



# 2015 Lake Sharpe Fishery Projections

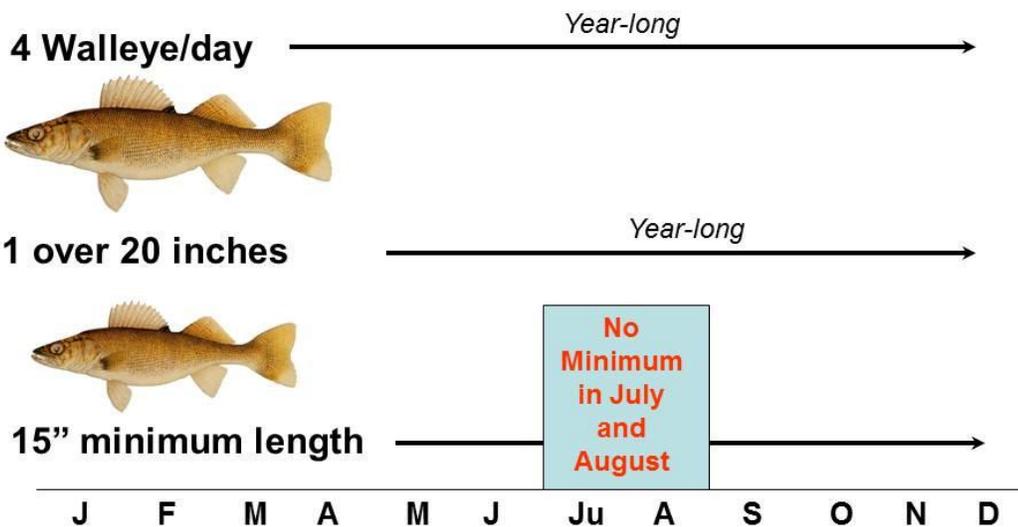
Each year, biologists working on Lake Sharpe collect information on fish populations from many fisheries surveys conducted throughout the year. They also collect information on angler use and harvest of those populations through creel surveys. By looking at trends in fish populations and angler use and harvest, predictions can be made about fishing on Lake Sharpe for 2015.

## Walleye

### Regulations for Lake Sharpe Walleye

Walleye limits for Lake Sharpe are the same as the South Dakota statewide standards of 4 fish daily and 8 in possession. The daily limit may include only one walleye 20 inches or longer and a 15-inch minimum length limit is in effect during all months except July and August.

## Walleye Regulations for Lake Sharpe



## Possession limit of 8

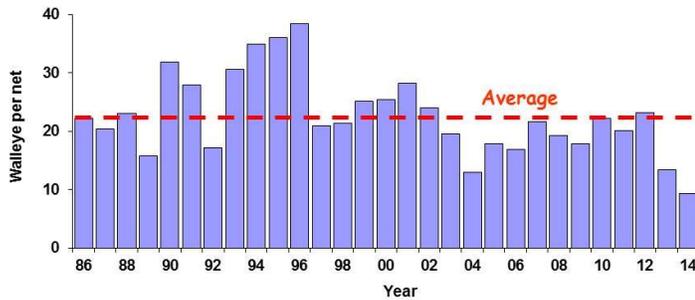
### Walleye Fishing Trends for 2015

Fishing activity peaks at different times in different areas on Lake Sharpe. Fishing usually is best in the spring and fall in the upper region, near Pierre, and then progresses downstream to the lower third of the lake. During mid-May, fishing improves in the lower third of the reservoir and remains good throughout the summer.

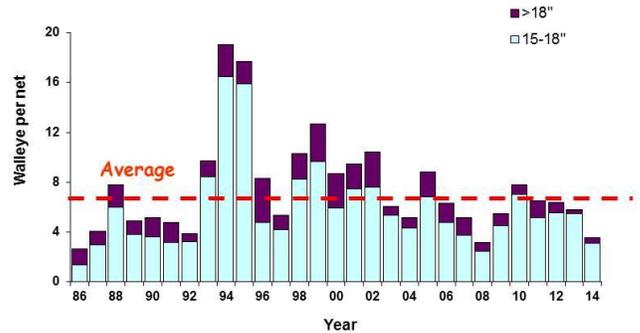
A walleye population, as with any fish population, has many ups and downs due to many factors, such as weather, water conditions, food resources, and angler harvest. In 2014, the walleye abundance index was 9 fish per net, which is well below the long term average.

The abundance of walleye over 15 inches has decreased in 2014. Of the 9 walleye caught per net in 2014, on average, less than 4 walleye per net exceeded 15 inches or 37% of the population. Walleye produced in 2010 and prior have grown longer than 15 inches. Walleye produced in 2011 should grow beyond 15 inches in 2015 and provide angling opportunities for the future.

**Lake Sharpe's walleye population index is currently below the long term average.**



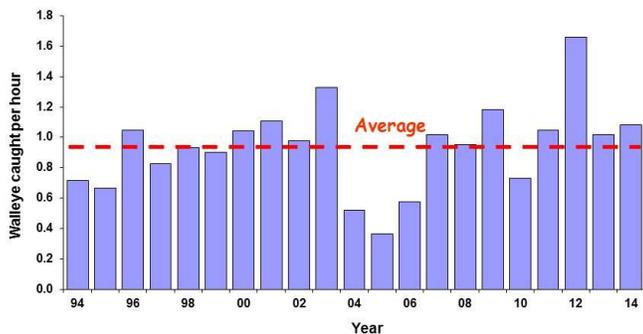
**Abundance of walleye 15 inches or greater was lower than average for Lake Sharpe**



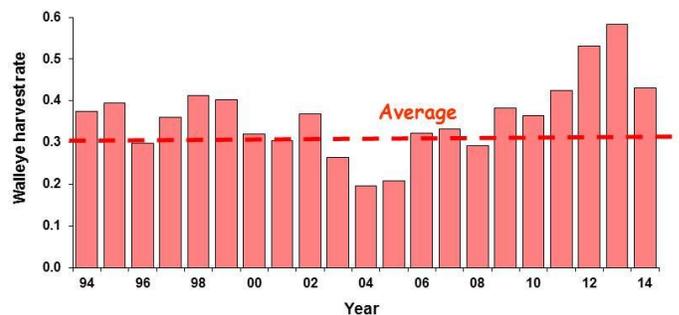
The 2014 net catches were lower than expected but angler catches were still above average indicating an abundant walleye population. Netting conditions in 2014 were not ideal due to wind, forage, and water flows which may have negatively effected gill net catches.

Walleye condition (or plumpness) along with the growing conditions of walleye good, indicting a promising future for fishing for Lake Sharpe.

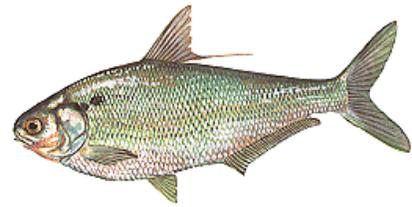
**The number of walleyes caught by anglers per hour of fishing was above the long-term average.**



**The number of walleyes harvested per hour of fishing was above the long term average.**



How easy fish are to catch is influenced by many factors including the number of adult walleye in the population, age of fish (younger fish are typically easier to catch), food availability, water conditions, etc. In 2014, lake-wide walleye catches by anglers were above average. Fishing was particularly good in the Pierre area. In 2015, the catches of walleye by anglers should continue to be fair despite a lower abundance of walleye currently in the population.



### **Gizzard Shad: Lake Sharpe's Primary Forage**

In Lake Sharpe, gizzard shad are the primary prey species. The majority of young gizzard shad die each winter due to cold water temperatures and relatively few adults survive each winter. In the spring, these adults spawn and produce thousands of young that feed Lake Sharpe fish for the rest of the year. If spawning conditions are not ideal for gizzard shad, there will be less food for walleye and other predator species. When conditions are right, adult gizzard shad will produce a high number of young, providing ample food for all predatory fish in Lake Sharpe.

In Lake Sharpe, fishing patterns develop due to the reliance of walleyes and other fish on young gizzard shad as food. In the spring, when gizzard shad numbers are low, walleye are easier to catch. In the summer, as the gizzard shad become large enough for walleye to eat, walleye are harder to catch because they have full stomachs. In the fall, walleye become more susceptible to anglers as they migrate upstream and concentrate in the upper end of Lake Sharpe.

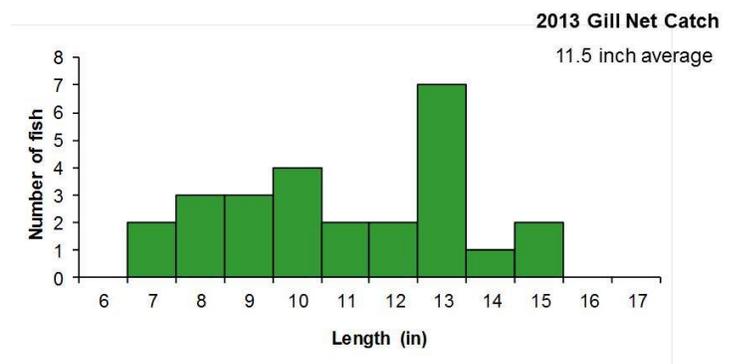
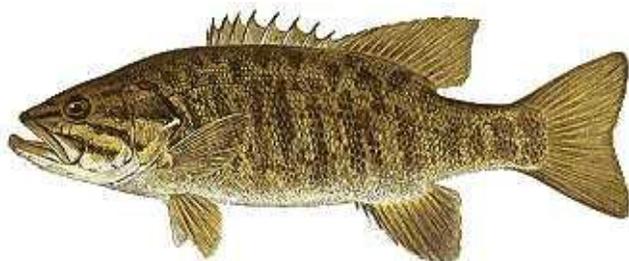
### **Smallmouth Bass**

Smallmouth bass are found throughout Lake Sharpe, but the best fishing is in the lower half of the reservoir. Smallmouth bass are the second most frequently caught species (walleye are most common) by anglers in Lake Sharpe. Shore fishing opportunities are best in May and June.

Smallmouth bass spawn in May to early June in Lake Sharpe. The male builds a nest in the shallows and attracts a female to his nest. The male will guard the nest and newly hatched fry for some time after hatching. After spawning, smallmouth bass will disperse from the shallows and cruise the "flats" for food during the summer, feeding to regain strength spent spawning. Walleye anglers often fishing the "flats" during June and July commonly catch smallmouth bass.

Lake Sharpe has a quality smallmouth bass population. Lake Sharpe smallmouth bass grow quickly to 15 inches. However, growth tends to slow down once a smallmouth bass reaches 15 inches with several more years of growth are needed for them to achieve larger sizes.

### **Lake Sharpe has a quality smallmouth bass population with a variety of sizes.**



### **Rainbow Trout**

The tailrace area below Oahe Dam is well known for trophy trout fishing. Anglers commonly catch large rainbow trout in the marina next to the tailrace during the winter and spring and in the tailrace throughout the year. In April, catchable rainbow trout (9-11 inches long) are stocked in the marina. This provides an excellent angling opportunity for kids and adults. Catchable rainbow trout that survive their first spring in Lake Sharpe can grow to a large size, adding to the number of trout available to anglers.



### **Channel Catfish**

Channel catfish are found throughout Lake Sharpe and are abundant but overlooked by most anglers. Lake Sharpe channel catfish average 18 inches in length. Fishing with live, cut, or stink bait is especially effective and can be extremely fast during the summer months. Channel catfish are very long lived in the cooler waters of Lake Sharpe. Larger channel catfish in Lake Sharpe may be up to 25 years of age. Many areas throughout Lake Sharpe are good channel catfish fishing locations including the Oahe Tailrace, Farm Island's Hipple Lake, and Fort George.



### **White Bass**

White bass in Lake Sharpe provide an additional sport fishery to anglers. The average size of Lake Sharpe's white bass is 14 inches which can provide a good tug on the end of a line. White bass concentrate in the months of Late-April, May, and June and can provide fast angling action during their spawning runs.

To fish for white bass look for them in May and June, especially in the upper third of the reservoir. Fish the windblown shorelines using jigs with plastic tails and small crankbaits. White bass are excellent to eat if served fresh with the red meat trimmed from the fillets.



### **Key Issues for 2015 for Lake Sharpe**

- Angler catch of small walleye will be common in 2015 due to production of walleye produced after 2011.
- A proportion (37%) of the walleye collected in the gill net survey in August, 2014 exceeded 15 inches .
- Smallmouth bass provide excellent fishing opportunities along side the walleye fishery.
- Trophy and catchable size rainbow trout fishing available in Oahe Marina and Tailrace.
- Chinook salmon is a possible catch in Oahe Tailrace.
- Channel catfish abundance is good and can provide hours of angling enjoyment.
- White bass are abundant and can provide excellent angling opportunities, especially in the spring.
- Excellent shore fishing can be found in the upper reaches of Lake Sharpe
- Boating access is available on Lake Sharpe in most areas of the reservoir.



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