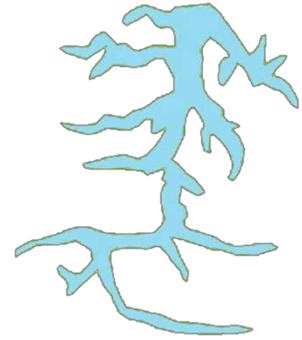




# IDNR – Fisheries

## 2014 Lake Status Summary

### Jim Edgar Panther Creek SFWA



**Location:** At the Jim Edgar Panther Creek State and Fish and Wildlife Area. 8 miles north of Ashland. 40 miles northwest of Springfield.

**Lake history and characteristics:** In the early 1990's the Department of Natural Resources purchased 15,575 acres of ground from Commonwealth Edison. Ten old farm ponds on the site were rehabilitated and restocked and three new larger lakes were constructed. Gridley Lake was completed and stocked in 1997, followed by Prairie and Drake lakes in 1999 and 2002, respectively. Prairie Lake is the largest lake spanning 210 acres, has a maximum depth of 45', an average depth of 18', is steep sided, has extensive beds of aquatic vegetation and woody cover, and is very clear with visibilities of 10-14'. Gridley Lake is 24.6 acres with a maximum depth of 42', while Drake Lake is 35 acres with a maximum depth of 42'.

#### Prairie Lake:

**Largemouth bass:** Prairie Lake has one of the better bass populations in the area. All largemouth bass population structural indices were within the management goals for 2014. Twenty-five percent of catchable fish collected in the fall 2014 survey measured over the 15" minimum length limit ( $RSD_{15} = 25$  in 2014), while 7% measured over 18". Largemouth bass catch rates increased to 116 fish/hr of electrofishing in 2014, which is much higher than it has been for several years. It is unknown to what degree the survey was affected by a fall pulsed-DC sample compared to a spring 3-phase AC sample. Prairie Lake largemouth bass body condition was the lowest it has been in over 10 years, but still within management goals ( $Wr = 95$ ). This lake can be difficult to fish due to its maximum depth of 45', steep sides, and abundant vegetation and woody cover, but very rewarding. Anglers can catch largemouth bass during the warmer months of the year around beds of aquatic vegetation, points, and deadfalls with plastic worms, jigs, spinners, crank baits, minnows, crayfish and worms.

**Black Crappie:** The black crappie population is below average, but they were unintentionally stocked by an unknown source. The numbers are currently poor, but there are some very high quality fish in the lake. Black crappie over 14" are not uncommon. A black crappie stocking program may develop in the future upon successful gizzard shad establishment. Anglers can catch crappie in the spring and fall on submerged structures and stickups with spinners, jigs and minnows.

**Channel catfish:** The channel catfish population is excellent both in quantity and quality. Many 2-8 lb fish are collected in surveys every year. Channel catfish are stocked into Prairie Lake on a biennial basis to supplement the population. Anglers can catch channel catfish around brushy areas, coves, and along the shoreline in the warmer months of the year using bottom fishing techniques with cut bait, shrimp, chicken livers or night crawlers.

**Muskie:** The muskie population is well established with surveys producing up to 6 fish per hour of electrofishing or net set. Muskie were first stocked in 1999, therefore there is a chance 50"+ fish are present in the lake. Anglers report fish of that size, although the largest muskie ever surveyed measured 45". Muskie in Prairie Lake tend to be in less than desirable body condition, which is most likely due to the lack of a strong forage base. Gizzard shad stockings began in 2010 to supplement the predator forage base. Anglers can catch muskie in the spring and fall around beds of aquatic vegetation using minnows, spinners, spoons, jigs, jerk and crank baits.

**Bluegill/redear sunfish:** The original management plan for Prairie Lake was to provide a trophy panfishery, but the bluegill and redear sunfish populations did not progress as planned. Therefore, a new management strategy was implemented in 2010 that focused on other facets of the fishery. Bluegill and redear sunfish populations in Prairie Lake are poor displaying large numbers of small fish.

**Smallmouth bass:** Smallmouth bass stockings began in 2009 to diversify the fishery. In all likelihood they will not reproduce naturally, but stockings may continue in an attempt to establish the population. No smallmouth bass were collected in the 2013 surveys, but have been collected up to 12.6" in the past. Anglers can attempt to catch smallmouth bass along rocky areas near the dam using minnows, night crawlers, crayfish, spinners and small crank baits.

**Gridley Lake:** Gridley Lake initially produced many large, fast growing bluegill and redear sunfish. The sunfish population since declined, but many management goals were met in 2014. Thirty-three percent of bluegill collected in 2014 measured over 6" and 15% measured over 7". The same story applies to redear sunfish in Gridley Lake. Twenty-nine percent of the redear sunfish collected in 2014 measured over 7", while 13% measured over 8". The largemouth bass population has shown signs of stunting over the last several years with high catch rates, poor body conditions, and skewed population structure. The 2014 fall fish survey showed an increase in bass body condition ( $Wr = 95$ ) and a more desirable population structure, but catch rates were low (35 fish/hr of electrofishing). The channel catfish population is doing well with 2-5.5 lb channel catfish present in the lake. Channel catfish are stocked biennially to supplement the population. Gridley Lake had some new additions in 2014. A new fall, catchable trout program was implemented, which has replaced the Gurney Road Pond trout program, and northern pike were stocked into the lake to help restructure the largemouth bass and sunfish populations.

**Drake Lake:** Drake Lake has an excellent redear sunfish and bluegill fishery. Sampling efficiency was poor in 2014, therefore the 2013 spring fish survey data is presented below. Twenty-four percent of bluegill measured greater than 7" and 10% greater than 8", while 51% of redear sunfish measured greater than 8" and 6% greater than 10" in the spring 2013 survey. The bass are overpopulated and show signs of stunting, which helps provide anglers the opportunity to catch trophy sunfish. High densities of small, hungry bass prey upon the sunfish species allowing the sunfish that avoid predation to quickly grow to large sizes. The channel catfish population is also doing well with 2-5.5 lb channel catfish present in the lake. Channel catfish are stocked biennially to supplement the population.

**Fishing Regulations:** see the Fishing Regulation Booklet or [IFISHILLINOIS.org](http://IFISHILLINOIS.org) for updates

2 pole and line fishing only

Largemouth bass - 15" minimum length limit with a creel limit of 3 per day.



Muskie - 48" minimum length limit with a creel limit of 1 fish per day.



Channel catfish - 6 fish per day creel limit.



(Drake Lake only) Bluegill or redear sunfish – 10 fish per day creel limit.



(Gridley Lake only) Rainbow trout – 5 fish per day creel limit.

Closed season Oct.1 thru 5 a.m. on third Saturday in October.



**Aquatic vegetation and/or chemical treatment:**

- treated nuisance submersed aquatic vegetation and filamentous algae around bank fishing areas with:
- Reward (7.5 gal) and Cutrine Plus (5 gal) at Prairie Lake 5/29
- Reward (2.5 gal) and Cutrine Plus (1.25 gal) at Gridley Lake 5/29
- Reward (2.5 gal) and Cutrine Plus (1.25 gal) at Drake Lake 5/29

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**Fisheries Management Activities Completed:**

- conducted a fall fish population survey on Prairie Lake using standard protocols (2-1 hr pulsed-DC electrofishing surveys). 10/22
- conducted a fall fish population survey on Gridley Lake using standard protocols (1-52 min pulsed-DC electrofishing survey). 10/23
- conducted a fall fish population survey on Drake Lake using standard protocols (1-1 hr pulsed-DC electrofishing surveys). 10/23
- stocked 200-11.8" muskie (9/13) and 8,400-7" channel catfish (8/8) into Prairie Lake
- stocked 1200 lbs (2,375 fish) of rainbow trout (9/29), 3,000-5.6" northern pike (6/19), 250-8" northern pike (7/18), and 990-8" channel catfish (8/14) into Gridley Lake
- stocked 1,720 6" channel catfish (8/14) into Drake Lake