

10. LAKE MEAD

History - Lake Mead was impounded in 1935 following the completion of Boulder Dam. Prior to the dam, the Colorado river had carp, channel catfish and four endemic nongame fish. In 1954, threadfin shad were introduced and the largemouth bass fishery flourished. In 1969, the largemouth fishing was waning and the management was changed to a two-stage reservoir with warmwater fish stocked in the shallow shoreline zones and coldwater fish stocked into the deep coldwater zones. A total of seven trout species and one warmwater species (stripers) were introduced. By 1974, reproduction of the striped bass was documented and the trout fishery began to wane. In 1983, trout stocking was discontinued for a seven-year period while the striped bass reigned supreme. In 1995, two new species, smallmouth bass and blue Tilapia, were documented in the lake.

Pertinent Information - Lake Mead has a maximum depth of 465 feet and covers 150,000 surface acres over its 110-mile length. Game fish include largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, channel catfish, black bullhead catfish, bluegill sunfish, green sunfish, black crappie, striped bass, rainbow trout and walleye. Catch rates for 2003 were 3.69 fish per angler day. Stripers averaged 15.88 inches in 2003, rainbow trout 10.2 inches and channel catfish 13.8 inches. Approximately 86% of the catch was made up of stripers and 7% were rainbow trout, with largemouth bass, channel catfish, bluegill and black crappie making up the other 6% of the catch. Peak catch rates are usually June and July and again in October and November. The most productive months to harvest largemouth bass are June, July and October; to harvest bluegill are May and June; to harvest black crappie January, November and April; to harvest channel catfish June, July and October; to harvest rainbow trout are January, February, and March; and to harvest stripers are July, October and November. Fish can be harvested any time of the day or night if the angler is well equipped, knowledgeable and versatile. During the cold months of November through March, striped bass can be taken during the day with bait (threadfin shad captured with cast net) and at night with top water plugs such as the AC plug fished with a slow retrieve. Additionally, bait can be fished under a clear bubble with or without a slip sinker. Largemouth bass can be patterned in both shallow and deep water with artificial lures fished early morning or evenings. Black crappie can be taken in the Overton Arm, Muddy River Arm and/or Virgin River Arm at night with live bait such as shiners and/or jigs. Fish against rock walls and in brushy areas. Trout can be taken in the immediate vicinity of their stocking with conventional gear such as worms, Power Bait or lures. Channel catfish occasionally hit spinners, but are usually captured while fishing on the bottom utilizing fresh fish parts, liver, prawns or prepared catfish bait fished on a sliding sinker with a treble hook.

Shad are the best bait for stripers, but are, at times, hard to find. Prepared bait and anchovies are good replacements as well as lures such as Sassy Shad and KastMasters. Numerous top water gear works during fish "boils". Check with the local sporting goods dealer. They will be more than happy to sell the latest "hot" top water lure. Stripers are fished in two ways: at depth (up to 80 feet) with prepared bait or spoons and hunting boils (surface activity generated by stripers actively feeding on shad), then fishing the

boil with top water plugs. Chumming is allowed on Lake Mead with anything except game fish parts. One of the favorite chums is anchovies. Fish over the chum for at least an hour then move to a different spot. At times, anchoring along a steep drop off and chumming on a set pattern will do the trick. Striped bass on the hunt move in schools and will clean up an area quickly, then move on.

Fishing at night is a slow relaxing way to spend an evening. Bait up, chum up, "bell" up and have a seat. You could catch anything from a catfish to a striper to a leatherneck turtle. Striped bass up to 43 pounds have been taken utilizing this method, however, the normal size is 2 to 3 pounds and these make excellent table fare.

While fishing in the back of coves during the spring and summer, look for weedbeds. Holes in the beds and a clean bottom often indicate nesting Tilapia. Try fishing with corn, peas, prepared meats such as hot dogs and/or sour mash or corn meal. Tilapia can weigh as much as 5 pounds and are excellent to eat.

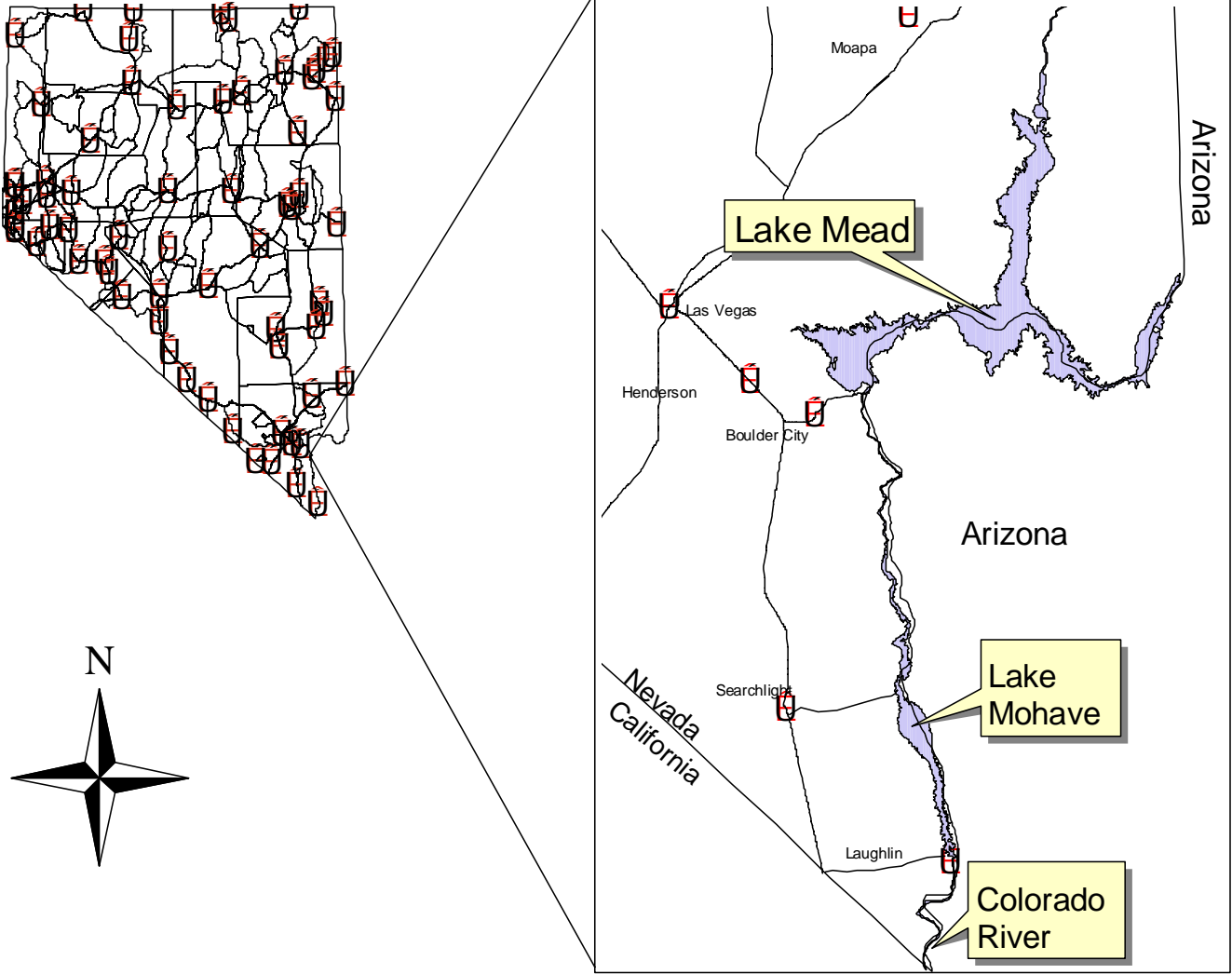
Camping - Camping via boat is allowed lake wide, while shore camping is becoming restricted. Established mobile type campgrounds are becoming the commonplace around the lake. Drive-to type campgrounds are found at every launch ramp except South Cove, Hemenway and Government Wash. Amenities include showers, water, tables and grills. Areas with full hookups include the Trailer Village, Echo Bay Marina and Overton Marina. Floating restrooms will soon be appearing around the lake. Seven were installed in 2001. Things to Consider - Summer temperatures at times reach 110°F, so carry water and leave a note as to your destination and expected time of return. The lake can, at times, get very rough, so listen to the weather forecast before boating for any distance, especially in a small craft.

Stocking - Approximately 85,900 9-inch rainbow trout are to be stocked into Lake Mead in 2006. Fish are stocked at Horsepower Cove, Hemenway Point, and Saddle Cove at B3 and B5 (also known as Hatchery Cove and Pumphouse Cove).

Regulations - Season is open year around, any hour of the day or night, except in areas as posted. Limit is 5 trout, 6 largemouth bass, 25 catfish, 15 crappie and 20 striped bass. No limit restriction on other game fish.

Biologist Forecast for 2006 - Fall and winter fishing should be average to good on stripers due to adequate shad abundance. Stripers, of course, will continue to dominate the harvest at 86% of the angler catch. In 2005, boat anglers had excellent success for stripers in the Boulder Basin in early to mid-summer (May to July). Recently censused anglers had fair success fishing with anchovies at Sand Island and the tires at Lake Mead Marina. Harvested striped bass last year averaged about 16" in length and 1.5 to 2 pounds in weight. There is a very strong adult age class in the 15-18" size range in the lake now. Largemouth bass fishing has been fair in the Muddy River of the Overton Arm. Rainbow trout fishing should be excellent for stocked fish. The lake is at its lowest level since the 1970s.

Boating Regulations – General boating regulations. Watch for posted or prohibited areas.



Access - Take Highway (515, 93, 95) east out of Las Vegas for 24 miles to the town of Boulder. Lake Mead is just north and east of the town. Follow the signs. A paved road runs along the west side of the lake.