

# Loyalhanna Lake

## Westmoreland County

### **May 2014 Trap Net, September 2014 and 2015 Hoop Net, May 2015 Night Electrofishing Survey**

Loyalhanna Lake is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Impoundment near Saltsburg, PA in Westmoreland County. The 480 acre lake (summer pool) is managed under statewide regulations for all species and contains a variety of naturally reproducing gamefish and panfish species such as Largemouth Bass, Black Crappie, White Crappie, Yellow Perch, Bluegill, and Pumpkinseed. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) stocks the lake with fingerling Muskellunge, Tiger Muskellunge, and Channel Catfish. The lake is also one of the few waters in western PA with a population of White Catfish.



*-White Catfish (right hand) and Channel Catfish from a trap net at Loyalhanna Lake*

Loyalhanna Lake was last surveyed in 2005 and results from the previous survey can be found [here](#). Beginning in 2014, Loyalhanna Lake was surveyed as part of a statewide survey designed to look at abundance, age, growth, and survival of Muskellunge and tiger muskellunge. The lake will be surveyed biennially for the next ten years to evaluate the Muskellunge and tiger muskellunge populations. In addition, the 2014/2015 survey was also used to evaluate the naturally reproducing panfish and gamefish populations in the lake, as well as to evaluate the results of Channel Catfish fingerling stocking.

A total of sixteen trap nets were set in April 2014. Table 1 below summarizes the catch data from our 2014 trap net survey at Loyalhanna Lake.

**Table 1. Length and frequency distribution of sampled fish from trap nets in April 2014.**

Species	Number caught	Size range (inches)	Comments
Black Crappie	347	3 - 13	5% > 9 inches
White Crappie	321	3 - 15	19% > 9 inches
Bluegill	328	2 - 7	10% > 7 inches
Pumpkinseed	6	4 – 6	None over 7 inches
Yellow Perch	20	5 – 11	15% > 9 inches
Brown Bullhead	222	8 – 15	99% > 9 inches
Yellow Bullhead	3	10 – 11	All over 9 inches
White Catfish	65	8 – 20	95% > 9 inches
Channel Catfish	93	7 - 28	57% > 15 inches
Tiger Muskellunge	6	30 - 36	
Brown Trout - Hatchery	1	19	
Tiger Trout – Hatchery	5	12 - 15	
Largemouth bass	6	10 - 18	
Common Carp	47	Not Measured	
Gizzard Shad	9	Not Measured	
Golden Shiner	36	Not Measured	
Northern Hog Sucker	3	Not Measured	
White Sucker	42	Not Measured	

Black Crappie and White Crappie were the most abundant species collected with 668 individuals collected. The majority of fish were in the 6 – 8 inch range with good numbers of fish over 9 inches available. A few trophy fish were also captured. The crappie populations have improved since the previous survey in 2005 when only a few fish over 9 inches were captured.



*-A pair of large White Crappie from Loyalhanna Lake*

Bluegill was the second most abundant species captured with 328 individuals captured. However, few Bluegills were of quality size. Yellow Perch and Pumpkinseed were also captured in low numbers with few quality sized individuals captured.

Loyalhanna Lake supports an excellent catfish population. A variety of species are present in fishable numbers, including Brown Bullhead, White Catfish, and Channel Catfish. Some of the biggest catfish captured included a 28 inch and 12 pound Channel Catfish, and a 20 inch and 6 pound White Catfish.



*-A large Channel Catfish from Loyalhanna Lake*



*-A large White Catfish from Loyalhanna Lake*

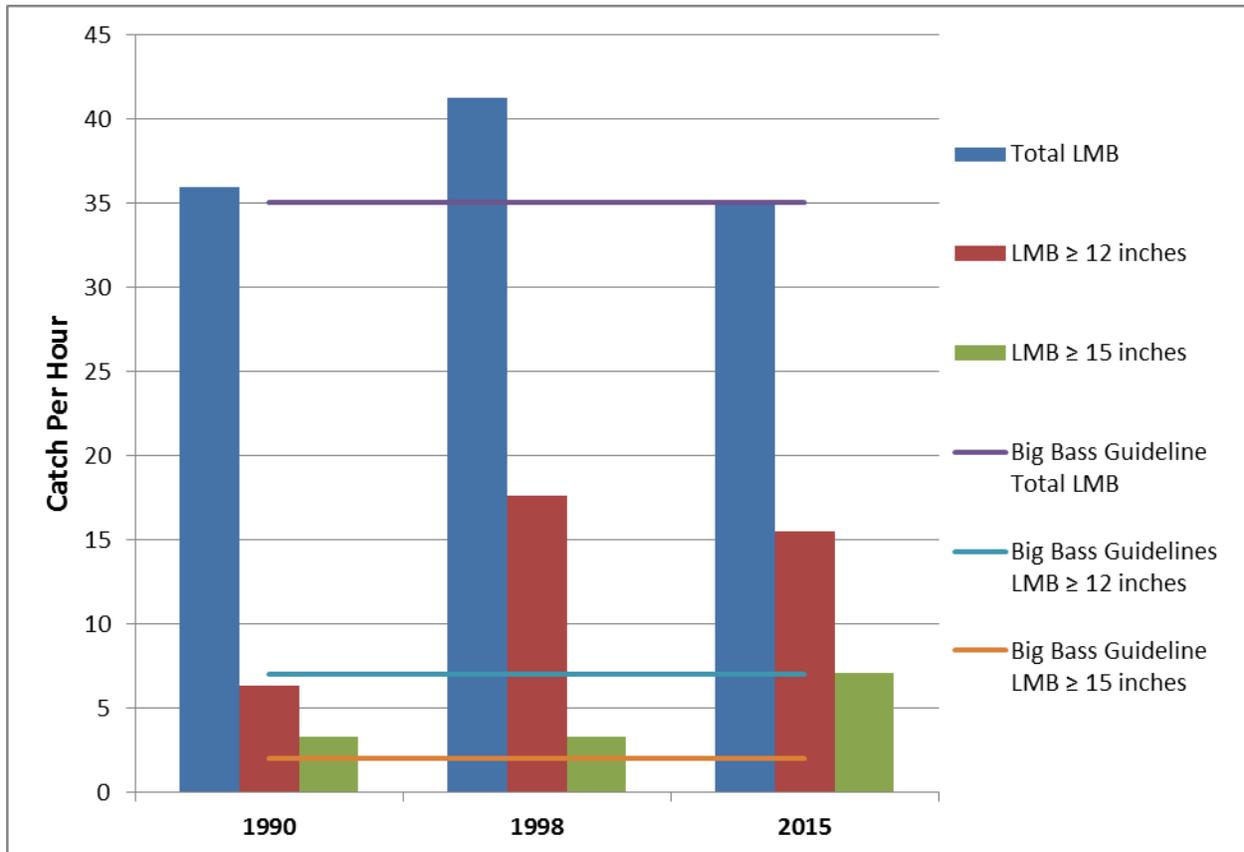
Only six (6) tiger muskellunge and zero (0) Muskellunge were captured in trap nets in 2014. All six tiger muskellunge were measured, weighed, and implanted with a tag to facilitate future identification if recaptured throughout the 10 year study.

The Largemouth Bass population was evaluated in Spring 2015 using night boat electrofishing. Overall, catch rates were good, with a total of 111 Largemouth Bass captured with 21% of the fish greater than 15 inches (Table 2). Catch rates exceeded the Big Bass Guidelines of 35 total fish/hr, 7 fish/hr greater than 12 inches, and 2 fish/hr greater than 15 inches that are used to characterize quality bass populations in Pennsylvania (Figure 1). Catch rate of Largemouth Bass over 15 inches in 2015 was more than double the two previous surveys.

**Table 2. Length and frequency of sampled fish from night electrofishing.**

Species	Number caught	Size range (inches)	Comments
Largemouth Bass	111	3 - 20	45% greater than 12 inches 21% greater than 15 inches

**Figure 1. Catch Rates of Largemouth Bass from night electrofishing in Loyalhanna Lake.**



Further evaluation of the catfish population was performed through the use of experimental baited hoop nets in September 2014 and 2015. Catch rates of catfish in hoop nets was lower than expected, potentially due to a change in the composition of the bait used to attract the catfish into these nets. Table 3 below shows the catch rates of catfish from September 2014 and 2015.

**Table 3. Length and frequency of catfish captured from baited hoop nets.**

<b>2014</b>			
<b>Species</b>	<b>Number caught</b>	<b>Size range (inches)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Brown Bullhead	4	11 – 13	
Channel Catfish	16	12 – 28	
White Catfish	2	13 – 19	
<b>2015</b>			
<b>Species</b>	<b>Number caught</b>	<b>Size range (inches)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Brown Bullhead	14	12 – 15	
Channel Catfish	66	13 – 27	
White Catfish	8	9 – 19	

Overall, Loyalhanna Lake offers very good angling opportunities for Largemouth Bass and catfish, and good opportunities for crappie, and fair angling opportunities for Bluegill.

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