Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Fishery Information Sheet

LAKE:  Grassy Lake  
COUNTY:  Price  
YEAR:  2013 & 2019

Grassy Lake is an 80-acre, soft water lake on the Elk River mainstem, located west of Phillips about halfway between Jobes Dam and Wiemer Dam. A natural rock bar at the outlet controls its water level. Usually, maximum depth is 7 feet and average depth is 4 feet. Lake bottom materials near shore were 40% sand, 40% muck, 15% rock, and 5% gravel. The Town of Elk maintains a public boat access at the inlet. On May 22, 2013 when water temperature was 62°F we assessed the population status of largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and bluegill by electrofishing. We collected all fish species along the entire 1.75-mile shoreline in 0.80 hour. We repeated that survey on June 10, 2019 at 70°F, sampling 1.80 shoreline miles in 0.90 hour. Our September 30, 2013 electrofishing circuit targeted age-0 walleye, but we dip-netted all gamefish for 1.90 shoreline miles in 1.00 hour at 63°F. Dense aquatic vegetation in all three surveys forced our electrofishing route offshore along much of the perimeter.

Walleye
Spring electrofishing captured 6 walleye 9.1–18.7" long in 2013 and 7 walleye 6.6–20.3" in 2019. Low catch rates of 2.9–3.3 walleye ≥ 10" per mile or 6.3–6.7 per hour do not represent the population’s abundance because walleyes are not targeted in late spring electrofishing surveys. Our spring surveys may have intercepted adults returning toward Soo Lake from earlier spawning activity upstream. Our fall 2013 survey captured 0.95 walleye fingerlings per mile, an extremely low electrofishing catch rate, which suggests that addition of new recruits to the walleye population was barely detectable in Grassy Lake that year.

Largemouth Bass
Very low catch rates of 1.7–2.9 bass/mile or 3.3–6.3 bass/hour in spring and fall electrofishing surveys indicate a largemouth bass population in low abundance. In a pooled sample of 12 fish from our three surveys combined, largemouth bass ranged 12.0–19.0" and averaged 15.0". Fish habitat in Grassy Lake seemed well-suited for largemouth bass reproduction, survival, and growth.

Smallmouth Bass
In seven spring and fall electrofishing surveys 1972–2019, only our June 2019 sample included smallmouth bass. They outnumbered largemouth bass by counts of 5 to 3 individuals. Smallmouth bass ranged 12.7–19.8" and averaged 14.6". The longest smallmouth bass in our sample was just short of trophy size (≥ 20"").

Black Crappies
Electrofishing catch rates of 10.3 and 13.7 crappies ≥ 5" per mile in May and September 2013 decreased to 1.7 per mile in June 2019, but we do not know if spring and fall electrofishing rates can be used to properly characterize crappie abundance. Though our samples were small, 44% of the 18 crappies captured in May 2013 and 38% of the 26 caught in September 2013 were at least 10" long.
Bluegill
Our late spring electrofishing capture rates increased from 14.3 bluegills ≥ 3" per mile or 31.3 per hour in 2013 to 25.6/mile or 51/hour in 2019. Their size structure changed little over that period, however. The 47 bluegills in our 2019 sample ranged 2.4–9.7" and averaged 7.3" long. In 2013 we caught 25 bluegills, ranging 4.6–8.8" and averaging 7.1". Among bluegill ≥ 3", 16% were ≥ 8" in 2013 and 11% were at least that long in 2019. In response to public fears about receiving the fishing pressure that might be diverted from adjacent waters with more restrictive panfish limits, the same experimental panfish harvest regulations now apply to the Elk River, its impoundments, and tributaries between Musser Flowage Dam and Wiemer Dam on Lac Sault Dore (Soo Lake). Anglers may keep 25 panfish, but only 10 of any one species.

Yellow Perch
Our spring 2013 electrofishing survey found 17 yellow perch 2.6–5.9"—suitable as forage, but not as table fare for anglers. Our spring 2019 samples forecasts better perch fishing opportunity, though we caution that we’re unsure how well late spring electrofishing surveys represent abundance and size distribution in yellow perch populations. In 2019 we caught 23 perch that ranged 3.2–11.5" and averaged 6.3". Forty percent of the perch ≥ 5" were at least 8" long.

The combined bycatch in our 2013 and 2019 electrofishing surveys included three muskellunge 17.3–41.3" and 32 northern pike 12.8–28.3" of which 88% were > 20". The other species in those pooled samples were four golden redhorse, a common shiner, 13 pumpkinseed 4.1–7.0", and 22 white suckers 8.9–19.2".

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