



Cumberland State Forest Lakes 2008

Located off of Route 60 between Powhatan and Dillwyn, Virginia, the 16,233 acre Cumberland State Forest is home to four small fishing lakes that many people may not know about. These include Lake Winston (10 acres), Arrowhead Lake (6 acres), Bonbrook (6 acres), and Oak Hill Lake (6 acres). As an added bonus, Cumberland State Forest is adjacent to Bear Creek Lake State Park which provides ample camping and other recreational activities nearby. All four lakes provide a warmwater fishery for largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, and channel catfish. Ten channel catfish per acre are stocked annually at each lake of to maintain the fishery.

For the remainder of this report I will be referring only to Lake Winston and Oak Hill Lake; lakes with the most recent sampling information. Bonbrook and Arrowhead Lakes were not sampled in 2007 due to planned maintenance activities. In the spring of 2007, Winton and Oak Hill were sampled by Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) personnel to monitor the health of the fisheries. Lake Winston is normally a good largemouth bass fishery with low density but good size fish exist in the population. The pattern was again observed in 2007 with very few small fish sampled and bass up to 20 inches observed. Most fish sampled were between 12 and 16 inches but no size class was well represented. Copious amount of watershield, an aquatic plant that looks like a small lily pad, along the shoreline prevented us from sampling the desirable near-shore areas so it is quite possible that many more smaller bass were hidden in that vegetation. Conversely, largemouth bass at Oak Hill were much more numerous but were also much smaller on average. Two fish 19-20 inches were sampled but most fell between 9-12 inches. This is also normal for Oak Hill Lake. For anglers visiting Cumberland State Forest ponds, choose Lake Winston for opportunities to catch larger but fewer bass and select Oak Hill Lake if you are more interested in catching numerous, smaller bass.

Bream fishing at these two lakes is limited to bluegill and redear sunfish. The bream sample at Winston was limited by the vegetation issue and no sunfish over 6 inches was sampled in 2007. Bluegill sizes are normally better at Winston so we're convinced that the watershield limited our ability to sample effectively. Redear are normally rare in Lake Winston so we weren't surprised by the low number sampled. The bream fishery at Oak Hill is somewhat better than Winston with numerous small bluegill and a few larger redear in the population. Redear up to 9 inches were sampled in 2007 and numerous bluegill less than 7 inches are present at Oak Hill.

Winston and Oak Hill offer a complimentary fishing opportunity for anglers of all skill levels. Winston offers a better opportunity to catch 20-inch largemouth bass but patience is a must with a low bass density. Oak Hill on-the-other-hand offers an excellent location for catching numerous small bass and bream. With ample bank access, this is an excellent location to take the kids fishing on a warm, spring day. Lake Winston is managed with a 14-inch minimum size limit, 5 fish/day creel limit for largemouth bass while Oak Hill has no length limit and a 5 fish/day creel limit for largemouth. All other species at the lakes are managed under statewide regulations. All four of the Cumberland State Forest lakes are restricted to electric motor only. Lake Winston has a concrete boat ramp suitable for any size johnboat while the other 3, including Oak Hill, are suited for hand-launching canoes and small johnboats. The Cumberland State Forest lakes can be reached by traveling north on route 629 off of Route 60 just west of Cumberland Court House, Virginia. The Forest, including the ponds, is open from dawn until dusk.