



Bear Creek Lake 2002

Bear Creek Lake is a 40-acre impoundment owned and operated by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The lake is the focal point of the 326-acre Bear Creek Lake State Park and is located in the Cumberland State Forest. There is one boat ramp providing angler access to the lake as well as a series of trails that provide extensive bank fishing opportunities. The fisheries are managed under general statewide fishing regulations which regulate creel limits with no length limitations. Species occupying Bear Creek Lake include largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, warmouth, channel catfish, and black crappie. Gizzard shad are also present in the lake and provide a limited prey item for largemouth bass. Bear Creek was renovated and dredged in 1999 to increase depth in the upper lake. Thus, the fishery is in a rebuilding phase and should continue to improve as the fishery matures.

Biologists with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries sampled Bear Creek in 2002 to assess the health of the newly re-established fishery. The primary sportfish in Bear Creek Lake is the largemouth bass. As expected, the bass population is dominated by fish under 12 inches. Abundance of bass is at an acceptable level and the size distribution should improve as the population has a chance to grow and mature. Some holdover bass are present in the lake, which provide the opportunity for anglers to catch fish up to 18 inches. Recent strong spawning years indicate that the bass fishery should continue to improve and provide a quality fishing experience for visitors to the park.

For those anglers who prefer fishing for species other than bass, Bear Creek also has a good sunfish fishery. The fishery is dominated by small bluegill up to 8 inches but 9-inch redear sunfish are also pretty common. Both species can be a lot of fun to catch with worms and bobbers and are a great way to teach kids to appreciate the sport of fishing. Bluegill numbers are a little high currently, but hopefully as the bass population continues to grow they will be able to reduce numbers through predation. Given the density of bluegill in Bear Creek Lake, anglers have an outstanding chance to catch something during a fishing trip to the park.

The Bear Creek Lake fishery should continue to improve following the 1999 lake renovation. It already provides anglers with dense fisheries and you might just land an 18 inch bass. Bear Creek Lake is restricted to electric motor or paddle only to enhance all visitors' enjoyment of this beautiful park. To visit Bear Creek Lake State Park, follow route 60 west from Midlothian to state route 622 (Trents Mill Rd). Travel north on 622 until you reach state route 629 on the left. This will take you into the park where signs are posted to assist visitors in locating all facilities.