



MAZONIA STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AREA

Area Synopsis

See Individual Lake Summaries for More Information
FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

LOCATION – The Mazonia State Fish and Wildlife Area main office is located in Grundy County, 3 miles southwest of Braidwood on Illinois Route 53 and Huston Road. The south unit, which includes the Ponderosa, Wilderness and Monster Lake areas, is located in Kankakee County north of County Highway 6 and west of the town of Essex.

DESCRIPTION – The area consists of over 200 impoundments ranging from less than $\frac{1}{4}$ acre to nearly 150 acres. Most all of these water areas are typified by steep drop-offs and many have maximum depths in excess of 30 feet with some twice that. Shoreline access to most lakes and ponds is limited by extensive stands of tall reed grass. Concrete boat ramps access four of the largest lakes within the main Mazonia area and here boats are restricted to trolling motors only. Gravel ramps are present on Eagle, Ponderosa and Monster Lakes. Gasoline motors are allowed on these water areas and while there are no horsepower limitations, a strict no-wake regulation is enforced. “Belly boats” have become an effective and popular way of accessing and fishing the smaller interior ponds. With the exception of Monster Lake which offers year ‘round fishing opportunity, Mazonia is closed to fishing during upland game and waterfowl season. Following the completion of the hunting seasons, Mazonia reopens for ice fishing dependent upon ice conditions.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES: Main lakes are surveyed on an alternate year basis. Spring trap netting is also incorporated at selected lakes. Habitat enhancement projects have been completed on many of these lakes and ponds. Aquatic vegetation, while present, has not required any active management.

STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY – Most of the larger water areas contain largemouth bass, bluegill, white and black crappie, channel catfish, carp and various other species. The IDNR presently stocks channel catfish into several lakes on a rotational basis. Redear sunfish have been stocked into Clear Lake and Ponderosa Lake as well. Northern pike stockings into several lakes have generally failed. A walleye stocking program has been approved for Monster Lake with the initial stocking scheduled for 2015. *No special mercury advisory or other contaminant-related consumption advisories pertain.*

LARGEMOUTH BASS – Bass Lake, located in the Main Unit, was surveyed in the spring of 2014. Collected at the rate of 40 per hour of electrofishing effort, largemouth bass catch rates (CPE) declined from the previous survey. The average size bass collected during this survey measured 12.0”, increasing from the 2012 survey by nearly 0.6 “. Legal size bass comprised over 24% of the adult collection and trophy-sized bass (18” plus) while not common were present. Clear Lake was also surveyed and while the bass collection was high, it was dominated by smaller fish; the average size bass did not exceed 10”. Best bets for bass fishing success continue to be Bass, Gar and Carp Lakes in the Main Mazonia Unit. Monster, Eagle and Ponderosa Lakes were also surveyed with Monster Lake providing the best bass population per 2014 fall survey results. Bigger bass are taken each year by anglers targeting the more remote, harder to get to lakes and ponds.

BLUEGILL – Survey results for 2014 indicate that Clear Lake continues to support a high-quality bluegill fishery. The average size bluegill collected measured 5.9” while nearly 39% of the collection met or exceeded 8”. The Ponderosa Lake bluegill fishery appears to be showing signs of heavy fishing pressure as population parameters were in decline for the 2014 survey.

REDEAR SUNFISH – Although present in several of the Mazonia lakes, Ponderosa supports the best population of redear sunfish. In the most recent trap net survey, redear sunfish dominated the collection as a total of 48 were captured ranging from 6.7" to 11.7", averaging 9.9" and 12.5oz.

CRAPPIE - Although both white and black crappies are present in the Mazonia impoundments, white crappie are the more common of the two. White crappie collected in the 2014 spring surveys on Bass and Monster Lakes had comparable average lengths which approached 9.5". Prevalent in most all lakes and ponds, crappies provide much of the early spring action. Crappies are regularly caught through the ice as well.

CHANNEL CATFISH – This species is present in most all of the larger water areas with densities greatest in lakes receiving annual supplemental stockings. During the spring 2014 survey on Bass Lake the gill netting yielded catfish which averaged 18.8", with the largest fish just over 5 pounds. **Flathead catfish** are present in Monster Lake and can be caught near the Granary Creek cut-off.

NORTHERN PIKE – This fish has been stocked into several of the Mazonia lakes but have shown poor recruitment, with few fish of size collected in IDNR sampling. A lone representative was collected from Bass Lake in 2014 which measured just under 30". This species should not be confused with grass pickerel, which are similar in appearance and do not grow large and are not protected by a length and/or creel limit. The current state record northern pike was caught from Monster Lake. Larger fish are present in some of the south unit lakes, holdovers from when these lakes were leased by private fishing clubs.

ADDITIONAL FISH SPECIES: A variety of other species which can be caught include common carp, freshwater drum, bullheads, green sunfish and several gar species.

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 - Trolling motor only, except Monster and Ponderosa Lake – gasoline outboards allowed, no wake

All fish species - Two pole and line fishing only.

Bluegill or Redear Sunfish – 10 fish daily creel limit on Ponderosa, unlimited elsewhere

Channel Catfish – 6 fish daily creel limit.

Largemouth Bass – 15" minimum length limit; 3 fish daily creel limit.

White, Black, or Hybrid Crappie – 10 fish daily creel limit

CONTACT INFORMATION – Mazonia/Braidwood State Fish & Wildlife Area: 815/237-0063.
IDNR Fisheries County Fish Biologist: 630/553-6680.