

Susquehanna River (middle reach) Clemson Island to PA Turnpike 2018 adult black bass survey



Figure 1. Area Fisheries Manager Bryan Chikotas with a 20.5", 4.25-pound Smallmouth Bass caught downstream of Dock Street Dam near New Cumberland, PA.

Fisheries Management Division biologists routinely assess the status of Susquehanna River Smallmouth Bass to document current population levels, fish size structure, age and growth statistics, and other population parameters. From October 22 through 25, 2018 Fisheries Management Area 7 biologists conducted nighttime electrofishing surveys targeting adult Smallmouth Bass at four historic sampling sites located within the middle portion of the Susquehanna River between Clemson Island and the Pennsylvania Turnpike Bridge. Sites surveyed were near Clemson Island, Rockville, Dock Street Dam, and the Pa. Turnpike Bridge near Highspire, PA.

In 2018, length distribution (Table 1) and catch rates of age-1 and older Smallmouth Bass varied among sites yielding an overall reach-wide catch rate of 121.0 fish/ hour (Figure 2). The 2018 catch was the fifth highest catch rate since standardized surveys were initiated in this reach in 1990, and well above the long-term median catch rate of 66.8 fish/ hour (Figure 2).

Of note, the length or size distribution of adult Smallmouth Bass (6" and longer) showed strong representation of length groups up to 20 inches (Table 1). This reflects favorable recruitment and survival of the moderate to strong year-classes produced in 2012, 2014, and 2015, which benefited from reduced incidence of disease; which had caused mortality of young-of-year Smallmouth Bass to varying degrees since 2005. Of interest to anglers targeting trophy Smallmouth Bass, more 20" and longer bass were caught during the 2018 survey than all other surveys from 1990-2017, combined.

Table 1: Length classes (inches) of Smallmouth Bass captured at the middle Susquehanna River during nighttime electrofishing surveys, October 22-25, 2018.

| | Clemson Island | Rockville | Dock St. Dam | Turnpike |
|---------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------|------------|
| 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| 7 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| 8 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 6 |
| 9 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| 10 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 15 |
| 11 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 13 |
| 12 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 15 |
| 13 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 16 |
| 14 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 13 |
| 15 | 13 | 2 | 5 | 15 |
| 16 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 12 |
| 17 | 11 | 6 | 4 | 7 |
| 18 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| 19 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 20 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Totals | 86 | 72 | 68 | 140 |

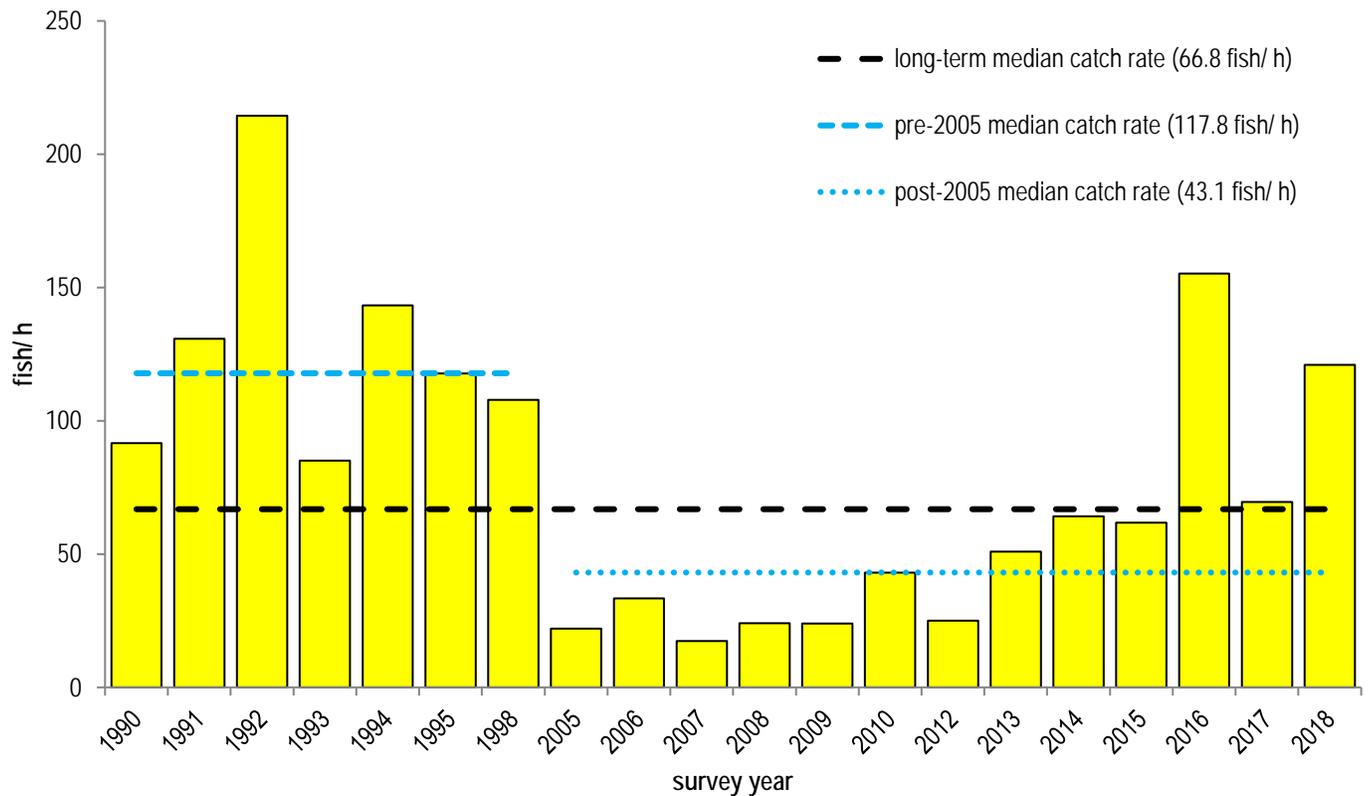


Figure 2: Catch per unit effort (CPUE, fish/ h) of Smallmouth Bass age-1 and older captured during nighttime electrofishing surveys conducted during the period of 1990 to present at four historic sites at the middle Susquehanna River.

Anglers targeting Smallmouth Bass in the middle Susquehanna River reach during the popular fall through early-winter period can expect to encounter high numbers of bass, including high numbers of large fish, as they prepare for winter. Anglers are reminded that during the [cold-weather period \(November 1 – April 30\) PFDs](#) are mandatory at all times for those in canoes, kayaks, and boats 16 feet and less in length.

For anglers interested in fishing for black bass in the middle Susquehanna River, [Catch and Immediate Release Bass Regulations](#) apply to this portion of the Susquehanna River.

Geoffrey Smith
Susquehanna River Biologist