



## Mill Creek Reservoir 2006



Mill Creek Reservoir is a 189-acre impoundment located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Amherst County. This is the largest of the three public reservoirs owned by the County and provides opportunities for fishing and family outings. The various facilities include picnic tables and grills, restrooms, play area, boat ramp, and associated parking. The lake is open year round but nighttime activities are prohibited except for fishing. Anglers are required to obtain a permit from the county to fish at night. Boats propelled by oar or electric motors are welcome but outboard motor use is prohibited.

The reservoir was impounded in 1985 and was stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, and channel catfish. Initially, this reservoir supported a very good largemouth bass population with good numbers of small and large fish. As the lake aged, the growth of these fish slowed and angler harvest increased. Anglers removed most of the bass before they reached the protective slot limit of 12-14 inches. Largemouth bass at this reservoir reached the lower end of the protective slot limit around age 3. Consequently, one and two year old fish dominated the bass population. A new largemouth bass minimum size limit of 14-inches was introduced in 2001 to improve the bass fishing by protecting an additional year class from over harvest. Sampling in 2003 and 2005 indicates that the new bass regulation has drastically improved the fishery and now bass up to 14 inches are prevalent with some fish reaching 23 inches in length.

**Table 1. Largemouth bass collected during the 1999-2005 electrofishing surveys. The top row is the inch group and the bottom rows are the number of fish collected per hour of sampling in each size group.**

Size (Inches)	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
# in 2005	55	11	13	21	18	15	6	20	5	2	1	3	2	1	5	1	0	2
# in 2003	15	8	1	7	26	13	10	6	7	4	4	2	1	1	0	0	0	2
# in 2000	13	0	4	29	11	4	9	1	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
# in 1999	20	14	3	10	8	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Although crappie were not officially stocked into Mill Creek Reservoir, they have become established and do provide fishing opportunities. Crappie are one of the most susceptible species to cyclic population trends. Crappie routinely have good and bad years when it comes to spawning success. The crappie population at Mill Creek Lake is no exception. Older fish dominate the current fishery. This pattern is typical in small lakes and is expected to continue. The unfortunate side to good and bad reproductive years is that anglers can expect to have good crappie fishing some years and bad in other years. Size limits and creel restrictions used by managers to control fish populations can not make up for years with poor reproduction. With this in mind, anglers may not know

what to expect from year to year until they try their favorite crappie holes each spring. Most crappie at this reservoir usually do not exceed 10 inches.

**Table 2. Crappie collected during the 2000-2005 electrofishing surveys. The top row is the inch group and the bottom rows are the number of fish collected in each size group.**

<b>Size (Inches)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
<b># in 2005</b>	2	8	5	31	31	4
<b># in 2003</b>	1	4	26	57	7	0
<b># in 2000</b>	0	5	8	11	2	0

The sunfish population is comprised of primarily bluegill but redear sunfish are also present. The high reproductive capability of sunfish has offset angler harvest affects on population size but the heavy fishing pressure has reduced the number of large sunfish. However, there is still good sunfish fishing available with fish up to 8 inches for those panfish enthusiasts.

**Table 2. Sunfish collected during the 2000-2003 electrofishing surveys. The top row is the inch group and the bottom rows are the number of fish collected per hour of sampling in each size group.**

<b>Size (Inches)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b># in 2003</b>	82	88	120	94	12	0
<b># in 2000</b>	107	63	46	31	29	7

No channel catfish were collected from Mill Creek Reservoir for a number of years so stocking was discontinued due to limited contributions to the fishery. However, a trial stocking of larger channel catfish was initiated in 2003 to see if catfish stocked at larger sizes will contribute more to the catfish fishery.

The reservoir can be accessed by taking route 60 to Lowesville Road (Rt. 718), turn right onto route 610, and bear left at the first intersection. Permits for night fishing are available through Amherst County at 434-946-9371.