



ILLINOIS & MICHIGAN CANAL

FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

LOCATION – Originally running from Lake Michigan in Chicago to LaSalle and the Illinois River, this once vital transportation artery is now dry in many areas while other sections contain water on an intermittent basis. The Canal travels through many towns including Lockport, Joliet, Morris, Ottawa, Utica and LaSalle.

DESCRIPTION – With construction commencing in 1836 and taking 12 years to complete, the Illinois and Michigan (I&M) Canal stretched 96 miles linking the Great Lakes to the Illinois River. The canal was the impetus for the settlement and development of much of northeast Illinois and is rich in history. The I & M Canal was originally hand-dug to depths of 6 to 8 feet and time has degraded much of the Canal and portions have little or no water flow. Those that do are marginal in terms of supporting viable fish populations. The best areas in terms of water supply are from Channahon through Morris, the Lock 14 section in LaSalle and to a lesser degree, the Utica section.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES - Catchable-size rainbow trout are released in the spring in the Utica section and catchable-size hybrid sunfish and channel catfish are stocked at Lock 14 in conjunction with an annual children's fishing event. Aquatic vegetation treatments are conducted annually at the Lock 14 pool. A full fisheries survey of selected areas of the Canal is conducted once every five years.

STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY – The I&M Canal supports a variety of fish species with better angling opportunities available near Channahon, the Aux Sable lock, Armstrong Street and Lock 14 in LaSalle. The failure of the Nettle Creek aqueduct in 2013 caused dewatering of the Canal west of the aqueduct. This also left the feeder system for the Gebhard Woods ponds dry and those ponds have slowly dried up. *No special mercury advisory or other contaminant-related consumption advisories pertain.*

LARGEMOUTH BASS – Although they can be found throughout the Canal, the best area at the present time is the Lock 14 section in LaSalle. Bass up to 4 pounds are possible. **Smallmouth bass** are more commonly found in the area near the Channahon feeder and below the Aux Sable lock.

BLUEGILL – This population could be classified as fair at best, generally dominated by smaller individuals. Larger bluegills are more commonly caught by ice fishermen. Best areas include the Morris section and Lock 14.

BLACK and WHITE CRAPPIE – Both species of crappie can be found in the Canal. Large crappies are not common, but fish in excess of ten inches have been collected during IDNR sampling. The Armstrong Street Access area along with the Lock 14 section provides the best opportunity for these species.

CHANNEL CATFISH – Best areas include the Channahon access as well as the Aux Sable Lock and the Morris area. Lock 14 pool is also a good bet due to the annual stocking program. **Flathead catfish** are also found at the Aux Sable lock area.

FISHING REGULATIONS – Statewide fishing regulations apply at this lake (see current Illinois Fishing Information booklet and IFISHILLINOIS website <http://www.ifishillinois.org/> for specific details).

Additional Site Specific fishing regulations:

Boaters – Electric trolling motor only, very limited access.

All fish species - Two pole and line fishing only.

Channel Catfish – 6 fish daily creel limit.

Largemouth Bass – 15” minimum length limit

Rainbow Trout – Spring closed season.

CONTACT INFORMATION – Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail: 815/942-6529.
IDNR Fisheries County Fish Biologist: 630/553-6680.