

# FISHING FORECAST

## 2012

**Included inside:**

2011 Sampling Charts



**NEBRASKA**  
— GAME  PARKS —

[OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org)

## WALLEYE

Anglers started to reap the benefits of higher and more stable water levels in many Nebraska reservoirs in 2011, and there will be even more fish to be caught from many reservoirs in 2012.

Fishing still will be challenging on some of those waters where there are acres of flooded trees and brush. For example, walleye populations in **Harlan County Reservoir** and **Lake McConaughy** are doing quite well, but anglers will have to go into the “jungle” in many cases to catch those fish.

Anglers looking for plenty of eating-size walleyes should head to **Sutherland** and **Maloney** reservoirs. Southwest reservoirs **Swanson** and **Enders** also will offer some of the state’s best opportunities to catch 15- to 20-inch walleyes. Improved water conditions at **Box Butte Reservoir** in the Panhandle also have benefitted the walleye population there.

Anglers looking for big walleyes should find their best chance to catch a trophy at **McConaughy** or **Merritt** reservoirs, but with high outflows last year, some big walleyes also could be caught downstream of **McConaughy** in canal reservoirs from **Sutherland** down to **Johnson**.

Eastern reservoirs tend to have fewer walleyes because smaller reservoirs are less ideal walleye habitats, but anglers will have some opportunities to catch walleyes at **Stagecoach** and **Wagon Train**. The walleye and sauger fishery in **Lewis and Clark Reservoir** and the **Missouri River** in northeast Nebraska should continue to be good, especially after the high flows of 2011.

## LARGEMOUTH BASS

Like other members of the sunfish family, largemouth bass are most successful in clean water with an abundance of shallow-water cover. Small waters, pits, ponds and small reservoirs, tend to be the best largemouth bass habitats. Anglers can find many largemouth bass longer than 15 inches in small reservoirs such as **Summit** and **Grove** in northeast Nebraska and **Burchard** and **Wagon Train** in the southeast part of the state. The sandhill lakes are ideal largemouth bass habitats and produce some of the fattest, prettiest bass found anywhere; check out **Swan Lake WMA** and **Watts Lake** on the **Valentine NWR** for some of those sandhill lake bass.

Many farm ponds and pits, most privately owned, produce excellent bass fishing every year. Several Nebraska anglers have permission to fish at least one of those waters. Some small private waters are enrolled in the Open Fields and Waters (OFW) program and are open to the public; be sure to check the Public Access Atlas for those waters (visit [OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org)). Interstate lakes and other small waters such as **Windmill No. 1**, **Hershey** and **Indian Creek WMA** also will offer some excellent bass fishing.

## WHITE BASS

White bass fishing was excellent on many reservoirs in 2011 and several of those same reservoirs should be excellent again this year. **Calamus Reservoir** produced thousands of white bass for anglers last year and will again this year. **Harlan County Reservoir** perennially is one of the state’s best white bass fisheries, and this year will be no exception. Reservoirs in the **Republican River** basin – the southwest reservoirs – also are consistent white bass fisheries; **Enders** and **Medicine Creek** should be the best of those. The canal reservoirs in central Nebraska also are excellent white bass habitats; **Jeffrey** should top the list this year, while **Johnson** and **Maloney** also will be good.

## BLUEGILL

Bluegills can be found across Nebraska but they thrive where there is clean water and abundance of shallow-water cover, especially aquatic vegetation. Small bluegills can be caught almost anywhere, so the challenge for anglers is finding some quality bluegills larger than 8 inches in length.

Sandhill lakes can produce some trophy bluegills, honest 1-pounders and larger, and **Smith Lake WMA** south of Rushville will offer anglers an excellent shot at some trophy bluegills. Sandhill lakes **Goose Lake WMA** and **Hackberry Lake** on the **Valentine NWR** will have some excellent bluegill fishing. Small- to medium-size reservoirs can be excellent bluegill habitats; **Summit** once again will offer some great bluegill fishing, as well as **Holmes**, **Liberty Cove**, **Czechland** and **Burchard**.

Small waters, pits and ponds, also are excellent bluegill habitats and pits on the **Fort Kearny** and **Windmill SRA** will be particularly good this year. Anglers should pay special attention to pits No. 3 and No. 1 at **Fort Kearny SRA** and pits No. 1 and No. 2 at **Windmill SRA**. Lake No. 20 at **Fremont Lakes SRA** also should produce some good bluegill fishing.

## CRAPPIES

Ideal waters for crappies have sheltered bays and coves with aquatic vegetation or flooded vegetation for cover. Small- to medium-size reservoirs often provide excellent crappie habitat and are found across Nebraska. **Whitney** and **Oliver** in the Panhandle and **Stagecoach** and the new **Lake Wanahoo** in eastern Nebraska will offer some of the best crappie fishing in 2012.

Larger irrigation reservoirs tend to have water-level fluctuations that hinder crappie production, but **Sherman Reservoir** is an exception and consistently offers good crappie fishing. Water-level fluctuations occasionally are just right to produce good crappie habitat in larger reservoirs; that is the case at **Harlan** and **Branched Oak**. The sandhill lakes can produce some excellent black crappies; **Smith WMA** and **Island Lake** on the **Crescent Lake NWR** will be proof of that.

## WIPERS

Wipers also thrive in large-reservoir habitats. **Red Willow** always has been one of the best wiper fisheries in the state, but water levels there will continue to be at minimum pool in 2012, pending dam repair. This year, **Swanson** will be a good alternative for big wipers among the southwest reservoirs. **Elwood** will be one of the best reservoirs in Nebraska for wipers, while **Calamus** and **McConaughy** will be good again.

In eastern Nebraska, smaller reservoirs are less favorable as wiper habitats, but anglers will have a chance at some big wipers at **Stagecoach Reservoir**, and there is a developing wiper fishery at **Wagon Train Reservoir**.

## CHANNEL CATFISH

Channel catfish are popular among anglers and can be found across the state. Anglers can catch some nice cats from most of the state's water bodies and everyone has their favorite cat hole. Some waters of note for catfish anglers will be **Sutherland, Midway, Wagon Train, Harlan** and **Minatare**. Anglers looking for some big channel catfish to catch and release should fish **Pawnee, Medicine Creek, Czechland, Merritt** and **Box Butte**. Do not overlook Nebraska's warm-water streams and rivers for channel cats, and again check out the OFW program for access to some of those waters.

## OTHER SPECIES

Nebraska offers diversity to its anglers. Anglers can expand their horizons by fishing for a variety of species in the state's waters. Besides the species highlighted in the fish sampling graphs, there are many other fish that can be pursued in 2012:

**SMALLMOUTH BASS** – **Lewis and Clark Reservoir** and the **Missouri River** in northeast Nebraska, as well as **Box Butte Reservoir** and **War Axe SRA**, will offer some of the state's best smallmouth bass fishing.

**BLUE CATFISH** – They can be found in the **Missouri River**, as well as **Zorinsky, Wehrspann, Conestoga** and **Branched Oak** reservoirs.

**FLATHEAD CATFISH** – These are some of the largest and meanest predator fish found in many Nebraska waters. Anglers can catch and release some trophy flatheads in **Harlan, Sherman** and **Branched Oak** reservoirs, as well as the **Tri-County** and **Loup** canal systems.

**SAUGER** – **Lewis and Clark Reservoir** and the **Missouri River** in northeast Nebraska is the best sauger fishery in the state, but **Johnson Reservoir** and the canal system and associated reservoirs above **Johnson** also have an excellent sauger fishery.

**YELLOW PERCH** – With higher water levels, panfish populations have rebounded in sandhill lakes, and yellow perch fishing should be as good as it has been in years. In particular, look for some good yellow perch fishing at **Blue, Island, Hackberry** and **Frye** lakes.

**NORTHERN PIKE** – The sandhill lakes are some of the best northern pike habitats in the state and once again lakes on the **Valentine NWR** will be some of Nebraska's most popular pike fisheries. However, do not overlook **Box Butte Reservoir** in the Panhandle, or **Goose Lake** for northern pike. Even though water levels at **Red Willow Reservoir** will remain at minimum pool in 2012, there are still some big pike for anglers to catch there.

**BULLHEADS** – Some anglers scoff at the thought of fishing for bullheads, but there are others who target bullheads, which are a great fish for children. Bullhead fishing will be particularly good at **Lonestar, Czechland** and **Wildwood** reservoirs. Catchable-size bullheads also are stocked at state recreation area lakes **Louisville No. 2A, Two Rivers No. 6, Two Rivers No. 7** and **Fremont No. 3**.

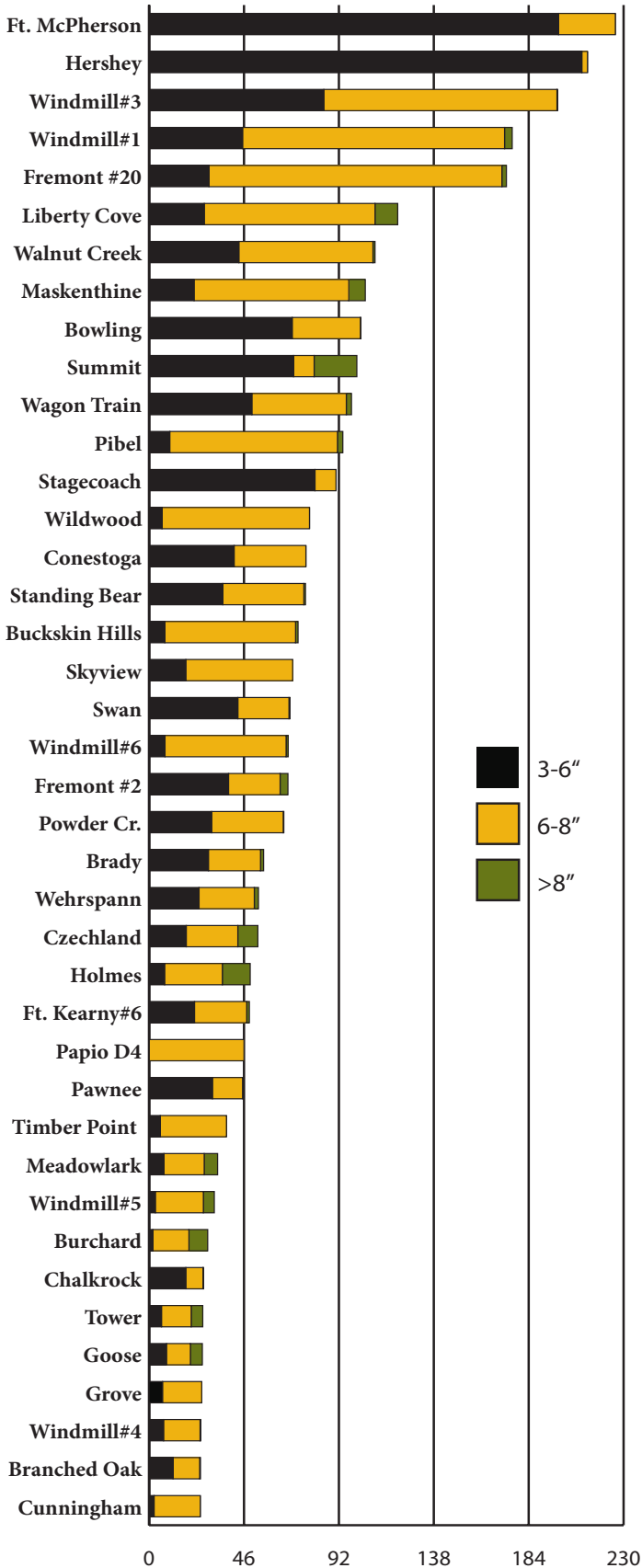
**MUSKELLUNGE** – Another example of the great variety of fish species found in Nebraska is muskellunge. Anglers can fish for this "king of freshwater fish" at **Merritt, Calamus, Wagon Train** and **Cottonwood-Steverson**.

**TROUT** – Nebraska has waters capable of supporting cold-water fish year-round, where anglers can find rainbow, brown and brook trout. Most of the cold-water trout streams are in the western and northern parts of the state; the **East Branch of Verdigre Creek, Long Pine Creek** and **Ninemile Creek** are perennial favorites among trout anglers. In 2012, the rainbow trout fishing at **Lake Ogallala** will continue to be as good as any that can be found anywhere in the country.

# 2011 Sampling Charts

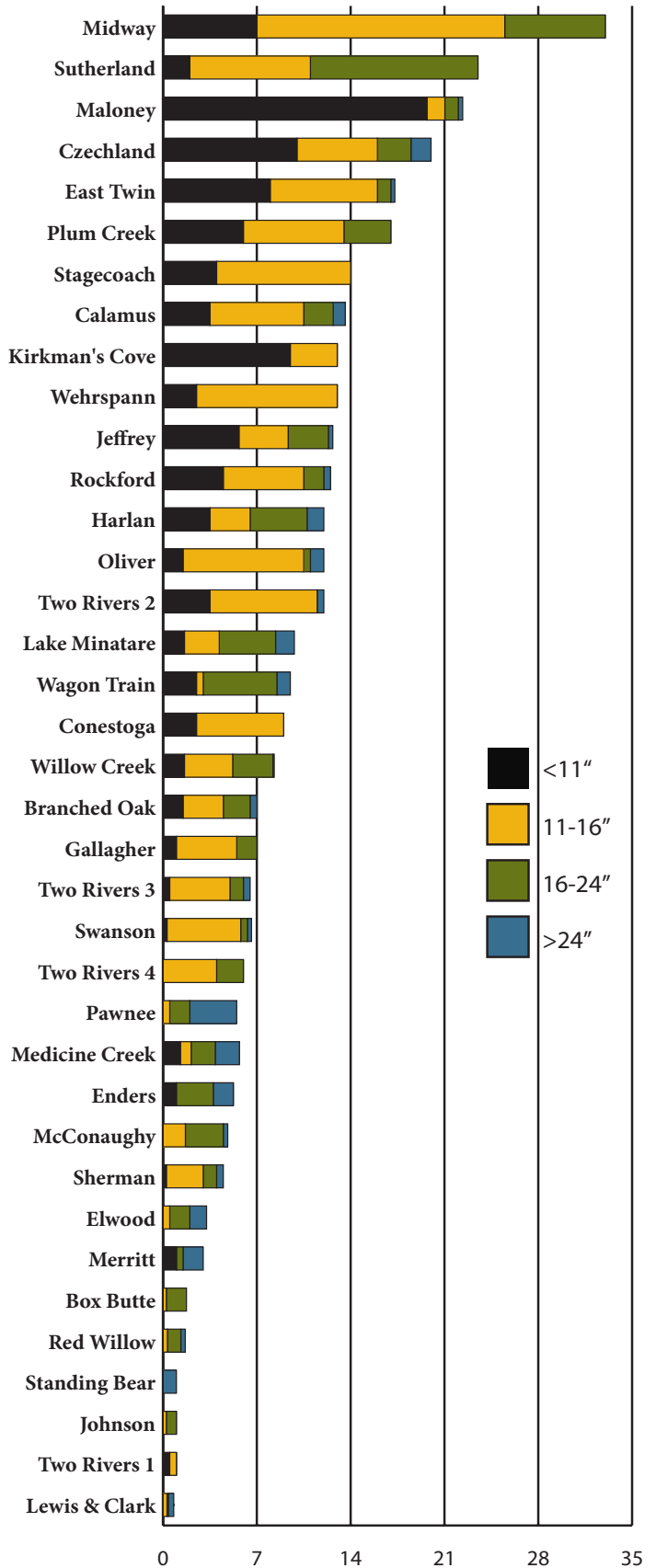
## BLUEGILL

Per Trap Net



## CHANNEL CATFISH

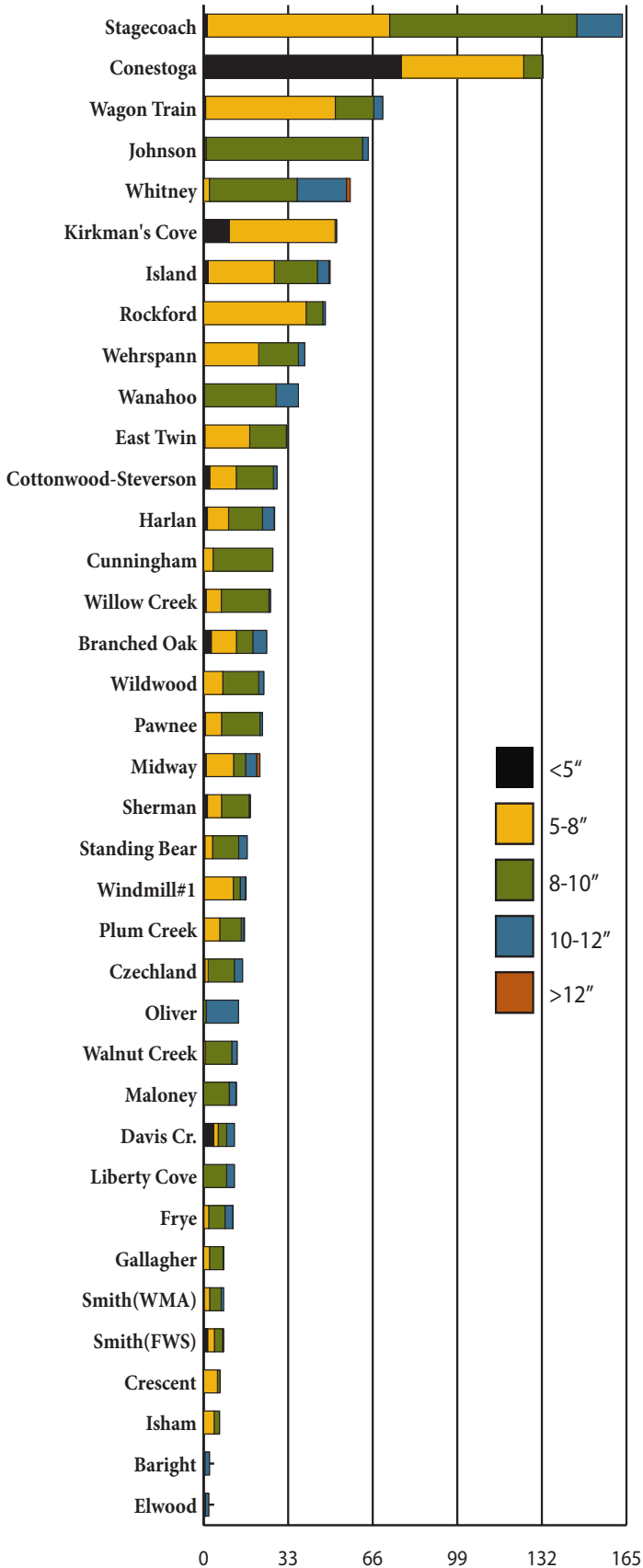
Per Gill Net



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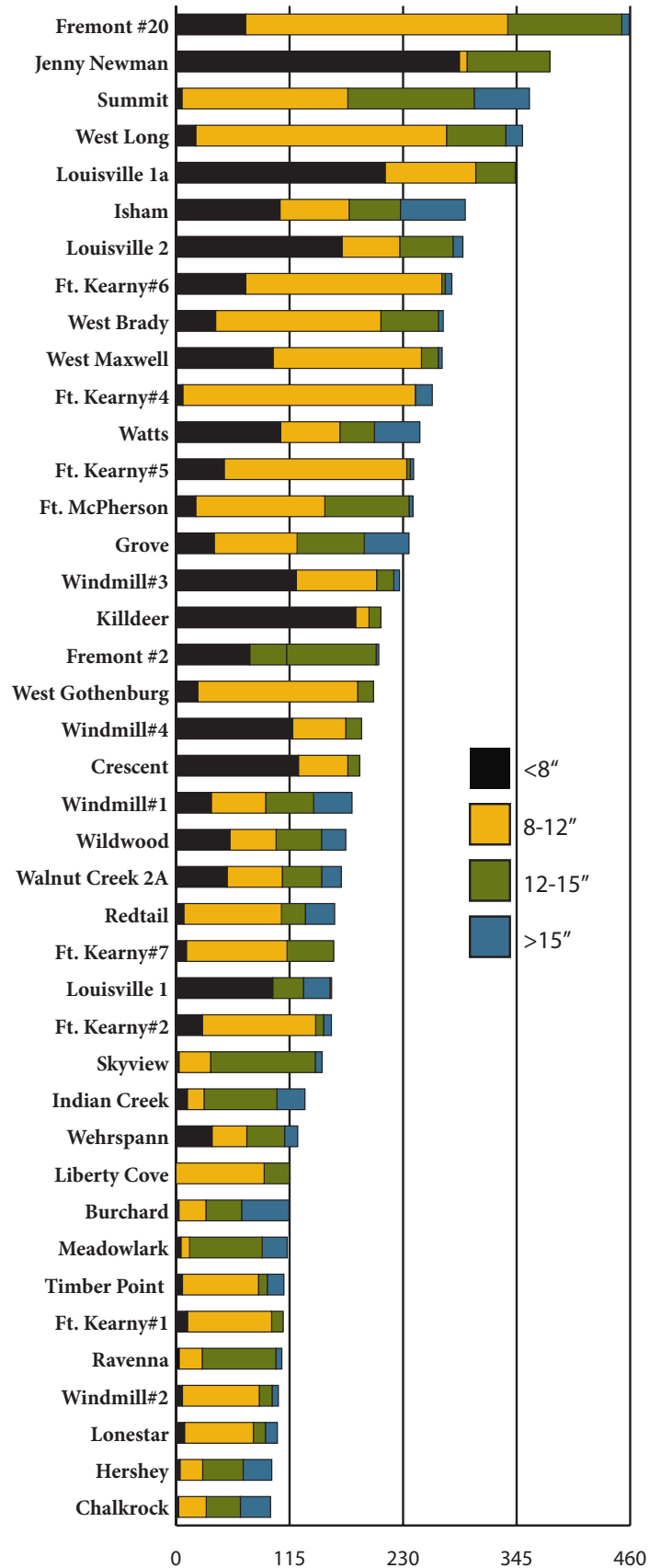
## CRAPPIE

Per Trap Net



## LARGEMOUTH BASS

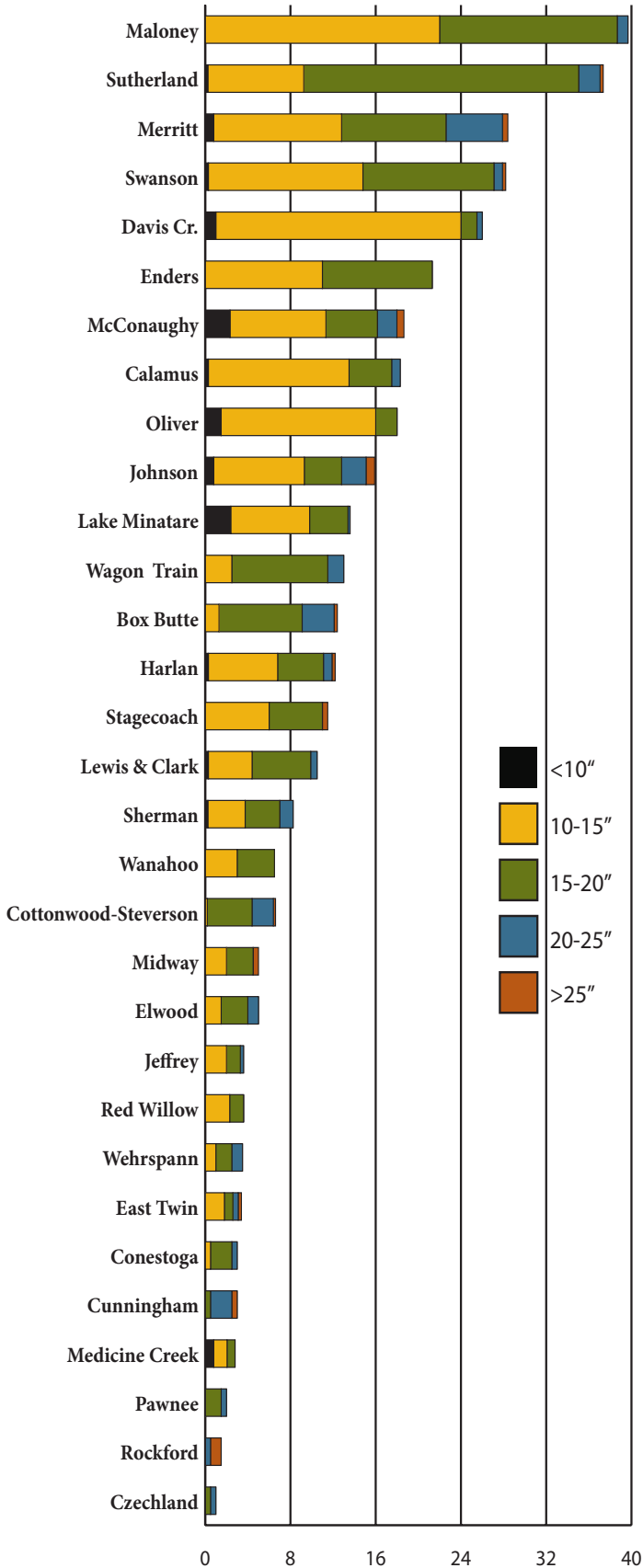
Per Hour Electrofishing



# 2011 Sampling Charts

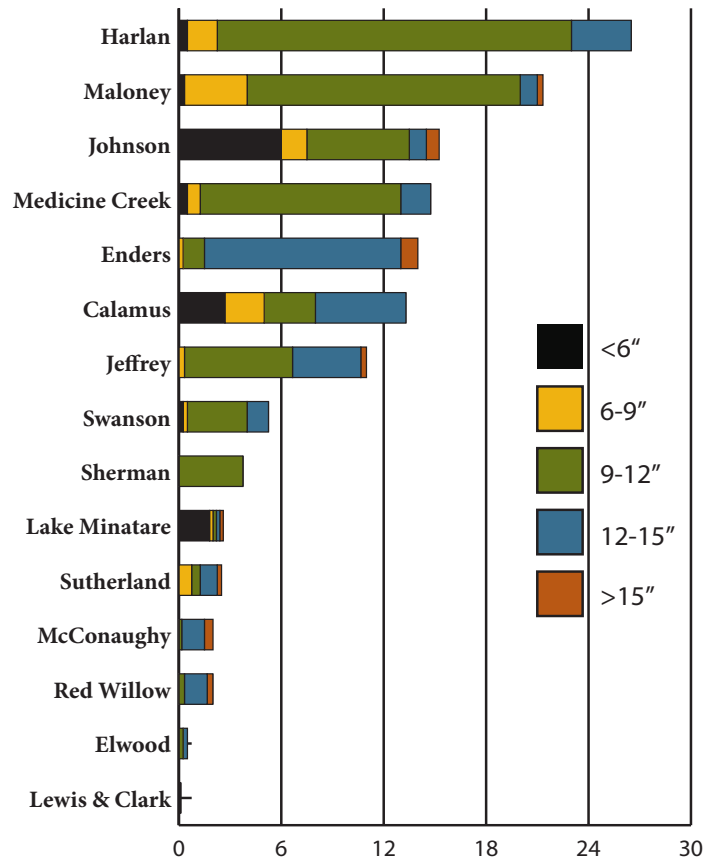
## WALLEYE

Per Gill Net



## WHITE BASS

Per Gill Net



## WIPER

Per Gill Net

