

Lake Mead Reservoir

ANGLER AND FISHERY SURVEY INFORMATION

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General information: Lake Mead is an interstate water on the southern border with Arizona. The reservoir supports a recreational fishery of Striped Bass, Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, and Channel Catfish. Other species include Black Crappie (Overton Arm area), Bluegill, Green Sunfish, and Common Carp. Striped Bass is the dominant sport fish, and in 2022 they made up 95% of the harvest. Harvested Striped Bass are typically 16-20 inches in length, weighing 1–3 lbs, with larger fish caught occasionally. Largemouth Bass are typically between 1-5 lbs, and Smallmouth Bass are typically between 1-3 lbs.

Location: Clark County, approximately 30 miles east of Las Vegas.

Size: At full pool, Lake Mead is 110 miles long with a maximum depth of 590 ft. The length of the shoreline is approximately 550 miles and covers 150,000 surface acres.

Management: Nevada Department of Wildlife manages the fishery as a General Warm Water fishery. The National Park Service manages the Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NPS).

Amenities and General Information:

Launch ramps: As of February 2023, one NPS managed launch ramp is open at Hemenway Harbor for shallow-hulled boats not exceeding 24 ft in length. Concessionaire managed launch operations are available at Callville Bay and Temple Bar (AZ) for boats under 40 ft, as of February 2023, at 1,047 ft lake elevation. Due to drought conditions, launch conditions may change as lake levels decline. Check the NPS website for current launch ramp conditions.
<https://www.nps.gov/lake/planyourvisit/conditions.htm>

Campgrounds are located at Boulder Beach, Las Vegas Bay, Callville Bay, and Echo Bay, with primitive camping around the lake. Some RV sites with full hookups are provided by concessionaires in the park. Go to the NPS website for more campground information
<https://www.nps.gov/lake/planyourvisit/campgrounds.htm>

Regulations

The fishing season is open year around, any hour of the day or night, except in areas as posted.

Limits:

- 5 trout
- 6 black bass
- 15 crappie
- 25 catfish
- Unlimited Striped Bass less than 20 inches total length
- 20 Striped Bass 20 inches or greater total length
- No limit restrictions on other game fish

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Tackle Restrictions

The use of more than two hooks for bait or flies is prohibited.

Bait Regulations

Species approved for use as live bait (taken only)

- Mosquitofish, Carp, and Gizzard Shad

Species approved for use as live bait (taken or purchased)

- Fathead Minnow, Golden Shiner, Threadfin Shad, and Goldfish

Safety Precautions

Summer temperatures can reach 110°F or higher. Carry plenty of water and leave a note as to your destination and expected time of return. Check the weather forecast before boating, as the lake can get very windy and rough.

Stocking

Fish occurring in Lake Mead are self-sustaining, therefore, stocking is not necessary.

Fishing Notes

- While Striped Bass can be caught year-round, the best months in 2022 were May through September. Live shad is the best bait, though anchovies and swimbaits are also used.

- Black Bass fishing is best May through September in both shallow and deep water with lures fished in the early morning or evening.
- Channel Catfish are more active as the weather warms with the best fishing May through October. Baits include prepared baits, chicken or beef livers, and anchovies fished on the bottom.
- Black Crappie can be found in the upper Overton Arm. The best fishing for crappie is the winter and spring.

FISHERY SURVEY DATA

Creel Surveys

In 2022, catch rates were excellent with anglers averaging 2.7 fish/hour and 9.2 fish/angler. From a sample of harvested Striped Bass, the average length was 17.3 inches, and the average weight was 1.5 lbs. Harvested Striped Bass were found to be in good to excellent condition.

Angler catch rates

	Fish/hour	Fish/angler
2022*	2.7	9.2
2021*	2.3	6.3
2020*	0.7	3.0
2019	0.9	3.9
2018	1.0	4.5

*Limited number of surveys

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2021 FISHERY SURVEY DATA

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Gill-net Surveys

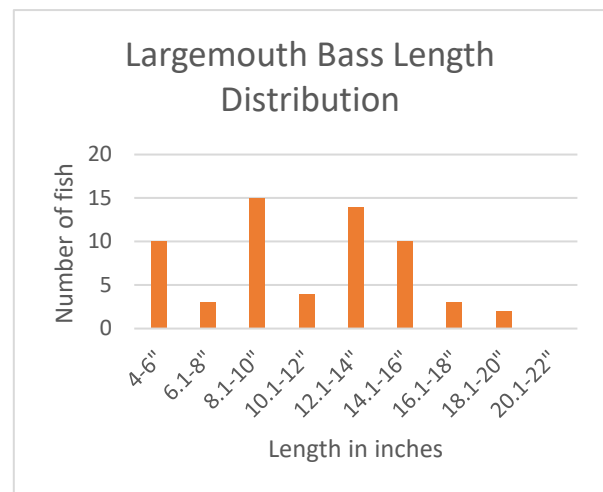
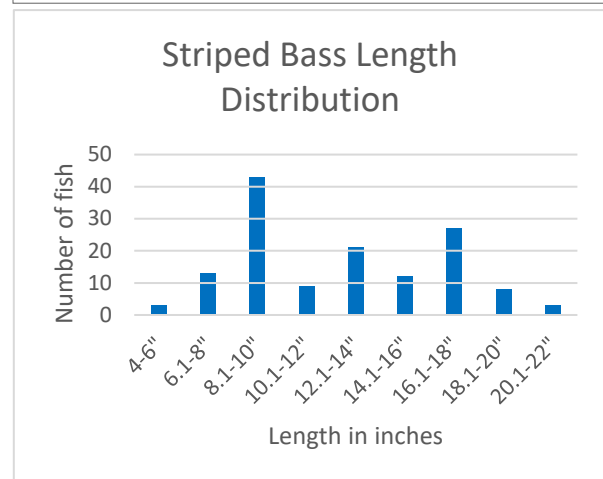
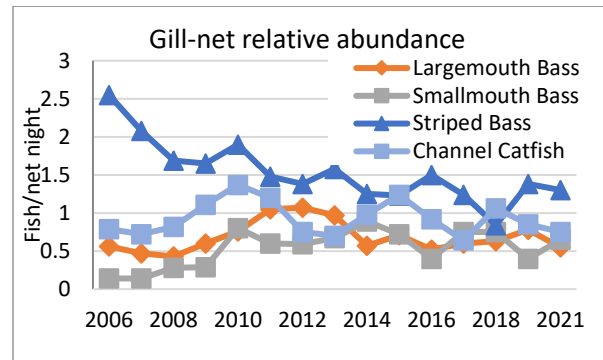
The most recent lake-wide gill-net survey was in 2021. From this survey, Striped Bass abundance was similar to that of 2019. Smallmouth Bass abundance had increased, and both Largemouth Bass and Channel Catfish abundance has declined since 2019.

Striped Bass

Striped Bass were the most abundant sport fish in the 2021 gill-net survey with a total of 143 captures and a catch rate of 1.3 fish/net-night. The average length was 12 inches and ranged from 5–21 inches. The average weight was 0.8 lb and ranged from 0.02–3.1 lbs. The distribution of lengths shows three main size classes at 8–10 inches, 12–14 inches, and 16–18 inches. Striped Bass made up 95% of the observed harvest in 2022.

Largemouth Bass

A total of 61 Largemouth Bass were captured in the gill-net survey at a rate of 0.6 fish/net-night. The average length was 11 inches and ranged from 4–20 inches. The average weight was 0.8 lb and ranged from 0.03–3.5 lbs. The length distribution shows a large number of juvenile 8–10-inch fish and many 12–16-inch fish for the coming years. Six Largemouth Bass were reported in the creel, making up 0.8% of the observed harvest in 2022.



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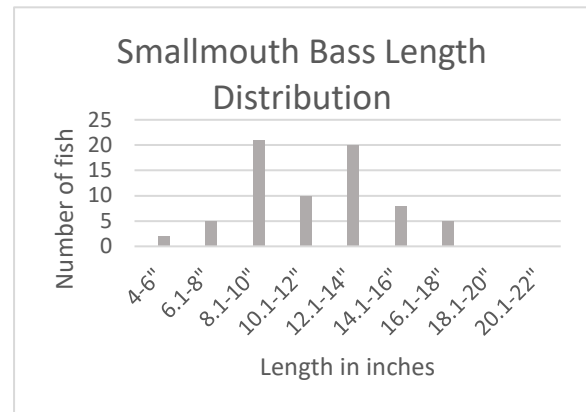
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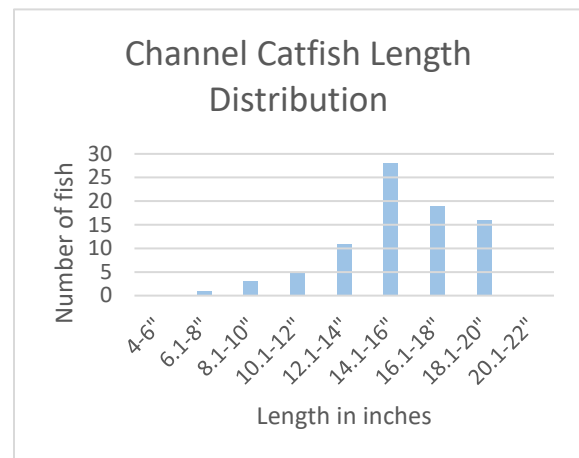
Smallmouth Bass

A total of 72 Smallmouth Bass were captured in the 2021 gill-net survey for a catch rate of 0.7 fish/net-night. The average length was 11 inches and ranged from 5–18 inches. The average weight was 0.8 lb and ranged from 0.04–2.4 lbs. The length distribution of Smallmouth Bass shows the most abundant sizes were from 8–14 inches. Nine Smallmouth Bass were reported in the creel survey, making up 1.1% of the observed harvest in 2022.



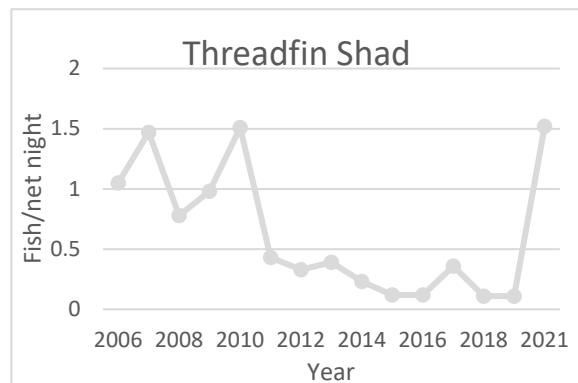
Channel Catfish

A total of 83 Channel Catfish were caught in the 2021 survey for a catch rate of 0.8 fish/net-night. The average length was 15 inches and ranged from 6–20 inches. The average weight was 1 lb and ranged from 0.07–2.4 lbs. The length distribution of Channel Catfish shows most fish were 14 inches or greater. Channel Catfish made up 3.1% of the reported harvest in the 2022 creel survey.



Threadfin Shad

Threadfin Shad abundance increased in the 2021 survey after a long decline of the population. Additionally, the 2022 shad trawl surveys show consistent shad production for the past three years. This will be beneficial for forage and to help improve Striped Bass body condition.



2023 Forecast

This year Striped Bass will be plentiful in the 16–18-inch length range, averaging 1-3 lbs, with a small portion of fish greater than 20 inches. Their body condition will be good at the beginning of the year, with summer and fall body condition dependent on successful shad reproduction in the late spring and early summer. Largemouth Bass will be abundant in the 12–16-inch size with good body condition. Smallmouth Bass will average 12–14 inches with good body condition. Channel Catfish will be abundant in the 14–20-inch size and will also be in good condition. With reduced fishing pressure, due to limited lake access, the average catch rates should remain high around 1–2 fish/hour. The inclusion of concessionaire operated launch ramps should help to improve lake access.



Lake Mead, Boulder Basin, February 2023.



Callville Bay, concessionaire-managed launch ramp, February 24, 2023, at 1,047 ft lake elevation.



Hemenway, National Park Service managed launch ramp, February 24, 2023, at 1,047 ft lake elevation.

Aquatic Invasive Species – Quagga Mussels

Quagga mussels are present in Lake Mead. The Nevada Department of Wildlife has two operating watercraft inspection and decontamination (WID) stations present, one at Hemenway Harbor and one at Callville Bay. An inspection is mandatory for slipped and moored watercraft that have been in the water for 5 days or more. Remember to “Pull your Plug” and “Clean, Drain and Dry” your watercraft when leaving Lake Mead and please comply with all instructions from the inspection staff.