



# Rend Lake

## Fisheries Fact Sheet

Rend Lake was completed in 1971 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The lake was formed by constructing a 2 mile long dam across the Big Muddy River floodplain.

**Location** – Rend Lake is located in Franklin and Jefferson counties along IL Interstate 57 approximately 15 mi. south of Mt. Vernon just northwest of Benton.

**Area** – At normal pool, Rend Lake has a surface area of 18, 900 acres, a maximum depth of 35 feet, and a mean depth of 10 feet. The lake is thirteen miles long and three miles wide, and has 162 miles of shoreline. It is the second largest impoundment in Illinois.

**Status of the Sport Fishery** – There are more than 30 species of fish in Rend Lake. In addition to traditional sportfish, Rend Lake also contains large populations of carp, buffalo, gar, drum, and shad. The fish population is surveyed annually, and summaries of some of the more popular sport fisheries below are based on the results of the most recent population survey and four-year trends in the population indices.

**Largemouth Bass** – The size structure of the bass population has declined over the past year, however, data from the most recent population survey show all population indices still remained within the target goals and the condition of all sizes of fish is excellent (mean Wr 102). The PSD (55) fell 27% from the previous year and the percentage of the total population exceeding the 14" minimum length limit fell 17% but, in spite of this decline the percentage of fish exceeding greater than the 14-inch minimum was the third highest in the last 10 years. Currently 38% of the adult bass population exceeds the 14-inch minimum length limit. The excellent bass body condition is the direct result of one of the largest shad populations on record. With the abundant food supply bass growth rates should be excellent, and this should help to quickly offset the slight decline in size structure of the population. Bass fishing in the coming year should be similar to 2014. The majority of fish above the minimum length limit will be 14" – 18" and weigh between 1.5 – 3.5 pounds. The number of larger bass over 20" in length remains stable but low.

**Bluegill** - The bluegill population has stabilized and remains almost identical to last year. Bluegill will remain abundant in the coming year with most keepers 6.5"- 8" in length and averaging 1/3 lb or less. The number of fish over 8" in length is also similar to last year with some reaching ½ lb. With above average growth rates and excellent body condition for fish over 5" inches in length (Wr 108), the population should provide very good fishing in the coming year.

**Crappie** - The size structure of the crappie population has declined significantly over the last two years. The percentage of crappie greater than 10" in length is at its lowest level since pre-regulation (13 years). Over the last two years the number of crappie greater than 10" in length has declined by 73%. Just as troubling is the 31% decline in the number of crappie 8"-10" in length during the same time period. Data from the 2014 trapnet survey show the portion of crappie population comprised of fish over 10" in length fell to 10%, while the percentage of fish 8" – 10" in length fell to 24%. This is only the third time in the last 13 years that crappie over 10" in length comprised less than 20% of the total population, and it is the first time since regulations were enacted that it has declined in two consecutive years. The number of crappie over 12" in length remains stable and relatively low. The condition of all sizes of crappie remained stable at the low end of the target range (Wr 90). Crappie reproduction remained strong with good numbers of age-0 fish. The cause of this decline is due primarily to a combination of two huge year classes of age-2 and age-3 fish, and a significant increase in angler

harvest of crappie over 10” in length. The two large year classes (6” – 8.5” in length) are largely responsible for a record high CPUE of 123 crappie per net-night. If growth rates remain stable the large number of age-2 fish should contribute significantly to the creel over the next two years. For 2015, crappie 10"-12" in length and averaging 1/2 to 1+ pound will be far less abundant than at any time in the past 12 years. In spite of this decline they will still be abundant enough to provide some quality angling opportunities. Crappie 8”- 10” are also abundant (24% of the population), and will also contribute to the creel. The length and creel regulations enacted in 2002 have had a significant impact on the size structure of the population. In the 12+ years since the regulations went into effect, the crappie population improved dramatically and remained stable. However, it appears that recent changes in the size structure of the population may require a change. Regulations will remain unchanged in 2015, but will likely change in 2016.

**Channel Catfish** - The fishing prospects for channel catfish remain excellent for the coming year. Natural reproduction and recruitment continue to be very strong, and are responsible for maintaining the large population of fish in the lake. The catch rate for channel catfish fell for the second straight year, but remained good. The condition of these fish is fair and growth rates are good. In the coming year, channel catfish from 1.5 – 3 lbs should be abundant and larger fish up to 5 lbs common. This lake remains one of the premier channel catfish waters in southern Illinois, and should remain on your list of places to fish for channels in 2015.

**White Bass** – The number of white bass collected in the fall 2014 electrofishing survey fell slightly, but was still the second highest catch rate in six years. Reproduction was good in 2011, 2012 and 2013, and white bass fishing was very good in the fall of 2014. This trend should continue into 2015 and for the next few years. Anglers can expect the catchable population in 2015 to be largely comprised of fish 10”- 15” in length and weighing 0.6 – 1.5 lbs. A smaller group of fish 6” – 8” in length will also contribute to the creel. All size groups of fish are in excellent condition (Wr 97).

**Fishing Regulations:** \*Consult the current Illinois Fishing Regulations Booklet for more detailed information.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Creel Limit</b>	<b>Minimum Length Limit</b>
Largemouth, Smallmouth, or Spotted Bass	6	14”
White, Black, or Hybrid Crappie	25 daily, not more than 10 exceeding 10”	
White, Yellow, or Hybrid Striped Bass	20 daily, not more than 3 exceeding 17”	
Channel Catfish	None	None

**For tournament permits contact Wayne Fitzgerald State Park 618/629-2320.**

**Additional Contacts: Rend Lake U.S Army Corps of Engineers 618/724-2493**

**Rend Lake Resort 618/6292211**

**Rend Lake Marina 618/724-7651**

**DNR Fisheries 618/393-6732**

**Updated: 12/3/14**