



JOHNSON LAKE BANNER MARSH STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AREA FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

LOCATION and DESCRIPTION: Located in Central Illinois, the 5,524 acre Banner Marsh State Fish and Wildlife Area lies adjacent to the Illinois River, 4 miles north of Banner, Illinois, along Route 24. The former bottomland lake and marsh was leveed and drained for agricultural practice from 1910 through 1958. From 1958 to 1974 approximately 90 percent of the site was strip-mined for coal. The strip-mined areas have since been reclaimed and purchased by the State of Illinois. Under the management of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (1978 - present) the primary objective for the site is to establish a freshwater marsh providing fish and wildlife habitat in the Illinois River Valley.

Banner Marsh SFWA was characterized by narrow strip pits and upland ponds, but in 1994 the hydrology changed due to the intentional cessation of pumping operations in the levee district. The water level rose approximately 7 feet (435 M.S.L.) due mainly to groundwater recharge by seepage under the existing 1-100 year flood-tight levee with the Illinois River. The total surface water acreage for the site increased from 530 acres to approximately 2400 acres and created a large vegetated littoral zone.

Johnson Lake is the largest lake in the Banner Marsh SFWA at over 600 surface acres. It is composed of a maze of final cut lakes interconnected by ditches to large shallow pond areas. The shallow areas (less than 6 feet) compose approximately 400 acres of flooded brush and diverse aquatic vegetation. The maximum water depth is 64.0 feet. Water clarity often exceeds 8 feet in the summer.

The main access area has a concrete boat ramp, 50 vehicle and trailer parking lot, restrooms and a handicap accessible fishing pier. The lake has a 25 h.p. motor limit. The site is open 24 hours a day, except for the Central Zone Duck Season. At which time only shoreline fishing is allowed after 1 p.m.

HISTORY & STATUS of the SPORT FISHERY:

Largemouth Bass: The largemouth bass population was evaluated by 156 bass from electrofishing and 12 bass from trapnets in 2014. The largemouth bass population appears to be defined by a high percentage of fish from 6 to 20 inches in length with good average Relative weights.

The 2014 electrofishing survey indicated a size structure with 48% of the bass over 16 inches and 18% over 18 inches in length. The goal of the protected slot length limit was to create a high density bass population that is composed of fish large enough to be efficient predators upon the high density of slow growing panfish and the rough fish population. A consistent bass population level has been maintained since 2000.

Bluegill: The current bluegill condition is of a poor state with a poor growth rate. The competition with the gizzard shad and carp have maintained this growth slowdown.

Crappie: In 2014, 25 stock size black crappie and 8 white crappie were sampled. 40% of the black crappie and 88% of the white crappie were over 9 inches long. Both species had only average body condition and this has decreased over the last 5 years. Anglers should be able to concentrate on these legal size fish with the flooded brush providing excellent habitat.

Channel Catfish: The channel catfish population was sampled by 7 fish in 2014. These fish ranged in size from 17 to 25 inches and were in excellent body condition. A low density population is present and an annual stocking of 600 fish is scheduled.

Walleye: The walleye population trapnet sampling in 2014 resulted in 5 total fish in 16 net nights of effort (.31 per net night). These fish ranged from 13 to 26 inches long. The body condition of these fish was very good at an average Wr of 96. An annual stocking of 24,000 walleye at 2 inches is anticipated.

Muskie: A total of 42 muskie were sampled by the spring trapnet survey in 2014. These fish ranged from 28 to 43 inches long. The body condition of these fish was very good at an average Wr of 96. In 2001, a total of 2,174 muskie at an average size of 11.4 inches were stocked, in 2002, 725 muskie at an average size of 10.9 inches were stocked and in 2003, 1333 muskie at an average size of 10 inches were stocked into Johnson Lake. No muskie were stocked in 2004, but 600 at least 10 inches long were annually stocked from 2005 through 2014.

FISHING REGULATIONS: Site specific angling regulations. Two pole and line fishing only except carp may be taken by bow and arrow devices, gigs or appears during May through August, all other statewide regulations apply. Species	Daily Creel Limit	Minimum Length Limit
All Fish	2 pole and line only	
Largemouth/Smallmouth Bass	3	12-18" protected slot length
Channel Catfish	6	None
Walleye	6	14" minimum
White and Black Crappie	25	9" minimum
Muskie	1	42" minimum

CONTACT INFORMATION – Rice Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area: 309/647-9184.

IDNR Fisheries County Fish Biologist: 309/446-9143.

Illinois Fishing Information booklet and IFISHILLINOIS website <http://www.ifishillinois.org/>