



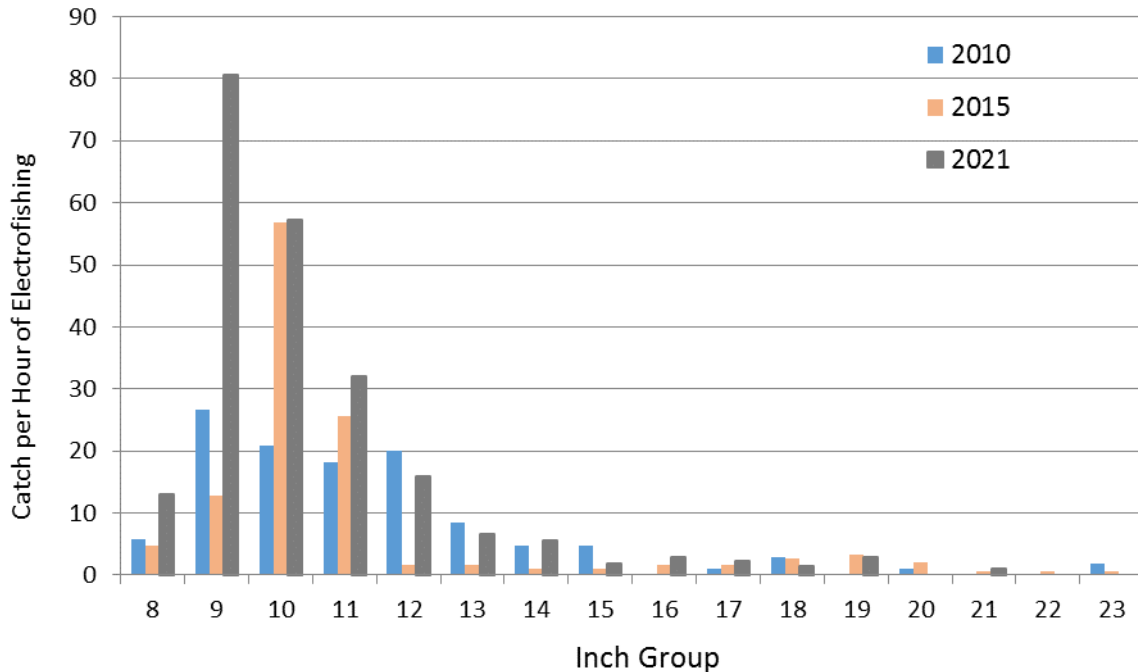
Mill Creek Reservoir (Amherst County) 2021 Management Report

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. Various facilities include picnic tables, toilets, boat ramp, and ample bank fishing areas. 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.

Largemouth Bass

This reservoir had a very stable largemouth bass population with good numbers of small and larger bass for many years. However in 2010, hydrilla (exotic aquatic plant) became established which eventually resulted in an unbalanced bass population by 2014. The density of young bass increased, due to hydrilla infestations, to a level that growth of these fish slowed dramatically. Growth, for five year old bass, dropped from an average of 14.2 inches in 2009 to 11.4 inches in 2015. Most bass stopped growing after reach 12-13 inches.

Efforts have been underway to reduce the number of smaller stunted bass to improve growth. There has been a small improvement in growth but there are still too many small bass. Largemouth bass up to 21 inches were collected in 2021, during DWR sampling, but the number of larger bass has declined over time due to poor growth. Largemouth bass size limits were changed in 2019 to a 14"-18" protected slot limit. The new size limit allows harvest of smaller bass up to 14" to help reduce the number of small fish. Any bass caught between 14" and 18" must be immediately released, bass less than 14" and larger than 18" can be harvested.



Largemouth bass collected during the 2010, 2015 and 2021 Mill Creek Reservoir electrofishing surveys.

Crappie

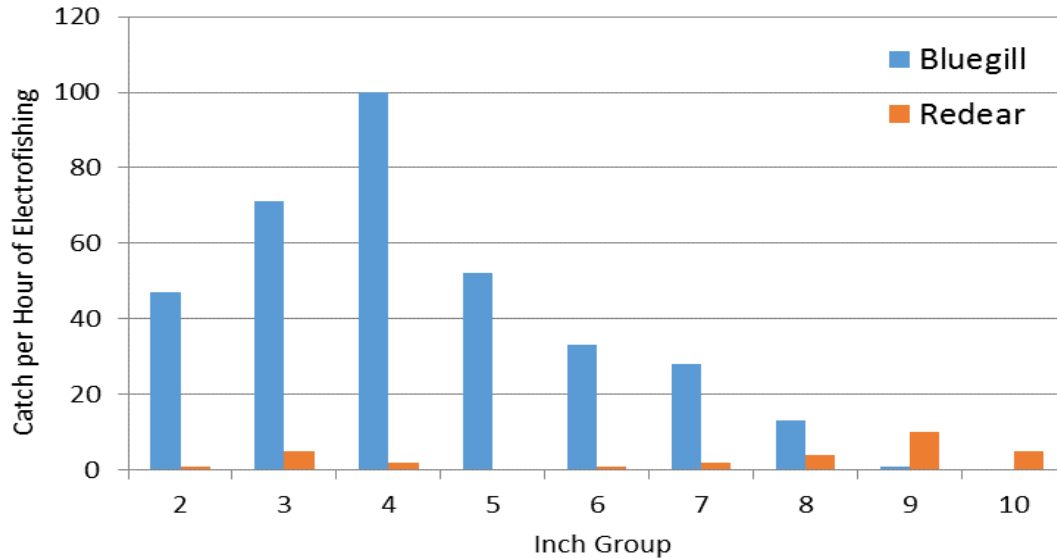
Crappie are one of the most prone species for erratic spawning success, which causes major population fluctuations in small lakes. The crappie population at Mill Creek Lake is no exception. One unfortunate aspect of varying reproductive success is that populations seldom remain stable; anglers have good crappie fishing some years and bad in others on the same lake. Size limits and creel restrictions used by managers to control fish populations cannot make up for years of poor reproduction. The 9-inch minimum size limit on crappie is to increase average size since most crappie in small lakes (including Mill Creek Lake) were harvested before they reach four years of age or 9 inches. The size limit helps extend good year classes an extra 1-2 years and improves in the sizes of crappie harvested. Most crappie at this reservoir usually does not exceed 10 inches.

Current crappie population is very low. The overabundant bass population has impacted the crappie population and it will take at least a few more years for the fishery to rebuild. However, even when the bass population is reduced, crappie will still need some good spawns for the population to rebuild and based on the information already mentioned, may take a few years.

Sunfish

The sunfish population is comprised of primarily bluegill but redear sunfish are also present and reach larger sizes. Bluegill sizes increased due to the overabundant bass population. High bass predation on small sunfish reduces sunfish competition and

improves their growth. Mill Creek Reservoir provides good sunfish fishing opportunities with high numbers of 6-7 inch sunfish and a limited number of 8-9 inchers for those sunfish enthusiasts.



Bluegill and Redear sunfish collected during the 2018 electrofishing survey.

Channel catfish are stocked every two years and provide a limited fishery. Yellow perch were first observed by DWR in 2008 but are in low abundance and are not making much of a contribution to the lake's overall fishery.

The reservoir can be accessed by taking route 60 to Lowesville Road (Rt. 778), turn right onto Turkey Mountain Road (Rt. 610), and bear left at the first intersection. Permits for night fishing are available through Amherst County at 434-946-9371.