



Amelia Lake 2006

Amelia Lake is a 100-acre impoundment located entirely within the Amelia Wildlife Management Area in Amelia County, Virginia. With its close proximity to Richmond, the wildlife management area provides easy access for a lot of Virginians to enjoy a variety of recreational activities including boating and fishing. Amelia Lake provides a warmwater fishery for largemouth bass, channel catfish, black crappie, bluegill and redear sunfish. Channel catfish are stocked annually at a rate of 15 fish/acre to maintain a fishable population.

Amelia Lake has been sampled intensively in recent history to try to get a handle on what drives the largemouth bass population. These samples indicate what biologists and anglers have known for a while – the bass population in the lake is unbalanced, and dominated by smaller fish. Densities of bass collected from this lake (measured as number caught per hour) are higher than most other waterbodies sampled in the state of Virginia. Good catch rates are typically found around 100 to 150 bass per hour. In 2001, the catch rate at Amelia reached an incredible 500 bass per hour – a rate indicating very crowded conditions. Because an abundance of predatory fish are present, food resources can become limited and the growth of bass in the population slows. The end result is a population of bass that hover around the eight to ten inch size range. Population estimates performed in 2002 add further evidence to the overcrowding problem. Most lakes in Southside Virginia have bass populations numbering about 25, 8-inch and greater bass per acre. Amelia's bass population is over 40 bass/acre. This is great for anglers seeking high catch rates and not frustrated when few, if any fish over 15 inches are creeled. Some large fish (over 20 inches) are in the lake, but their numbers are very low.

Other effects of an abundance of predators are realized in the forage species of the lake (bluegill and other sunfish). When an excess amount of predators are eating a limited amount of prey, not many of the prey survive long enough to grow large. The few fish that do escape the predatory largemouth bass are able to grow to large size, due to the abundance of food left behind by other fish. Currently, the sunfish population appears to be responding to the abundant predator population in just that way. Overall numbers of sunfish are down, but the average size increased in recent years. Nice sunfish are currently available to anglers, and should remain in the population, especially with the high density of bass present.

During the past several years, biologists have been attempting to bring the bass population under control by removing the size regulation and enforcing the creel of five bass per day. Biologists also highly encourage legal harvest of bass from Amelia to help reduce the population numbers to a more desirable level. In addition, the Department has been removing bass from Amelia to stock in area public waters that have sparse bass populations. This seems to be having some affect on largemouth bass numbers but the hoped increase in growth rates has not been realized as of yet. Amelia Lake may not produce a lot of trophy largemouth bass, but it does offer a great opportunity for an adult to introduce a kid to fishing.

Amelia Lake is open to anglers 24 hours a day. Gas motors are prohibited, although electric motors are allowed. A handicap fishing pier is available. Amelia Lake can be reached from Route 360 by taking State Route 604 North. Follow the signs to the lake.