CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

2025 Walleye Fishing Forecast

Walleye fishing opportunities in Virginia should be plentiful in 2025 to allow anglers a chance at catching this popular fish species. The collaborative efforts between VDWR fisheries biologists and hatchery staff allow for the propagation of Walleye. Walleye brood stock is typically collected from the New River, Staunton River, and South Holston River each spring. Collections occur in March to coincide with the spawning runs of each system. Walleye spawned or hatched at Vic Thomas, Front Royal, King and Queen, and Buller Fish Cultural Stations, are raised in fertilized ponds anywhere from 4 to 6 weeks. Walleye fingerlings, reared primarily on a zooplankton diet, will range in size from 1 to 2 inches in length. Ponds are harvested and Walleye fingerlings are stocked in waters across the Commonwealth. Additionally, female

Walleye are crossed with male Sauger to produce the hybrid Saugeye. Saugeye perform well in some systems and are stocked with or in place of Walleye. In 2023, VDWR had a banner year in which 1,781,500 Walleye and Saugeye fingerlings were stocked into 19 selected waters. Anglers should expect good Walleye and Saugeye fishing in the near future from the 2023-year class of stocked fish. Several factors were at play during the hatchery production cycle of 2024 that impacted the overall success of fish fry hatching and fingerling survival. The 2024 production allowed for the stocking of 669,170 Walleye and Saugeye fingerlings into 13 priority waters. For those anglers interested in additional information on a specific water, this forecast lists the resources by region. What follows are specific reports of Walleye and Saugeye sampling results with details for the anglers that might assist them in their pursuits.

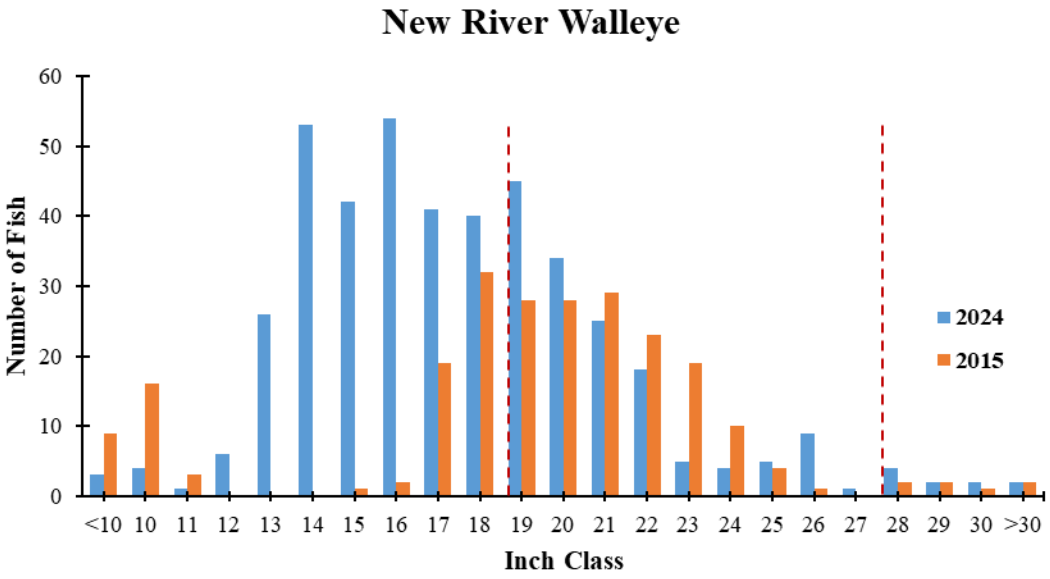
Southwest Virginia

Upper New River

The New River in southwest Virginia has a unique genetic strain of native Walleye. Since the early 2000's the VDWR has been working to conserve this unique fishery through stocking efforts. These efforts have led to an increase in catch rates for both anglers and biologists, specifically over the last 10 years. Past stocking efforts have focused on areas from Allisonia to Buck Dam. Anglers continue to report good catch rates of smaller fish 12-20" and fish greater than 28" in these areas. VDWR continues to focus stockings in these areas annually. However, in good production years when excess fish are available, fish are also stocked below Fries Dam creating a good fishery in the Byllesby pool. The New River was stocked with 47,000 Walleye fingerlings in 2024.

Most Walleye in the Upper New River are caught between February- April. Hot spots include Foster Falls, Ivanhoe, Route 100, Fries Dam, and Allisonia on the Upper New and Below Claytor Dam on the Lower New. The Upper New has a protected slot limit in place for Walleye. Anglers can harvest 2 fish per day year-round however, no fish 19-28" can be kept above Claytor Dam upstream to Fries Dam in Grayson County. This regulation was enacted to help protect spawning size fish while also giving anglers the option to harvest some fish as well.

The New River ranks right up there as one of the best waters in Virginia for anglers to catch an abundance of Walleye as well as a trophy.



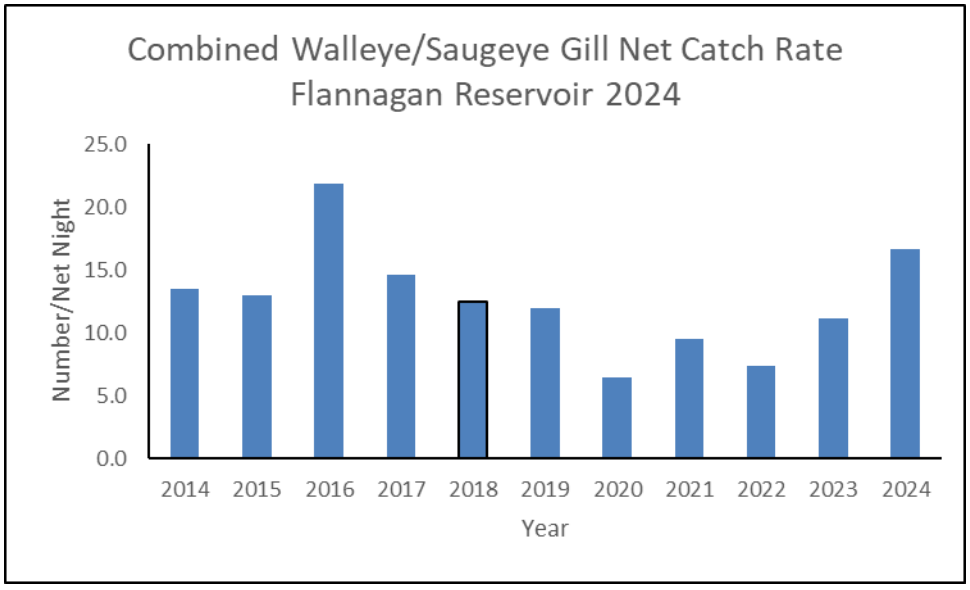
Length frequency distribution of collected Walleye displayed against past survey year. Dashed lines indicate fish collected within the protected slot limit of 19-28”.

The 2024 length distribution revealed a high proportion of Walleye in the 13-22” range. This indicated multiple years of good recruitment. Over the next few years anglers should begin to see higher numbers of fish entering the protected slot limit which, in turn, should help increase natural reproduction within the system. In 2024, 65% of fish collected were outside of the protected slot limit with 63% of fish collected being <19” and 2% being >28”. This indicates several years of good recruitment from the spawning population and DWR’s stocking efforts and gives anglers ample opportunities to harvest fish.

Flannagan Reservoir

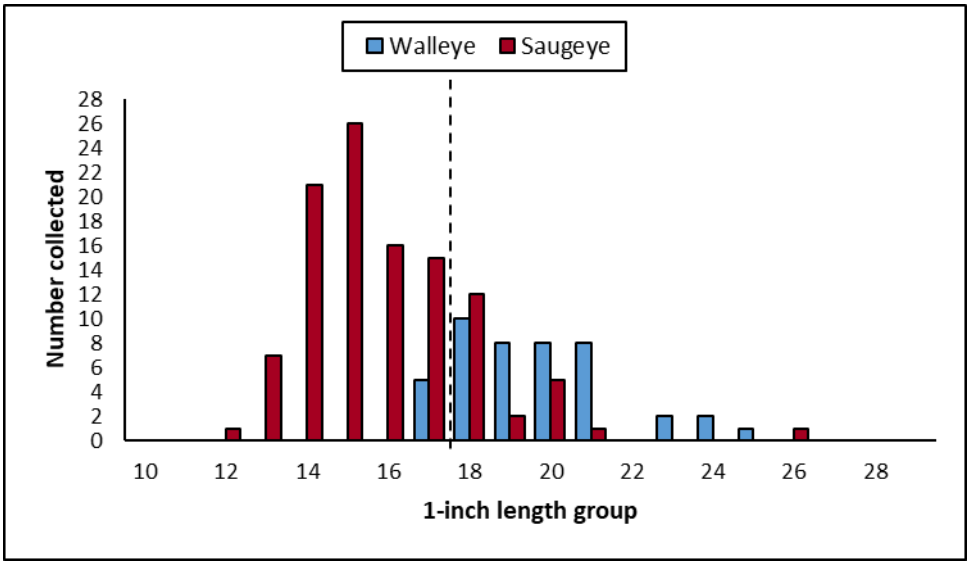
Fishing for Walleye on Flannagan Reservoir should be on the rise for anglers in 2025. With the success of recent stockings, there are several year classes that should be reaching harvestable size. VDWR biologists use the catch rate of Walleye in annual gill nets samples as a measure of the relative abundance of this species in the lake. The attached graph shows the combined catch rate of Walleye and Saugeye (number collected per net set) from 2014 –

2024. The catch rate in 2024 (16.7/net night) represented a 44% increase in relative abundance compared to 2023 (11.1/net night). The 2024 survey revealed a 25% increase from the 10-year average (12.6 /net night). This increase over the 10-year average can largely be attributed to meeting the allocated stocking numbers in recent years. The full allocation of Walleye was stocked in Flannagan Reservoir in 2019. In 2022 Flannagan received a full allocation of Walleye with the addition of Saugeye. In 2023 Flanagan received its full allocation as Saugeye. Saugeye are similar to Walleye and serve as a fill in when the production of Walleye does not satisfy full allocations. In 2024, Flanagan did not receive the full allocation due to a shortfall in hatchery production. However, there are still good numbers of fish the system. Fisherman should start to see increased numbers of fish of catchable size due to the full stockings in 2019, 2022, and 2023.



Historical catch rates of Walleye and Saugeye collected from Flannagan Reservoir from 2013 to 2023.

Walleye observed in the 2024 sample ranged from 17 – 25 inches in length with an average length of 20 inches and Saugeye ranged from 12 - 26 inches in length with an average length of 16 inches. Forty percent of the combined Walleye and Saugeye adult fish collected were ≥18 inches and 18% exceeded 20 inches in length. Many anglers target Walleye on the Cranesnest and Pound River arms of Flannagan Reservoir during the spawning run in March through April. However, anglers can also be very successful casting top-water lures at night in May through early June, which coincides with the Alewife spawn. As the season progresses and water temperatures increase, the Walleye will move deeper in the lake. This will require anglers to switch tactics and troll nightcrawler harnesses and crankbaits.



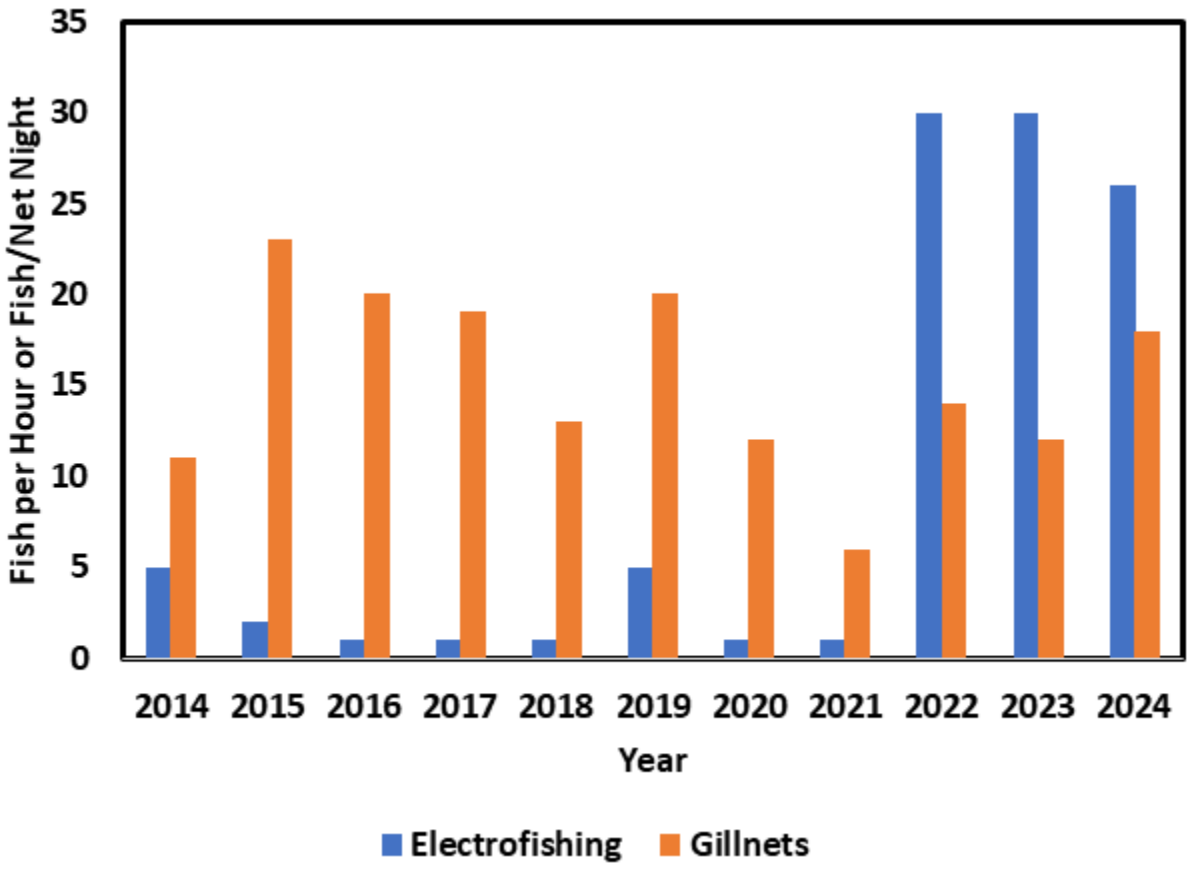
Length frequency distribution of Walleye and Saugeye collected during the 2024 gill net survey of Flannagan Reservoir**.**

South Holston

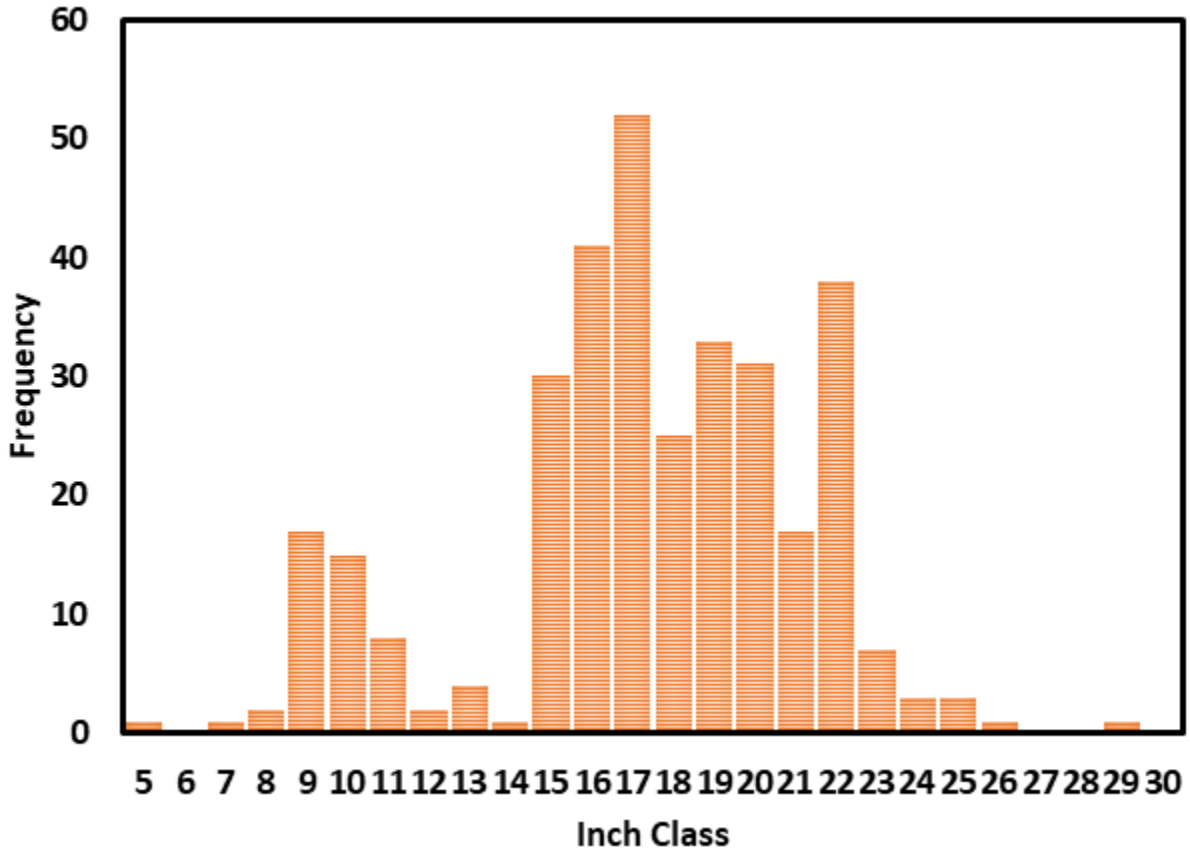
Anglers visiting South Holston Lake in 2025 should experience excellent Walleye fishing as the population continues to rebound. Sampling during 2024, including both electrofishing and gill netting, remained like 2023 with a desirable size structure with most adult Walleye collected larger than 18 inches. Electrofishing catch rates during spring 2024 were 26 fish/hr. which was similar to 2023 and well above the long-term average (7 fish/hr.), while the 2024 gill net catch rate increased to 18 fish per net and was above the long-term average (12 fish/net night). Winter gill net surveys provide a more complete picture of the Walleye population at South Holston Lake in terms of population densities, growth rates, and survival of stocked fingerlings. Anglers should enjoy the current state of the fishery as the population has quickly rebuilt due to more consistent stockings.

Anglers can expect average fishing during the spring spawning “run” on the South Fork Holston River due to a reduced but building lake population. Anglers congregate near the community of Alvarado from February through April to catch Walleye on the spring spawning “run”. During May and June, anglers find Walleye feeding along the shorelines of the lake. The post spawn top water bite in the lower lake will yield the best Walleye fishing Virginia has to offer. When Walleye move deeper during the summer months, successful anglers troll crawler harnesses on lead core line or use jigging spoons to reach the depths. Fall and winter fishing call for jigging spoons or jigs and live minnows.

The Walleye growth rate is outstanding, so anglers should find plenty of fish larger than the minimum size of 18 inches. Most Walleye exceed 10 inches in their first year and measure 15 to 18 inches in their second year. Walleye generally reach 20 inches by their third year. Recent analysis of the collected Walleye showed growth slows after age four with males seldom exceeding 24 or 25 inches in length. Trophy potential can be found with the females as they may reach lengths of 30 inches or more.



Sampling catch rates for Walleye in South Holston Reservoir 2014-2024. Blue columns represent spring electrofishing catch rates (fish per hour) and orange columns represent fall gill net catch rates (fish per net).



The current size structure of Walleye collected during sampling in 2024 (see graph above) shows that anglers can expect to find Walleye up to 29 inches, with the bulk of legal fish (18 inches) ranging from 18 to 22 inches.

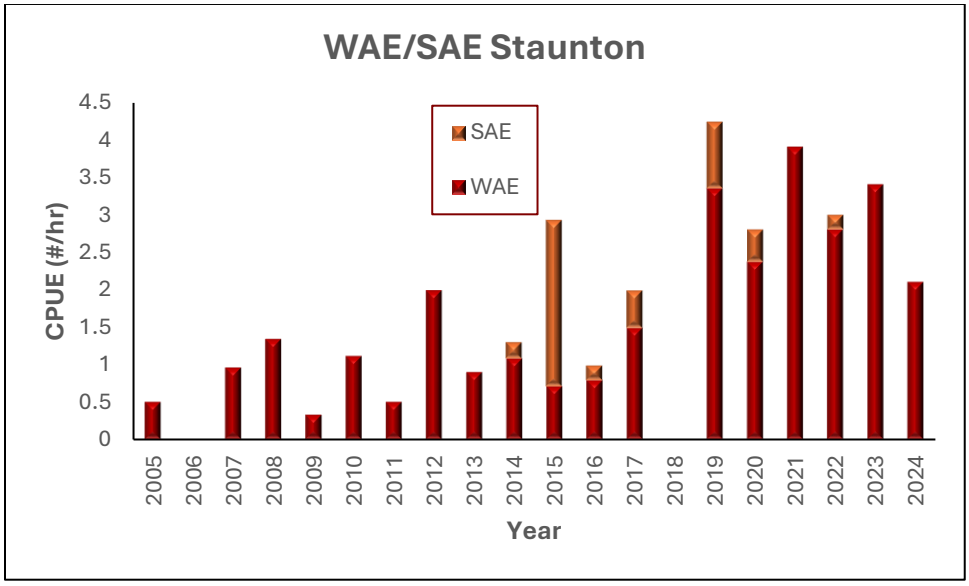
Hungry Mother Lake

This 108-acre lake provides anglers with a great opportunity to catch Walleye in a small lake setting. Located in Hungry Mother State Park, the lake is also a great destination for families. The Walleye population is stable or slightly increasing. There are good numbers of fish up to 20 inches and just enough larger ones to cause anglers to lose some sleep this summer. Walleye up to 28 inches in length have been landed in recent years. April, May, and June are the three best months, with night fishing generally being more productive. Most anglers use artificial lures, but live shad, minnows, and night crawlers are also very effective. The park provides boat rentals when in season and private boats can be launched at the boat ramp. Campsites and cabins provide anglers a place to stay while they discover the fishing opportunities that exist in Hungry Mother Lake.

South Central Virginia

Staunton River

Walleye fishing in the Staunton River has become a fishery to pay attention to, especially from Leesville dam to Altavista. Quality Walleye are now consistently being caught and sampled all the way to Brookneal. Fingerling and fry stocking into the Staunton historically resulted in limited success. Fortunately, recent stockings of Walleye into Leesville Reservoir have been much more successful, and anglers are reaping the rewards. A portion of the Walleye stocked into Leesville Reservoir passes through the dam and provides a boost to the Staunton fishery. The first figure below shows how VDWR sampling success, measured by the number of fish collected per hour (CPUE), with fall electrofishing surveys has improved over time. Saugeye, a Walleye x Sauger hybrid, which were stocked for three years when Walleye were unavailable, dominated the 2015 sample but now Walleye densities are improving, and anglers are seeing good creels of Walleye. Few Saugeye remain in the population, and none were collected in fall electrofishing surveys on the Staunton in 2021, 2023, or 2024.

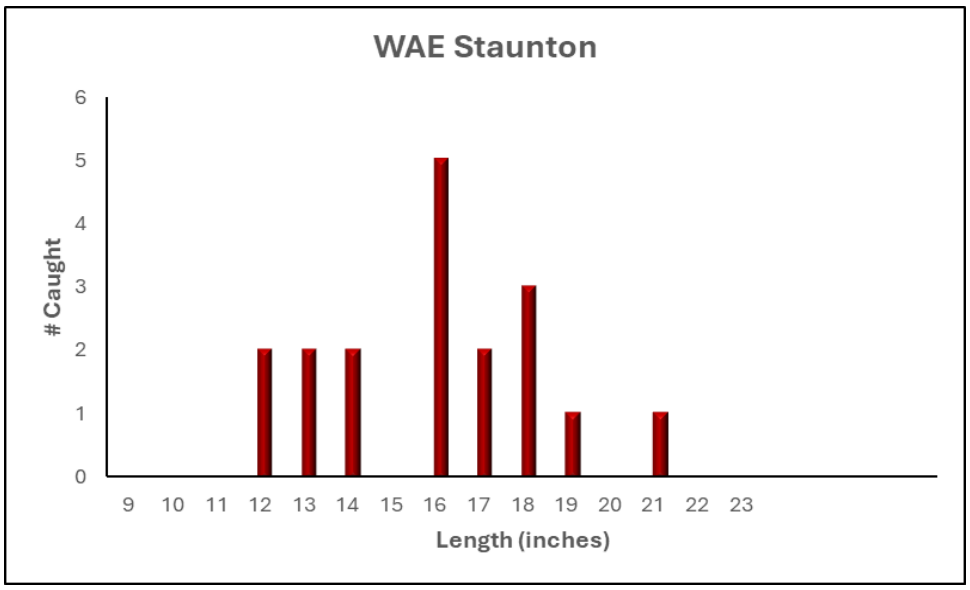


Historic catch rates of Walleye and Saugeye from the electrofishing of the Staunton River (2005 – 2024).

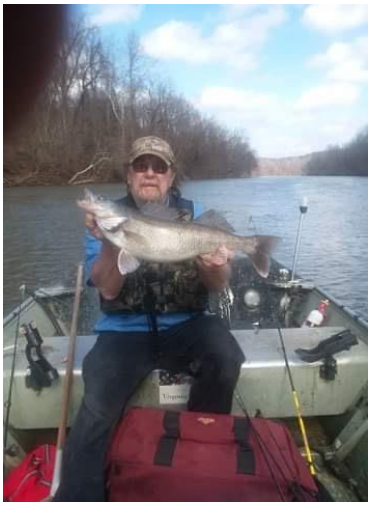
The largest fish sampled in 2024 was a 21-inch Walleye but larger individuals are certainly found in the river. 16 to 19-inch Walleye were collected and will provide excellent action for those anglers looking for a late winter, early spring fishery. Anglers are reminded that the legal minimum length limit is 18 inches and five fish can be harvested per day.

For information on catching Walleye in the Staunton please view our video at the following link.

Staunton River Walleye Fishing | Virginia DWR

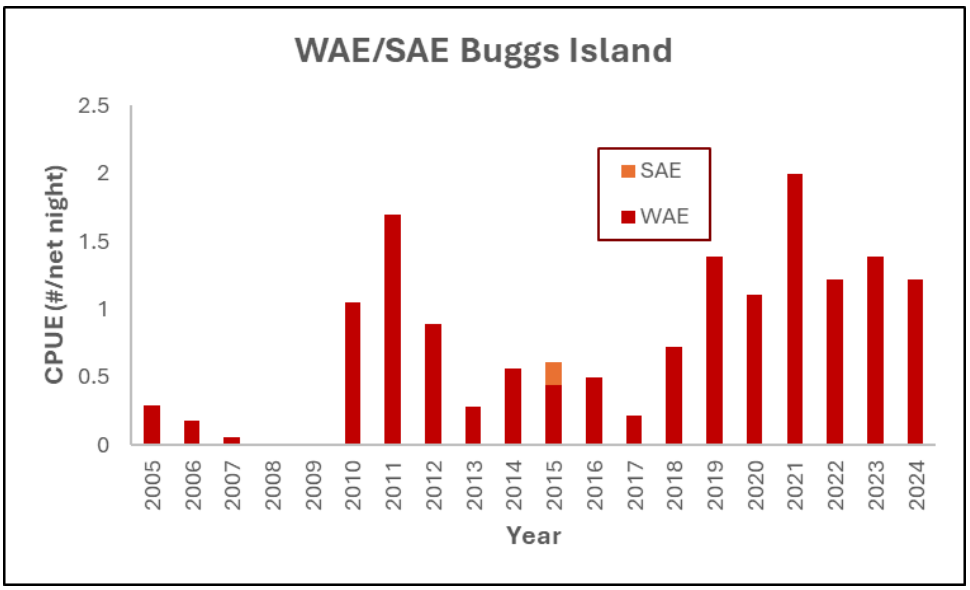


Length frequency distribution of Walleye collected from the 2024 fall electrofishing of the Staunton River.



Happy anglers displaying their Walleye catches from the Staunton River as well as the New River. Anglers are reminded to wear their PFDs as your photo might help you get into next year's Walleye Fishing Forecast.

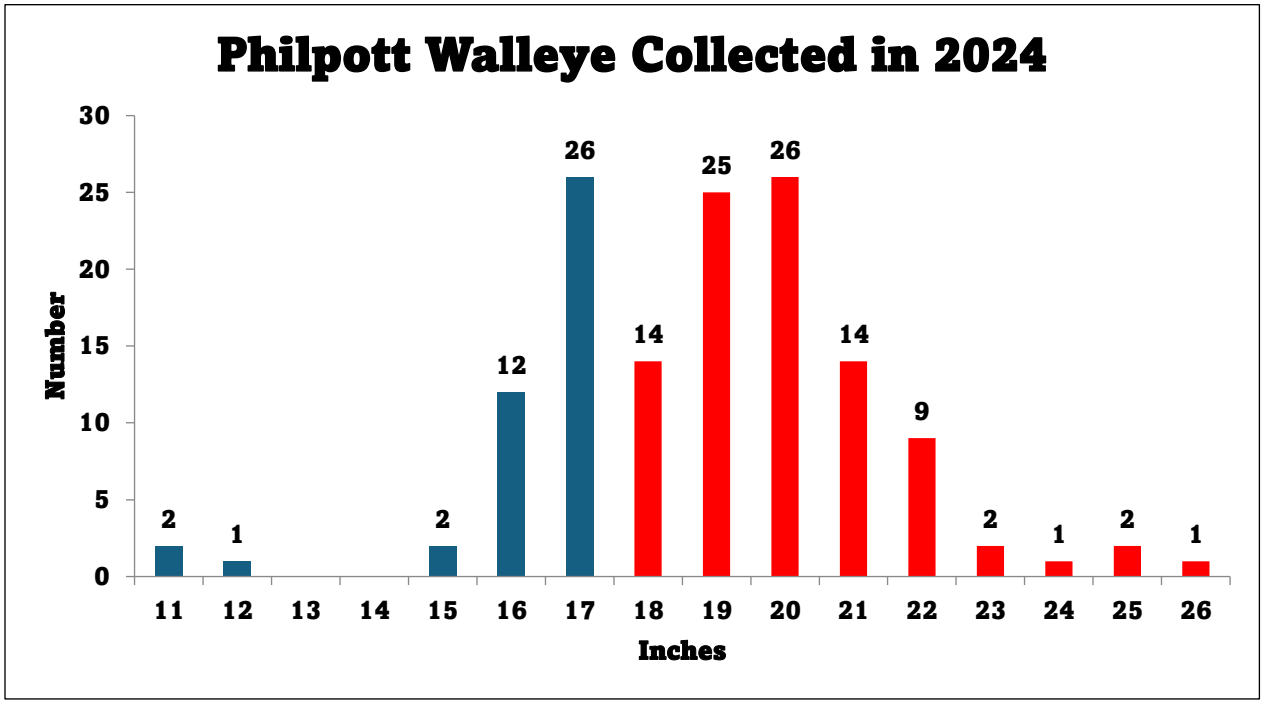
Another benefit of the stockings in the Roanoke/Staunton watershed is a boost in the Walleye fishery at Buggs Island Lake (AKA Kerr Reservoir). While they're still hard to target in this 50,000 acre reservoir, the opportunity to catch Walleye is improving each year. The final figure shows catch rates of Walleye and Saugeye in fall gillnet samples. A peak was deteced in 2021 but we continue to sample consistent numbers each year. Good Walleye numbers are seen mid-lake around Goat Island in the fall and winter months but uplake fishing should be good in early spring. Sub-legal (less than 18 inches) Walleye were sampled in both the river and Buggs Island Lake in 2024 indicating a strong fishery for several years to come. The Staunton River provides ample opportunity for anglers and paddlers alike. Enjoy this quality Walleye fishery!



Historic catch rate of Walleye and Saugeye collected from the gill net surveys of Buggs Island Lake.

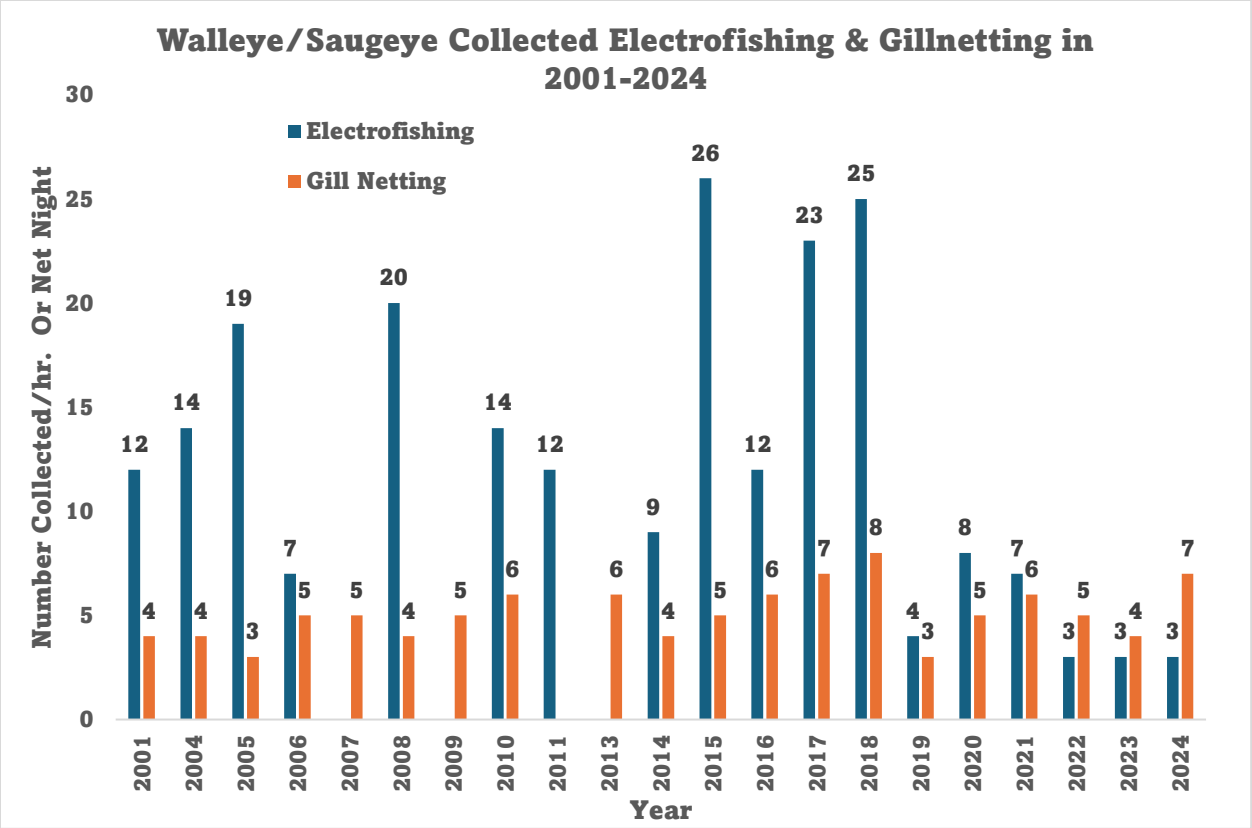
Philpott Reservoir

Walleye fishing success has slowed again in 2024 as Walleye anglers reported catching fewer Walleyes in Philpott Reservoir in 2024 when compared to years past. Again, this is likely due to lower Walleye population numbers following four years (2016-2019) of reduced stocking numbers and poor survival of the 2020 stocked year class based on the lasted fish population surveys. However, from 2021-2023 stocking numbers have ranged from 148,000 to 197,000 and the numbers are increasing again. Fish population surveys from 2024 showed that most of the catch is in the 16–22-inch range. A total of 137 Walleye and Saugeye combined were collected in 2024 with an average total length of 19 inches (2-2.5 pounds). Sixty-nine percent of the Walleyes collected in 2024 sampling efforts were 18 inches or longer. The following chart shows the sizes and numbers of Walleye and Saugeye biologists collected in 2024. The red bars on the chart indicate legal size (18") fish. Walleye reach 18 inches at about 2 years of age and most male Walleye grow slowly after reaching this size. Female Walleye typically grow well for another few years, with some achieving larger sizes.



Length frequency distribution of Walleye collected from Philpott Reservoir.

Walleye population abundance in Philpott Reservoir is measured using two sampling methods: electrofishing in the spring and gillnets in the fall. The reason for using two sampling methods is that when compared to bass, Walleyes are less likely to be associated with shoreline habitat during early April. Because this daytime electrofishing catch rate may not always accurately represent the Walleye population, gillnets are also used. Electrofishing catch rates vary considerably from year to year. Electrofishing catch rates for the May 2024 sample was (3.3/hr.) and the gillnet catch rate of 7 fish per net.



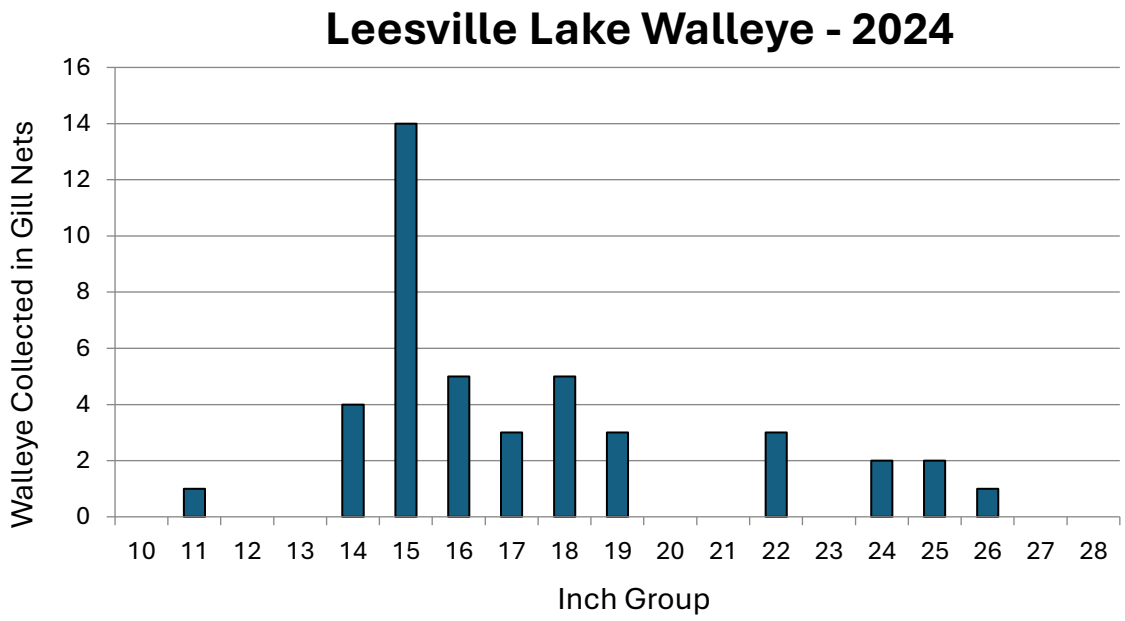
Comparison of electrofishing and gill net catch rates for Philpott Reservoir from historic trend data.

Skilled anglers, who spend time learning effective techniques for Walleye and find areas that are productive, should have successful fishing trips. Top-water night fishing is very popular and productive during the Alewife spawn in May and June. By late June, Walleye start moving into deeper water and are caught on nightcrawler harnesses and plugs trolled in deeper water. As water temperatures increase throughout the summer, Walleye continue to move deeper seeking cooler water. Anglers must fish deeper throughout the summer or fish at night to capitalize on this fishery. Catching a few Walleyes per outing is considered good, however, some reports from anglers in 2024 reported difficulty locating and catching a few Walleyes per trip, so it may take more time and skill in 2025 to boat Walleye.

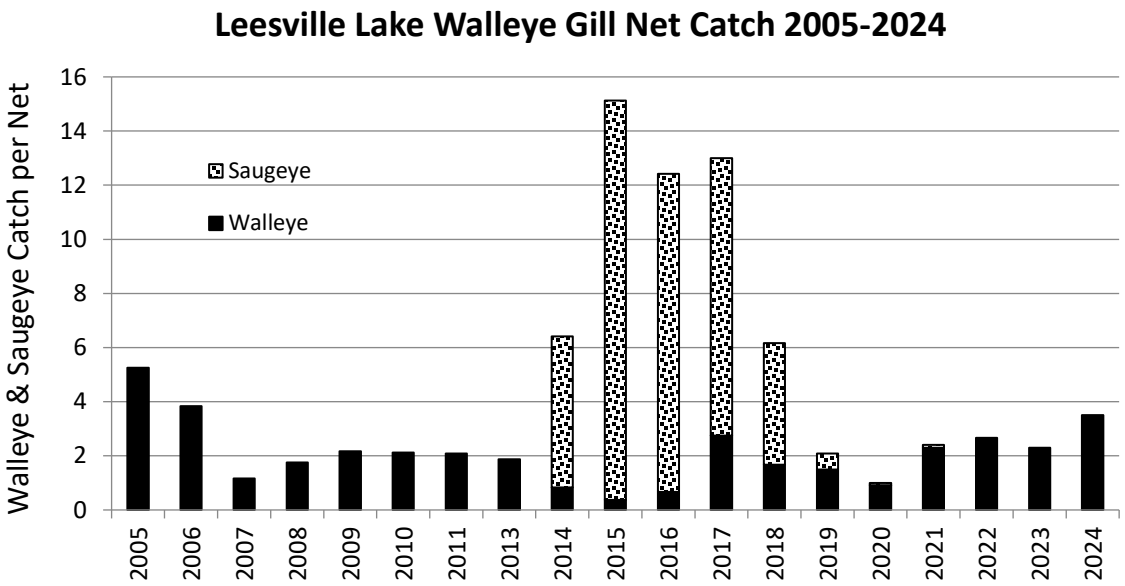
Leesville Lake

The 2025 fishing season for Walleye at Leesville Lake will continue to be challenging. Fishing has historically been poor due to low retention of stocked Walleye in the lake, as most Walleye eventually pass through the Leesville dam and into the Staunton River. Various data collections within Leesville Lake and the Staunton River confirm that high numbers of Walleye, regardless of size, pass through the Leesville Lake dam every year. Saugeye were stocked in 2013-2015 but only Walleye have been stocked since 2016 to preserve the Staunton River Walleye population for hatchery broodstock collections.

This fishery usually contains limited numbers of Walleye with overall numbers of Walleye remaining lower than any other Virginia lake stocked with Walleye. The 2021 and 2023 year classes were better than average for Leesville Lake and those fish will be primarily 15-22 inches in 2025. Even though recent stockings have slightly improved the population, most of those fish will leave the lake and end up in the Staunton River. While the Leesville Lake Walleye fishery remains less than desirable, stockings into the lake are essential to maintain the Walleye population in the Staunton River, Walleye stocked directly into the river have very low survival. The only way to sustain the river fishery and Walleye broodstock in the river for hatchery production and stocking, is to continue stocking Leesville Lake. Walleye that remain in Leesville Lake have good growth rates and typically reach 18 inches between ages two and three.



Length frequency distribution of Walleye collected during the 2024 gill net survey of Leesville Lake.



Historic trend data of Walleye catch from gill netting of Leesville Lake (2005 – 2024).

The most productive Walleye fishing is typically between Leesville Dam and mile marker 6. Night fishing in May and June, with floating or shallow running plugs cast to the shoreline, should not be overlooked. These fish often frequent shallow water during the night in spring and early summer. During daylight hours in the spring, fish the shoreline contour, targeting depths of 10-20 ft., then move deeper if those depths are unproductive. Walleye are very light sensitive and prefer dark or shaded habitat; consequently, these fish will frequent shallower depths if the water is shaded or stained but will remain deeper during the day if the water is clear. Rock cliffs and steeper shorelines should be the most productive, with some coves also holding fish. As water temperatures increase in late spring and throughout the summer, fish continue moving deeper, seeking cooler water, and become most active during nighttime hours. Leesville can be a challenge due to extreme daily water fluctuations and low fish densities, but anglers who spend time learning productive Walleye angling techniques for Leesville and concentrate on habitats that hold Walleye, may encounter some of these elusive fish. Leesville Lake experiences very light fishing pressure and can provide solitude for anglers looking to avoid crowds and boating traffic.

Northern Virginia

Shenandoah River

Walleye can be found in the Shenandoah River from Warren Dam in Front Royal downstream beyond the Virginia / West Virginia State line. Although they are not as numerous in the Shenandoah as they are in other rivers, their population is stable, and the fish are showing good growth rates reaching lengths exceeding 25 inches. In the spring of 2014, VDWR began an annual stocking program of Walleye fry in the Shenandoah River to supplement the natural population and increase the number of Walleye present for anglers to target. In 2024 the river received its ninth stocking of 20,023 fingerling Walleye. Half of the allocation are stocked just upstream of Morgan's Ford Landing. The remainder are spread out evenly between the boat ramps at Farms Riverview, Route 50, Lockes, and Rt 7. Anglers should expect to see an increase in numbers in 2025 due to the surplus fingerlings stocked in 2023. During our January sample we captured 41 Walleye at a rate of 11.7 fish per hour, which is right on the long-term average (Figure 1). During the February spawning run biologists and technicians handled 54 fish (catch rate = 37.8 fish per hour). The Walleye averaged 21 inches in length, with the largest female topping 30" (Figure 2). Most fish sampled were of legal harvest size or greater. Anglers should target the spring spawning run and focus on the 11-mile section from the landing at Morgan's Ford to Route 50. The remainder of the year they can be found throughout the Main Stem within the deeper pools. We continue to run into anglers who are turning on to this fishery, so plan a trip to the Shenandoah soon.

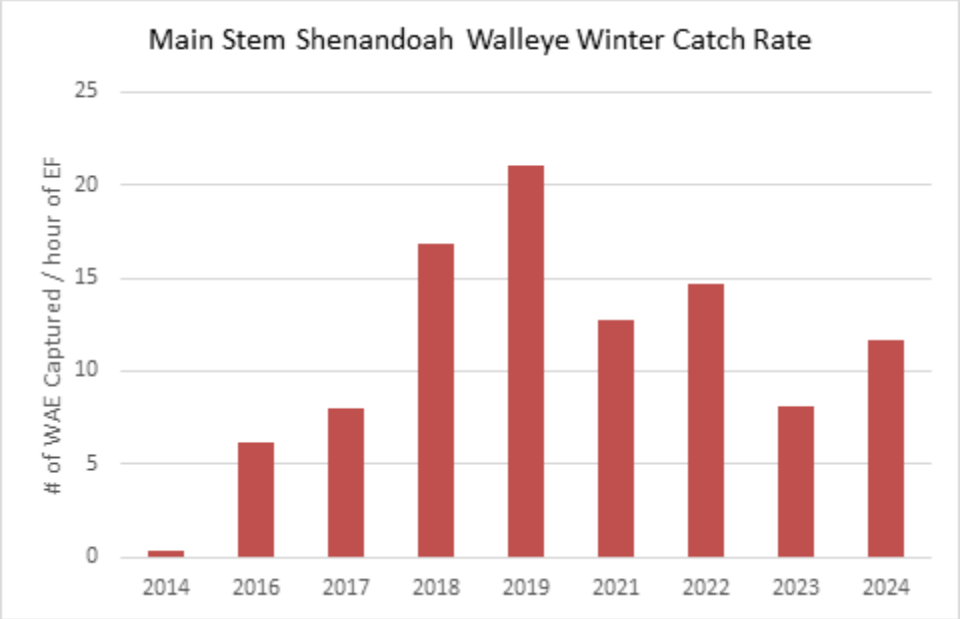


Figure 1: Main Stem Shenandoah Walleye winter catch rates using boat electrofishing. This graph depicts the catch rate over time. The 2024 CPUE fell in line with the historical mean.

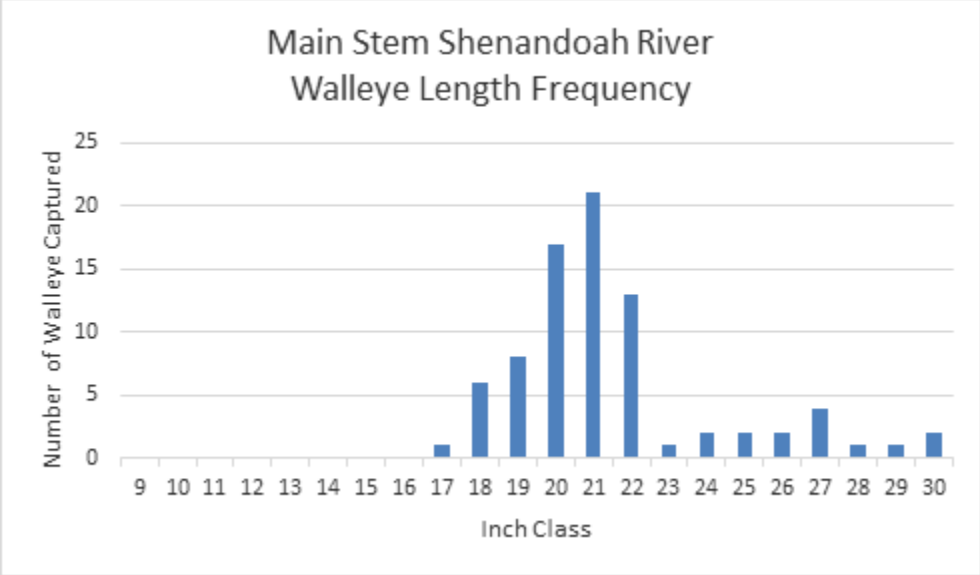


Figure 2: Length frequency distribution of Walleye collected from winter and spring electrofishing surveys on the Main Stem Shenandoah River in 2024.

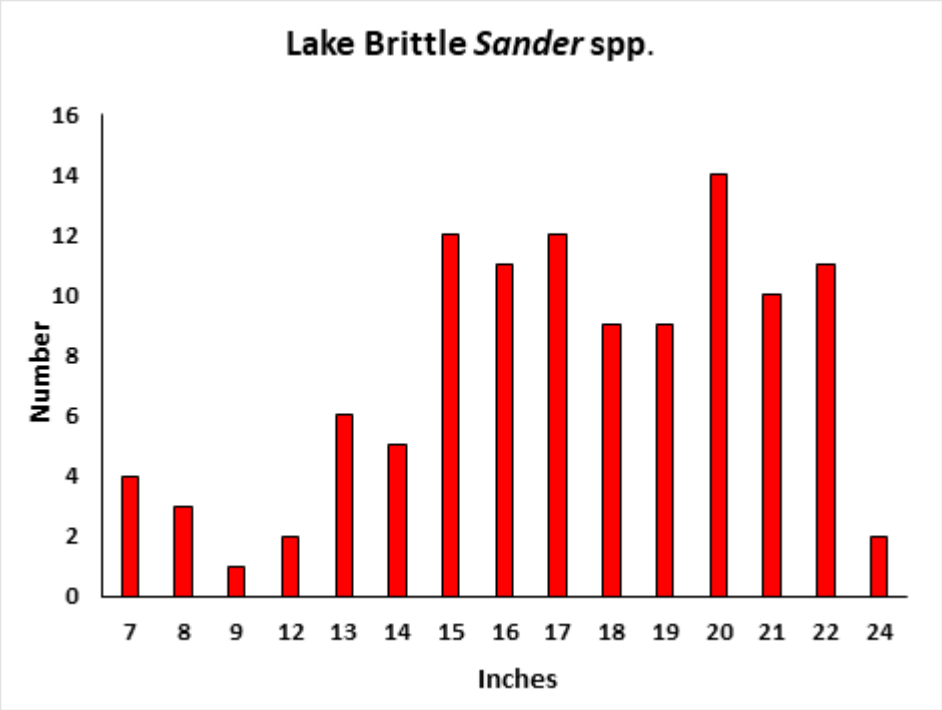
Lake Anna

The Saugeye (SAE) population within Lake Anna is dependent on VDWR stocking efforts. As a result of the 2013 stocking success and being well received by anglers, biologists decided to continue stocking every 2 to 3 years in order to maintain a SAE fishery. The 2021 stocking consisted of 5 SAE/acre and 10/acre in 2023. The fall gill net surveys of 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 revealed high abundances of SAE, with collections of 63, 166, 373 and 214. Collected SAE ranged in size from 13 to 24” in 2024, with the average sized fish being 17.8”. Gillnet catch rate was 6/net night in 2024, down from 10/net night in 2023. This decline in catch rate was associated with no YOY (Young of Year) fish in the collection, as Lake Anna was not stocked with SAE in 2024. The majority of the fish collected were from 16-19 inches, suggesting anglers can expect larger size SAE in the upcoming years. The 2024 survey revealed 39% of fish

were of legal size as compared to 29% in 2023. The statewide 18” min/5 per day creel limit is in place at Lake Anna. Recent Saugeye action has been solid on Lake Anna with experienced guides finding productive patterns that have yielded some great fish in the 5–6-pound range.

Lake Brittle

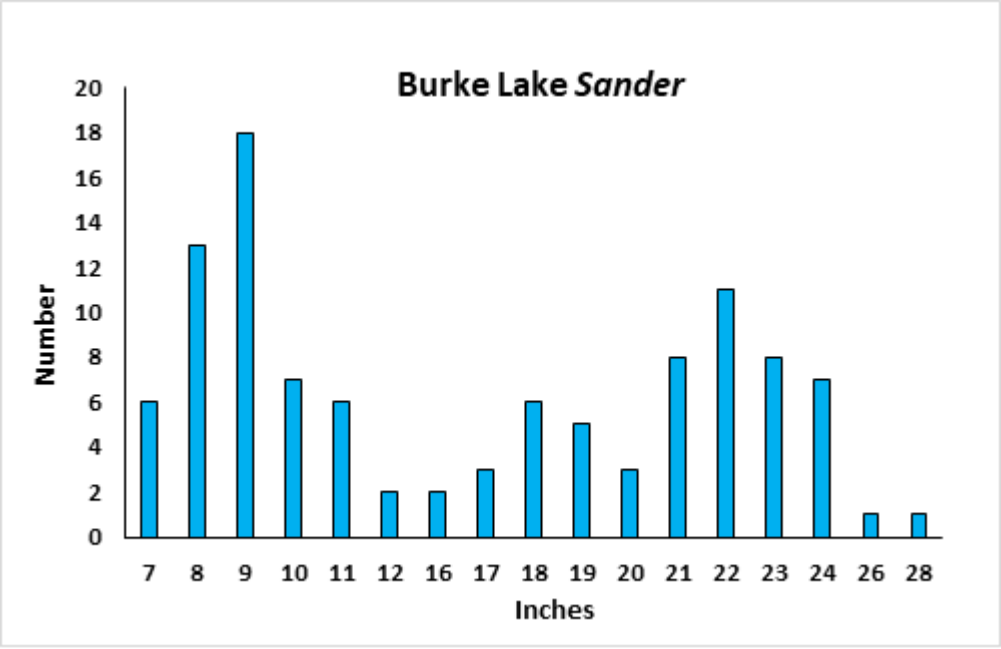
Lake Brittle is a 77-acre impoundment owned by VDWR in Fauquier County. The night electrofishing surveys of 2024 yielded 4 Walleye (WAE) and 107 Saugeye (SAE) for a catch rate of 41 fish/hr. This favorable catch rate revealed an increase from 2023 (25 fish/hr.) and could be attributed from the recruitment of fish from multiple years of higher stocking rates. Stocking rates of Walleye were historically 100/acre, but due to a declining population it was increased to 200/acre in 2019. It is currently stocked with SAE at 150/acre. Saugeye have better survival overall. The reason for the decline was likely poor juvenile survival from 2014 through 2017 resulting in failed year classes. A variety of environmental issues may have contributed including lake drawdowns during dam and spillway renovation, emergence of dense *Hydrilla*, and prolonged high/turbid water conditions due to increased storm water runoff. The average total length of fish collected was 17.2” and 2.1 lbs. with 46% of the collected fish greater than the 18-inch minimum size limit. The largest WAE collected was a 20” male weighing 2.6 lbs. The largest SAE was a 24” female weighing 5.2 lbs. The lake provides a suitable population of Walleye and Saugeye and has some of the best bank and boat access in Northern Virginia. Stronger year classes since 2019 should continue to provide improved fishing and size structure. The statewide 18” minimum/5 per day limit is in effect at Lake Brittle.



Length frequency distribution of Walleye and Saugeye collected from the 2024 electrofishing of Lake Brittle.

Burke Lake

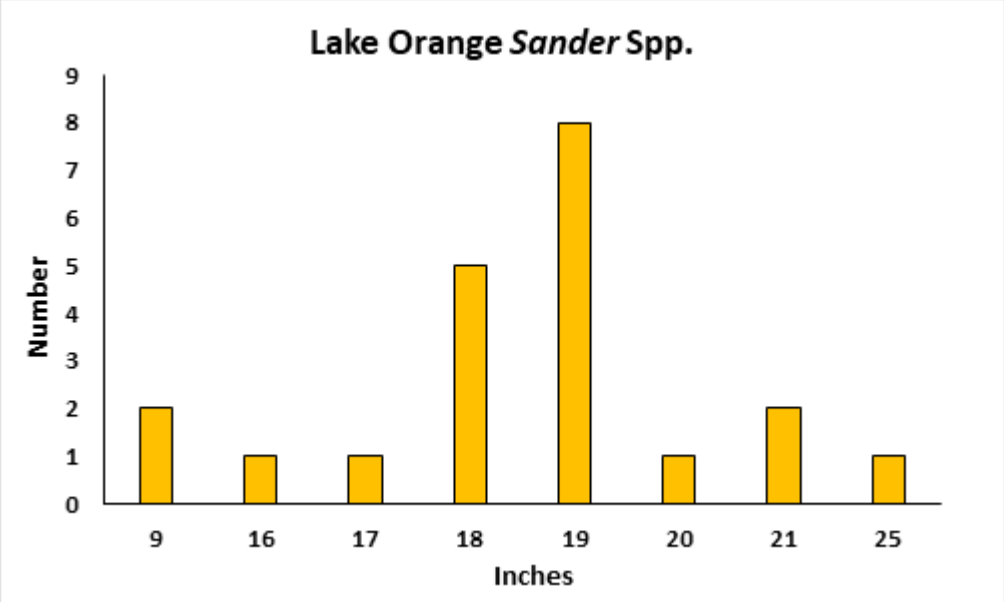
Burke Lake is a 218-acre impoundment owned by the VDWR located in Fairfax County – just a stone's throw from Washington D.C. Past stockings are still yielding quality results with anglers catching Walleye in the 4-7-pound range. The lake record Walleye is an 8 lb. 12 oz. trophy. The last few years has seen the Walleye stocking allocation transition to Saugeye when readily available from the DWR hatchery system. The stocking rate has remained consistent at 100 fish/acre. Anglers in pursuit of Walleye (WAE) and Saugeye (SAE) can expect to find most fish in the 2-to-3-pound range. Electrofishing catch rates were an excellent 34 fish/hour in 2024, which was more than triple the 11 fish/hour in 2023 and well above the goal of 10/hour for small impoundments. Spring 2024 surveys resulted in 46% of WAE and SAE greater than the minimum size of 18 inches. The abundance of juvenile fish set the average length at 15.2 inches. The sample yielded 21 WAE and 86 SAE for a total of 107. The largest WAE was a 28" female and weighed just over 7 lbs. The largest SAE was a 24" female weighing 6 lbs. The majority of the fish collected were between 8-10 and 21-24 inches; showing strong year classes to bolster the population with larger fish. Anglers can expect good numbers of 3-5 lb. fish and are encouraged to try trolling deep diving, fire tiger colored crank baits and spinner rigs around the lake off deep water break lines and points adjacent to deep water. Anglers should also remember that Burke Lake stratifies during the summer; Walleye and most other fish stay above the thermocline (usually about 10 feet down) during this time. Serious anglers can try fishing Burke Lake at night, when WAE and SAE actively feed. The VDWR ramp on the lower end of the lake is open 24 hours a day to fishing and launching boats only. The statewide 18" min/5 per day creel limit is in place at Burke.



Length frequency distribution of collected Walleye and Saugeye from the 2024 electrofishing of Burke Lake.

Lake Orange

Lake Orange is a VDWR owned 124-acre impoundment in Orange County. Anglers looking to fish for Walleye (WAE) and Saugeye (SAE) in the central Virginia Piedmont should look no further than Lake Orange as it has produced fish over 5 pounds. Electrofishing catch rate was 8 fish/hr. in 2024, an increase from the 5/hr. in 2023 but still below the desired 10/hr. goal. Spring nighttime surveys resulted in 62% of collected fish being legal, indicating the population is mostly comprised of older fish with an average of 18"and 2.3 lbs. The largest WAE was a respectable female that measured 25" and weighed 6.2 pounds. The Saugeye population is still developing with the largest collected Saugeye at 20" and just shy of 3 lbs. Lake Orange is currently stocked with 200 SAE fingerlings per acre in an attempt to counter poor juvenile survival and to boost the population within the lake. Most fish are caught during the late spring and early summer by anglers fishing for bass, although a few anglers do specifically target SAE here. Anglers should note that an 18" min/5 per day limit is in place at Lake Orange.



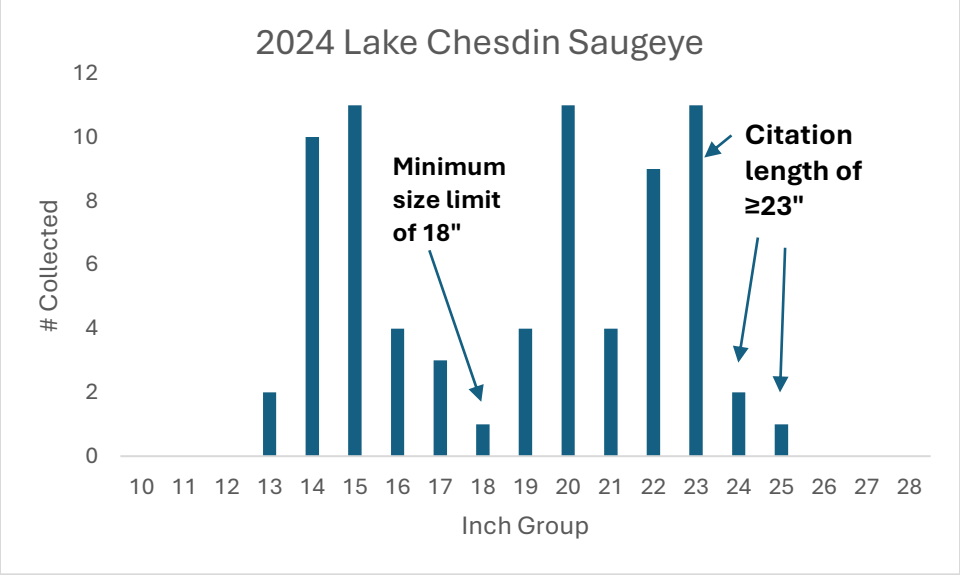
Length distribution of Walleye and Saugeye collected from the night electrofishing of Lake Orange in 2024

Eastern Virginia

Lake Chesdin

The Walleye and Saugeye populations within Lake Chesdin are highly dependent on VDWR stocking efforts. The initial stockings of Saugeye fingerlings into Lake Chesdin in 2013 and 2014 were extremely successful showing a high survival rate and great growth potential. Past Walleye stockings have not been nearly as successful as the Saugeye stockings, and this has pushed management decisions to go forth with Saugeye as one of the primary introductions into Lake Chesdin. The most recent stockings have seen Saugeye stocked in 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2023 with Walleye stocked in 2020 and 2024. The 2023 stocking consisted of 103,736 Saugeye fingerlings being dispersed in a pelagic manner. The 2024 stockings consisted of 96,179 Walleye fingerlings.

The fall surveys of 2024 revealed a decent abundance of Saugeye with 73 fish collected. The catch showed a decline from 2023 (n = 110) and failed to reach the record of 2022 (n = 192). Collected Saugeye ranged in size from 13 to 25 inches, with the average sized fish measured at 19.22 inches. This average length showed a slight decline from 2023 (mean TL = 19.54 inches) due to the increased presence of juvenile fish. The vast majority of the collected Saugeye were fish from the 2021 and 2023 stockings. The collection revealed and impressive tally of 25 citation-sized fish greater than 4 pounds in weight. The largest Saugeye weighed an impressive 6.5 pounds. Past surveys have topped out with Saugeye in the 7 to 7.5-pound range but these larger-sized females have been elusive the last two years.



Length frequency distribution of the Saugeye collected from Lake Chesdin during gill net surveys of 2024.

The Saugeye collection revealed 58.9% of fish were greater than 18 inches in total length. This percent of legal fish revealed a decline from the 2023 survey (84.5% ≥ 18”). From all indications, the Saugeye population is taking full advantage of the Gizzard Shad forage base. One of the more interesting facts from the 2024 survey was that 25 Saugeye reached past the citation weight of 4 pounds. Of these 25 weight citations, only 14 of them would classify as length citations (≥ 23”), which goes to show how healthy the collected fish were. The collection of Walleye has crashed over the past couple of years as VDWR has concentrated more heavily on Saugeye introductions. The 2024 survey did not reveal any Walleye in the collection. Time will tell if the Walleye stocking of 2024 will result in year class recruitment.

The gizzard shad population within Lake Chesdin is extremely abundant with a high proportion of fish in the 5 to 8-inch range. Lake Chesdin can be a difficult lake to fish due to the surplus of available forage. Anglers should not get too discouraged if they cannot find a productive pattern that works the first few times out on the lake. Anglers are encouraged to target these schools of shad, as you never know when a Walleye or Saugeye will strike a properly presented lure or bait. Deep diving crankbaits, that mimic the size of gizzard shad, are a good start for targeting the Walleye and Saugeye. Anglers are also encouraged to try trolling around with bottom bouncers and nightcrawler harness rigs. During the fall and winter months, shad schools will typically concentrate toward the lower third of the lake. The vast majority of the larger Saugeye were found toward the lower third of the lake during the December surveys.

VDWR biologists began tagging collected Walleye and Saugeye from Lake Chesdin in 2015 as part of the statewide tagging program. Additional Saugeye were tagged in 2024. Anglers should be on the lookout for a Floy tag just below the dorsal fin on the left-hand side of the fish's body.

Appomattox River

Anglers familiar with the Walleye and Saugeye fishing action on Lake Chesdin are most likely aware of the fishable populations below the dam. The Walleye and Saugeye populations of the Appomattox River below Brasfield Dam have yielded some positive results over the last few years. With recent stockings of Lake Chesdin centered around the higher survival rate of stocked Saugeye, anglers should expect to catch more Saugeye than Walleye. Some older male Walleye may still be present as catch rates of Walleye on the lake have been declining. Depending on the time of the year and the water flow, anglers will find fish stacked up within close proximity to Brasfield Dam. Anglers are reminded to stay the required distance away from the base of Brasfield Dam and to respect the current that can cascade over the dam especially during high flows. At other times of the year, fish may be congregated near VSU by Patton Park. Anglers have caught Saugeye in the James River as far to the east as Powell Creek. There is no telling where some of these fish will slide on down the system. With the continued stockings of Lake Chesdin, there is a decent chance that the fishing action in the lower Appomattox River will improve. VDWR does not actively stock the Appomattox River so the populations of Walleye and Saugeye are solely based on whatever fish escape from Lake Chesdin. Natural reproduction within this stretch of the river is possible but highly unlikely that juvenile fish survival would support a healthy population. Chesterfield County has the John J. Radcliffe Park situated below Brasfield Dam. This area along the river provides some limited bank fishing access and a canoe/kayak launch area. The similar creel limit of 5 fish/person in aggregate with the 18" minimum size limit still applies in the Appomattox River. Any tagged fish caught in the river, above or below the lake, will be honored for a reward check. Movements of lake tagged fish within the Appomattox River have provided some interesting findings.

Dedicated anglers have recently caught some amazing Saugeye from the Appomattox River.

Lake Whitehurst

Lake Whitehurst, located in Virginia Beach, is a 458-acre lake that has been stocked in the last few years with both Walleye and Saugeye. Whitehurst was once a popular Walleye hotspot, but Walleye stockings were discontinued when the lake's public access was removed in the mid-2000's. The lake has a new boat access located off of Shore Drive and VDWR has re-initiated the annual Saugeye/Walleye stockings. Anglers should expect moderate success when fishing for these fish, as this fishery is still being established. Angler reports indicate scattered success with a few legal-sized Saugeye reported. Lake Whitehurst is a rather shallow impoundment with a few deeper pits that provide some change in the depth contour. A City of Norfolk boating permit must be purchased to fish this impoundment. Stay tuned as this unique fishery should only get better in the years to come!

Additional Fisheries

Anglers may encounter decent Walleye action on the upper end of Lake Gaston. Located directly below Buggs Island Lake is Tailrace Park which provides great access to the upper reach of Lake Gaston. A large % of the Walleye population within Lake Gaston will make a spawning run migration up to Kerr Dam each March. Anglers can discover an abundance of male Walleye first in this area of the lake before the larger-sized females make their presence known. The ideal time for each spawning cycle could depend on factors such as water temperature, lunar phase, and water flow. All anglers should be warned that water releases from Buggs Island Lake (aka Kerr Reservoir) can raise the water level extremely fast when power generation occurs at this hydroelectric dam. Citation-sized Walleye can be found in Lake Gaston as evidence by the cover photo of this forecast in which Henry Bagwell proudly displayed his great 5 lbs. 8 oz. Walleye. Way to go Henry!

Recent reports have surfaced of the increased presence of Walleye on the James River. The majority of these reports have been centered around the fall line area in Richmond. A remnant population of Walleye has been holding on in this area of the river for many years. Past stockings of Walleye fingerlings on the Rivanna River aided the Walleye population on the lower James River after fish slipped out of the Rivanna. An occasional Walleye can be found near Lynchburg when conditions are right. Some reports have shed light on the large-scale movements of Saugeye on the Appomattox River in which fish have migrated out of the system to be found near Jordan

Point on the James as well as down in Powell Creek. Anglers should not expect to catch a limit of Walleye or Saugeye from the James River but might be surprised from time to time while fishing for bass.

Regional breakdown of stocked waters with ratings of each Walleye/Saugeye population

Region	Waterbody	Impoundment Size (acres)	Rating
Southwest Virginia	New River		Excellent
	Flannagan Reservoir	1,143	Excellent
	South Holston Lake	7,580	Excellent
	Hungry Mother Lake	108	Good
South Central Virginia	Staunton River		Excellent
	Philpott Reservoir	2,800	Good
	Leesville Lake	3,400	Fair
Northern Virginia	Shenandoah River		Good
	Lake Anna	9,600	Excellent
	Lake Brittle	77	Good
	Burke Lake	218	Good
	Lake Orange	124	Fair
Eastern Virginia	Lake Chesdin	3,100	Excellent
	Lake Whitehurst	458	Fair
	Little Creek Reservoir	947	Fair

Tagging Studies

Tagging studies are ongoing in several of the waters mentioned above and offer valuable information to fisheries biologists about how anglers use the resources that DWR has invested in. If you catch a tagged Walleye or Saugeye, mail the reward tag to the address printed on the tag and VDWR will send you a $20 reward. Please be patient as it takes time to process the reward payment. Thank you for your part in helping VDWR evaluate our Walleye and Saugeye fisheries.

For additional information on the tagging studies and the various fisheries, contact the following offices:

Upper New River, Flannagan Reservoir, South Holston Reservoir, Hungry Mother Lake: Marion Office (276) 783-4860

Leesville & Philpott Reservoirs: Forest Office (434) 525-7522

Staunton River: Farmville Office (434) 392-9645

Lakes Anna, Brittle, Burke, & Orange: Fredericksburg Office (540) 889-4169

Shenandoah River: Verona Office (540)248-9360

Lake Chesdin, Appomattox River, Little Creek Reservoir & Lake Whitehurst: Charles City Office (804) 829-6580