

Perry District Fisheries Newsletter

Fall 2020

Perry Reservoir Blue Catfish

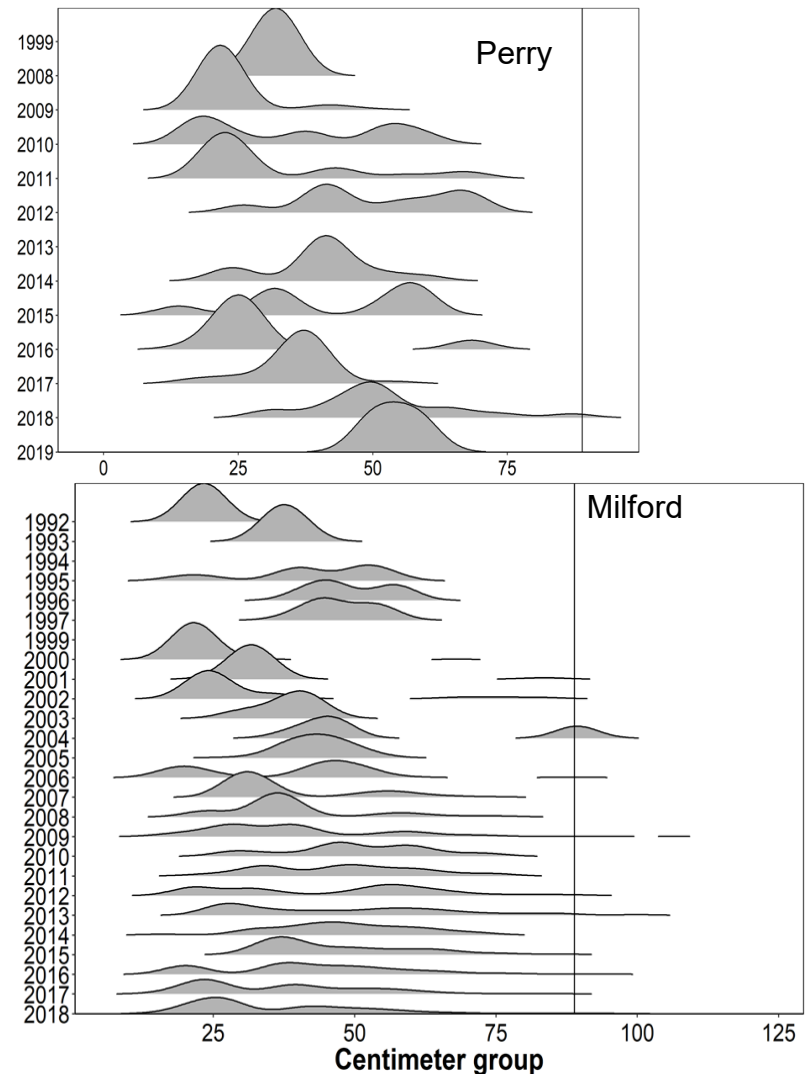
Special points of interest:

- Blue Catfish
- Fish Habitat
- Walk-In Fishing Program

Perry Reservoir was first stocked with Blue Catfish in 2006 at a rate of about one 4 inch fish per acre. It was stocked at that same rate the next six years. These stockings were done the exact same as when they were introduced at Milford reservoir 16 years earlier.

We sample these fish a variety of ways. The current standard method of sampling, what the fishing forecast is based off of, is our gill net data. Blue Catfish began showing up in our nets two years post stocking, the same as Milford. We can follow those fish in the sample records through the years as they grow (two figures to the right). Eventually they reach a spawning size and we see a second wave of fish about ten years after initial introduction on both Perry and Milford.

Here is where the difference in time kicks in. Sixteen years after the initial introduction Milford begins seeing consistent recruitment; Perry is only 14 years removed from the initial stocking. If everything continues to follow



the same path as our state's most popular Blue Catfish lake, then in about two more years we should be seeing constant recruitment and reproduction from our Perry fish and in sixteen years maybe Perry will

be fortunate enough to host the Cabela's King Cat Classic, the championship of this series! Ah, a biologist can dream...But why am I telling you all this? I have been getting more and more calls about a need for changing the regulation. (see next page...)

Blue Catfish continued



As I was saying, I have fielded numerous calls and responded to a few Facebook messages regarding a change in the Blue Catfish regulation at Perry. Anglers are currently allowed to harvest 5 fish over 35 inches. This was done to protect our stocked fish until they reached a size that they could contribute to the population (i.e., spawn once or twice). As the graphs on the previous page show, we aren't quite there yet.

Those that want a change want to be like Milford and El Dorado and would like to see a slot limit put in place. Do-

ing so now, would open up the harvest of those smaller fish that we are trying to grow to spawning size. Depending on how many anglers descend on the lake to take advantage of this regulation change, it could effectively negate the past 14 years of trying to get a population established. So, a slot limit is not the best method of management for Perry at this moment in time.

I have also received a few less calls from anglers concerned about excessive harvest of those fish above the 35 inch mark. I follow the Facebook pages pretty closely and I have not seen

much in regards to harvesting large fish from Perry, at least nothing to be alarmed about. The last time we ran a creel survey on Perry, in 2016, we found that after anglers spent a combined 154,500hrs (17.6 years) on Perry, FIVE keeper Blue Catfish were harvested. Things have certainly changed in four years, there are more of those large fish in the lake, but the point remains the same, harvest of these large fish is low.

If anything, I should be alarmed about the amount of harvest BENEATH the length limit! Earlier this spring, while crappie fishing, I witnessed a group of anglers reel in two sublegal Blue Catfish and place them on a stringer. I happened to know what vehicle they drove, and placed a regulation summary on their windshield with the regulation circled and hoped they did the right thing. But this is not an uncommon occurrence! Back to that 2016 creel survey, 44.4% of all Blue Catfish that were harvested from Perry were sublegal.

For the time being, we are sticking with the 35" minimum on Perry with hopes of moving to a slot in the future. Until then, PLEASE follow all regulations and we can get to that point even sooner.

New Fish Habitat



We recently tried out a new fish habitat design. It is called a crappie jack but I'm sure that other fish will like it too. I will admit that I did not come up with the design but found it on crappie.com's extensive forum devoted to fish habitat.

We ordered enough materials to make 100 just to see how it went and I will say, the construction process went pretty smooth. The design should hold fish and they appear to be pretty snag-proof.

Once we had them built, then came the question of how to deploy them. Did we want smaller clusters of three or four, a huge mine-field with all 100, did we want to tie some cedar trees and

hedge limbs across two of them? The possibilities were numerous. Ultimately we decided to create three larger artificial brushpiles, or mine-fields. We roughly measured out an area that was 40 feet square on the lake and tried our best to spread the pieces out evenly across that area like in the picture above. As you can imagine, that level of uniformity is not possible from a boat but I'm sure they will hold fish.

We spread them out across the lake too, one in the Rock Creek arm, one in Slough Creek arm, and one up near the Longview boat ramp. The locations should be up on the website soon. But I figured I'd pass along the locations here as well.

The Rock Creek location:
N 39° 09.632, W 095° 29.424

The Slough Creek location:
N 39° 08.413, W 095° 25.082

The Longview location:
N 39° 10.944, W 095° 27.166

These are PVC so they likely won't show up on your sonar until they get some growth on them so you may just have to take my word on the location. This is a new design, so if you happen to fish these this fall, or next spring, let me know if you have any luck. I know I'm going to try them out. As always, if you want to put any of your own habitat out, just send me an email and I'll hook you up with a permit.

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We're on the web!

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Walk-In Fishing Program



In my last newsletter I mentioned that we were conducting a contest to design a new logo for our Walk-In Fishing Access Program. A winner was chosen and the signs are beginning to go up.

Jarrett Deen of El Dorado had the winning design seen here. It was chosen out of 94 different and exceptional designs. The selection process was not easy, to say the least, and our committee spent nearly a full day deciding on which

logo to choose. The Walk-In Fishing Program is a great opportunity to get away from the crowds and find some great fish. Pick up a fishing atlas today and try out some of these unique fishing opportunities.