

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

**LAUREL AND MEDICINE LAKES
(Three Lakes Chain)**

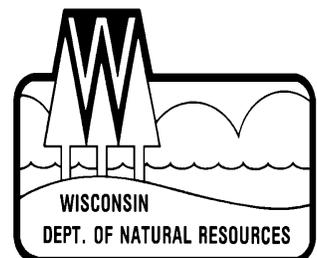
ONEIDA COUNTY

2014-15



Treaty Fisheries Publication

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
GENERAL LAKE INFORMATION.....	2
Location	2
Physical Characteristics	2
Seasons Surveyed.....	2
Weather	2
Fishing Regulations	2
SPECIES CATCH AND HARVEST INFORMATION.....	2
CREEL SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	3
Survey Logistics.....	3
General Angler Information.....	3
SPECIES INFORMATION	3
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4

SUMMARY TABLES

Table 1. Sportfishing effort summary.....	5
Table 2. Creel survey synopsis.....	6
Table 3. Laurel Lake synopsis.....	7
Table 4. Medicine Lake synopsis.....	8
SPECIES CATCH AND HARVEST INFORMATION	
Gamefish	
Figure 1. Walleye.....	9
Figure 2. Northern Pike.....	10
Figure 3. Muskellunge	11
Figure 4. Smallmouth Bass	12
Figure 5. Largemouth Bass	13
Panfish	
Figure 6. Yellow Perch	14
Figure 7. Bluegill	15
Figure 8. Pumpkinseed.....	16
Figure 9. Rock Bass	17
Figure 10. Black Crappie	18

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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 Laurel and Medicine Lakes; discussion of results of the survey; and detailed summaries, by species, of fishing effort, catch and harvest.

GENERAL LAKE INFORMATION



Laurel and Medicine Lakes (Three Lakes Chain)

Location

Laurel and Medicine Lakes are part of the Three Lakes Chain of Lakes, located in Oneida County near the Town of Three Lakes.

Physical Characteristics

Laurel and Medicine Lakes have a combined area of 645 acres, which accounts for 11% 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.

Weather

Ice-out on Laurel and Medicine Lakes was around May 7, 2014. Fishable ice formed on these lakes in late November.

Fishing Regulations

The following seasons, daily bag limits, and length limits were in place on Laurel and Medicine 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 for Laurel Lake and 1 on Medicine Lake, and then revised to 3 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 includes a comparison of these statistics with the previous creel survey. Information presented about species whose fishing season extended beyond March 1 should be considered minimum estimates. Each species page has up to five graphs depicting the following:

- PROJECTED FISHING EFFORT**
Total calculated number of hours during each month that anglers spent fishing for a species.
- 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.
- 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 Laurel and Medicine Lakes. The last creel survey took place during the 1994-95 season.

General Angler Information

Anglers spent 13,299 hours, or 20.6 hours per acre, fishing Laurel and Medicine Lakes during the 2014-15 season (Table 1). That was less than the Oneida County average of 33.7 hours per acre as well as the 1994-95 creel survey which estimated 27.6 hours per acre of fishing effort within the respective lakes. June and July were the most heavily fished month (4.4 hours per acre). Fishing effort was lightest in February (0.1 hours per acre) for those months when the entire month was creeled. The creel clerks were able to conduct 298 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 5,626 hours targeting walleyes for the two lakes combined. The greatest fishing effort for walleyes was in May (1,554 hours). January had the least amount of walleye fishing effort (23 hours).

Total catch of walleyes was 4,637 fish with a harvest of 584 fish. Highest catch (1,649 fish) and harvest (154 fish) occurred in May. Anglers fished 1.3 hours to catch, and 9.9 hours to harvest, a walleye during the 2014-15 season. The mean length of harvested walleyes was 12.2 inches, and the largest walleye measured was a 21.4-inch fish caught on Laurel Lake.

Northern Pike (Tables 2-4, Figure 2)

Fishing effort directed at northern pike was 1,733 hours during the 2014-15 season.

Northern pike fishing effort was greatest in September (666 hours). Total catch of northern pike was 817 fish with a harvest of 47 fish. The mean length of harvested northern pike was 22.4 inches, and the largest northern pike measured was a 23.2-inch fish caught on Laurel Lake.

Muskellunge (Tables 2-4, Figure 3)

Anglers spent 4,087 hours targeting muskellunge during the 2014-15 season. Muskellunge fishing effort was greatest in August (1,480 hours). Total catch of muskellunge was 221 fish, and the highest catch (84 fish) occurred in June. Anglers fished 23.9 hours to catch a muskellunge during the 2014-15 season. One muskellunge was harvested (42.1 inches) during the 2014-15 survey.

Smallmouth Bass (Tables 2-4, Figure 4)

Fishing effort targeted at smallmouth bass was 1,383 hours during the 2014-15 season. Smallmouth bass fishing effort was

greatest in July (622 hours). Total catch of smallmouth bass was 463 fish with no fish harvested. Highest catch (155 fish) occurred in June. 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 1,440 hours during the 2014-15 season. Largemouth bass fishing effort was greatest in July (622 hours). Total catch of largemouth bass was 659 fish with no documented harvest. Highest catch (292 fish) occurred in September. Anglers fished 8.0 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 3,701 hours. Anglers caught 1,523 black crappies and harvested 752 fish. The mean length of black crappies harvested was 10.0 inches, with the highest harvest (595 fish) occurring on Laurel Lake.

Bluegills were the second most sought after panfish species during the survey. Fishing effort directed at bluegills was 2,010 hours. Total catch of bluegills was 1,976 fish with 288 being harvested. The mean length of bluegills harvested was 7.2 inches, with the highest harvest (1,455 fish) occurring on Laurel Lake.

Yellow perch were the third most sought after panfish species during the survey. Fishing effort directed at yellow perch was 1,845 hours. Total catch of yellow perch was 1,265 fish with 15 being harvested. The mean length of yellow perch harvested was 7.2 inches, with the highest harvest (13 fish) occurring on Laurel Lake.

Pumpkinseeds were also caught (101 fish) and harvested (25 fish) during the 2014-15 season.

Rock bass were also caught (883 fish) and harvested (68 fish) during the 2014-15 season.

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 Kiepkke 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 our 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, all of whom 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 (Laurel and Medicine 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	22	2088	3.2	1.9	4.8	5.0
June	60	2839	4.4	6.2	6.4	6.4
July	54	2859	4.4	8.1	7.3	6.8
August	82	2606	4.0	5.5	5.7	5.5
September	35	1681	2.6	3.1	3.4	3.3
October	30	778	1.2	1.5	1.6	1.5
December	6	220	0.3	0.5	1.2	1.1
January	6	136	0.2	0.4	1.5	1.6
February	2	75	0.1	0.4	1.5	1.6
March	1	17	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.2
*Summer Total	283	12851	19.9	26.3	29.2	28.5
*Winter Total	15	448	0.7	1.3	4.5	4.5
Grand Total	298	13299	20.6	27.6	33.7	33.0

*"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 (Laurel and Medicine 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 the Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine 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 (Laurel and Medicine 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 (Laurel and Medicine Lakes) to other lakes in northern Wisconsin.

Table 2. Comparison of creel survey synopses, Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine 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	5626	25.44%	4637	1.3	584	9.9	12.2
Northern Pike	1733	7.84%	817	15.0	47	58.5	22.4
Muskellunge	4087	18.48%	221	23.9	4	1135.3	42.1
Smallmouth Bass	1383	6.25%	463	5.4	0		
Largemouth Bass	1440	6.51%	659	8.0	0		
Yellow Perch	1845	8.34%	1265	1.8	15	3.3	7.2
Bluegill	2010	9.09%	1976	1.4	288	11.4	7.2
Pumpkinseed	212	0.96%	101	2.1	25	8.4	7.0
Rock Bass	74	0.33%	883	1.0	68	1.5	6.7
Black Crappie	3701	16.74%	1523	2.8	752	5.4	10.0

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	5046	19.01%	942	5.4	328	15.4	12.3
Northern Pike	1309	4.93%	423	3.1	66	19.8	21.3
Muskellunge	7027	26.47%	345	20.4	48	146.4	37.1
Smallmouth Bass	203	0.76%	32	6.3	0		
Largemouth Bass	847	3.19%	335	0.0	14	60.5	
Yellow Perch	4397	16.56%	2765	1.6	725	6.1	7.6
Bluegill	3264	12.30%	1618	2.0	576	5.7	7.2
Pumpkinseed		0.00%					
Rock Bass	339	1.28%	198	1.7	35	9.7	8.7
Black Crappie	4114	15.50%	1205	3.4	207	19.9	10.1

Table 3. Comparison of creel survey synopses, Laurel 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	2752	20.92%	1556	1.9	201	14.0	12.5
Northern Pike	1139	8.66%	569	53.2	17		22.9
Muskellunge	1205	9.16%	66	26.7	4	333.3	42.1
Smallmouth Bass	848	6.45%	203	6.9	0		
Largemouth Bass	1061	8.07%	627	6.3	0		
Yellow Perch	1471	11.18%	760	1.7	13		7.2
Bluegill	1666	12.67%	1455	1.6	75	28.1	6.7
Pumpkinseed	203	1.54%	101	2.0	25	8.1	7.0
Rock Bass	65	0.49%	634	1.3	49	1.3	7.0
Black Crappie	2744	20.86%	934	3.1	595	4.7	9.6

7 * 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	2520	15.05%	189	14.6	83	32.3	12.4
Northern Pike	681	4.07%	202	8.8	8	0.0	22.3
Muskellunge	3352	20.03%	203	17.5	0		
Smallmouth Bass	52	0.31%	18	0.0	0		
Largemouth Bass	696	4.16%	277	3.1	0		
Yellow Perch	3341	19.96%	1918	2.3	534	7.1	7.6
Bluegill	2538	15.16%	1327	2.3	512	5.6	6.8
Pumpkinseed	216	1.29%	0	0.0	0		
Rock Bass	330	1.97%	53	0.0	35	0.0	7.4
Black Crappie	3013	18.00%	1075	2.8	149	20.3	10.1

Table 4. Comparison of creel survey synopses, Medicine 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	2874	32.09%	3081	1.0	383	7.7	12.1
Northern Pike	594	6.63%	248	6.3	30	20.0	21.9
Muskellunge	2882	32.18%	156	22.8	0		
Smallmouth Bass	535	5.97%	261	9.2	0		
Largemouth Bass	379	4.23%	32	30.3	0		
Yellow Perch	374	4.18%	505	1.0	2	0.0	7.3
Bluegill	344	3.84%	521	0.8	212	2.9	7.4
Pumpkinseed	9	0.10%	0		0		
Rock Bass	9	0.10%	249	0.4	20		5.9
Black Crappie	957	10.68%	590	2.2	157	9.0	10.0

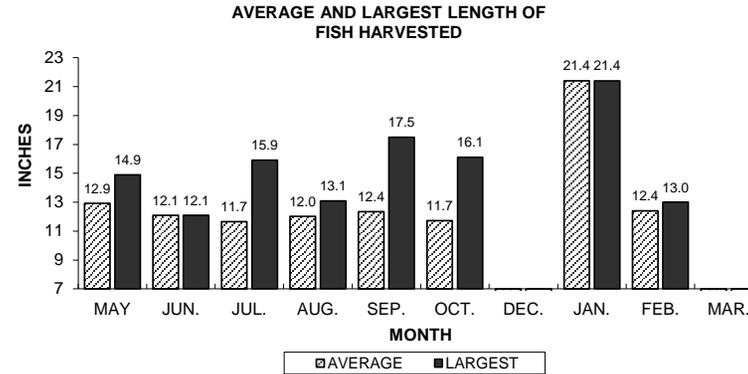
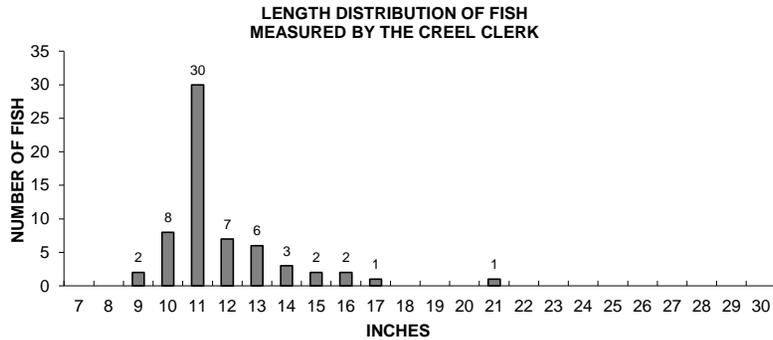
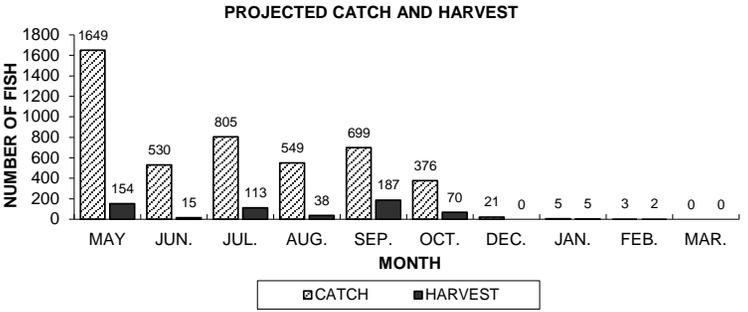
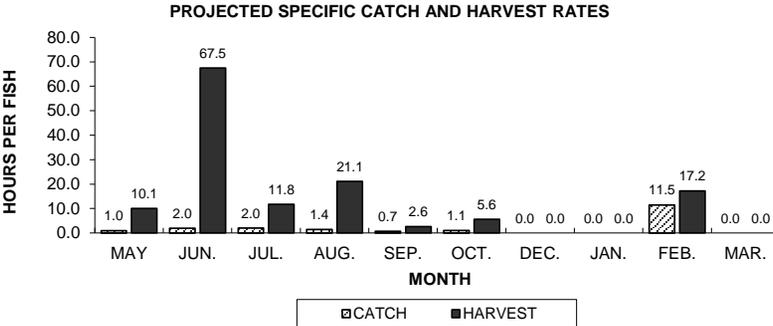
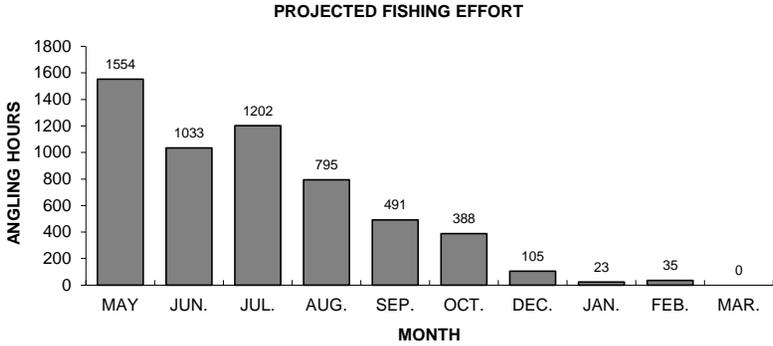
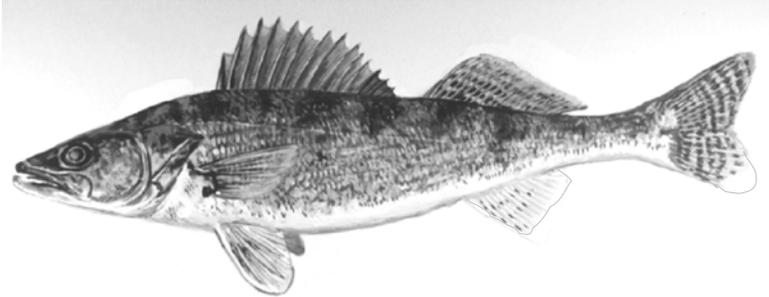
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** A blank cell in this column indicates that no fish of a given species were harvested by anglers who specifically targeted that species.

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	2526	25.20%	753	3.4	245	10.3	12.3
Northern Pike	628	6.27%	221	10.6	58	18.1	20.3
Muskellunge	3675	36.67%	142	26.2	48	75.8	37.1
Smallmouth Bass	151	1.51%	14	11.0	0		
Largemouth Bass	151	1.51%	58	4.4	14	10.9	
Yellow Perch	1056	10.54%	847	2.4	191	6.5	7.6
Bluegill	726	7.24%	291	2.5	64	11.4	7.6
Rock Bass	9	0.09%	145	6.0	0		
Black Crappie	1101	10.98%	130	11.2	58	22.6	10.1

WALLEYE



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Figure 1. Walleye sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine Lakes), during 2014-15.

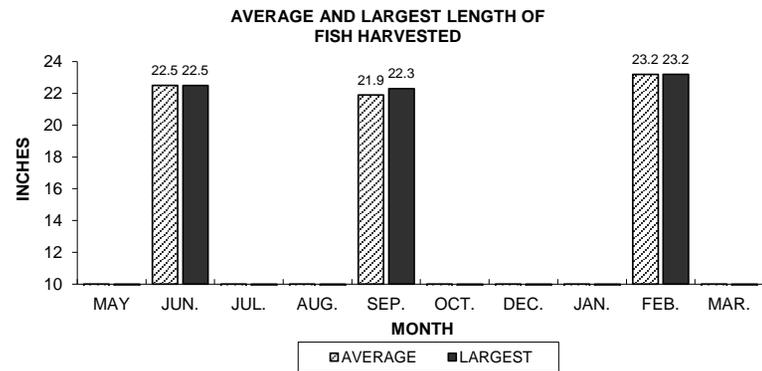
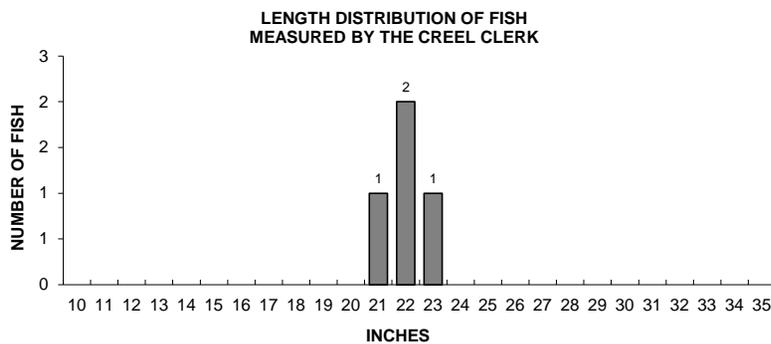
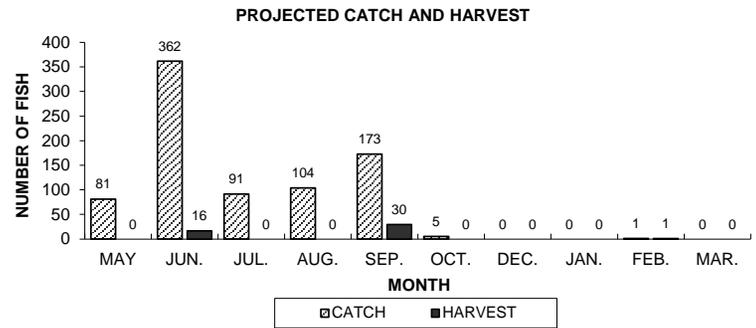
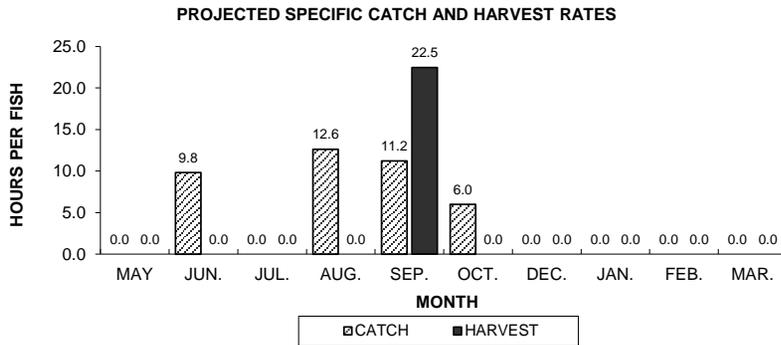
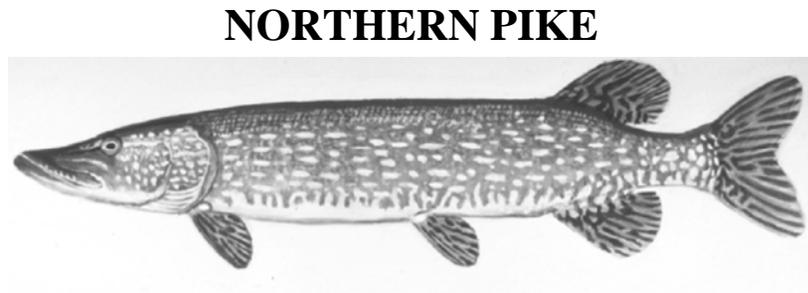
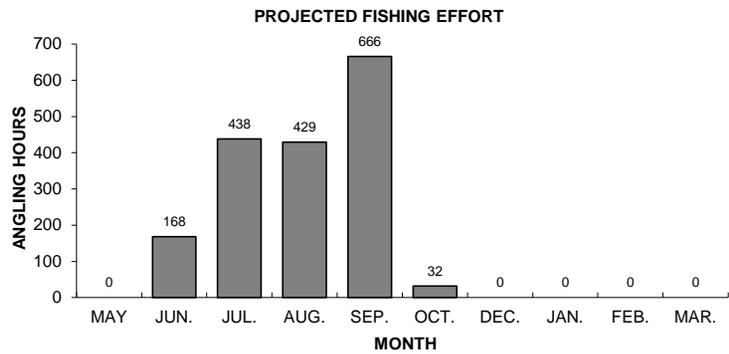


Figure 2. Northern pike sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine Lakes), during 2014-15.

MUSKELLUNGE

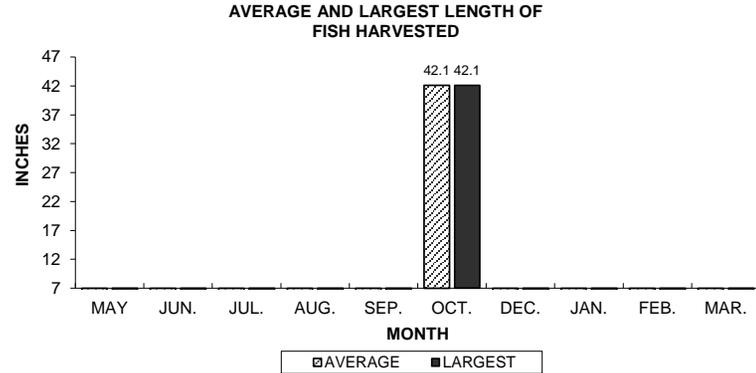
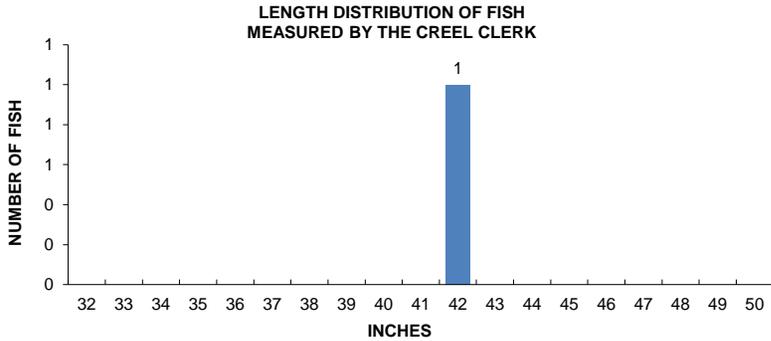
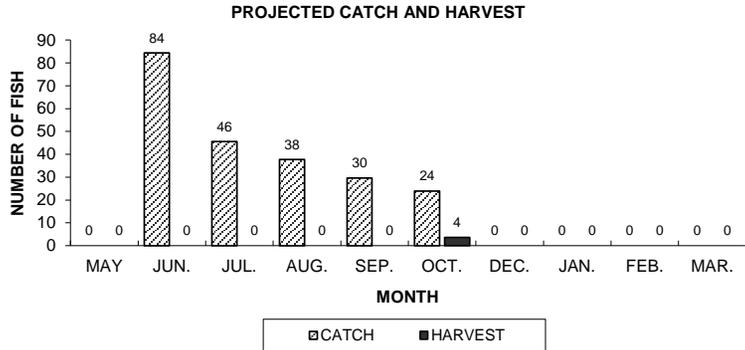
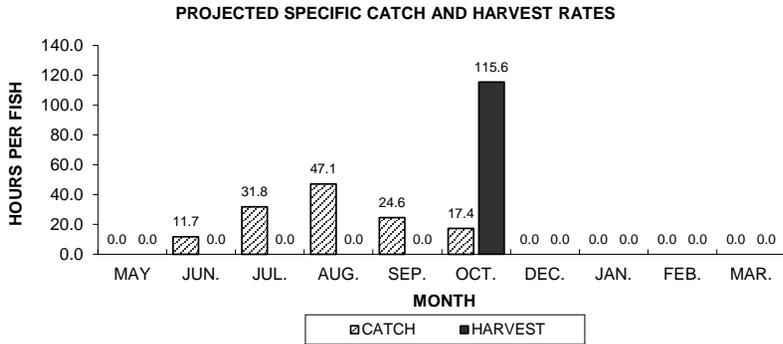
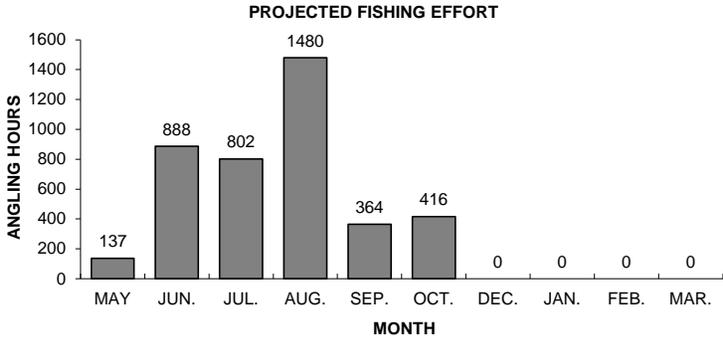


Figure 3. Muskellunge sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine Lakes), during 2014-15.

SMALLMOUTH BASS

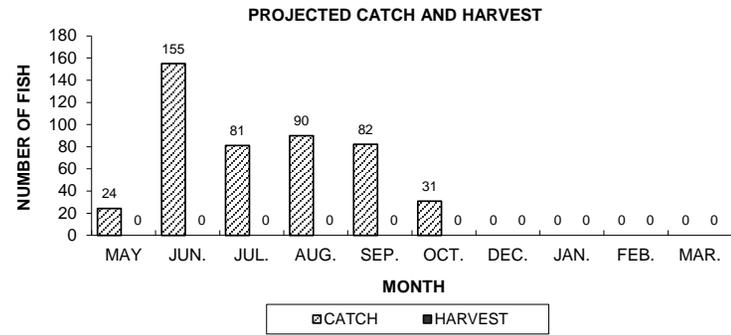
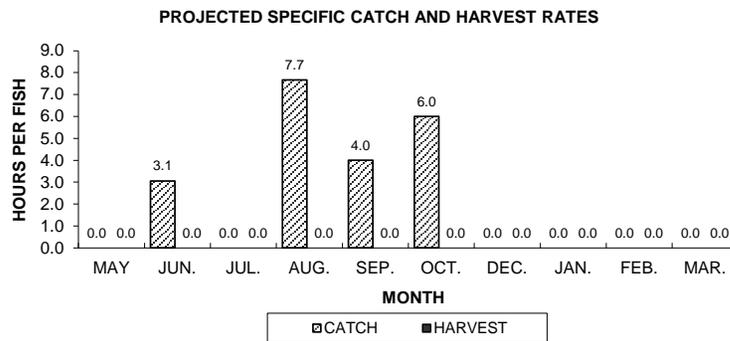
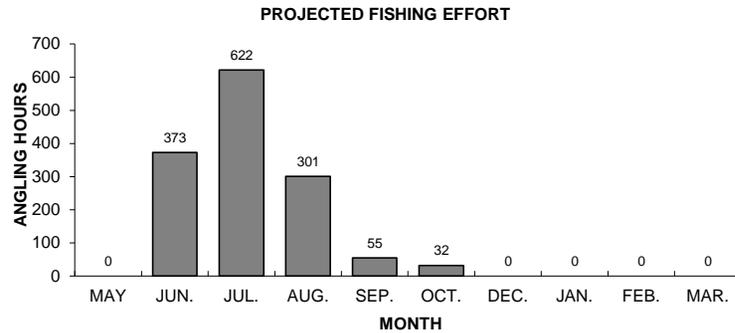
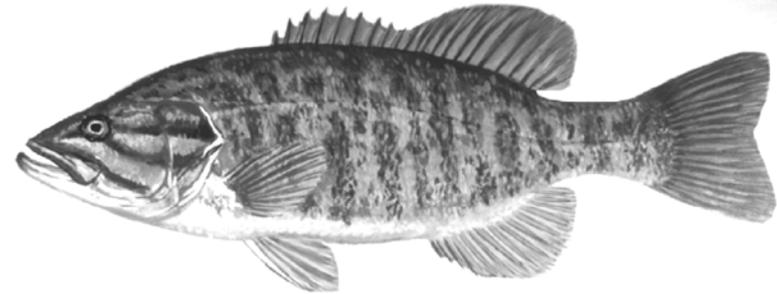


Figure 4. Smallmouth bass sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine Lakes), during 2014-15.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

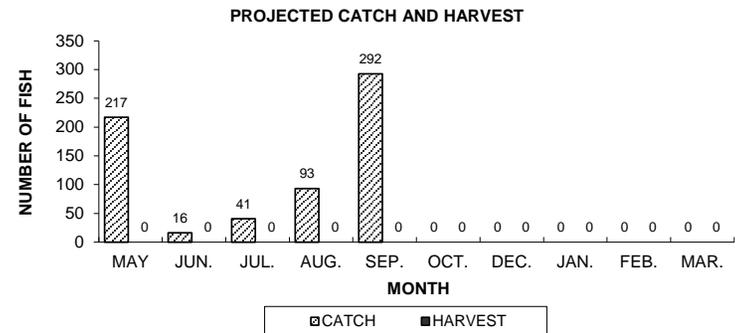
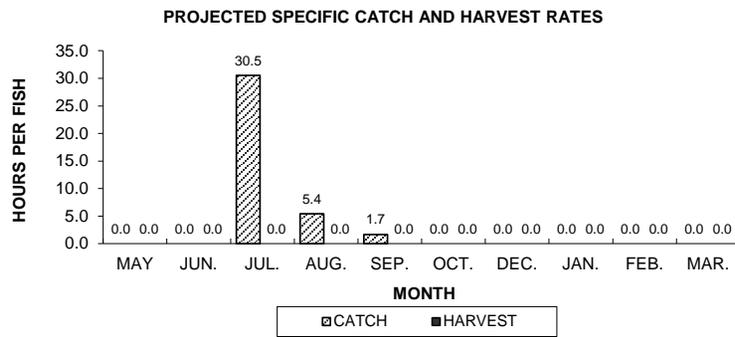
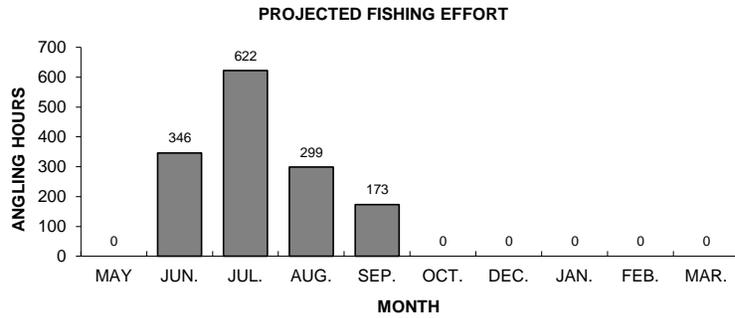
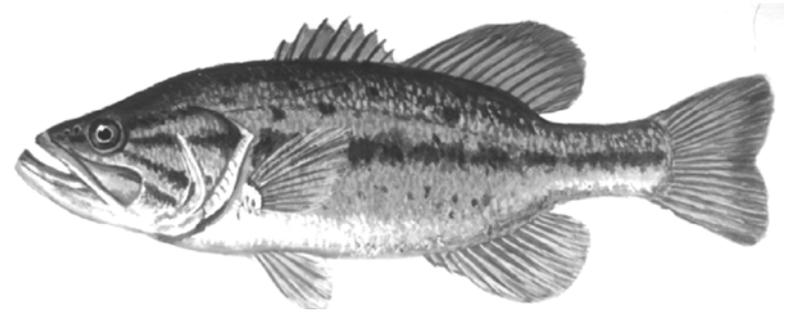


Figure 5. Largemouth bass sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine Lakes), during 2014-15.

YELLOW PERCH

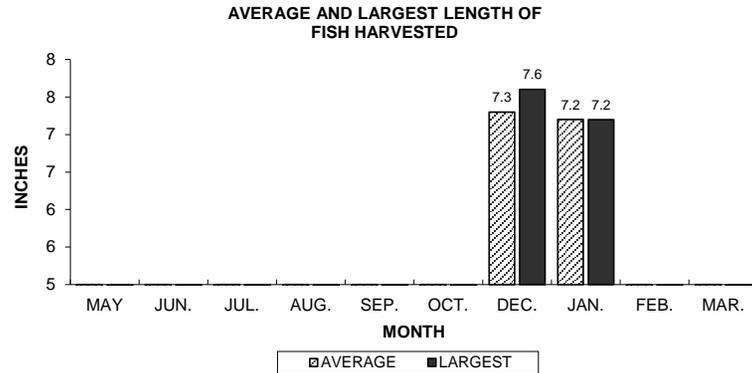
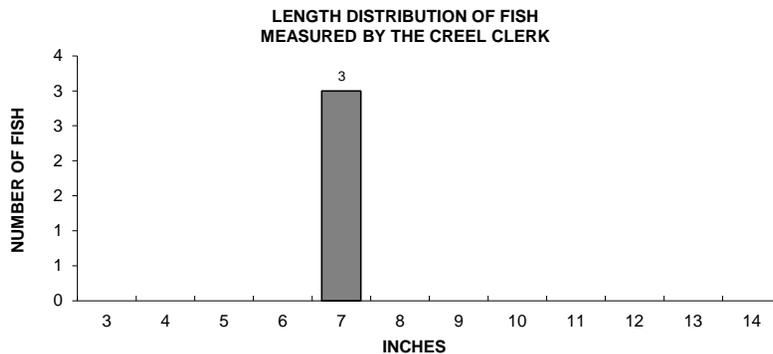
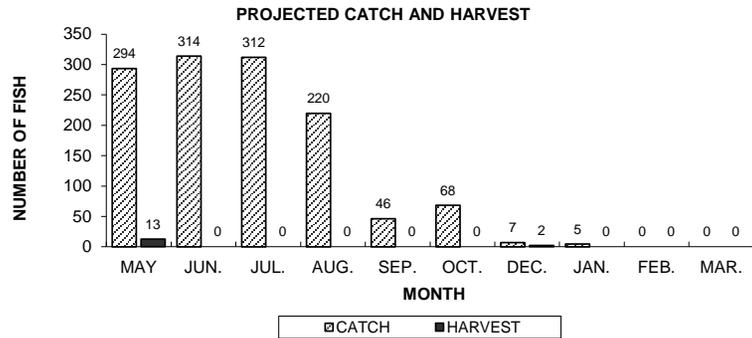
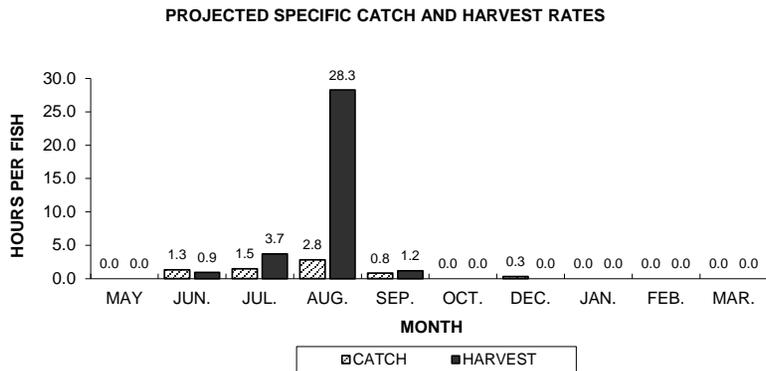
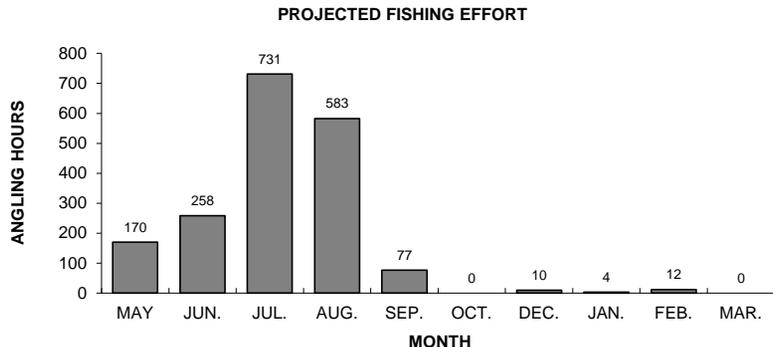
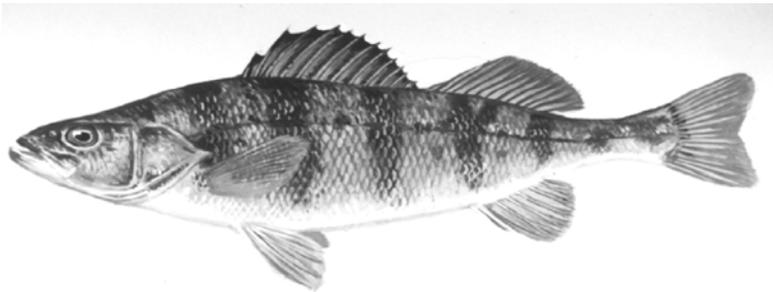


Figure 6. Yellow perch sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine Lakes), during 2014-15.

BLUEGILL

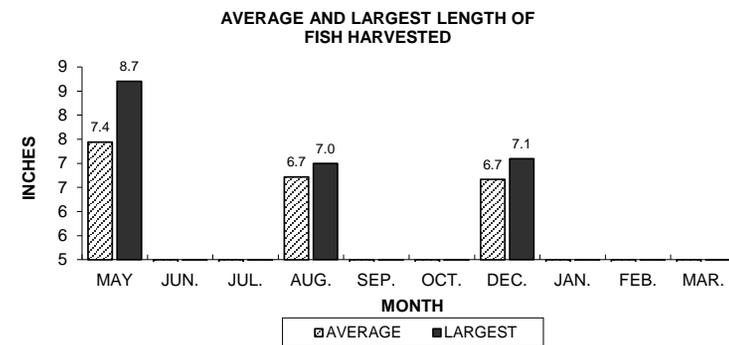
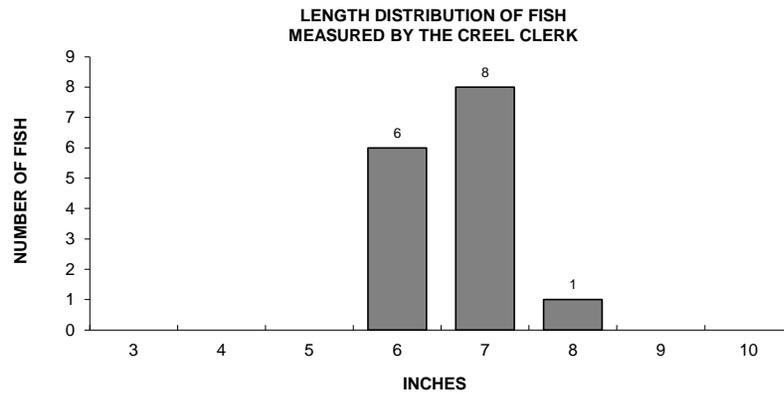
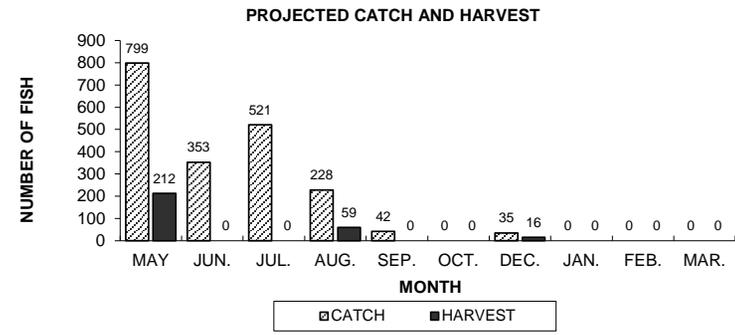
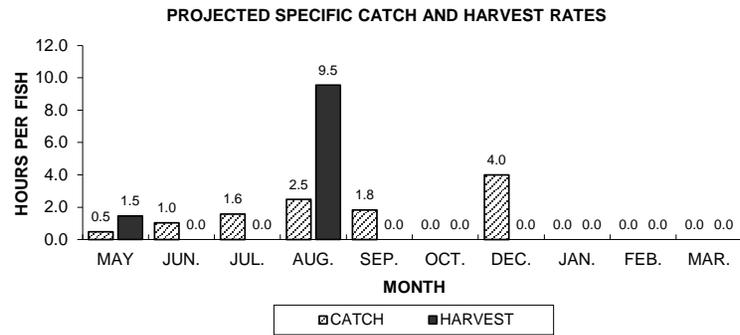
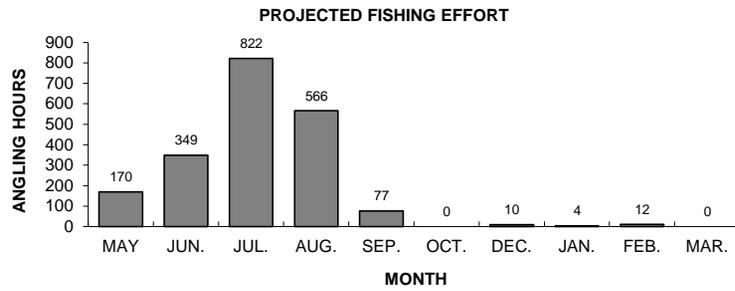
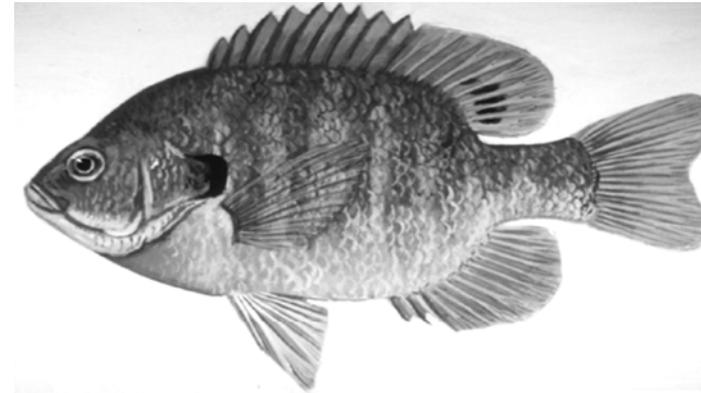


Figure 7. Bluegill sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine Lakes), during 2014-15.

PUMPKINSEED

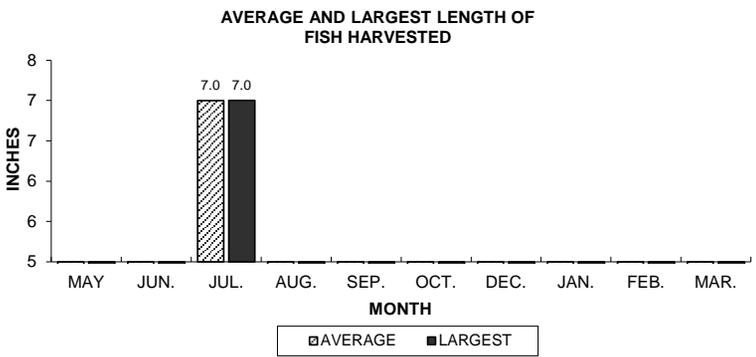
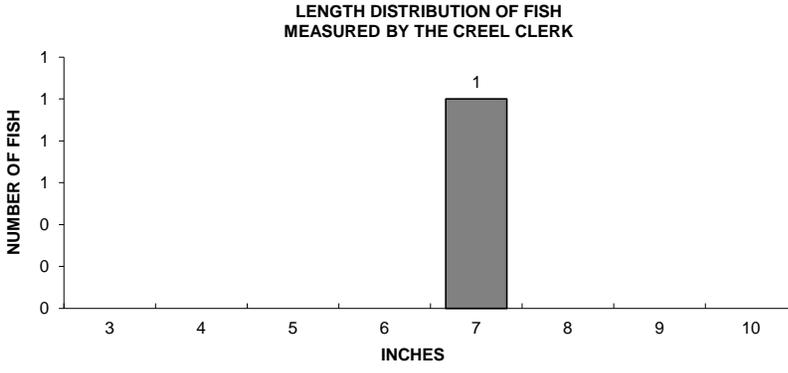
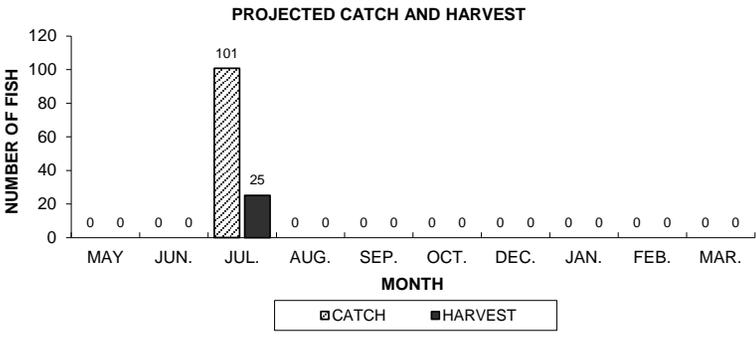
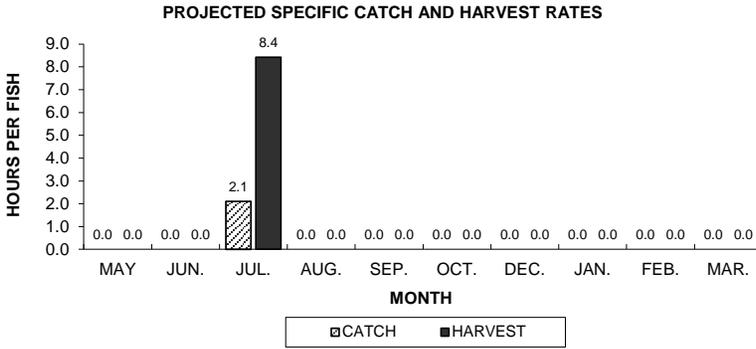
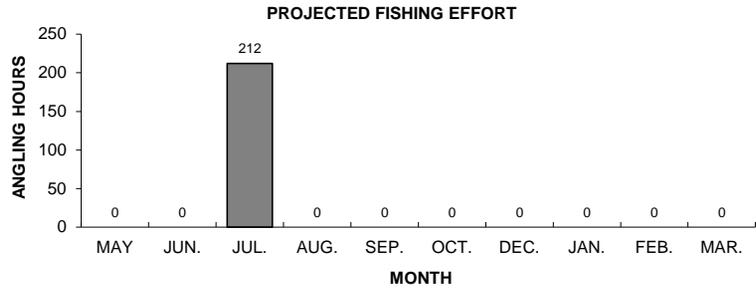
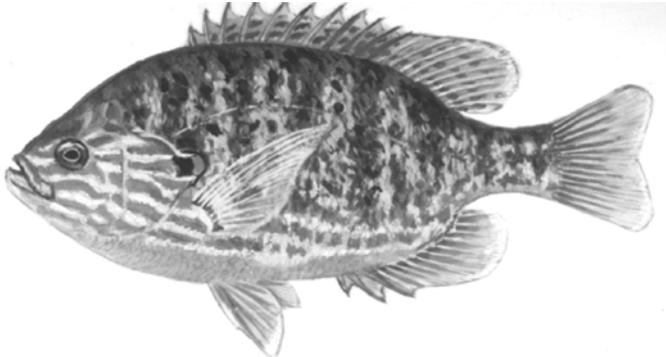


Figure 8. Pumpkinseed sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine Lakes), during 2014-15.

ROCK BASS

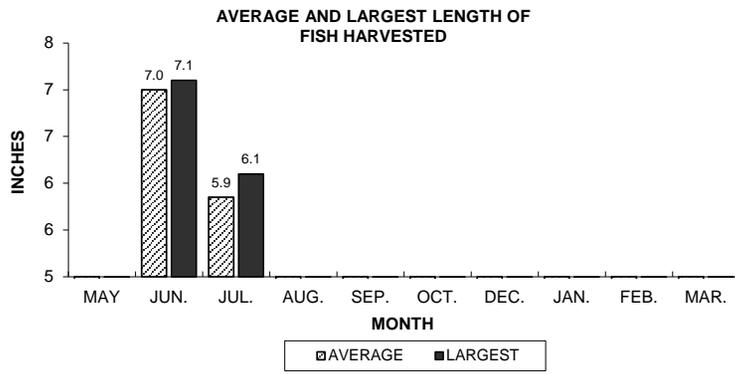
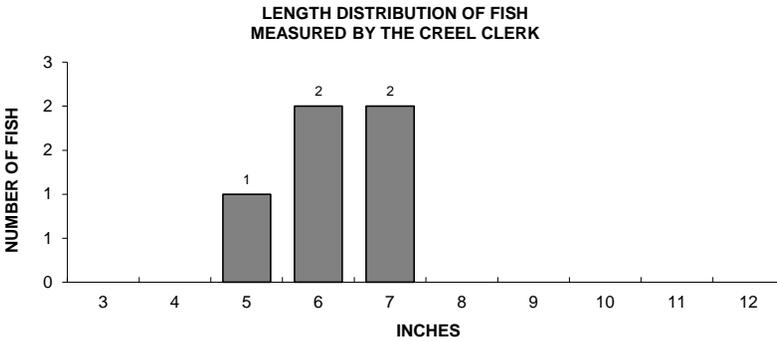
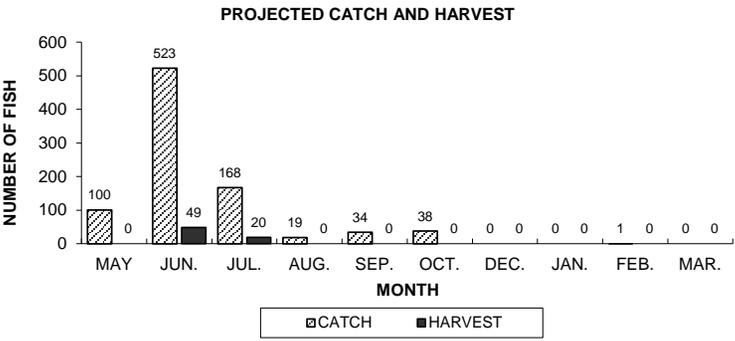
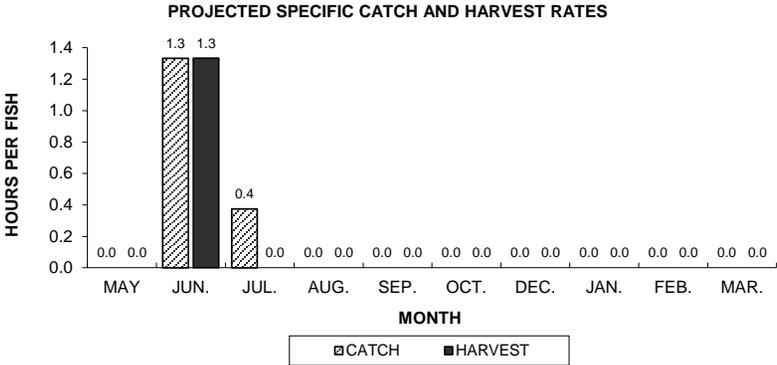
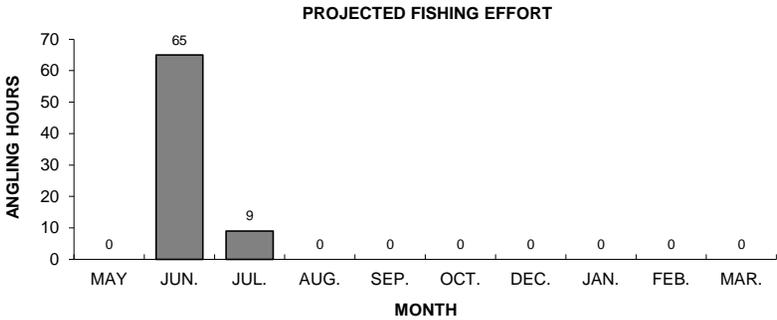
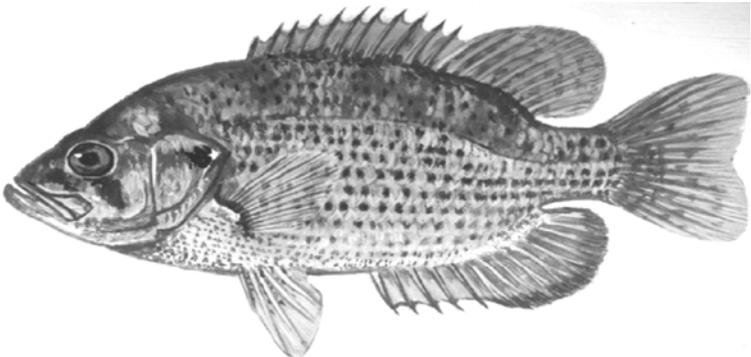


Figure 9. Rock bass sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine Lakes), during 2014-15.

BLACK CRAPPIE

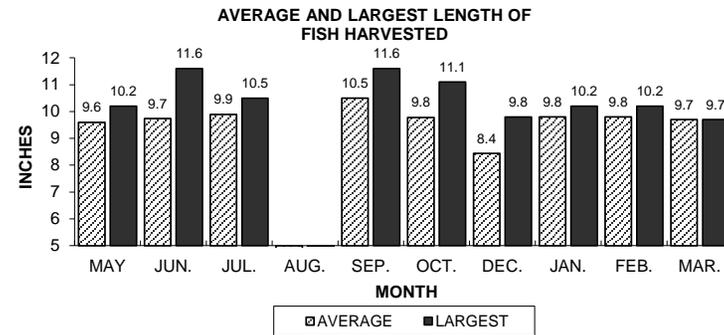
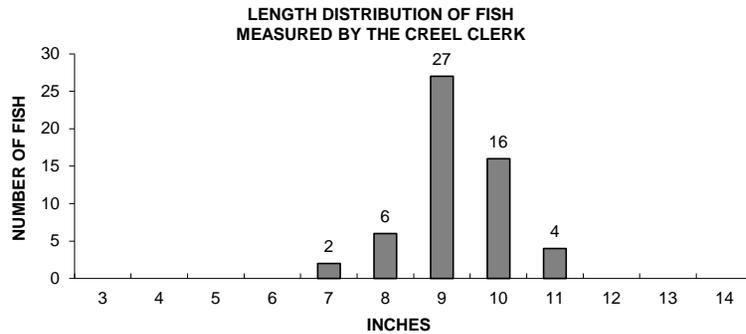
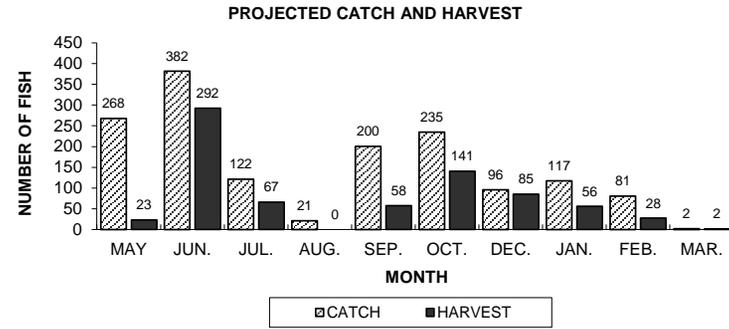
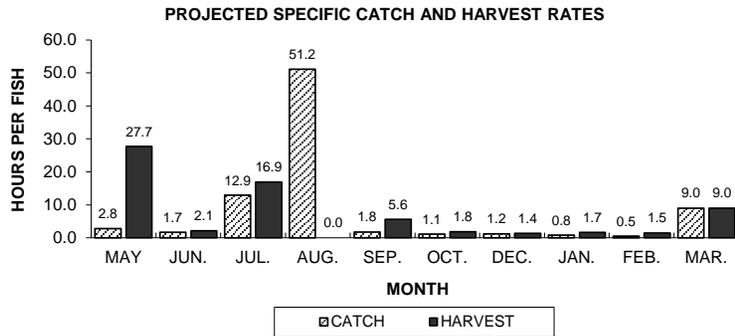
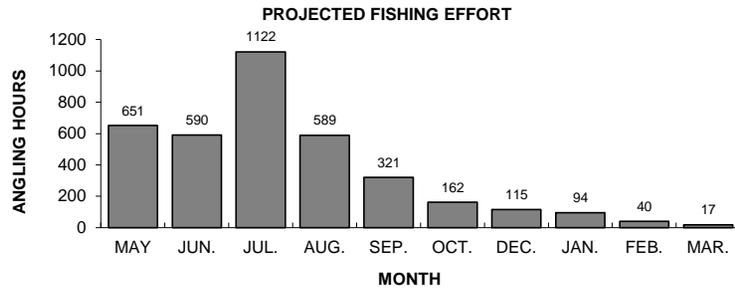
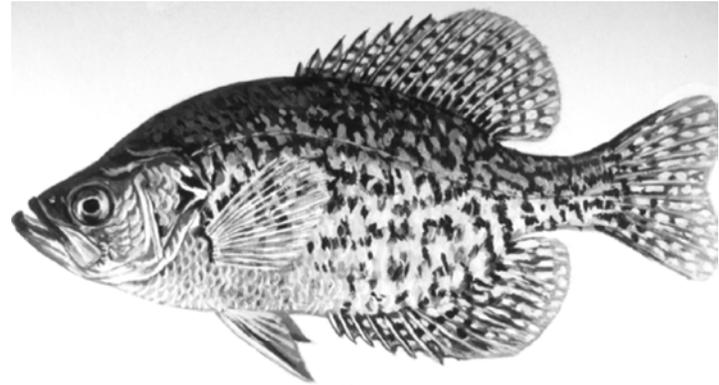


Figure 10. Black crappie sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Three Lakes Chain (Laurel and Medicine Lakes), during 2014-15.