

Lake Mead Reservoir

ANGLER AND FISHERY SURVEY INFORMATION

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General information: Lake Mead is an interstate water located on the southern border with Arizona. The reservoir supports a recreational fishery of Striped Bass, Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Channel Catfish, and Black Crappie. Other species include Bluegill, Green Sunfish, Blue Tilapia, and Common Carp. Striped Bass is the dominant sport fish, and in 2024 they made up 89% of the harvest. Harvested Striped Bass typically average 17 inches in length and weigh between 1–3 pounds. Largemouth Bass usually weigh 1–5 pounds, and Smallmouth Bass 1–3 pounds. Channel Catfish are also typically between 1–3 pounds though larger fish are sometimes caught.

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 warmwater Fishery. The National Park Service (NPS) manages the Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

Amenities and General Information:

Launch ramps: As of March 2025, there are three operable NPS managed launch ramps for lake access. These are Hemenway Harbor, Callville Bay, and Echo Bay. A concessionaire operated ramp is located at Temple Bar (AZ). Check the NPS website for current launch ramp conditions when planning your trip <https://www.nps.gov/lake/planyourvisit/conditions.htm>.

Campgrounds are located at Boulder Beach, Las Vegas Bay, Callville Bay, Echo Bay, and Temple Bar (AZ). At some locations, concessionaires provide RV sites with full hookups. Shoreline camping, accessible by boat, hiking, horseback and paddle craft, is allowed ½ mile from a designated road. Visit the NPS website for more camping information <https://www.nps.gov/lake/planyourvisit/lake-mead-campgrounds.htm>

Regulations

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

Tackle Restrictions

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

Daily Limits:

- 5 trout, 6 black bass, 15 crappie, 25 catfish
- 20 Striped Bass greater than 20 inches total length
- Unlimited Striped Bass less than 20 inches total length
- No limit restrictions on other game fish
- The Possession Limit is 2 times the daily limit.

Bait Regulations

- Species approved for use as live bait for use in **Lakes Mead, Mohave, and the Colorado River** located in Clark County

Taken only

- Mosquitofish, Carp, Gizzard Shad

Taken or purchased

- Fathead Minnow, Golden Shiner, Threadfin Shad, 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 Tips

- Striped Bass fishing can be good year-round. In 2024, March, April and July through December were the best months for catching Striped Bass. Live shad is the best bait, though anchovies, swimbaits, and other artificial lures are also used.
- Black bass fishing is best April through October in both shallow and deep water with lures fished in the early morning or evening. Fishing slows in the winter.
- 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.
- Crappie can be found in the Overton Arm, Greggs Basin, and occasionally in Boulder Basin. The best fishing for crappie is the winter and spring.

FISHERY SURVEY DATA

Creel Surveys

In 2024, successful anglers averaged 1.7 fish/hour and 5.9 fish/angler (Table 1). From a sample of harvested Striped Bass, the average length was 17 inches, and the average weight was 1.5 pounds. Striped Bass body condition was variable throughout the year. The poorest condition was seen January–July, with improvements observed in the fall.

Angler catch rates from creel surveys

Table 1.

Year	Fish/hour	Fish/angler
2024	1.7	5.9
2023	2.2	9.8
2022	2.7	9.2

Gill-net Surveys

The most recent lake-wide gill-net survey was in 2023. The relative abundance shows Smallmouth Bass were the most abundant species followed by Striped Bass, Largemouth Bass, and Channel Catfish (Figure 1).

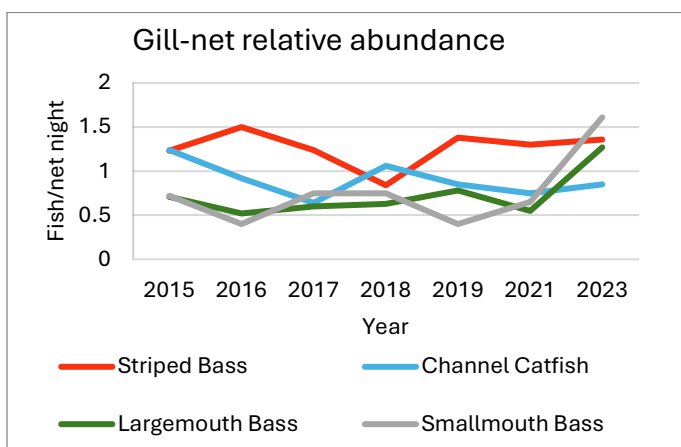


FIGURE 1.

Striped Bass

A total of 101 Striped Bass were captured in the 2023 gill-net survey for a catch rate of 1.4 fish/net-night. The average length was 14 inches, and the average weight was 1.0 pound. The proportional size distribution shows 85% of the population is stock to quality length (12–20 inches) and 15% is quality to preferred length (20–30 inches) (Figure 2). In 2024, Striped Bass body condition was variable through the year, with poor to fair conditioned fish observed through the summer with improvements seen by the fall.

Largemouth Bass

A total of 94 Largemouth Bass were captured in the 2023 gill-net survey at a rate of 1.3 fish/net-night. The average length was 10 inches and ranged from 6–19 inches. The average weight was 0.5 pound and ranged from 0.1–3.0 pounds. The proportional size distribution shows a decline in larger-sized Largemouth Bass with 77% stock–quality length (8–12 inches) and 23% quality–preferred length (12–20 inches) fish (Figure 3). Largemouth Bass were in excellent condition with a relative weight W_r of 91.

Smallmouth Bass

A total of 119 Smallmouth Bass were captured in the 2023 gill-net survey for a catch rate of 1.6 fish/net-night. The average length was 12 inches, and the average weight was 1.0 pound. The proportional size distribution shows a fairly even distribution of stock–quality, quality–preferred, and preferred to trophy sized fish at ~30% for each group (Figure 4). Smallmouth Bass were in good body condition with a relative weight W_r of 85.

Channel Catfish

A total of 63 Channel Catfish were caught in the 2023 survey for a catch rate of 0.9 fish/net-night. The average length was 15 inches, and the average weight was 1 pound. The proportional size distribution was similar to the previous four years showing 56% of the sample were quality–preferred length (16–24 inches) and 44% were stock–quality length (11–16 inches) (Figure 5). Their body condition was considered good with a relative weight W_r of 80.

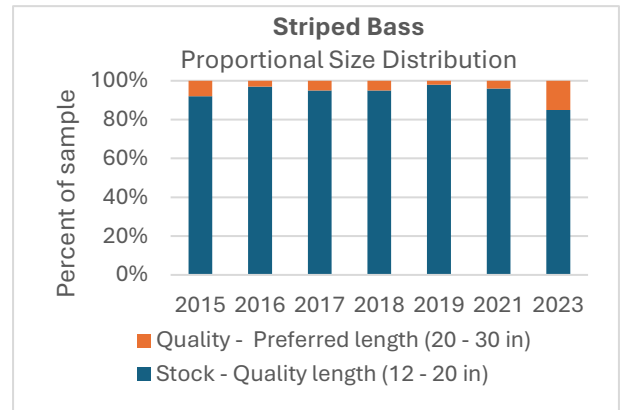


FIGURE 2.

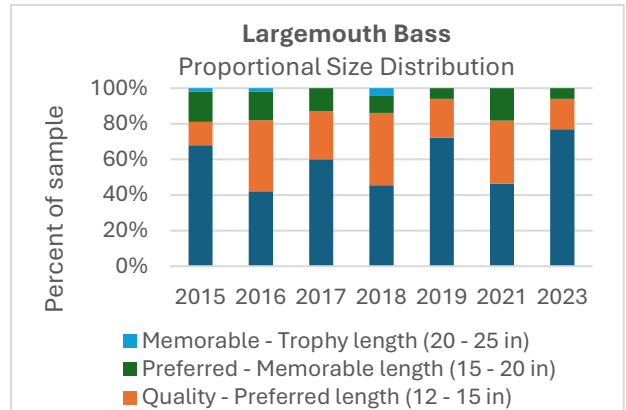


FIGURE 3.

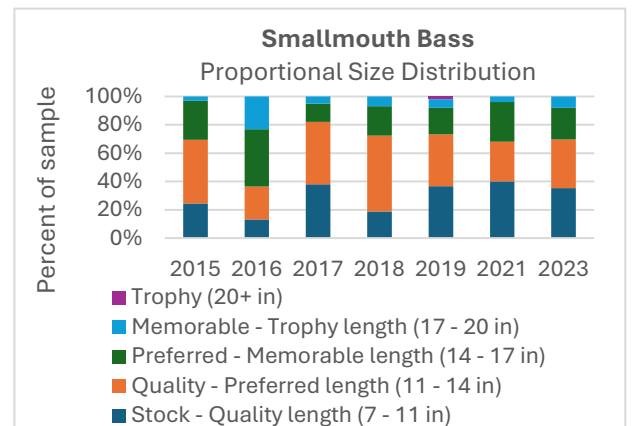


FIGURE 4.

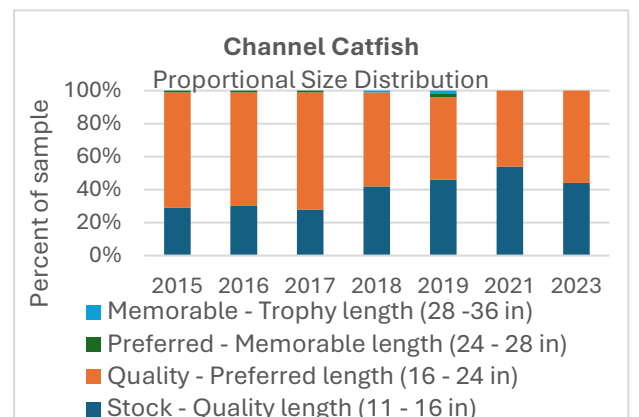


FIGURE 5.

Shad

Shad production has been somewhat consistent the past three years with larval shad abundance near the 10-year mean of 112 shad/100m³ (Figure 6). This year there was a slight increase in shad production in the Overton Arm and a reduction in the Boulder Basin.

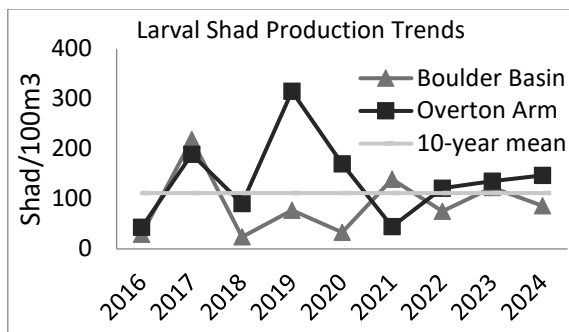


FIGURE 6.

2025 Fishing Forecast

This year, Striped Bass are forecast to be plentiful in the stock–quality size class of 12–20 inches, with fewer fish exceeding a quality length of 20 inches. Harvested fish will likely average 17 inches, with weights between 1–3 pounds. Striped Bass body condition will be variable through the year with occasional, poorly conditioned fish. Body condition may improve in the fall, following adequate shad reproduction in the spring.

Largemouth Bass will be abundant in the quality size of 12–13 inches, with occasional catches of 3–5 pounders. Good to excellent body condition is expected through the year. Smallmouth Bass are expected to be more plentiful than Largemouth Bass. The catch should be evenly distributed between stock–quality length (7–11 inches), quality–preferred length (11–14 inches), and preferred–memorable-length fish (14–20 inches). Smallmouth Bass should remain in good condition throughout the year.

Channel Catfish will be most abundant in the stock–quality length of 12–16 inches, and less abundant in sizes greater than 16 inches. Most Channel Catfish will weigh 1–3 pounds. Black Crappie are usually found in Overton Arm and the Gregg Basin areas of the lake but may be found in the Boulder Basin. Since 2023, three captures have been reported in the Boulder basin. Angling for Black Crappie is typically best in the winter and spring.

FIGURE 7. Boulder Basin, Lake Mead, Clark County, NV.

