



2023 Walleye Fishing Forecast



In late February and March fisheries biologists and hatchery staff collect adult Walleye from the New River, Staunton River, and South Holston Reservoir to produce fingerling Walleye to stock in selected lakes and rivers in Virginia. Walleye spawned or hatched at Vic Thomas, Front Royal, King and Queen, and Buller Fish Cultural Stations, are raised in ponds until they are about 1.5 to 2 inches in length. Ponds are harvested and walleye fingerlings are 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 2022, VDWR stocked approximately 1,166,345 Walleye or Saugeye fingerlings. Overall, in 2022 hatchery production was very good and should lead to good Walleye fishing in 2023. The following table lists some of the lakes and rivers stocked and offers a rating of the population as “Excellent” (an abundant population), “Good” (decent numbers), or “Fair” (a few). For those anglers who want more in depth information on a particular water what follows are specific reports of Walleye sampling results and fishing details for the individual waters listed in the table. Anglers who want the challenge of catching a Walleye or Saugeye should fish one of the locations in this forecast.

Region	Water	Rating
Southwest Virginia	Flannagan Reservoir	Excellent
	South Holston Reservoir	Excellent
	Hungry Mother Lake	Good
	New River	Excellent
South Central Virginia	Staunton River	Excellent
	Leesville Lake	Fair
	Philpott Reservoir	Good
Northern Virginia	Lake Brittle	Good
	Burke Lake	Good
	Lake Orange	Fair
	Shenandoah River	Good
Eastern Virginia	Little Creek Reservoir	Good
	Lake Chesdin	Excellent

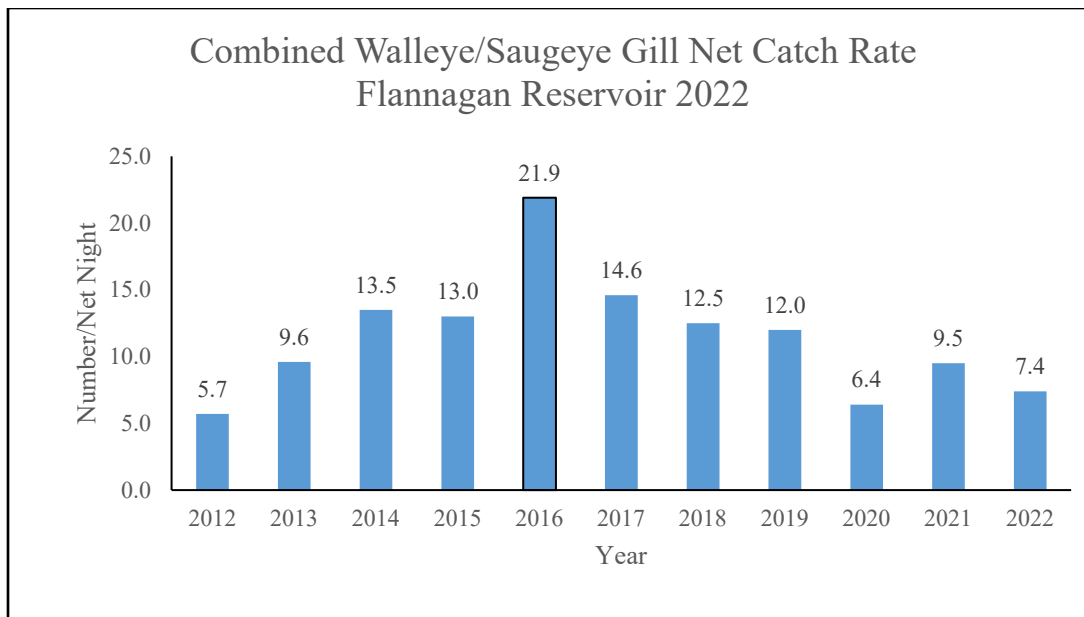


Southwest Virginia

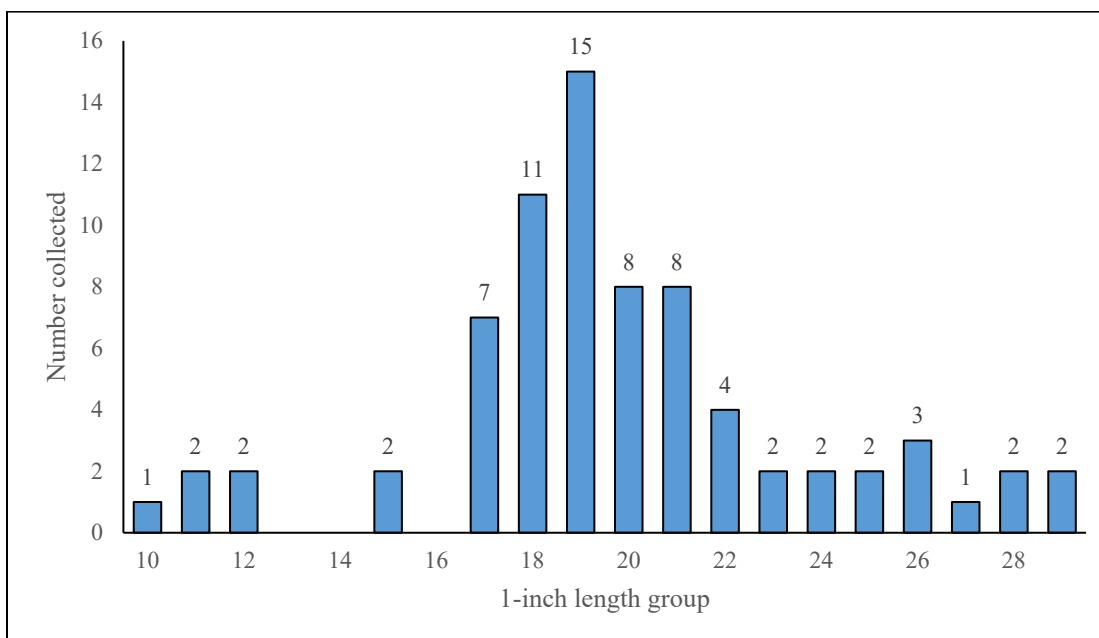


Flannagan Reservoir

Fishing for Walleye on Flannagan Reservoir may continue to be somewhat challenging for anglers in 2023. 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 – 2022. The catch rate in 2022 (7.4 /net night) represented a 22% decline in relative abundance compared to 2021 (9.5 /net night). It is also a 36% decline from the 10-year average (11.5 /net night). This was the third time since 2012 Walleye catch rates dropped below the management target of 10/net night. This decline can largely be attributed to missed stocking cohorts in 2016 and 2018 resulting from insufficient hatchery production. Flannagan also received a reduced stocking rate in 2019 and 2021 due to some of the same issues. These age classes have historically made up a substantial proportion of the sample, so their absence is reflected in the lower relative abundance observed. Fortunately, the full allocation of Walleye was stocked in Flannagan Reservoir in 2020. In 2022 Flannagan received a full allocation of Walleye with the addition of Saugeye. Saugeye have not been stocked in the lake since 2013 and serve as an extra stocking to help bolster the fishery. The stockings in 2020 and 2022 should help the population to rebound over the next couple of years.



Walleye observed in the 2022 sample ranged from 10 – 29 inches in length with an average length of 19 inches (see graph below). Ninety-two percent of the adult fish collected were ≥ 18 inches and 38% exceeded 20 inches in length. So, although the overall number of Walleye and Saugeye are down, most fish out there are of harvestable-size (18 inches or greater) and should provide anglers with a good opportunity.



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.

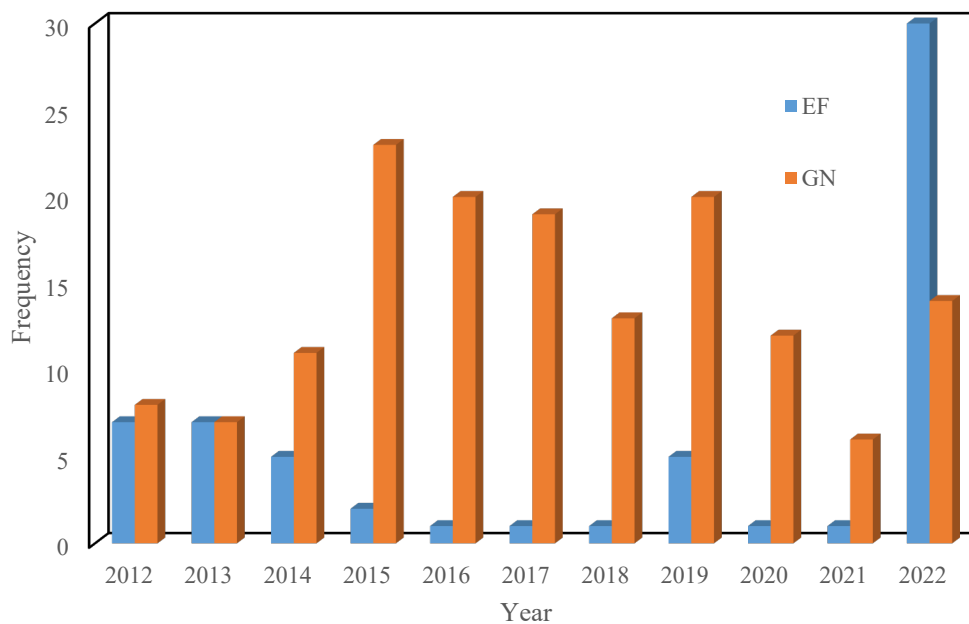
South Holston Reservoir

Anglers visiting South Holston Lake in 2023 should experience good Walleye fishing, as the population is rebounding over declines in recent years. Sampling during 2022, including both electrofishing and gillnetting, exhibited an increase in catch with a mostly desirable size structure with most Walleye collected during the fall gillnetting larger than 18 inches. Electrofishing catch rates during spring 2022 were 30 fish/hr. and well above the long-term average (7 fish/hr), while the 2022 gillnet catch rate increased to 14 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. However, 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.

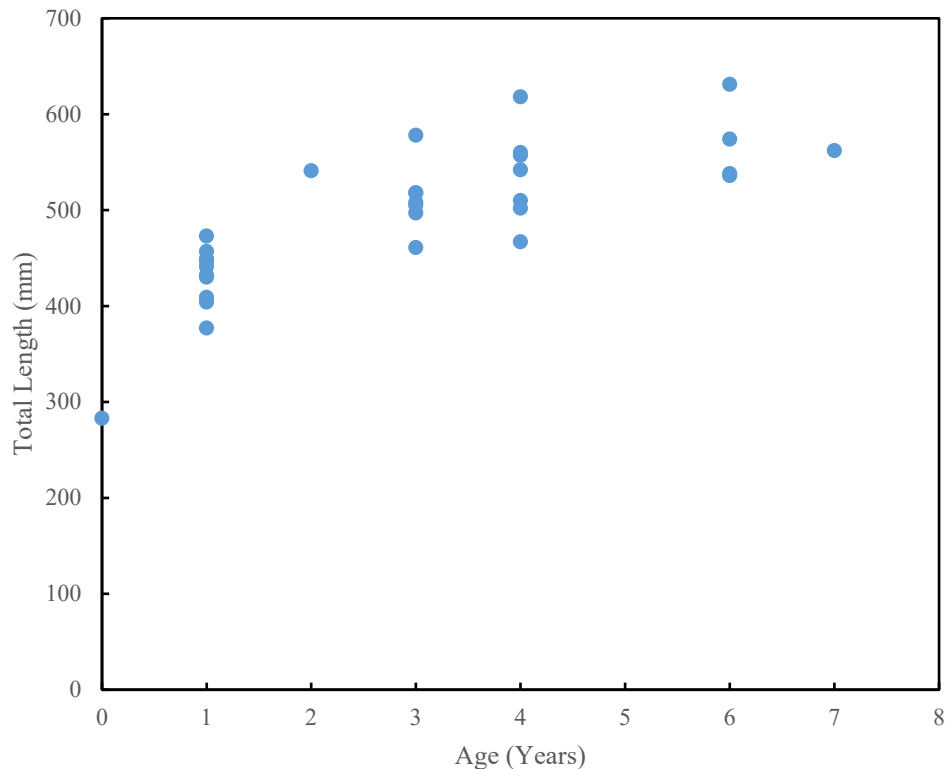
Anglers can expect average fishing during the spring spawning "run" on the South Fork Holston River due to a reduced lake population. Anglers congregate near the community of Alvarado from February through April to catch Walleyes on the spring spawning "run". During May and June anglers find Walleyes 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.

South Holston Lake - Walleye



Sampling catch rates for Walleye in South Holston Reservoir 2012-2022. Blue columns represent spring electrofishing catch rates (fish per hour) and orange 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 2021. 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).

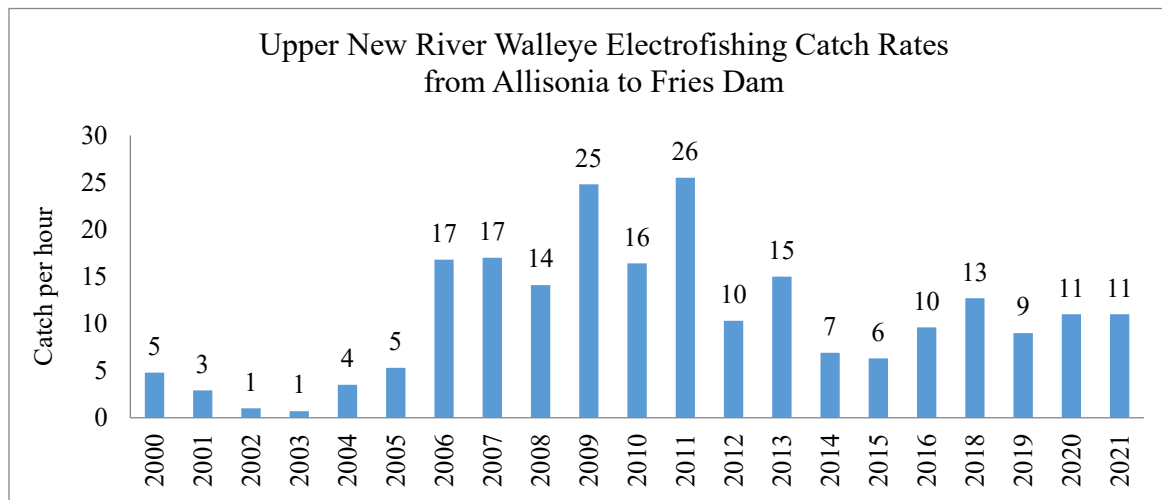
Hungry Mother Lake

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.

Upper New River

In 2023, Walleye fishing on the Upper New River from Fries Dam downstream to Allisonia will be consistent with recent years due to annual stocking since 2014. In 2015, 2017, 2021 and 2022 Walleye were stocked at multiple sites from Allisonia to Fries. As a

result, annual Walleye catch rates in fisheries biologists' spring electrofishing surveys increased from the low catch rates recorded in 2014 and 2015.



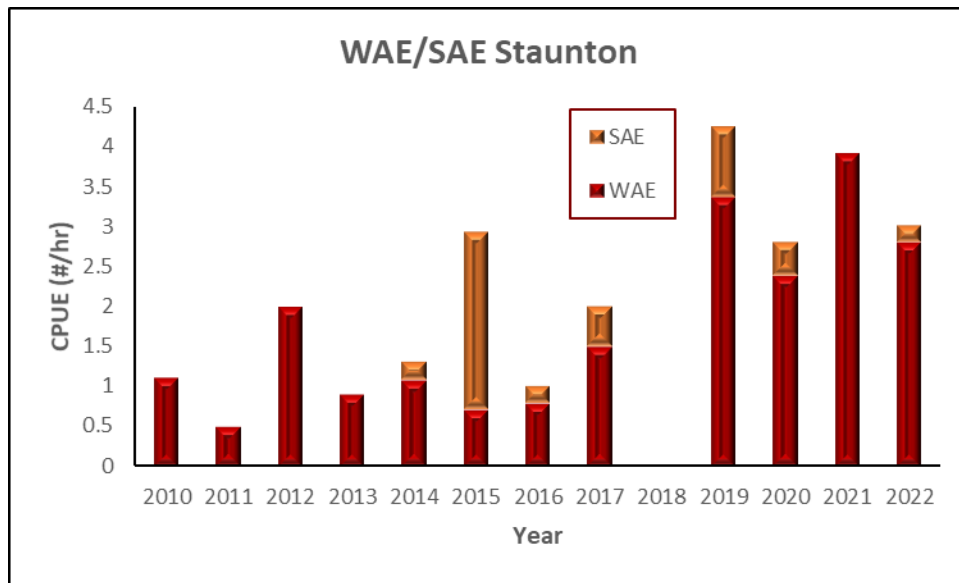
Anglers fishing from Fries Dam to Claytor Dam will have to return 19-to-28-inch Walleye year-round under the new size limit effective January 1, 2023. All Walleye 19 to 28 inches caught must be released unharmed. Anglers may keep 2 Walleye per day less than 19 inches or over 28 inches. This regulation 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. 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. Anglers have recently reported catching trophy walleye.



South Central Virginia

Staunton River

Walleye 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 stockings into the Staunton historically resulted in limited success. Fortunately, recent stockings of Walleye 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, a Walleye x Sauger hybrid, 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. Few Saugeye remain in the population but two were collected in fall electrofishing samples in the Staunton in 2022.

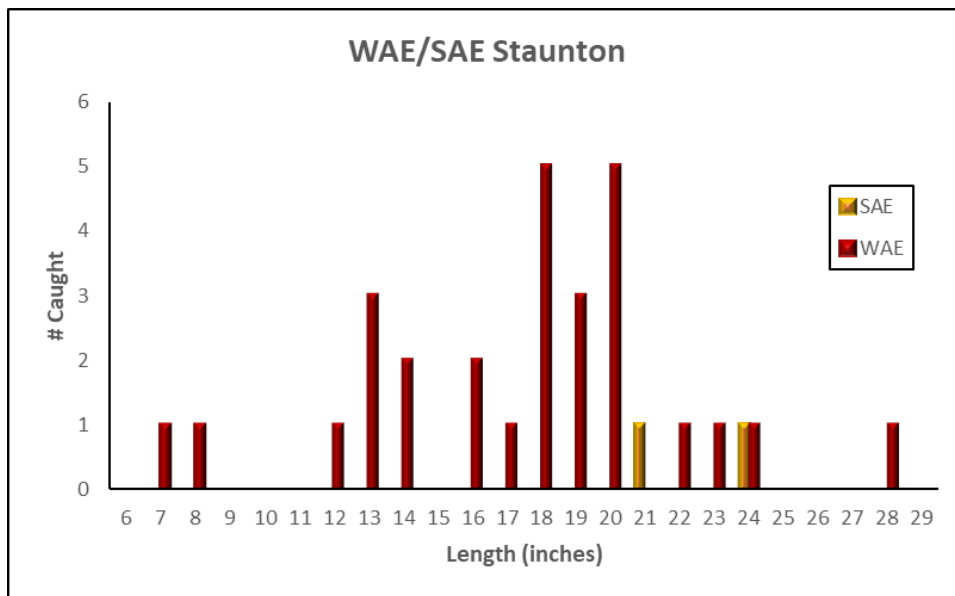


The second figure shows the lengths and numbers of Walleye and Saugeye sampled in fall electrofishing surveys. The largest fish sampled in 2022 was a 28-inch Walleye. Several 18 to 20-inch Walleye were collected and will provide excellent action for those anglers looking for a late winter, early spring 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 and 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 uptake fishing should be good in early spring.

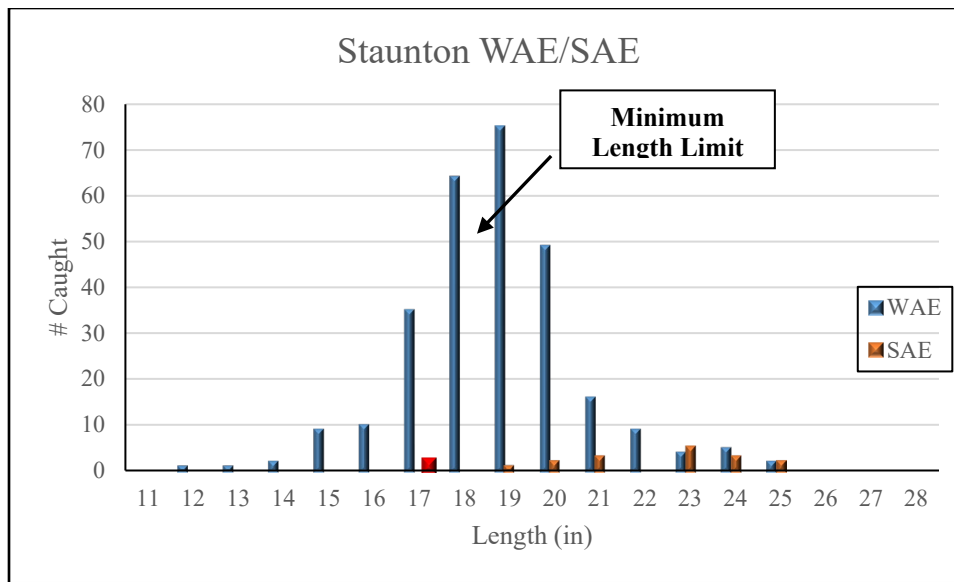


Exploitation Study

A tag reward study is being performed in 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 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 reservoir. 16–18-inch Walleye dominated the catch in 2020 and 2021 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% (corrected to 15% due to non-reporting bias). Again in 2021, 300 additional tags were placed in Walleye (290) and Saugeye (10) with 50 again going into Leesville Lake. Forty tags were returned in 2021 for an exploitation rate of 13% (corrected to 19% due to non-reporting bias). As in 2020 and 2021, 300 tags were placed in Walleye (282) and Saugeye (18) with 50 going into Leesville Lake in 2022. Fourteen tags were returned in 2022 for an exploitation rate of 5% (corrected to 6% due to non-reporting bias). These initial results indicate that this is a developing fishery that has seen an increase in success in the first two years of the study but a decline in 2022. Tagging will commence and likely conclude winter 2023 with a goal of 300 additional fish being tagged in the river. This fourth year of the study will reveal if the fishing pressure increases as it did the first two years of the study or continues to decline as it did in 2022. The final figure shows the size and density of Walleye and Saugeye tagged in 2022.

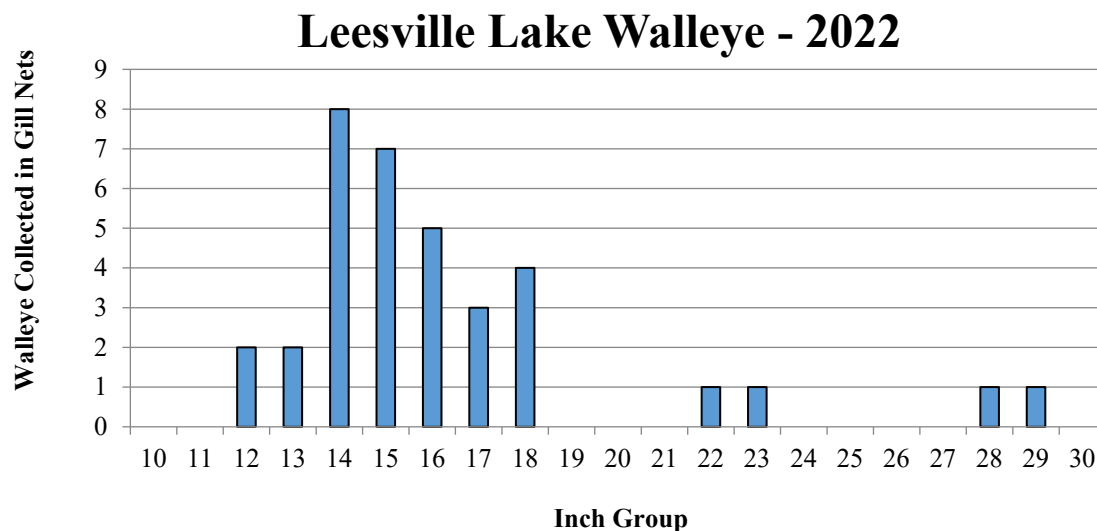


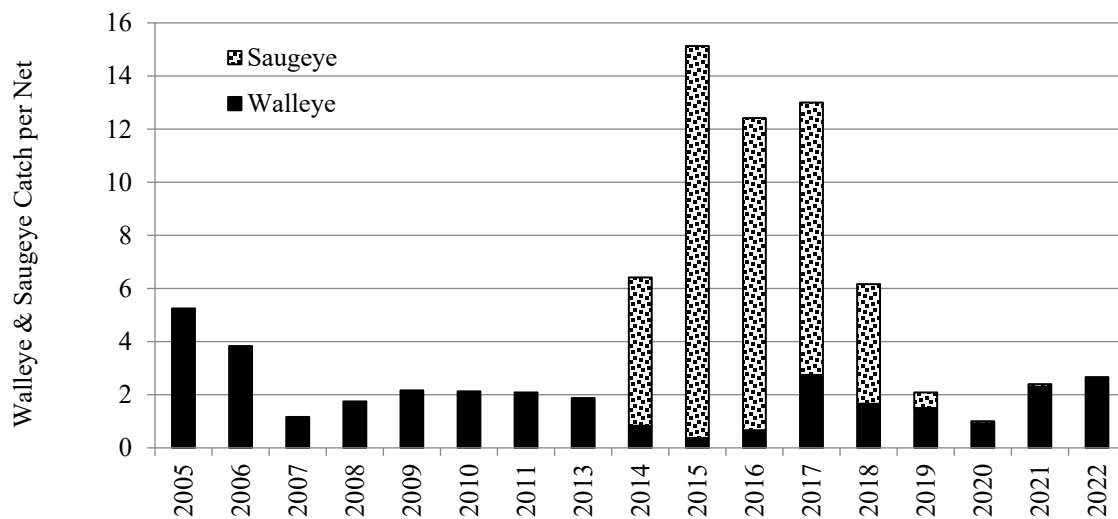
The Staunton River provides ample opportunity for anglers and paddlers alike. Enjoy this quality Walleye fishery!

Leesville Lake

The 2022 fishing season for Walleye at Leesville Lake will continue to be challenging. Fishing has historically been poor due to low retention of stocked Walleye in the lake, as most Walleye eventually pass through the Leesville dam and into the Staunton River. Various data collections within Leesville Lake and the Staunton River confirm that many Walleyes, regardless of size, pass through the Leesville Lake dam. Saugeye were stocked in 2013-2015 but only Walleye have been stocked since 2016 to preserve the Staunton River Walleye population for hatchery brood stock collections.

This fishery usually contains limited numbers of primarily larger fish with overall numbers of Walleyes remaining lower than most other Virginia Walleye lakes. However, the 2021-year class was better than average for Leesville Lake and those fish will be primarily 16-19 inches in 2023. More 6-month-old walleyes were collected in the fall of 2021 than any other fall sample (since 2005) and were also abundant in 2022 at 1½ years old, so this good year class should improve fishing for the next couple of years. Walleye at Leesville have good growth rates and typically reach 18 inches between ages two and three.





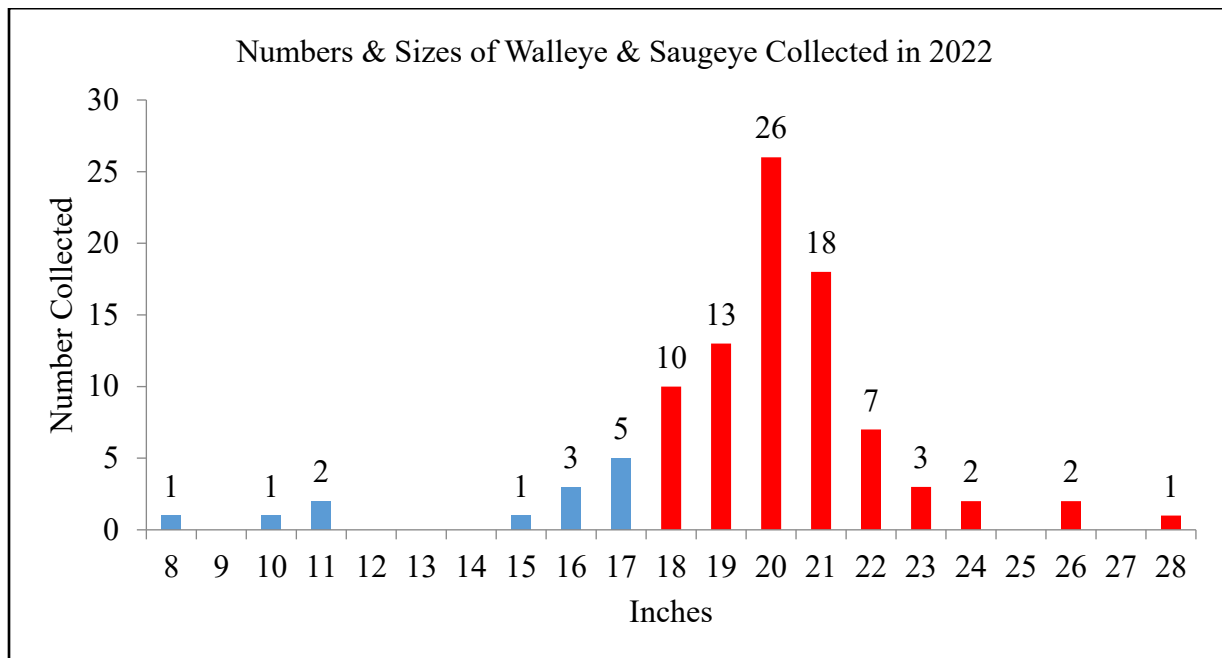
The most productive Walleye fishing is typically between Leesville Dam and mile marker 6. Night fishing in May and June, with floating or shallow running plugs cast to the shoreline, should not be overlooked. These fish often frequent shallow water during the night in spring and early summer. During daylight hours in the spring, fish the shoreline contour, targeting depths of 10-20 ft., then move deeper if those depths are unproductive. Walleye 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 angling techniques for Leesville and concentrate on habitats that hold Walleye, may encounter some of these elusive fish. Leesville Lake experiences very light fishing pressure and can provide solitude for anglers looking to avoid crowds and boating traffic.

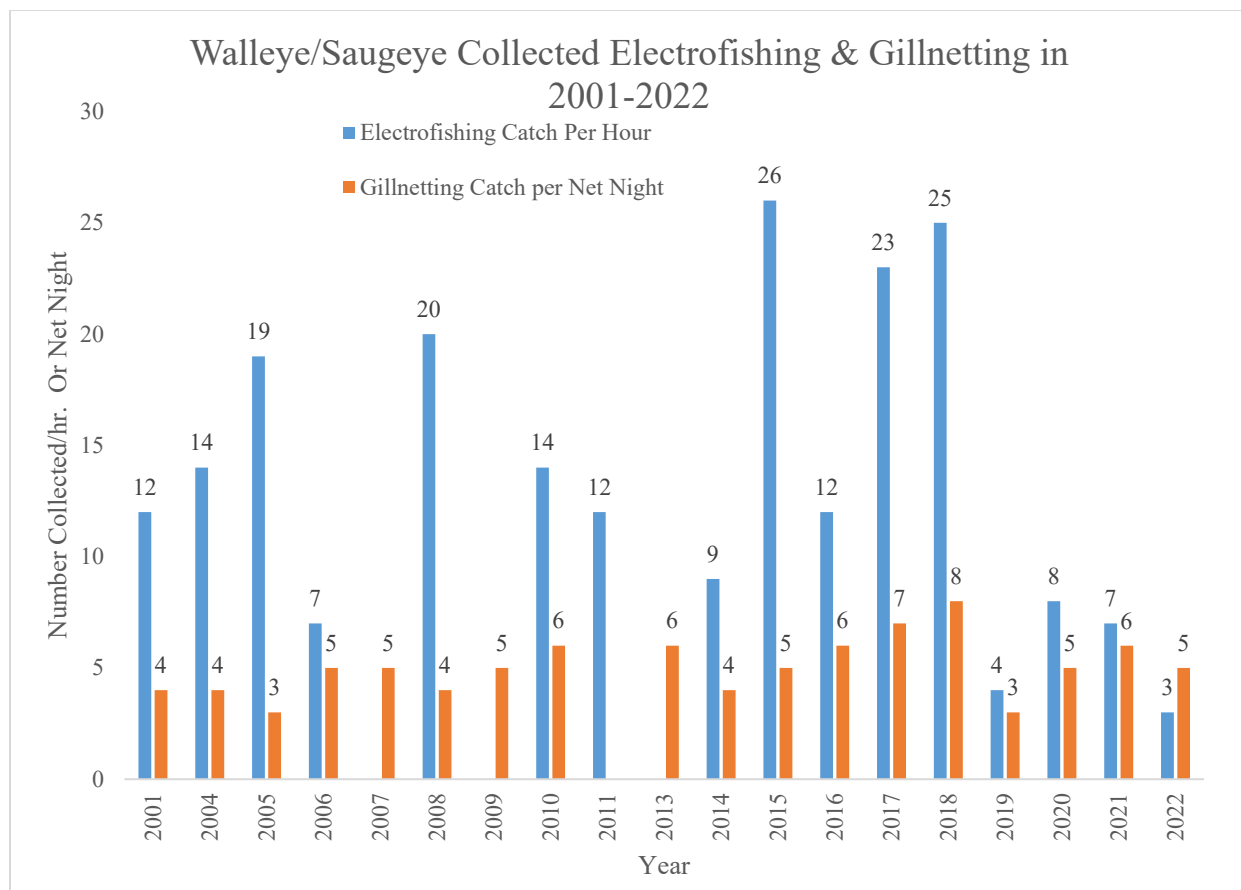
Philpott Reservoir



Walleye anglers reported catching fewer Walleyes in Philpott Reservoir in 2022 when compared to years past. This is likely due to lower Walleye population numbers following four years (2016-2019) of reduced stocking numbers. However, there are still decent numbers and sizes of Walleye in Philpott, and it remains one of the better Walleye populations in Virginia. Fish population surveys from 2022 showed that most of the catch is in the 17–23-inch range. A total of 95 Walleye and Saugeye combined were collected in 2022 with an average total length of 19 inches (2-2.5 pounds). Seventy-nine percent of the Walleyes collected in 2022 sampling efforts were 18 inches or longer. Anglers who caught walleye fishing Philpott in 2022 reported catching quality size fish. The following chart shows the sizes and numbers of Walleye and Saugeye biologists collected in 2022. The red bars on the chart indicate legal size (18”) fish. Walleye reach 18 inches at about 2½ 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 this daytime electrofishing catch rate 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 2022 sample was (3/hr.) and the gillnet catch rate of 5 fish per net was average.



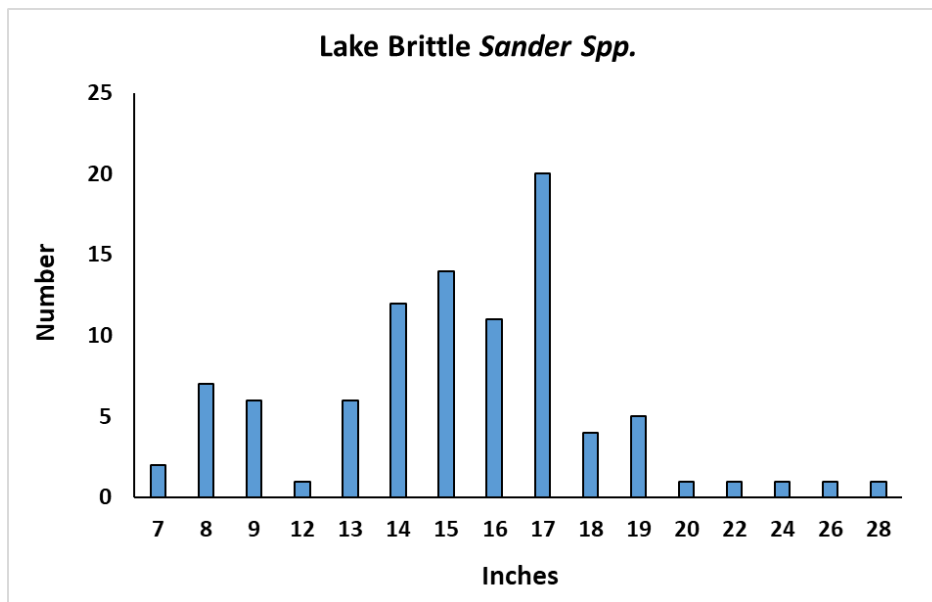
Skilled anglers, who spend time learning effective techniques for Walleye and find areas that are productive, should have successful fishing trips. Top-water night fishing is very popular and productive during the Alewife spawn in May and June. By late June, Walleye start moving into deeper water and 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 Walleyes per outing is considered good, however, some reports from anglers in 2022 reported difficulty locating and catching a few Walleyes per trip, so it may take more time and skill in 2023 to boat walleye.

Northern Virginia

Lake Brittle

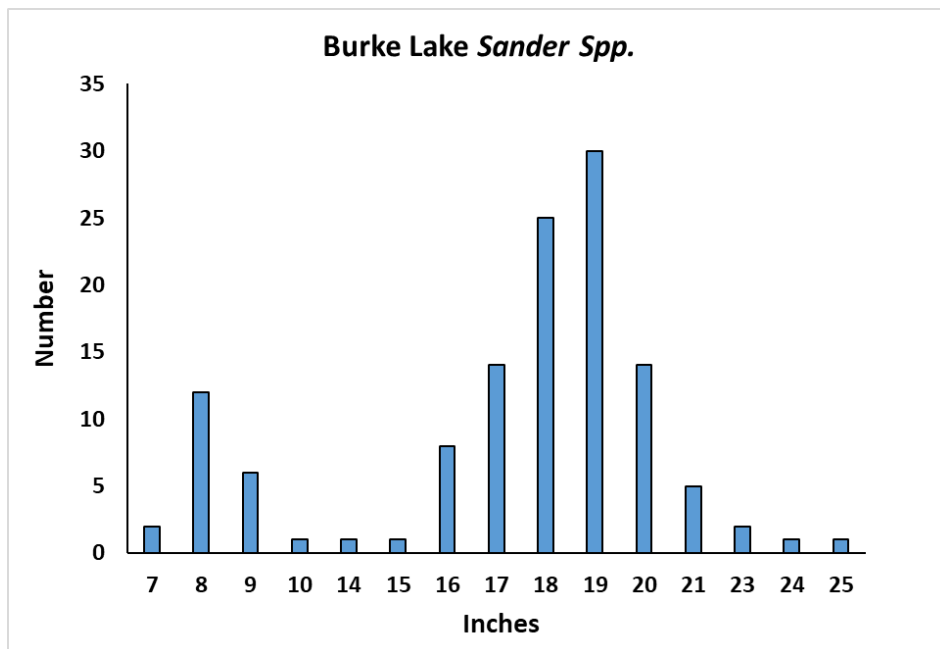
Lake Brittle's *Sander spp.* population continues to recover from a downtrend after stocking at a higher rate the previous four years. Electrofishing catch rates decreased to 29 fish/hour in 2022 (from 38 fish/hour in 2021); however, they remained well above the 10/hour goal and included fish up to 9 lbs. The high catch rate was attributed to fish from multiple years of higher stocking rates recruiting to the fishery. Stocking rates of Walleye were historically 100/acre, but due to a declining population it has increased to 200/acre since 2019. The reason for the decline was likely poor juvenile survival from 2014 through 2017 resulting in failed year classes. A variety of environmental issues could have contributed including lake drawdowns during dam and spillway renovation, emergence of dense *Hydrilla*, and prolonged high/turbid water conditions due to increased storm water runoff. Biologists are working to mitigate some of the issues leading to poor survival and are hopeful that survival of juveniles stocked since 2019 will help the lake rebound from the current low population. The lake still provides a suitable population of Walleye and Saugeye

and has some of the best bank and boat access in Northern Virginia. During 2022 electrofishing surveys, 20% of *Sander spp.* collected were legal (18") which was almost identical to the 19% in 2021. Stronger year classes since 2019 should provide improved fishing and size structure. Average sample size was 15.5". The statewide 18" minimum/5 per day limit is in effect at Lake Brittle.



Burke Lake

Burke Lake is located in Fairfax County – just a stone's throw from Washington D.C. Anglers in pursuit of Walleye and Saugeye can expect to find most fish in the 2-3-pound range, with some fish as large as 8 pounds. Electrofishing catch rates were an excellent 44 fish/hour in 2022, which was double the 22 fish/hour in 2021 and well above the goal of 10/hour for small impoundments. Spring 2022 surveys resulted in 64% of Walleye being legal with a 17.3" average. An 18-inch minimum/5 per day limit is in place at Burke.



Lake Orange

Anglers looking to catch Walleye and Saugeye in the central Virginia Piedmont should look no further than Lake Orange as it can produce fish over 5 pounds. Electrofishing catch rate was 7 fish/hour in 2022 which decreased from the 13 fish/hour in 2021. Spring 2022 surveys resulted in only 12% of Walleye being legal, indicating the population is mostly comprised of younger fish with a 16.1" average. Most fish are caught during the late spring and early summer by anglers fishing for bass, although a few anglers do specifically target Walleye here. Anglers should note that an 18-inch minimum/5 per day limit is in place at Lake Orange.



Biologists will continue to monitor the *Sander spp.* populations at Lake Brittle, Burke Lake, and Lake Orange again in 2023 as part of a study to evaluate angler catch, exploitation and variable stocking rates. Tagged Walleye and Saugeye are still in these lakes and 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, then the fish can 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?”

Shenandoah River

Walleye can be found in the Shenandoah River from Warren Dam in Front Royal downstream beyond the Virginia / West Virginia State line. 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. In the spring of 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. In 2022 the river



received its seventh stocking of 20,484 fingerling Walleye. During our January sample we captured 51 Walleyes at a rate of 14.7 fish per hour, which is right on the long-term average. During the February spawning run, biologists focused on learning more about potential spawning locations within the Main Stem. It was determined that most of the population stage for spawning within the 10-mile reach below the Warren Dam. Biologists and technicians handled 173 fish averaging 21 inches in length, the largest female measured 29 inches and weighed 10 pounds. Most fish sampled were of legal harvest size or greater. After the spawn, the fish redistribute downstream and slink back into the deeper pools. Local anglers are starting to reap the benefits of this fishery, so plan a trip to the Shenandoah soon.

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 another Region 1 destination for anglers to fish for Walleye and a chance at Saugeye. James City County Parks & Recreation has a great park that provides plenty of access to the reservoir. The water level at Little Creek Reservoir has been drawn down over the last few years in the eventual hopes of having major repair work conducted on the dam. Public boat launching has been limited the last few months after park staff closed the ramp in the name of safety. The fishing pier and some of the adjacent shoreline areas of the park provide suitable access for bank fishing. With increased water pool, James City County Parks will hopefully open the ramp soon for anglers to launch their own boats.

The Walleye population continues to provide dedicated anglers a productive chance at catching legal size fish greater than 18 inches with the outside chance of catching fish greater than 5 pounds. Little Creek Reservoir historically received 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 multiple 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 2021 stocking of Little Creek Reservoir consisted of a large-scale stocking of 560,000 Saugeye and Walleye fry over the course of two nights. This was the first time a large number of fry were stocked into the reservoir. Additional Saugeye fry were stocked into the reservoir during the spring of 2022. A total of 34,512 Walleye fingerlings were stocked in May 2022. The 2022 gill net survey of Little Creek Reservoir was cancelled with the temporary closure of the boat ramp due to extreme low water. DWR staff will hopefully be able to conduct spring electrofishing surveys in 2023 to assess the level of survival from the most recent fry and fingerling stockings.



Anglers that fished the reservoir these last few years had to adjust their fishing techniques to deal with the decreased water level. Newport News Waterworks had to draw the reservoir down roughly 10 feet in preparation for repair work on the dam. Anglers should keep the continued drawdown in mind as the repair work might take a few more years. 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. 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 deep diving crank baits in the 17 to 20-foot depth range within the western half of the reservoir. Bottom bouncers with nightcrawler harnesses were another productive technique 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. Finding that productive depth is key to finding active fish at Little Creek Reservoir.

DWR biologists continue to tag Walleye and Saugeye collected from Little Creek Reservoir as part of the statewide tagging study. 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. The concession stand should have the tag return forms for anglers to pick up. Reward tags can be cut off any under-sized fish that may measure less than the minimum size limit of 18 inches. Anglers can release any fish they catch if they so desire as long as the reward tag is cut off first. 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. Recent stockings of Lake Chesdin have established strong year classes of Saugeye. Pelagic stockings of the Walleye and Saugeye fingerlings typically disperse the fish out to 30 different locations each May. The 2019 stocking of roughly 90,000 Saugeye fingerlings created an impressive stock of fish for anglers to target. The 2019-year class provided a lot of action for anglers that were initially targeting the crappie fishery. The 2020 allocation consisted of two batches of Walleye fingerlings for a healthy stocking of 94,801 fish. The 2021 stocking of Lake Chesdin consisted of a mix of Walleye and Saugeye that totaled 109,633 fingerlings. The 2022 stocking consisted of another full batch of Saugeye fingerlings with 95,221 stocked.



The fall surveys of 2022 revealed a high abundance of Saugeye and the limited presence of Walleye. The collection of 192 Saugeye during the fall surveys was a record catch rate for Lake Chesdin. The previous record haul of 113 Saugeye in 2021 was blown away in 2022. Collected Saugeye ranged in size from 10.12 to 23.27 inches, with the average sized fish measured at 17.74 inches. The collected Saugeye were fish from the 2019 and 2021 stockings. The 2019-year class provided 32 fish larger than 4 pounds in weight. The largest Saugeye was an extremely healthy female that weighed 5.45 pounds. The Saugeye collection revealed 57.3% of fish were greater than 18 inches in total length. This percent of legal fish was greater than the 47.8% found during the 2021 survey. From all indications, the Saugeye population is taking full advantage of the gizzard shad forage base. The 2021 fall survey yielded the collection of 7 walleye, which showed a sizeable decline from 2021 (N = 31). Collected Walleye ranged in size from 16.06 to 26.46 inches, with the average sized fish at 21.52 inches. The largest Walleye measured a very impressive 7.33 pounds.

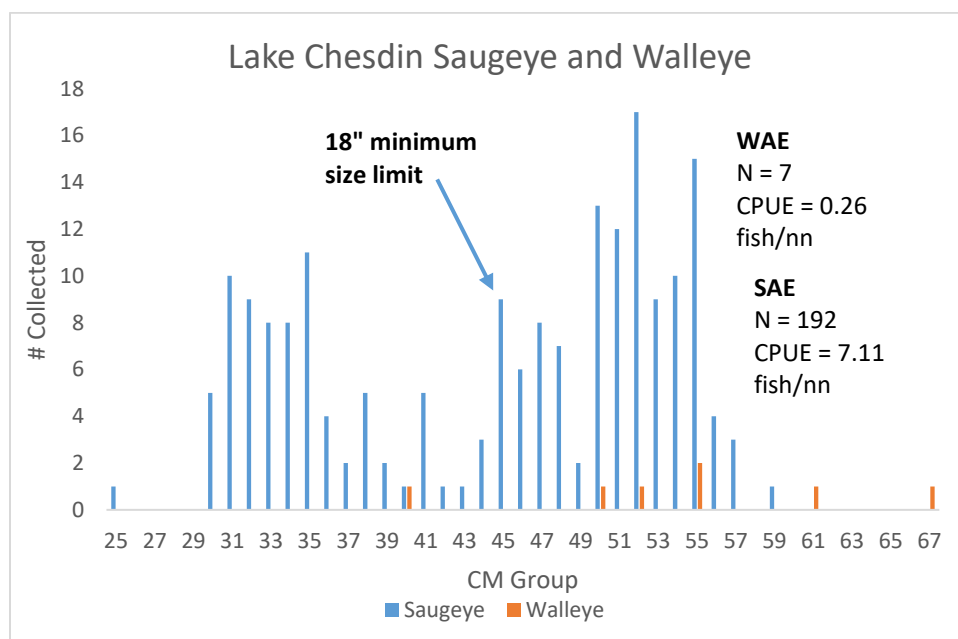


Figure 1. Length frequency distribution of Walleye and Saugeye collected during the gill net surveys of Lake Chesdin from December 6th to December 8th, 2022

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 cannot 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. Deep diving crankbaits, that mimic the size of gizzard shad, are a good start for targeting the Walleye and Saugeye. Anglers are also encouraged to try trolling around with bottom bouncers and nightcrawler harness rigs. During the fall and winter months, shad schools will typically concentrate toward the lower third of the lake. Anglers and boaters should easily observe the wild flocks of cormorants that invade the fishery each winter to forage heavily on the shad schools. The vast majority of the larger Saugeye were found toward the lower third of the lake during the December surveys. DWR biologists began tagging collected Walleye and Saugeye from Lake Chesdin in 2015 as part of the statewide tagging program. The fall 2022 survey provided some quality sized Walleye and Saugeye for tagging purposes. Anglers that can 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 fish's body. Anglers should contact the DWR Region 1 office (804-829-6580 ext. 126) to report collected reward tags if they would like to receive a \$20 reward check.

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 populations in the Appomattox River below Brasfield Dam have yielded some positive results over the last few years from fish that managed to escape the lake. With continued stockings of Lake Chesdin, there is fair to decent chance that the fishing action in the lower Appomattox River will improve. The similar creel limit of 5 fish/person in aggregate with the 18" minimum size limit still applies in the Appomattox River. Any tagged fish caught in the river, above or below the lake, will be honored for a reward check.



Tagging Studies

Walleye tagging studies are ongoing in several of the Walleye waters mentioned above and offer valuable information to fisheries biologists 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:

Leesville & Philpott Reservoirs	Forest Office	(434) 525-7522
Staunton River	Farmville Office	(434) 392-9645
Lakes Orange, Burke & Brittle	Fredericksburg Office	(540) 889-4169
Little Creek Reservoir & Chesdin	Charles City Office	(804) 829-6580
Shenandoah River	Verona Office	(540)248-9360
Hungry Mother Lake	Marion Office	(276) 783-4860
Upper New River		
South Holston Reservoir		
Flannagan Reservoir		