LAKE GEORGE

FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

LOCATION – Lake George is located in Rock Island County - 5 miles west of Andalusia off Route 92. It is part of Loud Thunder Forest Preserve

DESCRIPTION – In a joint effort to provide additional fishing opportunities to anglers in Illinois, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources entered into a lease agreement with Rock Island County Forest Preserve District. Lake George is 167 acre lake with a maximum depth of 62 feet and an average depth of 24 feet. The lake has 4.2 miles of wooded shoreline. Boating is permitted with electric trolling motors only. The lake car/trailer paved parking lot with two concrete boat ramps. The boat launch is ADA accessible. There is a concession building at Lake George that offers boat and electric motor rentals, bait, food, and some tackle supplies. For more information contact Lake George at 309-795-1070.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES - The fishery is managed by annual species-specific surveys, regulations and stocking. Artificial fish habitat is added to lake in the form of natural and plastic structures.

STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY – Lake George receives an annual stocking of Channel catfish, Walleye, Striped Bass hybrids (Wiper) and Muskie. Largemouth are stocked when available or when a poor year class has been identified. Below is a description of the fishery.

Muskie:
The Muskie population was sampled with 5- 4X6 large mesh trap nets for two nights. The 2023 sample again showed a healthy and diverse Muskie population. The 2024 sample was the 2nd highest overall CPUE in the past 5 samples. Fish 38-42 inches was the dominate size class of the sample. The Muskie population has remained very stable over the years and continues to provide excellent fishing. Relative weights (Wr) for both male and female Muskie are in the good to excellent range.

1.Management Plan:	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Net nights: (# nets)	1(6)	1(10)	2(5)	NS	NS	2(5)	2(5)	2(5)	2(5)
CPUE (fish/nn)(n)	0.3(2)	1.2(12)	1(10)			1.1(11)	1.4(14)	4.7(47)	3.2(32)
CPUE 20.1-29.9 0.1	0.6	0.0			0.4	0.2	0.0	0.2	
CPUE 29.9-38.2 0.0	0.2	0.8			0.4	0.7	3.6	1.0	
CPUE 38.2-42.1	0.2	0.2	0.2			0.2	0.3	0.9	1.5
CPUE 42.1-50.0	0.0	0.2	0.0			0.1	0.1	0.2	0.5
CPUE 50+	0.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	0.0	0.0	0
RSD 36 0	33	20			46	38	28	63	
Avg Length mm 636	843	863			843	857	903	913	

2. Avg Wr by sex:	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
20.1-29.9									
Avg Wr Female	NA			NA	NA				
Avg Wr Male		(96)				(101)	(103)		
29.9-38.2									
Avg Wr Female			(117)			(123)	(106)	(109)	
Avg Wr Male		(88)	(101)			(98)	(99)	(101)	
38.2-42.1									
Avg Wr Female		(89)	(102)			(101)	(114)	(116)	
Avg Wr Male						(98)	(80)		

42.1-50.0					
Avg Wr Female	(96)		(102)	(104)	(99)
Avg Wr Male					
50+					

Largemouth Bass:

Traditionally, Lake George has had an extremely good bass population. The 2024 survey showed a very diverse population with a PSD of 58. The overall CPUE was the 3rd highest since the draw down. Catch rates and size distribution seemed to return to pre draw down numbers. The increase in E. Milfoil seems to be helping Largemouth recruitment numbers with fish less than 8 inches having another good year in 2024 unlike historic up and down of bass recruitment. Fall relative weights remained good for all size group sampled in the fall of 2024.

Largemouth bass were sampled in the spring of 2024 to determine age and growth characteristics (Table 3,4). Largemouth bass show excellent growth with fish reaching 14 inches in 3.8 years and an average length at age 3 fish of 12 inches. Regional this is very fast growth and compares with Largemouth bass from Shabbona Lake. Smaller lakes in the Region have an average length at age 3 of 9 inches. It is interesting that since 2020 when E. milfoil was identified at the lake more prominent age class seemed to develop.

1.Management Plan Fall:	Goal	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
# Stock (200mm)	>100	41	54	NS	31	47	56	74	67	71
PSD (95% CI)	40-60	83	61		61	32	39	38	64	69(15)
RSD 14	10-20	63	50		32	28	20	14	25	39
RSD 18	0-10	5	7		0	4	5	3	3	4

2.Fall diurnal DC electrofishing CPUE (fish/hr) of each length group of Largemouth bass collected at Lake George

Year	<8	8-12	12.1-15	15.1-20	> 20	Total
2016	63.3	4.7	10.0	12.0	0.7	90.7
Avg Wr	(99)	(91)	(92)	(97)	(99)	
2017	16.6	14.0	7.3	14.0	0.7	52.6
Avg Wr	(100)	(95)	(100)	(98)	(100)	
2018	NO sample due to the lake being drawn down for dam repairs in the fall of 2018					
2019	55.3	8.0	7.3	5.3	0.0	75.9
Avg Wr	(121)	(112)	(104)	(98)		
2020	28.0	21.3	2.0	8.0	0.0	59.3
Avg Wr	(101)	(100)	(101)	(92)		
2021	61.3	22.7	9.3	4.7	0.7	98.7
Avg Wr	(103)	(95)	(102)	(107)	(107)	
2022	18.7	30.7	13.3	5.3	0.0	68.0
Avg Wr	(102)	(95)	(89)	(102)		
2023	32.0	24.0	34.0	9.0	0.0	99.0
Avg Wr	(100)	(90)	(90)	(93)		
2024	46.0	14.67	22.0	10.0	0.7	93.4
Avg Wr	(105)	(99)	(90)	(93)	(89)	

3.Spring Electrofishing Population assessment

Spring Electrofishing	: Goal	2024
# Stock (200mm)	>100	95
PSD (95% CI)	40-60	58(14)
Mean length Age 3*	Inches	12.13

	mm	308.28
Years to 14 inches		3.8 years

*Average length of age 3 fish aged

4.Spring Electrofishing CPUE (fish/hr) of each length group of Largemouth Bass collected at Lake George

Year	<8	8-12	12.1-15	15.1-20	> 20	Total
2024	19.0	40.0	35.0	18.0	2.0	114.0

5. Age length key of Largemouth Bass collected from Lake George collected 5/22/2024

Length (mm)	Age 1	Age 2	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7	Age 8	Total
60	1								1
70									0
80	1								1
90									0
100									0
110									0
120	1								1
130									0
140	2								2
150									0
160	2								2
170	1								1
180	2								2
190	2	1							3
200									0
210		2							2
220		1							1
230		6							6
240		4							4
250		5							5
260		3	2						5
270		2							2
280		1							1
290			6						6
300			4	1					5
310				1					1
320			3	3					6
330			1	1					2
340			1	3					4
350				2					2
360				2					2
370				2					2
380			1	3					4
390									0
400									0
410				1	1				2
420									0
430								1	1
440				1					1
Total	12	25	18	20	1	0	0	1	77

Bluegill:

Historically the Bluegill population has been dominated by fish 3-6 inches in length with fair to good relative weights. The lake has a long history of a population with similar population make up. The population did change some post 2018 draw down. The 20204 sample was more like historic samples as far as size distribution, with the dominate size group being the 3–6-inch fish. Larger individuals in the 6-8 range have returned to the post draw down catch rates of 2019 and 2020. Relative weights did improve fall size groups in 2024 from 2023 samples.

Bluegill were sampled in the spring of 2024 to determine age and growth characteristics (Table 3 and 4). The Fall 2023 strong year class did not represent in the Spring 2024 sample, which is interesting. The dominate age class was 3 years that ranged from 100- 160 mm. Growth is moderate with a mean length at age 2 of 3.5 inches and years to 6 inches at 2.5 years. Growth slows in age 3 and 4 with a max fish size of 170 mm (6.75 inches)

1.Management Plan:	Goal:	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
#Stock(80mm)	>100	140	227	NS	133	223	137	180	240	259
PSD	20-60	28	6		29	22	6(4)	7(4)	5(3)	5(2)
RSD 7	10-15	1	0		0	0	0	0	0	0
RSD 8	0-10	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0

2.Fall diurnal DC electrofishing CPUE (fish/hr) of each length group of Bluegill collected at Lake George

Year	<3	3.1-6	6.1-8	8.1-10	Total
2016	68.7	67.3	26.0	0.0	162.0
Avg Wr		(102)	(98)		
2017	5.3	150.7	8.7	0.0	164.7
Avg Wr		(106)	(97)		
2018	No sample due to the fall draw down				
2019	10.0	62.7	26.0	0.0	98.7
Avg Wr		(109)	(101)		
2020	42.0	116.7	32.0	0.0	190.7
Avg Wr		(89)	(90)		
2021	26.0	86.0	5.3	0.0	117.3
Avg Wr		(106)	(91)		
2022	18.0	87.4	10.4	0.0	138.0
Avg Wr		(98)	(94)		
2023	238.0	227.0	13.0	0.0	478.0
Avg Wr		(88)	(87)		
2024	39.3	164.7	8.0	0.0	212.0
Avg Wr		(92)	(96)		

3.Spring Bluegill Electrofishing Population assessment

Spring Electrofishing	: Goal	2024
# Stock (80mm) >100	186	
PSD (95% CI)	40-60	7(3)
Mean length Age 2*		3.5 inches
Years to 6 inches		2.5 years

*Average length of age 3 fish aged

4.Spring Electrofishing CPUE (fish/hr) of each length group of Bluegill collected at Lake George

Year	<3	3.1-6	6.1-8	8.1-10	Total
2024	142.0	173.0	13.0	0.0	328.0

5. Age length key of Bluegill collected from Lake George 5/22/2024

Length (mm)	Age 1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
80		3					3
90		3					3
100			6				6
110			4				4
120			5		1		6
130			5	1			6
140			2	1			3
150			2	2			4
160				5		1	6
170					1		1
Total	0	6	24	9	2	1	42

Walleye:

Previously Lake Georges Walleye population was sampled via DC night electrofishing and the results have been poor. It is possible that environmental and lake conditions will not allow for a good Spring sample by electrofishing. In 2022 data to evaluate the Walleye population were taken from 5- 4x6 ft. 1.5 inch mesh trap nets. Trap net data showed a good size distribution with very good Wr's. Timing of this sample will have to be evaluated with some historic data. The 2023 survey did not contain enough numbers to evaluate population characteristics. The 2024 survey again did not contain enough fish to evaluate the population. Water temperatures at the time of the sample was 45 F. Future samples may need to move to warmer surface temps or develop a different sampling protocol may be needed.

1.Management Plan Spring:	2022	2023	2024
Net nights: (# nets)	2(5)	2(5)	2(5)
# Stock(250mm)	16	7	2
PSD	100	100	100
RSD 18	75	71	100

2.Spring CPUE (fish/nn) of each length group of Walleye collected at Lake George

Year	<9.8	9.8-15	15-20.1	20.1-24.8	24.8-29.9	>29.9	Total	
2022	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.2	0.3	0.0	1.6	
Avg Wr			(91)	(116)	(121)			
2023	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.7	
Avg Wr			(96)	(115)				
2023	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.7	
Avg Wr			(96)	(115)				
2024	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.2	
Avg Wr				(99)				

Crappie:

The Crappie population was sampled with total of 10 nets per day for a grand total of 20 net nights were completed. A total of 74 crappie were sampled by trap nets. White Crappie were the dominate species with 58 sampled. Lake Georges lack of vegetation and lake structure will tend to favor the White crappie over the Black crappie. The 2024 survey did show a stable crappie population with better relative weights than the 2022 sample. Otolith were not taken in 2024 due to time constraints. Smaller mesh trap nets used in 2024 did allow for sampling of yoy crappie.

Black crappie:

Management Plan	:Goal	2022	2024
# Stock (130mm)	>100	21	12
PSD	40-60	57	25
RSD 10	5-10	10	0
Mean length Age 2+		7.5”	n/a
	(190.75mm)		
CPUE ≥ 8.0 inches		0.5	0.1
CPUE age-1(fish/nn)		0.1	n/a
Net nights: (# nets)		2(20)	2(20)
CPUE (fish/nn) (n)		1.1(21)	0.8(16)

2.Fall trap netting CPUE (fish/nn) of each length group of Black crappie collected at Lake George

Year	<5	5.1-8	8.1-10	10.1-12	12.1-15	Total
2022	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.0	1.1
Avg Wr		(89)	(90)	(82)		
2024	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.8
Avg Wr		(99)	(105)	(102)		

3. Age length key of Black crappie collected from Lake George 10/25-26/2022

Length (mm)	Age – 1	Age – 2	Age - 3	Age - 4	Total	
140	2					2
150						0
160						0
170			2			2
180			3			3
190			1	1		2
200				2		2
210			1	6		7
220			1			1
230						0
240						0
250				1		1
260						0
270						0
280					1	1
Total	2		8	10	1	21

White crappie:

Management Plan	: Goal	2022	2024
# Stock (130mm)	>100	102	53
PSD	40-60	82	95
RSD 10	5-10	14	26
*Mean length Age 2+		8.5”	n/a
	(216.8mm)		
CPUE ≥ 8.0 inches		4.1	2.4
CPUE age 1(fish/nn)		0.2	n/a
Net nights: (# nets)		2(20)	2(20)
CPUE (fish/nn) (n)		5.1(102)	2.9(58)

*Mean length of aged fish not extrapolated data

2.Fall trap netting CPUE (fish/nn) of each length group of White crappie collected at Lake George

Year	<5	5.1-8	8.1-10	10.1-12	12.1-15	Total
2022	0.0	0.9	3.1	1.1	0.0	5.1
Avg Wr		(87)	(86)	(89)		
2024	0.3	0.1	1.8	0.6	0.1	2.9
Avg Wr		(103)	(102)	(92)	(94)	

3. Age length key of White crappie collected from Lake George 10/25-26/2022

Length (mm)	Age – 1	Age – 2	Age – 3	Total
140	1			1
150	1			1
160				0
170		1		1
180		4		4
190	1	8	2	11
200	1	5	6	12
210		7	6	13
220		7	17	24
230		5	2	7
240		3	3	6
250		5	7	12
260		1	4	5
270			3	3
280			2	2
Total	4	46	52	102

Gizzard Shad:
The Gizzard shad population has a history of being strong. Gizzard shad between 6 and 7 inches dominated the 2017 sample as in past years. The 2019 sample showed an opposite trend to previous years with YOY gizzard shad dominating the sample. I would assume this is a response to the draw down over the winter of 2018. Hybrid Striped bass were stocked in 2020 at a rate of 30 per acre to help keep numbers of Gizzard shad down. The 2020 survey showed a decline in total CPUE and a reduction in CPUE less than 6 inches. The 2021 survey again showed a reduction of Gizzard shad less than 6 inches. The 2022 survey again showed a decline overall CPUE of Gizzard shad and a decline in Gizzard shad less than 6 inches. The trend of declining CPUE rates of fish less than 6 inches continued in 2023. Catch rates for larger Gizzard shad remained stable in 2023. 2024 again showed stable lower overall catch rates of Gizzard shad for both fish over and under 6 inches.

Management Plan:	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
CPUE (fish/hr) < 6inches	20.0	16.0	NS	94.0	50.0	10.0	2.0	0.0	2.7	
CPUE (fish/hr)	168.0	78.0		102.0	52.6	60.0	15.3	25.0	13.3	

Other Species:
Other species sampled as part of the community electrofishing sample were Channel catfish, Flathead catfish, Walleye, Common carp, Black crappie, White crappie, Green sunfish, and Longear sunfish

FISHING REGULATIONS – Statewide fishing regulations apply at this lake (see current Illinois Fishing Information booklet and IFISHILLINOIS website http://www.ifishillinois.org/ for specific details).

Additional Site Specific fishing regulations:

All Fish . . . . . 2 Pole and Line Fishing Only
Large or Smallmouth Bass . . . . . 6 Fish Daily Creel Limit (14″ Minimum Length Limit)
Bluegill or Redear Sunfish . . . . . No Fish Daily Creel Limit (No Minimum Length Limit)
Channel Catfish . . . . . 6 Fish Daily Creel Limit (No Minimum Length Limit)
Pure Muskellunge . . . . . 1 Fish Daily creel Limit (36″ Minimum Length Limit)
Striped, White, or Hybrid Striped Bass . . . 1 Fish Daily Creel Limit (17″ Minimum Length Limit)
Walleye, Sauger, or Hybrid Walleye. . . . . 6 Fish Daily Creel Limit (14″ Minimum Length Limit)
White, Black, or Hybrid Crappie . . . . . 25 Fish Daily Creel Limit (No Minimum Length Limit)

CONTACT INFORMATION – Loud Thunder Forest Preserve: 309-795-1040
IDNR Fisheries County Biologist: 630-360-4185