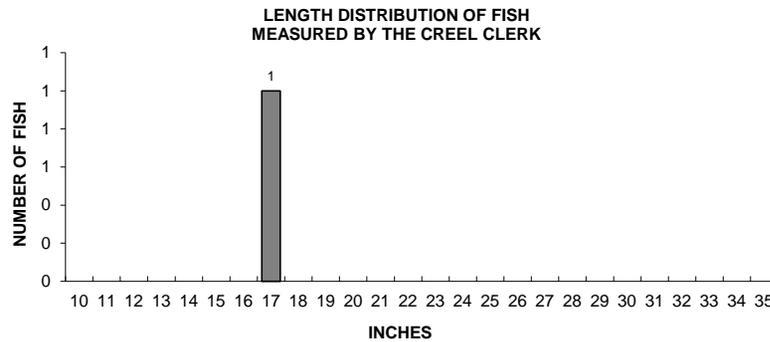
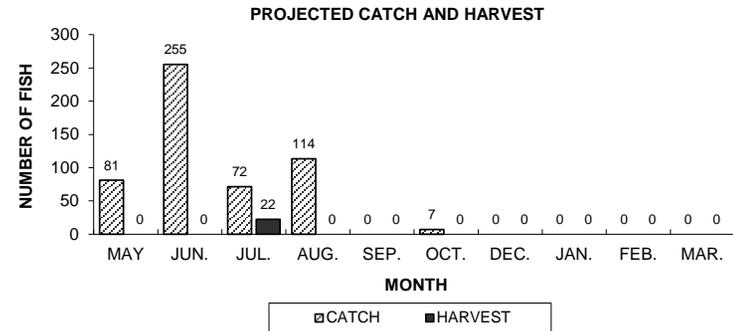
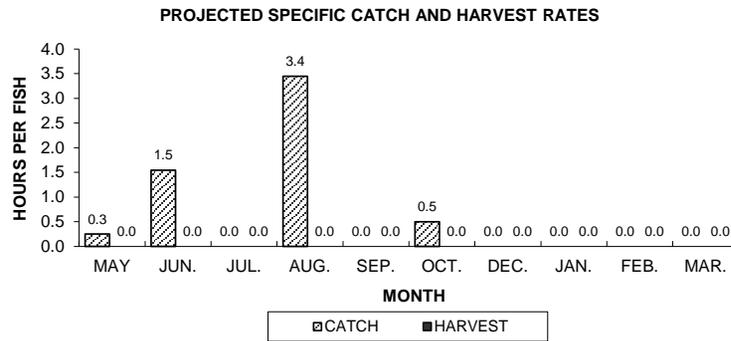
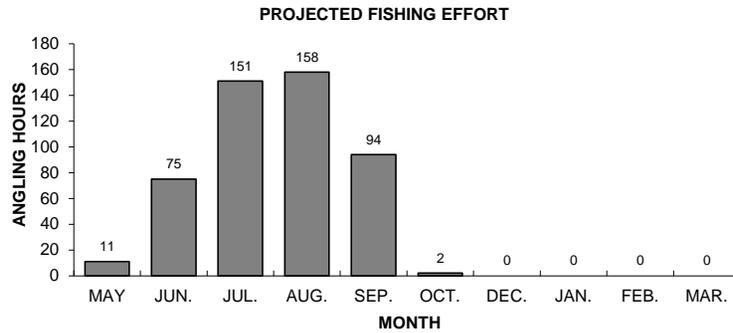
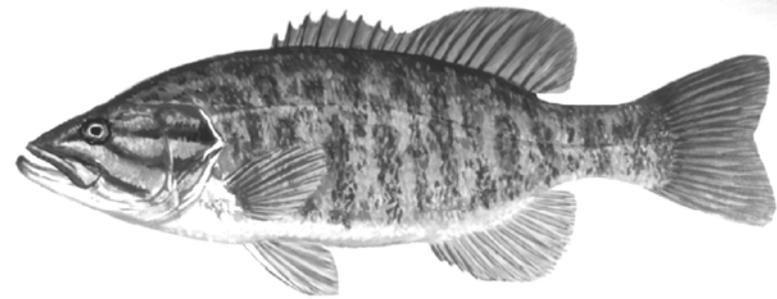


Figure 4. Smallmouth bass sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), during 2014-15.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

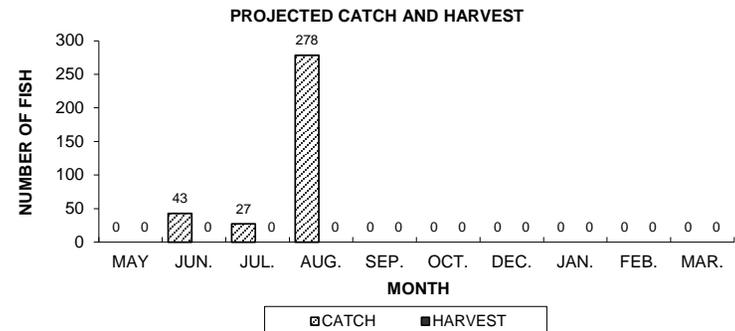
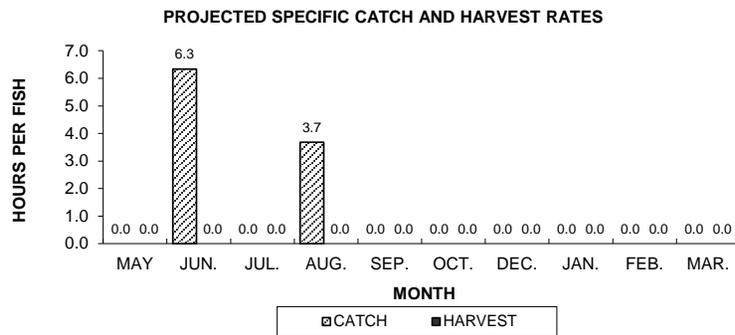
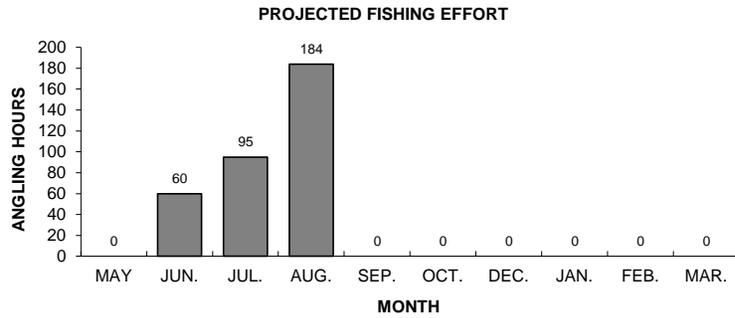
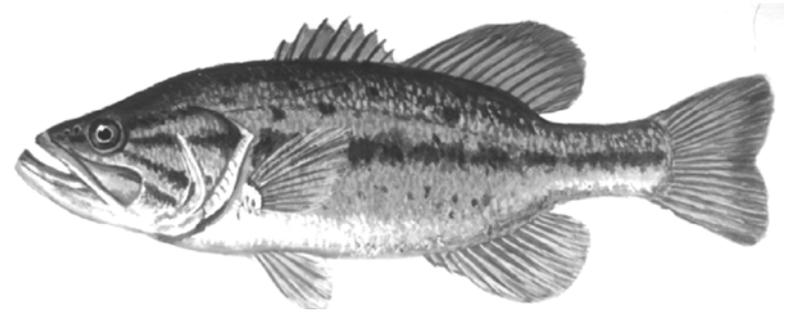


Figure 5. Largemouth bass sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), during 2014-15.

YELLOW PERCH

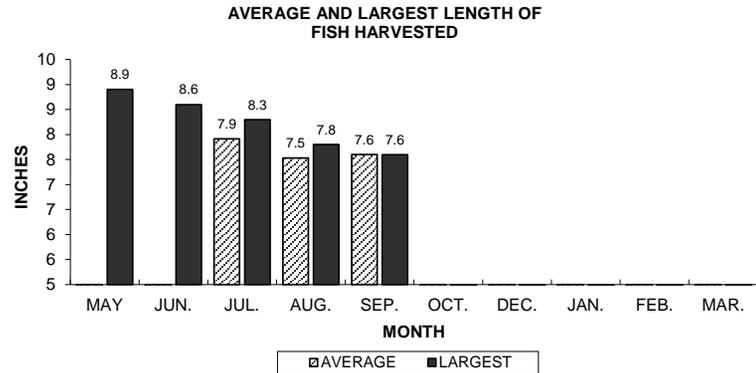
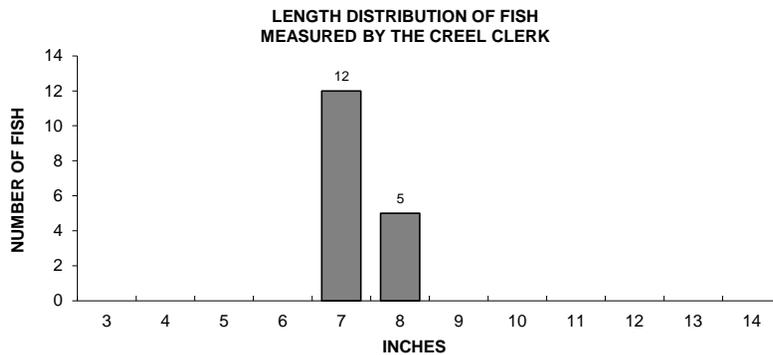
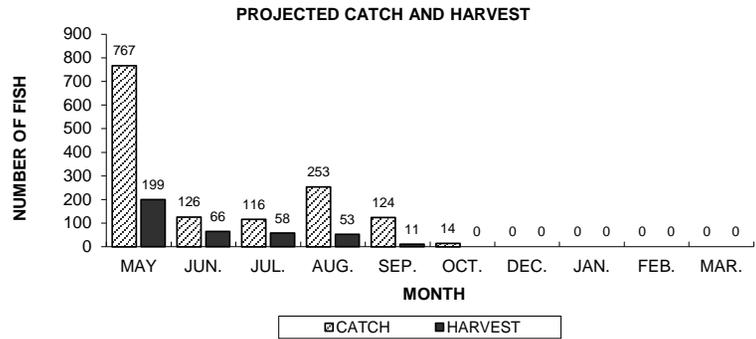
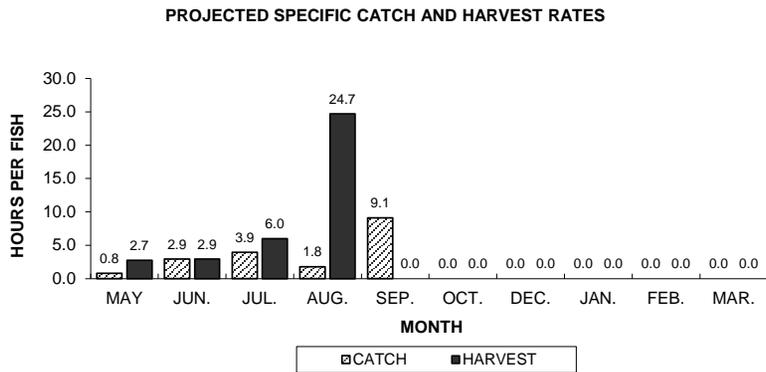
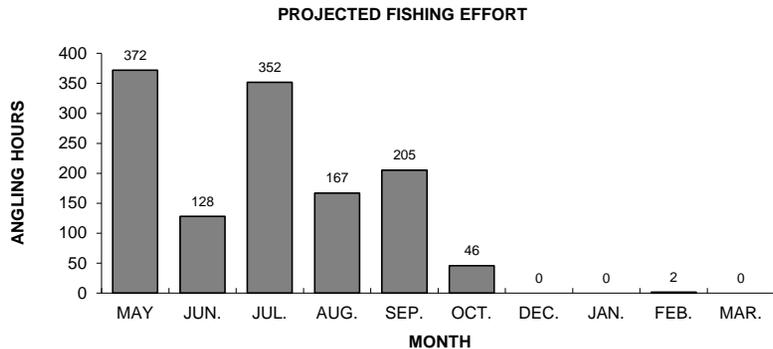
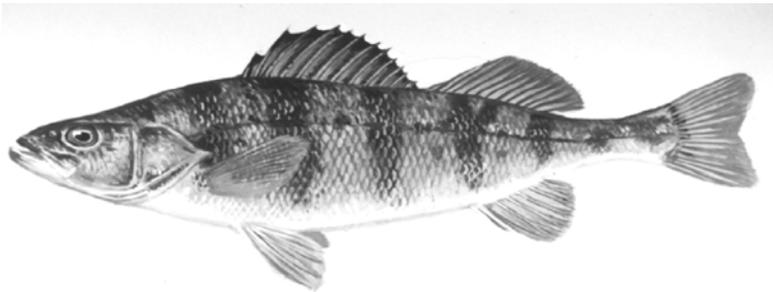


Figure 6. Yellow perch sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), during 2014-15.

BLUEGILL

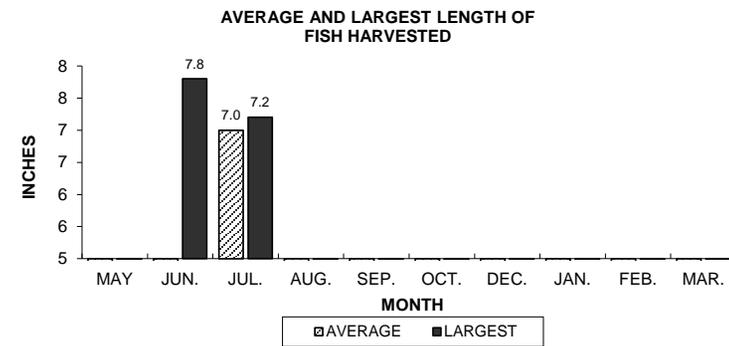
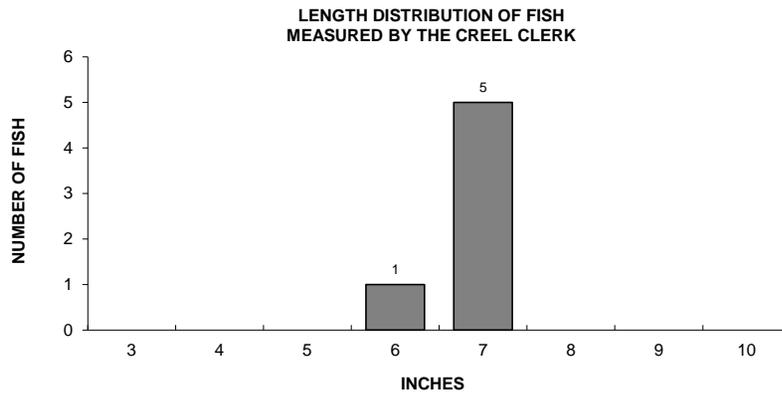
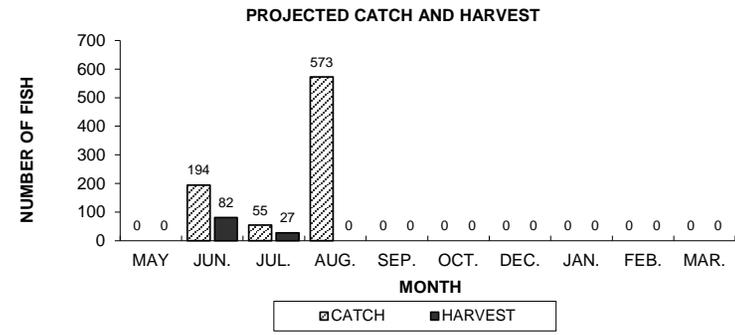
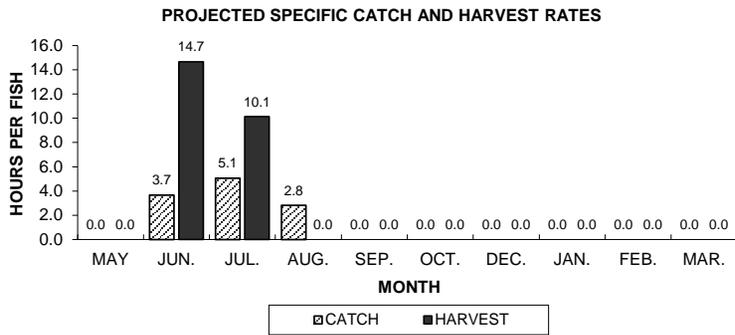
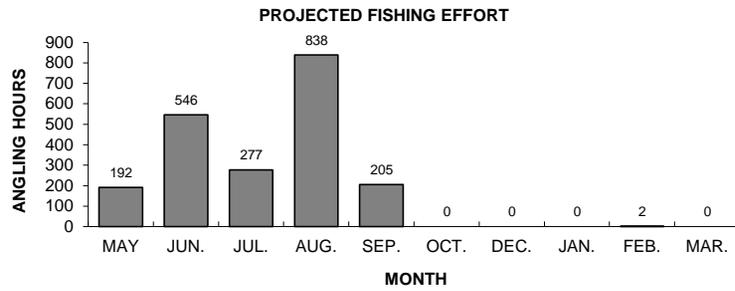
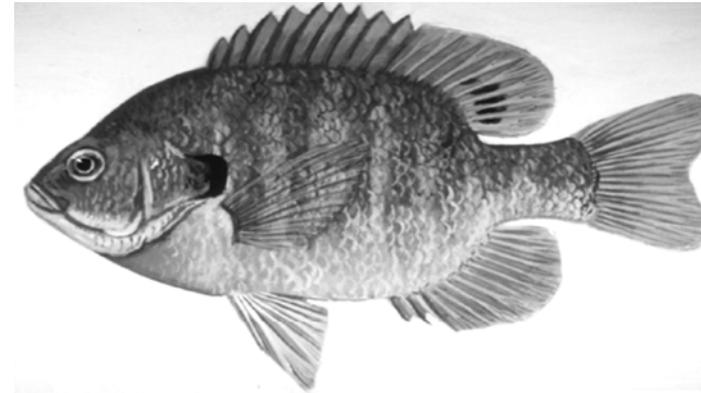


Figure 7. Bluegill sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), during 2014-15.

PUMPKINSEED

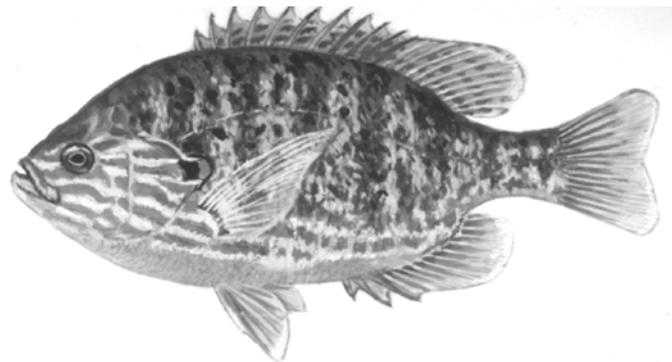
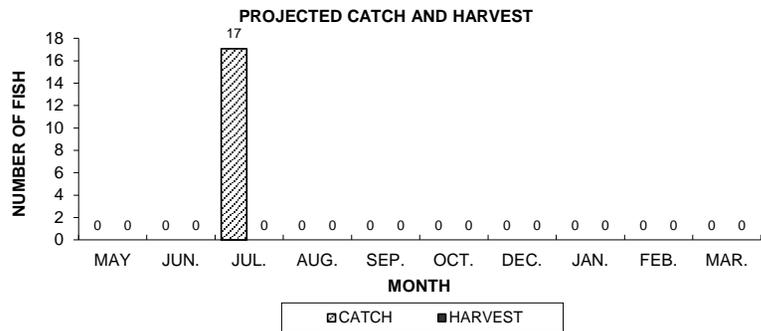


Figure 8. Pumpkinseed sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), during 2014-15.

ROCK BASS

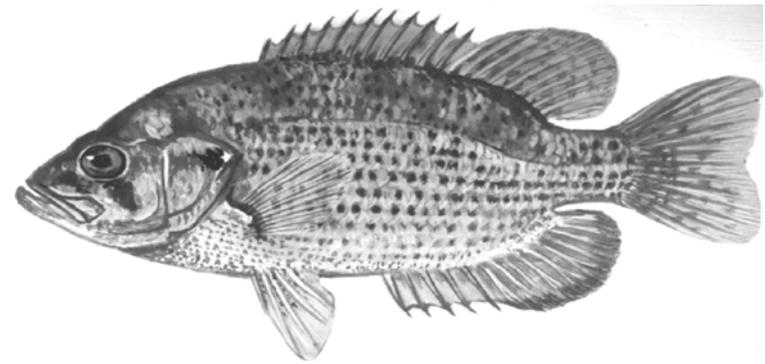
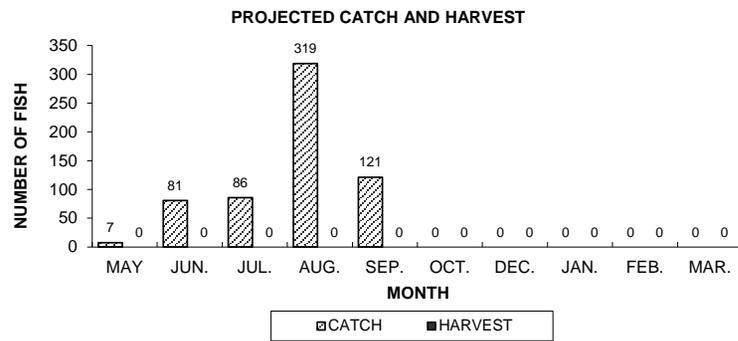


Figure 9. Rock bass sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), during 2014-15.

BLACK CRAPPIE

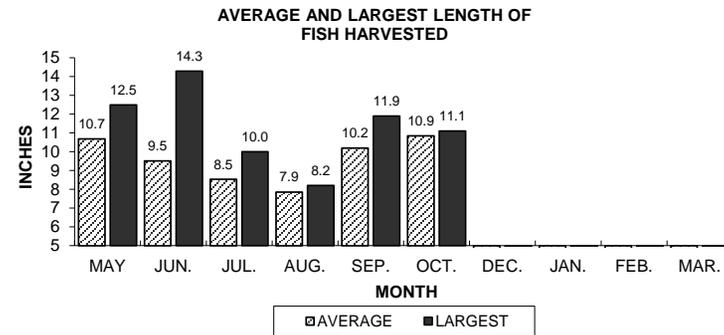
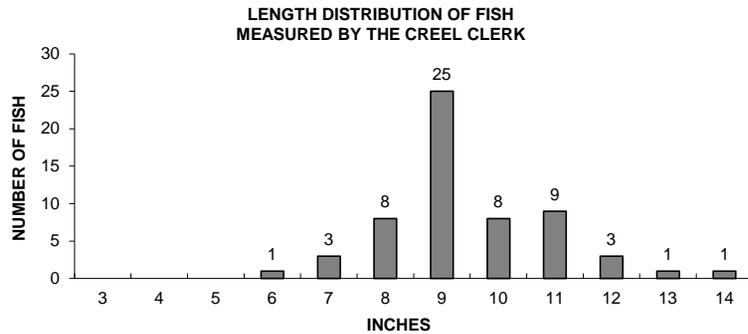
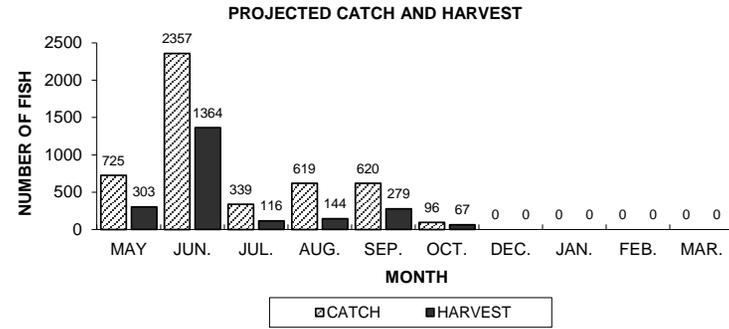
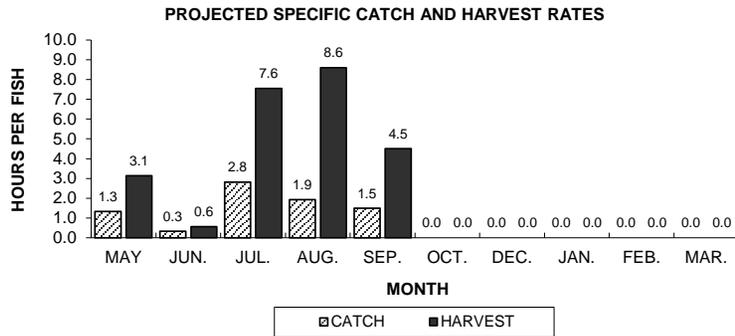
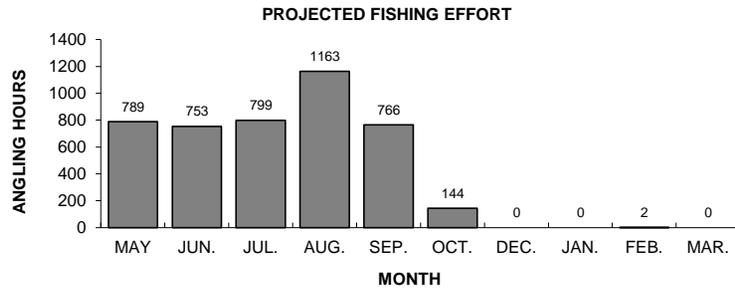
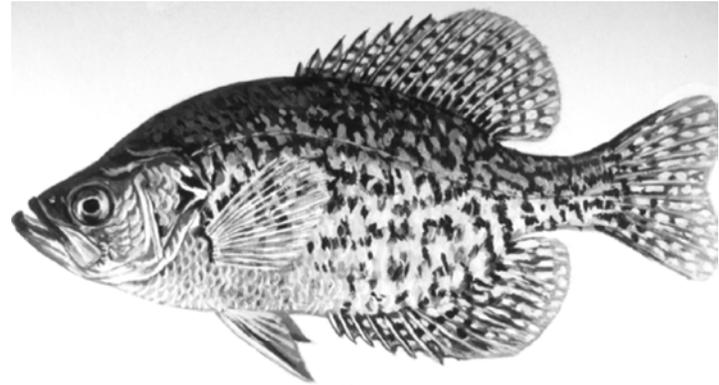


Figure 10. Black crappie sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Big Stone, Deer, and Dog Lakes), during 2014-15.