

Lake Francis Case 2010 Fishing Forecast

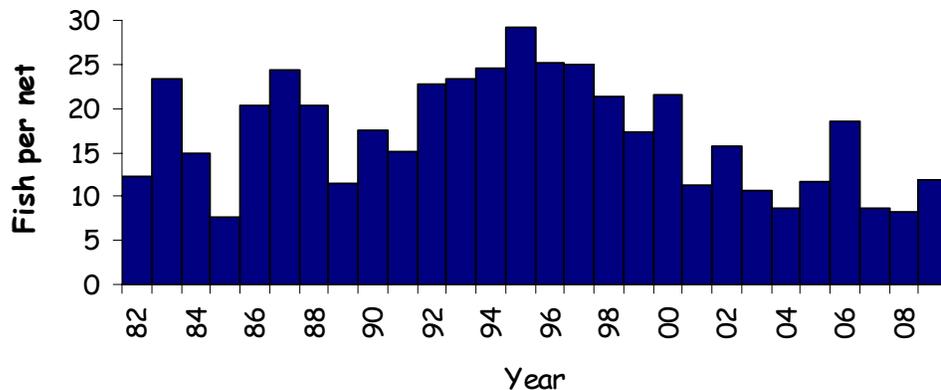


Biologists working on Lake Francis Case annually survey both the fish populations and angler use and harvest of those fish populations. Information collected from these surveys, over the years, provides trends in fish populations and angler use as well as indicating effectiveness of past management efforts and predicting how fishing will be in the future. Angling use of Lake Francis Case has remained stable over the past five years while walleye harvest has declined to a level more sustainable than the high harvest that occurred during the late 1990's. Good natural walleye production in 2005 and 2006 comprises a bulk of the current walleye population in Lake Francis Case.

Walleye Fishing Trends For 2010

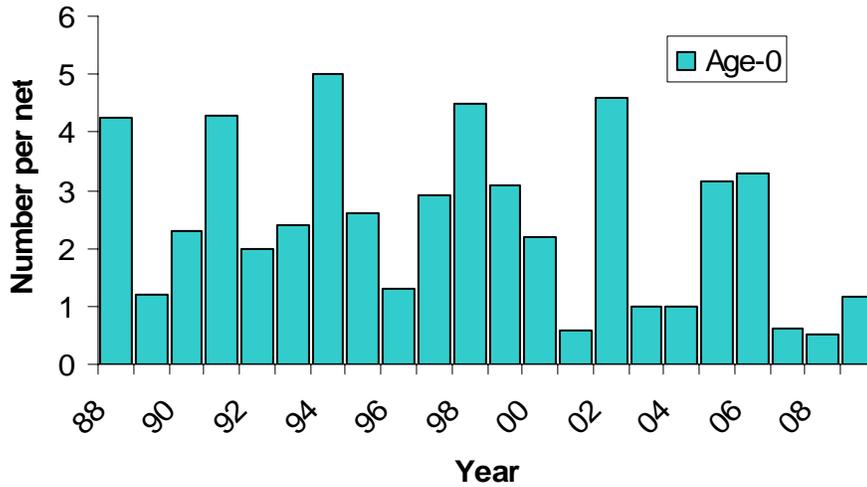
Fishing activity peaks at different times in different areas on Lake Francis Case. For anglers unfamiliar with Lake Francis Case walleye, fish can be found year-round throughout the reservoir. However, the typical yearly pattern has a majority of the spawning size walleye moving into the upper 1/3 of the reservoir in late fall/early spring. After spawning in mid/late April, walleye begin to disperse throughout the reservoir. Consequently, fishing activity typically follows the same pattern. However, as water temperatures rise, walleye fishing can be good throughout the reservoir. Lake Francis Case typically receives most of its fishing use during the May-July time period.

Lake Francis Case Walleye



A majority of walleye in the Lake Francis Case population are less than 15 inches in length. Abundance of harvestable sized walleye (those ≥ 15 inches), in the 2010 Lake Francis Case population is greater than what was present in the reservoir in 2009. Good walleye production during 2005 and 2006 has resulted in more harvestable sized fish for 2010. Anglers should expect good catches of walleye in the 13 to 16 inch size range. Fish produced in 2005 and 2006 will support most of the sportfish harvest during 2010. Moderate walleye production occurred in 2009.

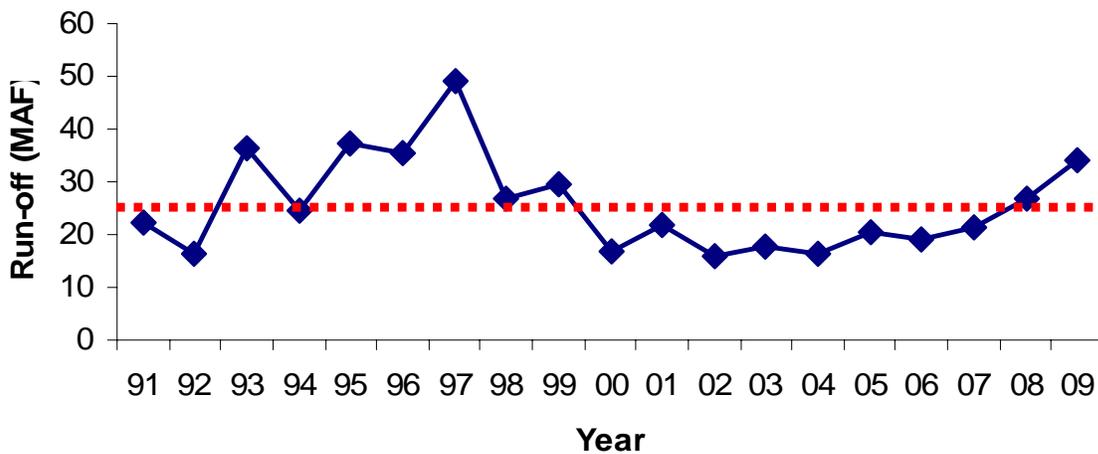
Lake Francis Case Walleye Production



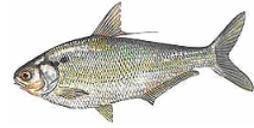
Water - Obviously Important to Fish

Obviously, water is very important for fish. What you may not know is that run-off into the Missouri River system is key for fish production. Localized run-off brings nutrients into the reservoir needed to produce plankton; small creatures that our bait-fish and newly hatched game fish eat. During periods of high run-off (such as the late 1990's), the reservoir is capable of supporting high numbers of fish. Drought conditions seriously impact the reservoir's ability to produce and maintain our fish populations. During periods of low run-off, the reservoir simply does not have the nutrients needed to support a large number of fish. As the graph below shows, run-off in the Missouri River basin has returned to above average (25.2 million acre-feet, depicted by the dashed line) during the past 2 years following eight years of below normal conditions, which should increase productivity.

Missouri River Annual Run-off in Million Acre Feet (MAF)



What Do Lake Francis Case Walleye Eat?



Gizzard Shad are the primary prey fish of predator species in Lake Francis Case. Due to gizzard shad being intolerant of cold water temperatures for extended periods, a majority of the gizzard shad in Lake Francis Case die each winter. Fortunately, there are enough warm water refuges, associated with numerous artesian wells located throughout the reservoir, to over-winter a few adult shad. These fish spawn and produce a lot of young shad each spring. Catch rates of walleye and other sport fish that depend on gizzard shad for food are typically highest in May and June, when food resources are very limited. Young shad reach a size desirable to walleye by mid July. That is when angler catches of walleye typically decline on Lake Francis Case because there is plenty of food for walleye to eat. Other prey fish species found in Lake Francis Case include emerald and spottail shiners, yellow perch, white bass and a host of different minnows and darters.

Other Fishing Opportunities



Channel Catfish

Channel catfish are found throughout Lake Francis Case. They are plentiful but often overlooked by most anglers. Lake Francis Case catfish are slow growing and long lived. Catfish in the angler harvest during 2009 averaged over 17 inches long (8 or 9 years old). Shore fishing with live, cut, or stink bait is an effective method to catch catfish, especially in the summer. Channel catfish provide excellent table fare and are preferred by some anglers.

Channel Catfish fishing regulations for Lake Francis Case: There is no daily or possession limit on channel catfish on Lake Francis Case.



Smallmouth Bass



Smallmouth bass are found throughout Lake Francis Case with the best fishing usually found in the middle and lower portions of the reservoir. However, good shore fishing opportunities exist in the upper reservoir in May and June. Boat anglers often focus on the rip-rap areas below Big Bend Dam or near Chamberlain; the rocky areas and bays around Snake, Platte, and Pease Creeks; the numerous bays around the North Point area; and the face of Ft. Randall Dam.

Smallmouth bass spawn in May to early June in Lake Francis Case. Males build nests in the shallows and attract females to their nests. Male bass will guard the nest and newly hatched fry after hatching. After spawning, smallmouth bass will disperse from the shallows and occupy mud flats in search of food during the summer months.

Smallmouth Bass fishing regulations for Lake Francis Case: Daily limit of 5 fish and possession limit of 10. There are currently no length restrictions for smallmouth bass on Lake Francis Case.



White Bass

White Bass: Often called stripers or silver bass, white bass are common throughout the reservoir. Fishing for white bass in the upper third of the reservoir in May and June has proven very productive. Anglers often target tailrace areas, but do not overlook wind-blown shorelines for white bass. During calm evenings, schools of white bass can often be seen chasing baitfish on the water's surface. White bass are excellent to eat if served fresh with the red meat trimmed from the fillets. Good white bass production in 2004, 2005 and 2008 should provide ample opportunity for anglers during 2010.

White Bass fishing regulations for Lake Francis Case: Daily limit of 25 and a possession limit of 50. There are currently no length restrictions for white bass on Lake Francis Case.

Keeping white bass, catfish and other species INSTEAD OF WALLEYE will help maintain our walleye population when the number of harvestable size walleye is low.

Walleye/Sauger or Hybrids

Regulations for Lake Francis Case Walleye/Sauger/Hybrid

- 4 fish daily/8 in possession
- Minimum walleye length limit is 15" and is in effect from Jan. 1-June 30 and Sept. 1-Dec. 31, annually (all months of the year except July and August).
- Anglers are allowed only one walleye/sauger 20 inches or longer in their daily limit, year-round.
- High-grading or culling of walleye is prohibited.
- The area between the railroad bridge and the I-90 causeway in Brule and Lyman counties is closed to fishing during January, February, March, April and December, except that shore-fishing is allowed from the Brule County side year-round.
- When anglers are fishing through the ice in the area from the northern Gregory-Charles Mix county line downstream to Ft. Randall Dam, size restrictions do not apply and anglers are required to keep the first four walleye/sauger they catch.

Key points for Lake Francis Case in 2010

- Excellent natural walleye production in 2005 and 2006 is currently supporting a bulk of the population and harvest. Moderate walleye production occurred in 2009.
- Abundance of walleye 15 inches and longer is higher than 2009. A conservative harvest in 2010 will help prolong the quality of the fishery.
- Sauger, smallmouth bass, channel catfish and white bass populations are capable of supporting additional harvest



For further information, please contact:

Missouri River Fisheries
1550 East King Ave.
Chamberlain, SD 57325
(605) 734-4547