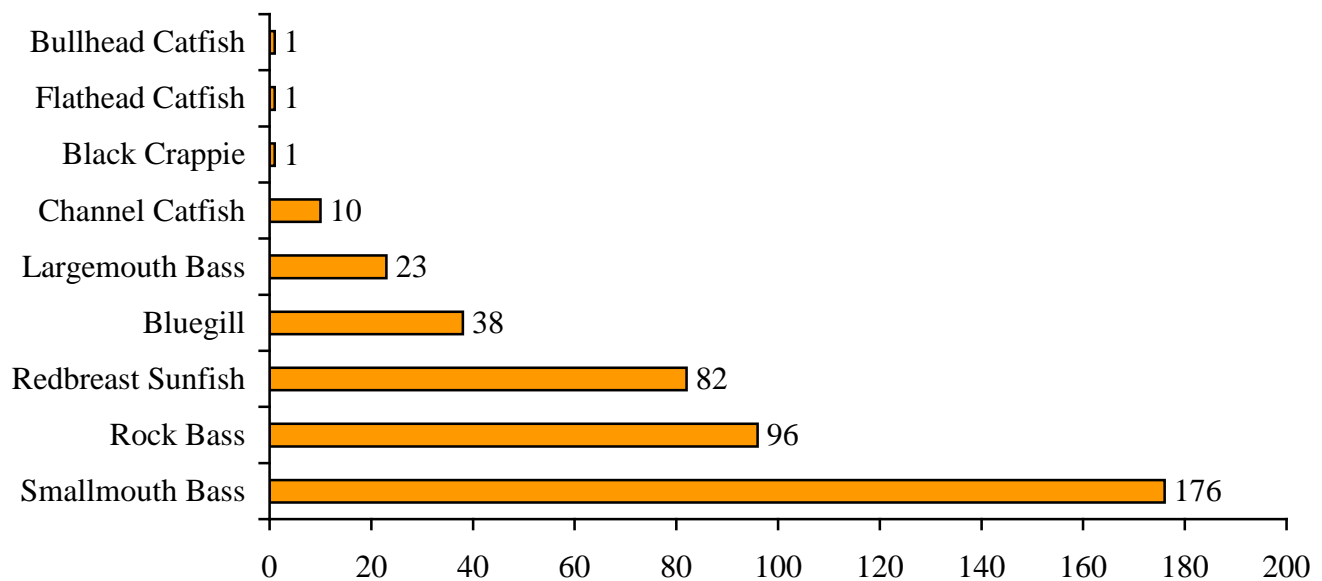




## Middle Fork Holston River 2012 Popular Report

The headwaters of the Middle Fork Holston River are located on the boundary of the Smyth-Wythe county line above the Town of Marion in southwest Virginia. The river flows southwest approximately 56 miles through Smyth and Washington counties before entering South Holston Lake. There are approximately 32 miles of navigable river that support healthy sport fish populations. While no public boat or canoe access is available, anglers still access the Middle Fork from private land or areas where the river is adjacent to public roads. The upper sections of the Middle Fork in the Town of Marion, Town of Chilhowie and above Atkins are classified as category A and B stocked trout waters from October 1 to June 15 each year. These sections are marked with signs and open to public fishing with the proper licenses required.

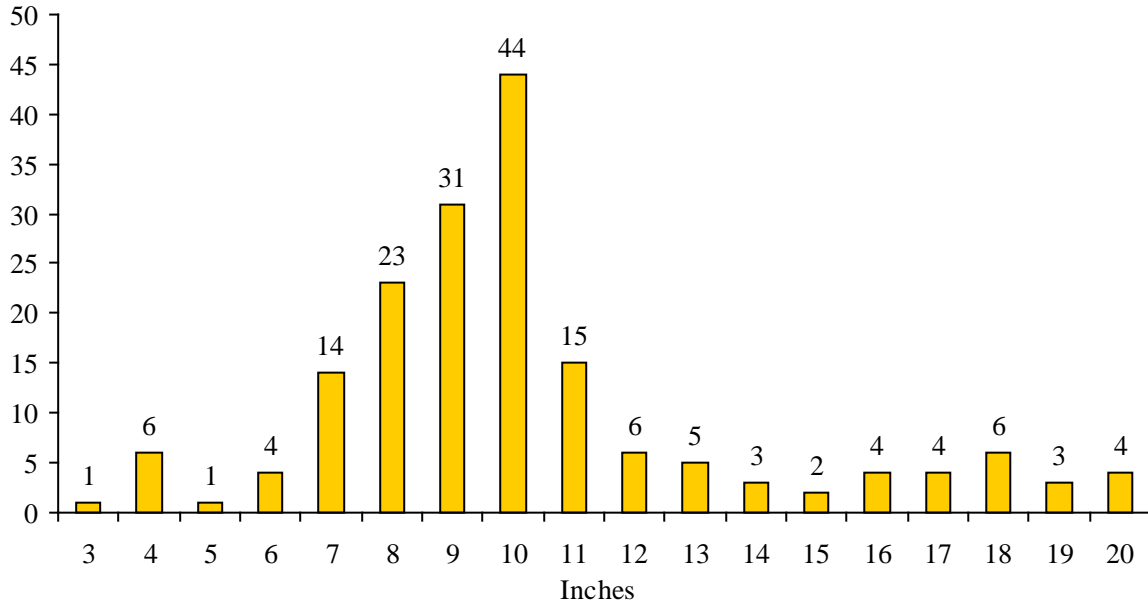
Fish population surveys conducted in 2011 indicate the presence of nine different sport fish species, with smallmouth bass, rock bass, and redbreast sunfish making up 83% of sport fish collected. The following chart identifies the common names of fish and the total number collected.



### *Smallmouth Bass Fishery:*

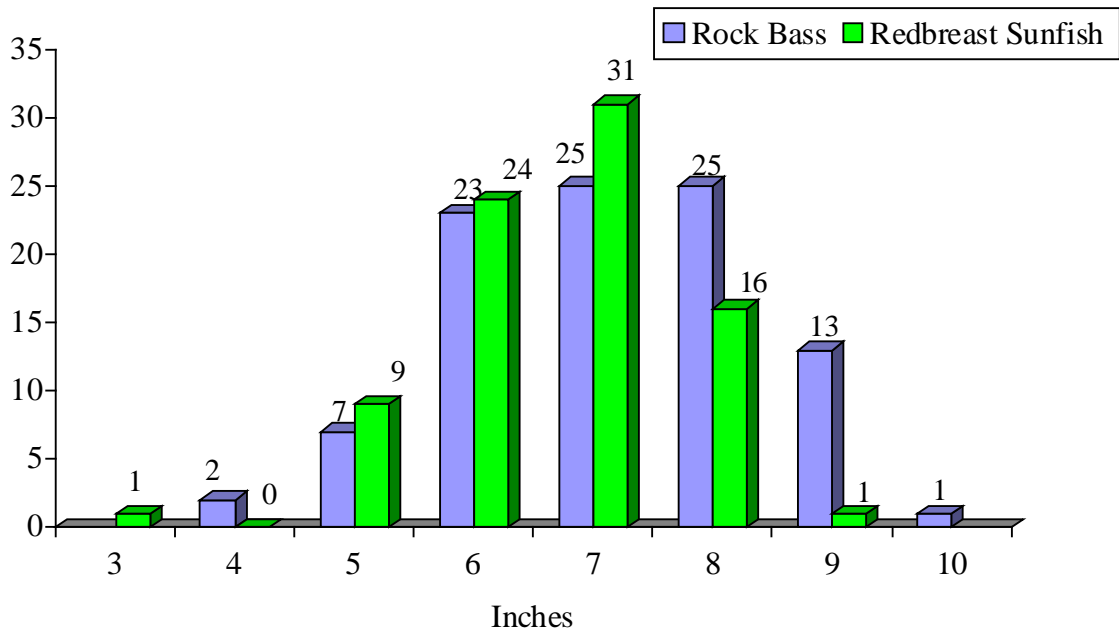
Smallmouth bass catch rates averaged 86/hr (n=9 samples). This is above the state average for rivers in Virginia, which is approximately 60 bass per hour. The average size of smallmouth bass collected in the Middle Fork is approximately 261 mm or 10 inches (n=176, standard deviation = 3.5 in.) with sizes ranging from 3 to 20 inches. Only 13% of all smallmouth collected were larger than 14 inches, and 4% were larger

than 18 inches. The smallmouth bass population is stable and relatively healthy with good size distribution as shown in the following graph of lengths collected in 2011.



*Rock Bass and Redbreast Sunfish:*

Rock bass and redbreast sunfish catch rates average 47 and 40 fish per hour, respectively. These fish are abundant throughout the river system and make up a majority of angler catch. The size of rock bass and redbreast sunfish are similar as shown in the figure below for fish collected in 2011. Rock bass grow to be a few inches larger in size than redbreast sunfish.



Current management focus for the river is to monitor the sport fish species present and enhance these populations when needed through stocking, regulations and habitat improvements. Channel catfish were stocked at several locations in 2011, and stockings will continue in 2012. Investigations into possible public access for fishing and canoe launching will continue as opportunities become available.

*Fishing the Middle Fork Holston River in 2012:*

The Middle Fork Holston River will offer a variety of good fishing opportunities in 2012. The river has good numbers of smallmouth bass, redbreast sunfish, rock bass and bluegills located throughout the 32-mile navigable sections in Smyth and Washington Counties. Smallmouth bass are abundant and can grow to decent size, up to 18-20 inches. Anglers may also catch a few largemouth bass, black crappie, channel catfish and pumpkinseed sunfish. There are no public access points on the 32-mile navigable portion of the Middle Fork Holston River, so anglers are encouraged to obtain landowner permission when accessing the river from private lands. The upper portions of the Middle Fork Holston in the Town of Marion, Town of Chilhowie, and Atkins provide excellent trout fishing opportunities, as these sections are part of the Department's stocked trout program. Remember when fishing stocked trout waters, a trout license is required in addition to a freshwater fishing license.

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