



Sandy River Reservoir 2015

Sandy River Reservoir is a 740-acre impoundment located just east of Farmville in Prince Edward County, Virginia. The impoundment was created in 1994, and opened to public fishing in 1996. The lake is owned by Prince Edward County but the fishery is managed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). The lake provides a warmwater fishery for Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, Redear Sunfish, Black Crappie, Chain Pickerel, and Channel Catfish.

Sandy River Reservoir continues to be one of the best fishing destinations in Southside Virginia. Recent fishery surveys confirm this reservoir's status as an excellent destination for great fishing - especially for Largemouth Bass. Anglers and VDGIF biologists do share some concerns over recent trends in trophy bass catch rates. Number of Largemouth Bass over 20 inches in springtime electrofishing surveys peaked in 2011 but declined sharply in 2012. Density of bass over 20 inches rebounded in 2013 and increased again in 2014, but we are keeping an eye on this fishery. In 2010 we sampled for and detected the presence of Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBv) in the reservoir, and while no fish kill was ever observed, the disease does increase mortality in the population – especially for larger bass. This will hopefully run its course in the next few years and the fishery should recover. While this lake probably reached its productive peak (“new lake phenomena” – high nutrient load available to newly flooded waters) in 2011, I expect Sandy River Reservoir to continue to be an excellent bass fishery. Reproductive rates of Largemouth Bass are still among the highest in the state which will help to ensure a great bass fishery into the next several years. Largemouth Bass continue to be the most popular species to fish for at Sandy River Reservoir with over 70% of all fishing pressure concentrated on bass. The best places to catch a lunker continue to be in the standing timber on either end of the lake, especially in April and May.

The Black Crappie fishery showed improvement in 2014 with an average size of 9 inches, all of the fish in the sample appear to be from the same year class. I expect the crappie population to decline this coming year and start its rebuilding phase in the years to follow, because the fish in 2014 were of legal size and likely harvested heavily. Black crappie is nearly tied with Channel Catfish as the second most popular fishery at Sandy. Fall trap netting should be considered to better quantify the crappie population.

Another fishery of note at Sandy is the Channel Catfish fishery. This is one of the best Channel Catfish fisheries in the area and it receives a significant portion of the fishing pressure. Most catfish caught at Sandy are in the 2-5 pound range but fish up to 30 inches and 10 pounds are found here. Most fish caught by anglers are in the 16-20 inch range but bigger fish are definitely landed at Sandy.

Bluegill and Redear Sunfish, aka shellcracker, round out the most highly sought game species at Sandy River Reservoir. More sunfish are caught and harvested at Sandy than any other species. Fish up to 11 inches are caught but most are in the 7-9 inch range. The best places to catch good numbers of sunfish at Sandy are around beaver lodges, tree tops in the

water, and off of points in the spring. Sunfish are one of the best species to fish for to get kids hooked on fishing, as success rates are usually very high and gear to fish for bream is relatively inexpensive. There is an excellent handicapped accessible fishing pier located at Sandy River Reservoir to provide safe and convenient fishing access to anyone wishing to spend a great day fishing.

Other species that you can catch at Sandy include Chain Pickerel, Warmouth and Green Sunfish. Sandy River Reservoir is an excellent destination for devoted bass anglers or parents of young children alike. The reservoir is open to fishing 24 hours a day and facilities include a two lane, concrete boat ramp with courtesy pier; handicap accessible fishing pier; lit parking lot; and handicap accessible restroom facilities. Bank fishing is available near the boat ramp parking lot and at other areas around the lake. Boaters are restricted to 10 hp motors or less. The lake can be reached by taking 460 east out of Farmville and turning south on state route 640 (Monroe Church Road). Take the first left after turning onto Rt. 640 and follow this to the ramp.