2021 Walleye Fishing Forecast

Annually, in March fisheries biologists and hatchery production staff collect adult Walleye from the New River, Staunton River, and South Holston Reservoir for the production of fingerling Walleye to stock in selected lakes and rivers in Virginia. Walleye were spawned or hatched at Vic Thomas, Front Royal, King and Queen, and Buller Fish Cultural Stations, raised in ponds until they are about 1.5 inches long, when they were stocked in locations across the state. Additionally, female Walleye are crossed with male Sauger to produce the hybrid Saugeye. Saugeye perform well in some systems and are stocked with or in place of Walleye. In 2020, VDWR stocked approximately 1,025,283 Walleye fingerlings. Overall, 2020 was a good production year slightly above the long term annual production average for the past decade of 890,852 fingerlings statewide, see chart below. The following report offers Walleye sampling results and fishing forecasts on waters stocked with Walleye and Saugeye fingerlings. Anglers who want the challenge of catching a Walleye or Saugeye should fish one of the locations in this forecast.
Chart of annual Walleye/Saugeye production 2008-2020 in Virginia. Saugeye (cross between a Walleye and Sauger) were stocked in some waters in 2013-15 and 2019.
Southwest Virginia

Upper New River

In 2021, Walleye fishing on the Upper New River from Buck Dam downstream to Allisonia will be consistent with recent years due to annual stocking since 2014. In 2015 and 2017 to 2020, Walleye were stocked at multiple sites from Allisonia to Fries. As a result, annual Walleye catch rates in fisheries biologists’ spring electrofishing sampling increased from the low catch rates in 2014 and 2015.

Anglers fishing from Buck Dam to Claytor Dam will have to release 19 to 28 inch Walleye year round under the new size limit effective January 1, 2021 (explained below), but they should catch plenty of Walleye under 19 inches. In spring 2020 electrofishing samples, 58% of the Walleye collected were in the 14 to 19 inch size range.

Spring 2020 Electrofishing Walleye Size Ranges - Allisonia to Fries Dam
Anglers catch most Walleye in the Upper New River from February to April, but Walleye are also caught throughout the year. Crankbaits, jigs, and live minnows work well for catching them during the late winter and spring season. Ivanhoe, Foster Falls, and Allisonia are all good areas to fish.

When you fish for Walleye on the Upper New River, follow these size and creel limits:

1. **From Buck Dam downstream to Claytor Lake Dam:** *Year round: All Walleye 19 to 28 inches caught must be released unharmed.* Anglers may keep 2 Walleye per day less than 19 inches or over 28 inches. This regulation allows anglers to harvest a few smaller male Walleyes (typically less than 19 inches) or a trophy female Walleye (typically greater than 28 inches) while protecting the best spawning-size Walleyes in the population.

2. **From Fries Dam downstream to Buck Dam:** As of January 1, 2021, the statewide 18 inch minimum length limit, with a 5 per day creel limit for Walleye is in effect year round.

Biologists tagged Walleye in the Upper New River from 2008 to 2012 as part of a statewide Walleye research project. A cash reward of 20 dollars will still be offered for the return of these tags with catch information. Anglers can remove the tag by cutting through the monofilament attachment with scissors or a knife. The fish can then be released or harvested (the length limits listed above apply). Return the tag and catch information to the address printed on the tag. Catch information includes: date, time and general location of catch, "Was the fish harvested or released?", "Were you fishing for Walleye?", and "Did you catch other Walleye on this fishing trip?"
Anglers visiting South Holston Lake in 2021 should experience good Walleye fishing, although not as productive as in recent years. Sampling during 2020, including both electrofishing and gillnetting, exhibited a decline in catch, although a mostly desirable size structure remains with most Walleye collected during the fall gillnetting larger than 18 inches. Electrofishing catch rates during spring 2020 were 1 fish/hr. and below the long term average (7 fish/hr), while the 2020 gillnet catch rate decreased to 12 fish per net and was comparable to the long term average (12 fish/net night). Winter gillnet surveys provide a more complete picture of the Walleye population at South Holston Lake in terms of population densities, growth rates, and survival of stocked fingerlings. A reduced stocking in 2016 of 42,640 Walleye fingerlings due to hatchery production issues has resulted in a missing year class, which is now evident in our sampling efforts. As a result, anglers should still enjoy the current state of the fishery, and more recent stockings at the requested allocation will increase the population that recruits to the fishery over the next few years.

Anglers can expect average fishing during the spring spawning "run" on the South Fork Holston River due to a reduced lake population. Anglers congregate near the community of Alvarado from February through April to catch Walleyes on the spring spawning "run". During May and June anglers find Walleyes feeding along the shorelines of the lake. The post spawn top water bite in the lower lake will yield the best
Walleye fishing Virginia has to offer. When Walleyes move deeper during the summer months, successful anglers troll crawler harnesses on lead core line or use jigging spoons to reach the depths. Fall and winter fishing call for jigging spoons or jigs and live minnows.

Walleye growth is outstanding, so anglers should find plenty of fish larger than the minimum size of 18 inches. Most Walleye exceed 10 inches in their first year and measure 15 to 18 inches in their second year. Walleye generally reach 20 inches by their third year. Walleye growth slows after age four and males seldom exceed 24 or 25 inches in length, while females may reach lengths of 30 inches or more.

Sampling catch rates for Walleye in South Holston Reservoir 1999-2020. Blue columns represent spring electrofishing catch rates (fish per hour) and yellow columns represent fall gillnet catch rates (fish per net).
A summary of length at age data for Walleyes in South Holston Reservoir, based on fall gillnet data from 2019. Each circle represents an individual Walleye. For example, at age 1 some Walleyes are only 14 inches long and others are 17 inches long. Walleye are legally harvestable at 18 inches (457 mm).

**Hungry Mother Lake**

This 108-acre lake provides anglers with a great opportunity to catch Walleyes in a small lake setting. Located in Hungry Mother State Park, the lake is also a great destination for families. The Walleye population is stable or slightly increasing. There are good numbers of fish up to 20 inches and just enough larger ones to cause anglers to lose some sleep this summer. Walleyes up to 28 inches in length have been landed in recent years. April, May, and June are the three best months, with night fishing generally being more productive. Most anglers use artificial lures, but live shad, minnows, and night crawlers are also very effective.
Flannagan Reservoir

Fishing for Walleye on Flannagan Reservoir may continue to be somewhat challenging for anglers in 2021. VDWR biologists use the catch rate of Walleye in annual gill nets samples as a measure of the relative abundance of this species in the lake. The graph below shows the combined catch rate of Walleye and Saugeye (measured as the number collected per net set overnight) from 2012 – 2020. The catch rate in 2020 (6.4 /net night) represented a 47% decline in relative abundance compared to 2019 (12.0 /net night). This was the first time since 2012 that the Walleye catch rate for Flannagan Reservoir had dropped below the management target of 10 fish/net night. This decline can largely be attributed to missed stocking cohorts in 2016 and 2018 resulting from insufficient hatchery production. These cohorts would have been Age-4 and Age-2 in the 2020 sample. These two age classes have historically made up a substantial proportion of the sample so their absence is reflected in the lower relative abundance observed. Fortunately, Walleye were stocked in Flannagan Reservoir in 2019 and 2020, which should help the population to rebound over the next couple of years.

Walleye observed in the 2020 sample ranged from 13 – 25 inches in length with an average length of nearly 20 inches (see graph below). Seventy percent of the adult fish collected were ≥18 inches and 37% exceeded 20 inches in length. So although the overall number of Walleye and Saugeye are down, the majority of fish out there are of harvestable-size (18 inches or greater) and should provide anglers with a good opportunity for a fish dinner.
Many anglers target Walleye on the Cranesnest and Pound River arms of Flannagan Reservoir during the spawning run in March through April. However, anglers can also be very successful throwing top-water lures at night in May through early June, which coincides with the Alewife spawn. As the season progresses and water temperatures increase, the Walleye will move deeper in the lake. This will require anglers to switch tactics and troll nightcrawler harnesses and crankbaits

**South Central Virginia**

**Leesville Lake**

The 2021 fishing season for Walleye/Saugeye at Leesville Lake will continue to be challenging. Fishing has historically been poor due to sporadic stocking, poor survival of stocked Walleye, and high numbers of fish passing through the dam. This fishery routinely contains limited numbers of primarily larger fish, but the overall numbers of Walleye have been low compared to other Virginia Walleye lakes. Since 2013, Leesville Lake has received consistent stockings, which did improve the number of Walleye collected in DWR sampling. Additionally, Saugeye were stocked in 2013 – 2015 and these fish survived much better than their Walleye counterparts did. Physical differences between Walleye and Saugeye will not be noticeable for most anglers and habits for the two are very similar.

Beginning in 2016, legal size Walleye/Saugeye numbers increased, primarily due to Saugeye stocking and survival. However, the population declined dramatically in 2019. The recent decline is presumably due to high flows in the Roanoke River system flushing a high percentage of the Walleye/Saugeye from Leesville Lake into the Staunton River and no stocking of Saugeye (only Walleye) since 2015. Various data collections within Leesville and Staunton River have confirmed many Walleye/Saugeye of all sizes pass through the Leesville dam.
The bulk of the Walleye/Saugeye population is currently over 18 inches with a few Walleye in the 5-6 pound range. Walleye/Saugeye at Leesville have good growth rates and typically reach 18 inches between ages two and three. Approximately 63% of the Walleye/Saugeye population in the fall of 2020 were at least 18 inches in length and about 31% of the population was 22 inches or larger.

The most productive Walleye/Saugeye fishing is typically between Leesville Dam and mile marker 6. Night fishing in May and June, with floating or shallow running plugs cast to the shoreline, should not be overlooked. These fish often frequent shallow water during the night in spring and early summer. During daylight hours in the spring, fish the shoreline contour, targeting depths of 10-20 ft., then move deeper if those depths are unproductive. Walleye/Saugeye are very light sensitive and prefer dark or shaded habitat; consequently, these fish will frequent shallower depths if the water is shaded or stained, but will remain deeper during the day if the water is clear. Rock cliffs and steeper shorelines should be the most productive, with some coves also holding fish. As water temperatures increase in late spring and throughout the summer, fish continue moving deeper, seeking cooler water, and become most active during nighttime hours.

Leesville can be a challenge due to extreme daily water fluctuations and low densities, but anglers who spend time learning productive Walleye/Saugeye angling techniques for Leesville and concentrate on habitats that hold Walleye, may encounter a number of these elusive fish. Leesville Lake experiences very light fishing pressure and can provide solitude for anglers looking to avoid crowds and boating traffic.
Anglers continue to catch Walleyes in Philpott Reservoir, just not as many as they have in the past years. Walleye population numbers are down from previous years following three years of stocking at reduced rates. However, Philpott remains one of the better Walleye populations in Virginia. Fish population surveys from 2020 showed the majority of the catch in the 16-25 inch range. A total of 131 Walleye and Saugeye combined were collected in 2020 with an average total length of 19 inches. Seventy-five percent of the Walleyes collected in 2020 sampling efforts were 18 inches or longer. Anglers fishing Philpott for Walleye reported catching quality size fish in 2020. The following chart shows the sizes and numbers of Walleye and Saugeye biologists collected in 2020. The red bars on the chart indicate legal size (18”) fish. Walleye reach 18 inches at about 2.5 years of age and most male Walleye grow very slowly after reaching this size. Female Walleye typically grow well for another few years, with some achieving larger sizes.
Walleye population abundance in Philpott Reservoir is measured using two sampling methods: electrofishing in the spring and gillnets in the fall. The reason for using two sampling methods is that when compared to bass, Walleyes are less likely to be associated with shoreline habitat during early April. Because these daytime electrofishing catch rates may not always accurately represent the Walleye population, gillnets are also used. Electrofishing catch rates vary considerably from year to year, as seen in the chart below. Electrofishing catch rates for the May 2020 sample was (8/hr.) and the gillnet catch rate of 5 fish per net was average.
Sampling catch rates for Walleye in Philpott Reservoir 2001-2020. Blue columns represent spring electrofishing catch rates (fish per hour) and orange columns represent fall gillnet catch rates (fish per net).

Skilled anglers, who spend time learning effective techniques for Walleye and find areas that are productive, should have successful fishing trips. Top-water night fishing is very popular and productive during the Alewife spawn in May and June. By late June, Walleye start moving into deeper water and are caught on nightcrawler harnesses and plugs trolled in deeper water. As water temperatures increase throughout the summer, Walleye continue to move deeper seeking cooler water. Anglers must fish deeper throughout the summer or fish at night to capitalize on this fishery. Catching a few Walleye per outing is considered good, however many anglers in 2020 reported difficulty location and catching several Walleye per trip. Perhaps 2021 will be more productive for Walleye anglers.
Staunton River

Walleye and Saugeye (Walleye/Sauger hybrid) fishing has really taken off in the Staunton River, especially from Leesville dam to Altavista. Quality Walleye are now consistently being caught and sampled all the way to Brookneal. Fingerling and fry stocking into the Staunton historically resulted in limited success. Fortunately, recent stockings of Walleye and Saugeye into Leesville Reservoir and the river have been much more successful and anglers are reaping the rewards. The first figure below shows how VDWR sampling success, measured by the number of fish collected per hour (CPUE), with fall electrofishing surveys has improved over time. Saugeye, which were stocked for three years when Walleye were unavailable, dominated the 2015 sample but now Walleye densities are improving and anglers are seeing good creels of Walleye.

![WAE/SAE Staunton](chart.png)

The second figure shows the lengths and numbers of Walleye and Saugeye sampled in fall electrofishing surveys. Saugeye dominated the big fish catch but Walleye are quickly catching up. The largest fish sampled in 2020 was a 24-inch Saugeye but several 18- and 19-inch Walleye were collected and will provide excellent action for those anglers looking for a late winter, early spring fishery. Remember that the legal minimum length limit is 18 inches and five fish can be harvested per day. For information on catching Walleye in the Staunton please view our video at the following link,

https://dwr.virginia.gov/blog/staunton-river-Walleye-fishing/

Another benefit of the stockings into Leesville and the Staunton River is a boost in the Walleye fishery at Kerr Reservoir. While they’re still hard to target in this 50,000 acre reservoir, the opportunity to catch Walleye is improving each year. Good Walleye numbers are seen mid-lake around Goat Island in the fall and winter months but uplake fishing should be good in early spring.
Exploitation Study

A tag reward study is being performed in 2020, 2021 and likely 2022 to assess the extent of angler exploitation of the Walleye/Saugeye fishery. Look for signs posted at public fishing ramps for additional information and return the tags if you are lucky enough to catch a tagged fish. It is very important information that will benefit the fishery! Please return tags to:

VDWR – Reward Program
107 Foxwood Drive
Farmville, VA 23901
In 2020, 260 Walleye and 40 Saugeye were tagged for a total of 300 reward tags. Of those 300, 50 were released into Leesville Lake to determine fishing pressure in the Lake. The third figure shows the sizes of fish tagged in our winter/spring tagging field season. 16-18 inch Walleye dominated the catch in 2020 so anglers can expect a high density of legal fish in the river. Thirty tags were returned in 2020 for an exploitation or catch rate of 10%. Of those thirty fish caught only four were harvested. These initial results could indicate a couple of things. One, the population of Walleye and Saugeye in the Staunton River is very large and thus few tagged fish are captured. Two, this is a developing fishery that has not received a lot of effort yet. It is very likely that it is a combination of the two theories. Tagging will commence winter 2021 with a goal of 300 additional fish being tagged in the river.
Northern Virginia

Shenandoah River

Currently Walleye can be found in the Shenandoah River from Warren Dam in Front Royal downstream beyond the Virginia / West Virginia Stateline. Although they are not as numerous in the Shenandoah as they are in other rivers they are increasing in number and can reach lengths exceeding 25 inches. The main source of the population prior to the annual stocking program came from stocking 285,000 fry in 2007. In the spring 2014 VDWR began an annual stocking program of walleye fry in the Shenandoah River to supplement the natural population and increase the number of walleye present for anglers to target. Recent sampling indicated survival of the 2014 and 2015 stockings. However, Walleye were not stocked in 2016 or 2017 due to an unfortunate lack of production in hatcheries. Stocking resumed in 2018, 2019 and 2020. Interviews with anglers indicate the 2018 stocking has recruited to the fishery nicely. DWR electrofishing samples in January of 2021 support these interviews and found fish from the 2014 and 2015 stocking at 24+ inches. Anglers should see increased catch rates as the 2019 stocked fish begin to recruit to catchable size in 2021. Average size of the 52 Walleye collected in January of 2021 was approximately 22 inches. The largest was 29 inches. The heaviest fish collected during DWR 2021 winter sampling was 10 lbs. 14 oz. Most fish sampled were of legal harvest size or greater. Future stockings are planned for the Shenandoah River which should further increase the population numbers to offer an acceptable walleye fishery. Anglers fishing for walleye on the Shenandoah River should focus their efforts in the deeper pools during the daylight hours. Walleye will move out of the deeper pools into shallow bedrock ledge areas to feed during night hours. There are typically high numbers present between Warren Dam and Morgan’s Ford Access from January through March.
Lake Brittle

Lake Brittle’s Walleye population has begun recovering from a downtrend after stocking at a higher rate the previous two years. Electrofishing catch rates increased to 28 fish/hour in 2020 from a low of 5 fish/hour in 2019. The high catch rate was mainly due to an abundance of young fish stocked in 2019. Stocking rates of Walleye had historically been consistent at 100/acre, however due to a declining population it was increased to 200/acre in 2019 and 2020. The reason for the decline in the adult population was likely due to poor juvenile survival from 2014 through 2017. A variety of environmental issues could have contributed to the poor survival including lake drawdowns during the dam and spillway renovation project, the emergence of dense Hydrilla in the lake, and prolonged high/turbid water conditions in the lake due to increased stormwater runoff. Biologists are working to mitigate some of the issues leading to the poor survival and are hopeful that survival of the juvenile stocked in 2020 and beyond will help the lake rebound from the current low population. The lake still provides a suitable population of Walleye and has some of the best bank and boat access to fish for Walleye in Northern Virginia. During the 2020 electrofishing surveys, only 12% of Walleye collected measured the harvestable size of 18 inches, however the stronger year classes of 2019 and 2020 will provide improved fishing and size structure for the future. An 18-inch minimum/5 per day limit is in effect at Lake Brittle.
Burke Lake is located in Fairfax County – just a stone’s throw from Washington D.C. Anglers in pursuit of Walleye can expect to find most fish in the 2 to 3 pound range, with some fish as large as 8 pounds. Electrofishing catch rates were 33 fish/hour in 2020 which was a slight decrease from the 37 fish/hour in 2019, however well above the goal of 10/hour for small impoundments. Spring 2020 surveys resulted in 42% of Walleye being harvestable with a 15.4” average. An 18-inch minimum/5 per day limit is in place at Burke.
Lake Orange

Anglers hoping to catch decent Walleye should look no further than Lake Orange, occasionally catching fish over 5 pounds. Electrofishing catch rates were 17 fish/hour in 2020 which increased from the 9 fish/hour in 2019. Spring 2020 surveys resulted in 29% of Walleye being harvestable with a 14.6” average. Most Walleye are caught during the late spring and early summer by anglers fishing for bass, although a few anglers do specifically fish for them at this location. Anglers should note that an 18-inch minimum/5 per day limit exists at Lake Orange.
Biologists will continue to monitor the Walleye populations at Lake Brittle, Burke Lake, and Lake Orange again in 2021 as part of a study to evaluate angler catch, exploitation and variable stocking rates. A cash reward of $20 is offered for the return of the tag and catch information. Anglers can remove the tag by cutting through the monofilament attachment with a knife or scissors. The fish can then be released or harvested. Return the tag and catch information to the address printed on the tag. Catch information includes: date; general location of catch; “Was the fish harvested or released?”; “Were you fishing for Walleye?” and “Did you catch any other Walleye on this fishing trip?”

**Eastern Virginia**

**Little Creek Reservoir**

Little Creek Reservoir is a 947-acre water supply impoundment owned by the City of Newport News located within James City County near the Town of Toano, VA. The reservoir provides a good opportunity for anglers to fish for Walleye and Saugeye. James City County Parks & Recreation has a great park that provides plenty of access to the reservoir. The Walleye population continues to provide dedicated anglers a productive chance at catching 4 to 6-pound fish. Little Creek Reservoir typically receives 94,700 Walleye fingerlings each May, with fish stocked in a pelagic manner to allow for greater dispersal. The stocking rate of 100 fingerlings/acre over the course of nine years provided the basis for a strong Walleye population. The reservoir did not receive any Walleye fingerlings in 2019 due to hatchery production limitations and a change in allocation to other waters in Region 1. The 2020 stocking efforts consisted of Walleye fry in conjunction with a limited abundance of Walleye fingerlings. The 97,000 Saugeye fingerlings stocked in 2014 are still providing anglers some action. Angler catch rates of Saugeye were high during 2016 and 2017, but have shown a decline over the last couple of years. Angler reports revealed several 5-pound plus Saugeye caught in 2020. The largest reported Saugeye weighed in at 6.5 pounds, which would have been a new state record. The large schools of blueback herring, that comprise the majority of the forage base, may make fishing more difficult at various times of the year.

One of the keys to fishing on Little Creek Reservoir is to concentrate on the deeper edges in and around the numerous points that line the shoreline. Anglers that fished the reservoir in 2020 had to adjust their fishing techniques to some extent with the decreased water pool. Newport News Waterworks had to draw the reservoir down roughly 10 feet in preparation for repair work on the dam. There is no set timeline on when the repairs will be completed, as anglers should expect the water to be down at least another year or possibly two. The drawdown will allow anglers to scout out the various sunken islands, tapered points, and sand bars for future reference. A trusty fish finder will allow for the detection of blueback herring schools as well as the thermocline depth during the summer months. Anglers that fish Little Creek Reservoir for the first time should be aware that the reservoir is trolling motor use only and should plan their trip accordingly. Windy days on Little Creek Reservoir have a way of eating through charged batteries. Some of the best action has come from anglers that slow-troll their baits in the 17 to 20 foot depth range within the western half of the reservoir. Trolled nightcrawlers can be a very productive pattern for anglers to try during the warmer weather months. Dedicated anglers will catch their fair share of Walleye surprisingly during the summer
months if they are able to keep their baits in the Walleye strike zone. Anglers jigging Silver Buddy Blade Baits along with Rapala Jigging Raps can catch some quality Walleye from deep water during the cold-water months as well as during the summer. The transition months of fall can create some difficulties in finding Walleye, as the plentiful schools of baitfish appear to scatter to various creek arms.

Walleye will congregate along the southern shoreline of the reservoir in their classic pre-spawn pattern from early March to early April. There are no large tributaries that flow into Little Creek Reservoir, so the Walleye will target various rock shelves in their attempt to spawn. DWR biologists continue to tag Walleye and Saugeye collected from Little Creek Reservoir as part of the statewide tagging study. The 2019 and 2020 daytime surveys provided a limited abundance of newly tagged fish as nighttime spring surveys were not conducted. Plans are in the works to conduct night electrofishing surveys in 2021 to assess the Walleye population. Anglers that catch a reward tag can receive a $20 reward if the tag is returned to the Region 1 DWR office with some catch information. Reward tags can be cut off any under-sized fish that may measure less than the minimum size limit of 18 inches. The creel limit for Walleye and Saugeye is 5 fish/person/day in aggregate.

**Lake Chesdin**

The Walleye and Saugeye populations within Lake Chesdin are highly dependent on DWR stocking efforts. Lake Chesdin has historically been listed as a Diversity Water on the DWR Walleye Management Plan. The lake receives Walleye stockings when there is a surplus of produced fish within the DWR hatchery system. Conditions were favorable in 2013 and 2014 to allow for the stocking of both Saugeye and Walleye fingerlings. The requisition of 125,000 fingerlings was actually surpassed in 2015 when the hatchery brought 144,661 Walleye fingerlings to the lake. The 2015 Walleye year class should still
provide anglers with decent action. These consecutive stocking efforts along with additional stockings conducted prior to 2013 have created a respectable fishery. Pelagic stockings of the Walleye and Saugeye fingerlings have been successful in spreading the fish out in this 3,100 acre impoundment. The lake received another stocking of Saugeye fingerlings in 2019 after a few years of missed stockings. Stocking efforts allowed for the introduction of roughly 90,000 Saugeye fingerlings. It did not take too long for anglers to start catching this latest batch of Saugeye as reports cycled in from several crappie anglers reporting their catch of Saugeye from various locations on the lake. The 2020 fish stocking allocation consisted of two batches of Walleye fingerlings that were stocked in a pelagic manner.

The fall surveys of 2020 revealed a high abundance of Saugeye and the decent presence of Walleye. Collected Saugeye from the 2019 stocking showed a wide range of growth with a size distribution from 12 to 18 inches. The average length of collected 2019-year class Saugeye measured 14.2 inches. From all indications, these Saugeye are off to a good start with some fish taking full advantage of the forage base. The survey revealed some trophy fish potential with the collection of two older Saugeye that weighed 7.14 and 7.22 pounds. The largest collected Walleye weighed in at 7.68 pounds. On another positive side note, age and growth analysis provided some proof of natural Walleye reproduction within the system with a handful of fish from the 2018 year class, which was a year the lake was not stocked.

Lake Chesdin Saugeye of 7.14 pounds collected December 2020

The gizzard shad population within Lake Chesdin is extremely abundant with a high proportion of fish in the 5 to 8-inch range. Lake Chesdin can be a difficult lake to fish due to the surplus of available forage. Anglers should not get too discouraged if they
can’t find a productive pattern that works the first few times out on the lake. Anglers are encouraged to target these schools of shad as you never know when a Walleye or Saugeye will strike a properly presented lure or bait. DWR biologists began tagging collected Walleye and Saugeye from Lake Chesdin in 2015 as part of the statewide tagging program. Anglers that are able to catch a Walleye or Saugeye should inspect the fish to see if there is a reward tag located just below the dorsal fin on the left side of the fish's body. Anglers should contact the DWR Region 1 office to report collected reward tags if they would like to receive a $20 reward check. Spring movements have shown a large proportion of the population migrating toward the upper reaches of the lake along the old river channel. Late fall into early winter has the majority of the Walleye and Saugeye congregating toward the lower third of the lake as they follow the schools of shad. The minimum size limit for Walleye and Saugeye is 18 inches with a daily creel limit of 5 fish/person in aggregate. Anglers familiar with the Walleye and Saugeye fishing action on Lake Chesdin are most likely aware of the fishable population below the dam. The Walleye and Saugeye fishing on the Appomattox River below Brasfield Dam has been yielding some positive results over the last few years from fish that managed to be washed over the dam. With continued stockings of the lake, there is a fair to decent chance that the fishing action in the lower Appomattox River will improve.

**Tagging Studies**

Walleye tagging studies are ongoing in several of the Walleye waters mentioned above and offer valuable information to fisheries biologists and administrators about how anglers use the Walleye resources the Commonwealth invests in. If you catch a tagged Walleye send it in to the address on the tag and VDWR will send you a $20 reward. Please be patient as it takes time to process the reward payment. Thank you for your part in helping VDWR evaluate our Walleye fisheries.
For more information, contact the following offices:

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<th>Location</th>
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<td>Leesville &amp; Philpott Reservoirs</td>
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