

BASS ANGLERS INFORMATION TEAM

BAIT

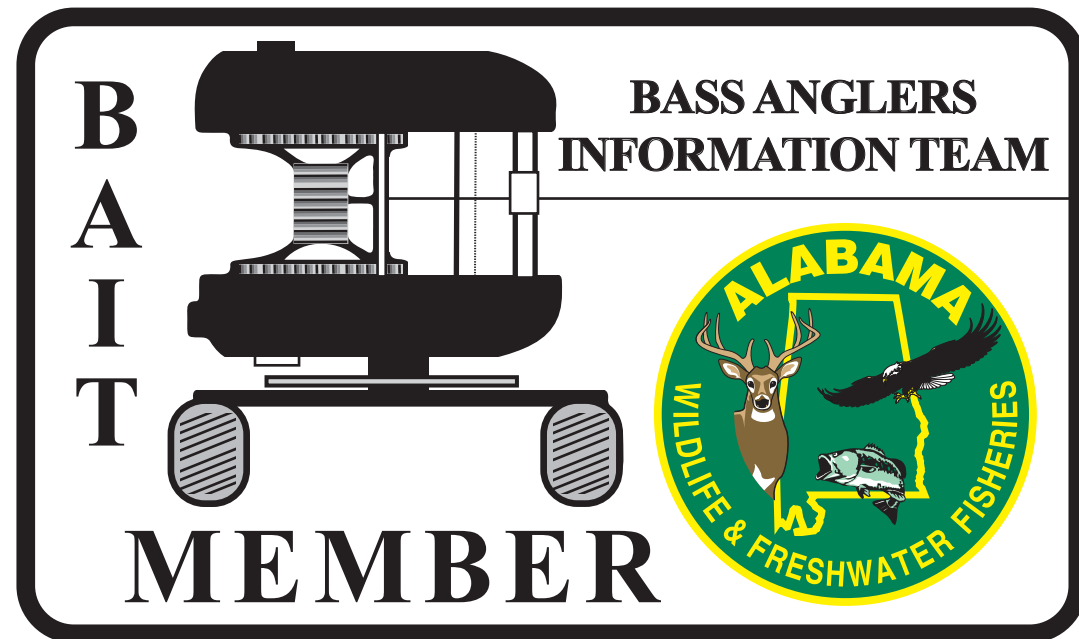
2020



ANNUAL REPORT

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
WILDLIFE AND FRESHWATER FISHERIES DIVISION

BAIT 2020



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&**

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**Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries
Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**

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www.outdooralabama.com/freshwater-boating-access

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BAIT 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the participating bass clubs, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks for their genuine interest in this program and their willingness to take a proactive approach to managing bass fisheries in Alabama’s reservoirs. Without their cooperation, assistance, and enthusiasm this program would not be as thorough and in-depth.

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INTRODUCTIONS AND METHODS

The 2020 Bass Angler Information Team (BAIT) Annual Report marks the 35th year of the BAIT Program. The objective of the program since its inception has been to gather information on bass populations by combining the efforts of bass club members and state fisheries biologists. The BAIT Program summarizes catch data on reservoir bass populations that are collected and provided to us by participating clubs and tournament organizations. This information is used by state fisheries biologists in combination with data from other sources as potential indicators to issues that may need further attention through standardized sampling or research to assist with management decisions. Bass anglers use the report to establish future tournament sites, or to locate a reservoir that provides a particular type of fishing. Throughout 2020, we summarized 15,924 tournament reports. Anglers spent 3,769,225 hours collecting data for this program. They contributed data from 1,038,680 bass that weighed 1,994,323 pounds.

This report also contains information related to the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries’ (WFF) Boating Access Maintenance and Development Program which maintains 115 boating access areas statewide. The accomplishments made by this program during 2020 may be of particular interest to tournament bass anglers and their organizations.

Every year, we attempt to maintain the support of the previous year’s clubs and to enlist the support of new clubs through public meetings, news releases, and letters. Participating club officers or tournament directors are sent the previous year’s annual report and tournament report postcards to be completed following each tournament. As tournament cards are received, they are checked for accuracy and entered into a computer database. Club officers are contacted when

data are suspected to be erroneous. We compile and analyze the data after receiving the December tournament reports. Statewide tournament results are sorted by reservoir and month.

To rank reservoirs, five “fishing quality” indicators are used including the percent of successful anglers (percent of anglers with one or more bass at weigh-in), average bass weight, number of bass per angler-day, pounds of bass per angler-day, and hours required to catch a bass five pounds or larger. Since the length of a fishing day varies between tournaments, an angler-day is defined as one angler fishing for 10 hours. In this report, an angler-day may simply be referred to as a day of fishing. A minimum of five tournaments for an individual reservoir is considered necessary for minimum confidence in each reservoir dataset. Reservoirs with five or more tournament reports are ranked for each of the quality indicators. Values are assigned to each category and an overall rank is determined for each reservoir by summing the values of the five quality indicators. This ranking system is intended to be a quick reference for tournament site selection. It does not constitute a best/worst list of Alabama reservoirs and should not be interpreted that way.

Tournament results are also broken down by month for statewide tournament results. This section is intended to aid clubs and tournament directors in scheduling tournaments seasonally, since the quality of fishing can vary considerably from one season to the next. It also allows anglers to better understand their chances of achieving a particular goal (i.e., catching a big bass) by studying, in detail, how anglers performed each month of the year. In previous years, the results were broken down by month for each reservoir. However, a decline in BAIT reports have required us to combine all reservoirs and report only statewide results by month.

Bass fishing in Alabama has remained excellent for the past several years. However, the COVID 19 pandemic affected every aspect of daily life in 2020. Pandemic-related lockdowns closed businesses and pushed people outdoors to seek recreation away from crowds of people. Shutdowns began in March 2020 and continued through May. Based on annual resident fishing license sales, 2020 saw a significant increase in the number of people fishing. Unfortunately, a significant decrease in BAIT tournament reports during those months also occurred. This is likely due to pandemic shutdowns canceling or postponing tournaments. The overall reduction in BAIT tournament reports limited our ability to compare 2020 data to data from previous years because the reduction came during a time of the year that traditionally offers some of the best fishing, statewide. Even with the reduction of data from the spring fishing season, 2020 still provided quality fishing when comparing the quality indicators to years past.

Reservoirs are ranked by the quality indicators for reservoirs with five or more BAIT tournament reports. Reservoirs with less than five BAIT tournament reports are not considered for the quality indicator rankings but are included in the table summarizing tournament data by reservoir (Table 1). Because of the reduction in reports, approximately half of the traditional reservoirs were not included in the rankings. As expected, all quality indicators decreased from those reported in 2019 with the exception of percent success, which slightly increased. The good news is that even with the disruption of a spring fishing season and fewer reservoirs included in the rankings, the 2020 quality indicators remained above the 35-year average. It is likely that the quality indicators would look different had we been able to collect tournament data from the entire year of 2020.

In 2020, the average bass weight was 2.17 pounds, a decrease of 8% but still 13% above average. Percent success (where an angler weighs in at least one bass) increased 4 %, which is 12% above average. The number of bass per angler-day (one angler-day equals one angler fishing for 10 hours) decrease by 6% but still 28% above average. Pounds of bass per angler-day decreased by 13% but still 45% above average. Finally, the number of hours required to catch a 5-pound bass increase by 84%, which is 35% better than average.

- **Average Bass Weight:** was 2.17 lbs., **decreased by 8%** and was **13% above average**.
- **Percent Success:** (anglers weighing at least one bass) **increased 4%** and was **12% above average**.

- **Number of bass per angler-day:** (one angler-day = one angler fishing for 10 hours) **decreased 6%** and was **28% above average**.
- **Pounds of bass per angler-day:** **decreased 13%** and was **45% above average**.
- **Number of hours required to catch a 5 lb. bass:** **increased 84%**, which is **35% higher than average**.

NOTABLE FACTS:

Although the larger Tennessee River impoundments have been traditional angler favorites, two Coosa River reservoirs topped the **Quality Indicator Rankings**. Below are some notable facts uncovered after summarizing all of the 2020 BAIT tournament submissions:

- **Weiss** took the top spot in the overall Quality Indicator Rankings. Wilson held the top spot for the past 6 years. Unfortunately, **Wilson** did not have enough BAIT tournament submissions to be considered for the Quality Indicator Rankings in 2020.
- The top five reservoirs with the overall highest Quality Indicator Rankings were **Weiss (50), Logan Martin (49), Harris (42), Eufaula (41), and Pickwick (39)**.
- The top reservoirs for catching the most legal fish after considering the percent success and number of bass per angler day Quality Indicator Rankings are **Harris, Mitchell, Logan Martin, Weiss and Martin**.
- The top reservoirs with the largest fish on average were **Guntersville, Eufaula, and Pickwick** while the three best reservoirs to catch a bass more than 5 lbs. were **Eufaula, West Point, and Harris**.
- The top three reservoirs to catch the largest bags were **Logan Martin, Weiss, and Pickwick**.
- Several large reservoirs that historically are included in the quality indicator rankings were left out due to the lack of BAIT tournament report submissions.

2020 STATEWIDE B.A.I.T. STATISTICS

14.03 – Average winning weight for five fish

3.54 – Number of bass weighed in per angler-day

7.67 – Pounds of bass weighed in per angler-day (new record)

2.17 – Average weight of bass caught

390 – Hours required to catch a 5-pound bass

9.58 – Weight of the largest bass caught

6 – Number of bass 8 pounds and larger

180 – Number of bass 5 pounds and larger

85.00 - % Success Anglers (with at least one fish)



ALABAMA STANDARDIZED SAMPLING OF BLACK BASS FOR POPULATION MANAGEMENT

WFF fisheries biologists are often seen on reservoirs during the spring and fall collecting sport fish for standardized reservoir sampling. Through five district offices, WFF manages 45 public reservoirs encompassing more than half a million acres of water throughout the state. Inside the front cover of this publication, each district office is listed along with the reservoirs within their area of responsibility. Each reservoir is sampled on a routine basis to monitor the population structure of its sport fish species. These samples are conducted in a standardized manner according to the guidelines of the Alabama Reservoir Management Manual so that changes in population characteristics can be monitored over time by comparing to previous samples. Most reservoirs are sampled on a 3-year cycle. Management recommendations such as length and creel limits are determined from this research.

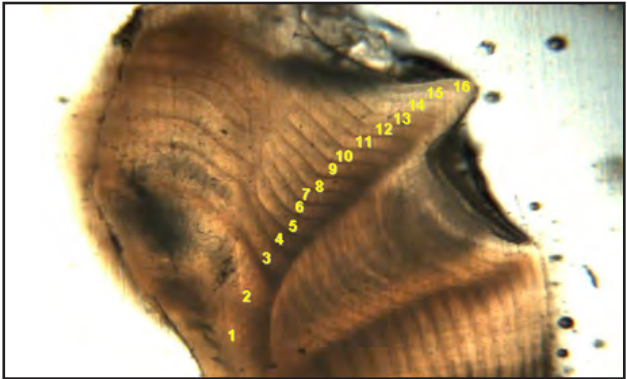
Various sampling gear is used to obtain standardized samples. That gear is specific to the fish that the biologists are targeting. In the spring, biologists use specially designed electrofishing boats that temporarily stun fish so they can be netted. Spring electrofishing surveys usually target Largemouth Bass, Spotted Bass, and crappie. On occasion biologists also collect other species such as Bluegill Sunfish, Redear Sunfish, shad, or catfish. In the fall and early winter, gill nets and trap nets are used to collect fish species that prefer open water, or deep areas where electrofishing is not effective. Gill nets are made of monofilament, and capture fish when they swim into it. Gill nets are primarily used to collect Striped Bass,

Hybrid Striped Bass, White Bass, Sauger, and Walleye. Trap nets are box-shaped nets made of nylon that are specifically designed to collect young crappie. They are an effective tool to evaluate young crappie produced from the previous spring, which provides a good indication of the abundance of adults in future years.

Fish collected in reservoir samples are measured for total length and weight, and age is determined. The length and weight data combined, allow biologists to examine how plump the fish are, which is an indication of whether or not the appropriate amount of food is available. Length data is used to assess whether the correct proportion of catchable size fish are available for anglers to harvest. Age data in conjunction with length data allows biologists to determine how fast fish are growing. In order to age fish, the inner ear bone (otolith) must be removed and looked at under a microscope. Fish begin laying down a new circular mark on the otolith each spring. The circular marks on the otolith correspond to years of age. These circular marks, or rings, are formed because calcium is deposited at a constant rate no matter how fast the fish is growing. During winter, when the fish is not actively growing, the calcium is deposited in a more concentrated area, and leaves behind a ring once the fish's growth-rate increases as water temperatures become warmer. The number of fish collected at each age is used to determine how quickly fish are dying out of the population, either from fishing or natural causes.



Bass are weighed and measured so that biologists can determine the size structure of the population, growth rates, and relative condition.



Cross-section of an otolith from a 16-year-old Largemouth Bass.



BLACK BASS, DATA ANALYSIS, REGULATIONS, AND RESEARCH

All of the data is analyzed and compared to previous samples from the individual reservoir and to statewide average data from all reservoirs. Biologists can then determine if harvest regulations need to be changed to improve the fishery. The most common type of regulation on a reservoir fish population is a daily creel limit, or simply how many fish an angler can keep each day. Daily creel limits are used to prevent angler harvest from becoming too high to sustain the fishery. Length limits are another regulation used when fishing pressure or angler harvest is too high on fish of a particular size. Length limits are sometimes used to protect young fish so they can reach maturity or to increase the number of large fish for anglers.

Complex statistical models are sometimes developed to predict how fish populations might respond to changes in the length or bag limits imposed on each reservoir. Over time, the predictive ability of these models can be validated by comparing the predicted effects to the actual fishery responses to the changes in harvest restrictions. In general, harvest restrictions have minimal impacts unless the rate of fish dying from angling exceeds the rate of fish dying naturally. There is little biological justification for protecting fish that are dying primarily of natural causes. Since bass harvest in Alabama is generally very low, few reservoirs have restrictive length limits at this time. However, routine monitoring of bass populations will allow changes in harvest restrictions to be made whenever necessary.

A complex combination of variables ultimately determines the quality of each fishery in each reservoir. Even with good management, reservoirs with low fertility or poor water quality do not have the potential to produce outstanding fisheries. Depending on the results of these investigations, some management objectives may include the reduction of small bass through the use of slot limits or increasing the

number of larger fish using minimum length limits, which can also reduce the effects of variable recruitment.

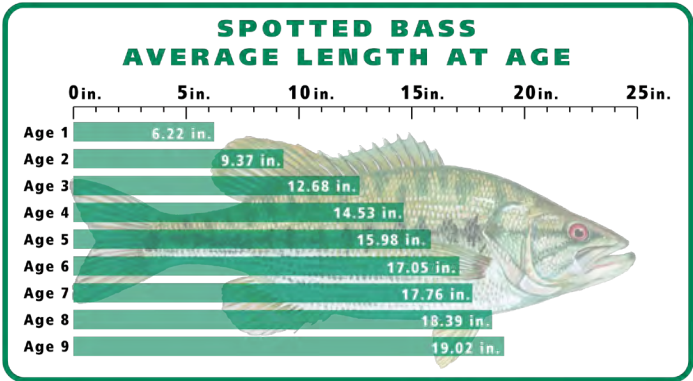
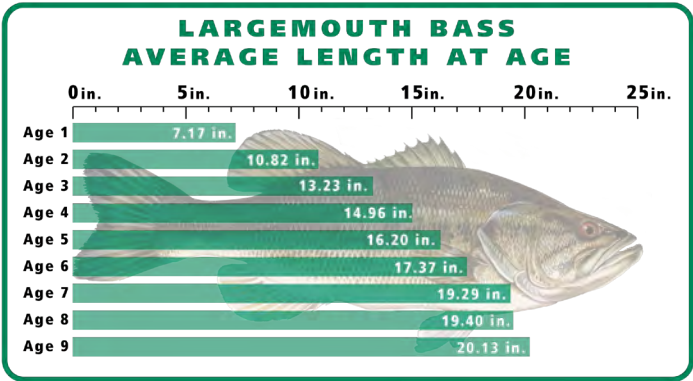
You may also occasionally notice biologists interviewing anglers at boat ramps. These interviews are known as access point creel surveys and give biologists important information about what kinds and sizes of fish anglers are catching as well as bass harvest rates. They also provide biologists information about what anglers want to catch and highlight any issues anglers may be having in a particular reservoir. Access point creel surveys are a very important component of reservoir fisheries management because management decisions are ultimately made to benefit the people using the resource.

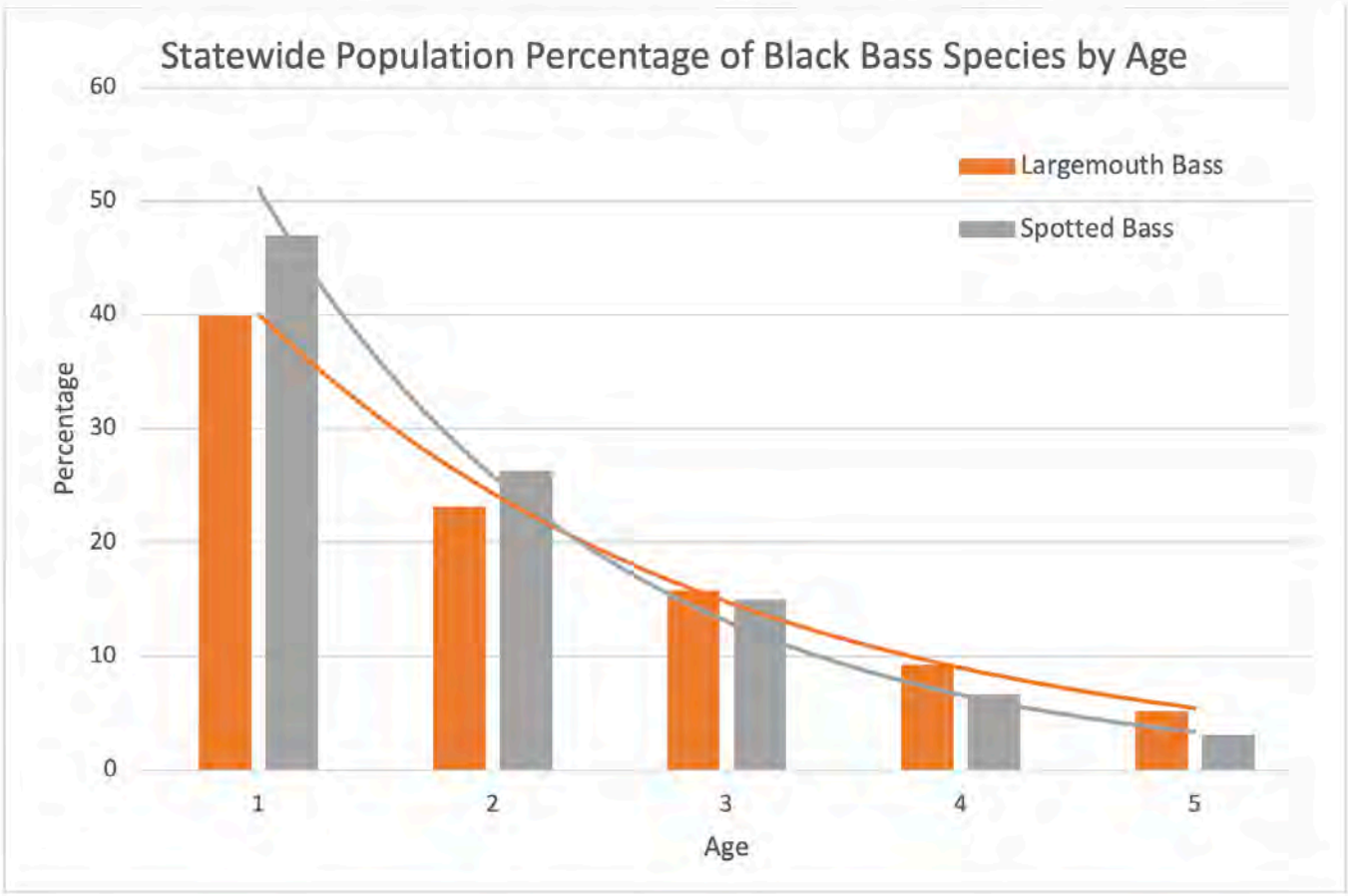
In addition to baseline reservoir monitoring, research projects are often needed to address specific fisheries problems. Some research projects are conducted by WFF Fisheries Section biologists while others are performed by researchers from various universities. These research projects span a wide array of fisheries issues but often pertain to sport fish and black bass species in Alabama's rivers and reservoirs where tournaments take place. These projects may look at specific problems with black bass species or other fish species that could have an indirect effect on black bass species in Alabama's waterways.

Standardized sampling data for black bass species have been collected, analyzed, and compiled in a database since 1986, and contain information from more than 60,000 bass statewide. The graphs and tables (*shown on left*) demonstrate the average length at age distribution and abundance for each age class for largemouth bass and spotted bass statewide. They also demonstrate the variability in size within each year class for both species. This is pooled data collected from fish from every reservoir in the state. The information is not intended to represent individual reservoir fish populations.

Largemouth Bass Length at Age (Inches)				
Age	Minimum	Average	Maximum	Sample Size
1	0.94	7.17	13.74	19,190
2	4.92	10.82	16.93	11,130
3	7.17	13.23	19.65	7,602
4	8.78	14.96	20.55	4,475
5	10.16	16.20	22.64	2,501
6	11.02	17.37	22.72	1,401
7	13.47	19.29	24.41	848
8	12.91	19.40	23.90	522
9	14.06	20.13	24.29	247
10	14.88	20.39	25.24	147

Spotted Bass Length at Age (Inches)				
Age	Minimum	Average	Maximum	Sample Size
1	1.65	6.22	13.46	6,791
2	3.66	9.37	17.48	3,803
3	7.05	12.68	17.80	2,163
4	9.53	14.53	16.22	964
5	10.83	15.98	16.26	446
6	12.95	17.05	20.20	159
7	13.82	17.76	20.51	76
8	15.00	18.39	20.98	27
9	16.42	19.02	22.24	15





Fisheries biologists collect a nice Largemouth Bass and some nice Spotted Bass during standardized electrofishing samples.



Largemouth Bass have been collected up to 16 years old and Spotted Bass have been collected up to 12 years old in our standardized samples. Fish more than five years old make up less than 7% of largemouth bass and 2% of spotted bass from historical population datasets, which is why they were not included. Bass exceeding 9-10 years old are rare; therefore, they were not included in the figures.

The data and information collected through standardized reservoir sampling surveys is vital for biologists to make wise management decisions for anglers. The Reservoir Management Program is the primary source of data that determines whether a fish population is in good condition, is overfished, or if a specific issue needs to be studied. The work is a necessary part of WFF’s mission to preserve, protect, and enhance Alabama’s aquatic resources.



BAIT WEBSITE

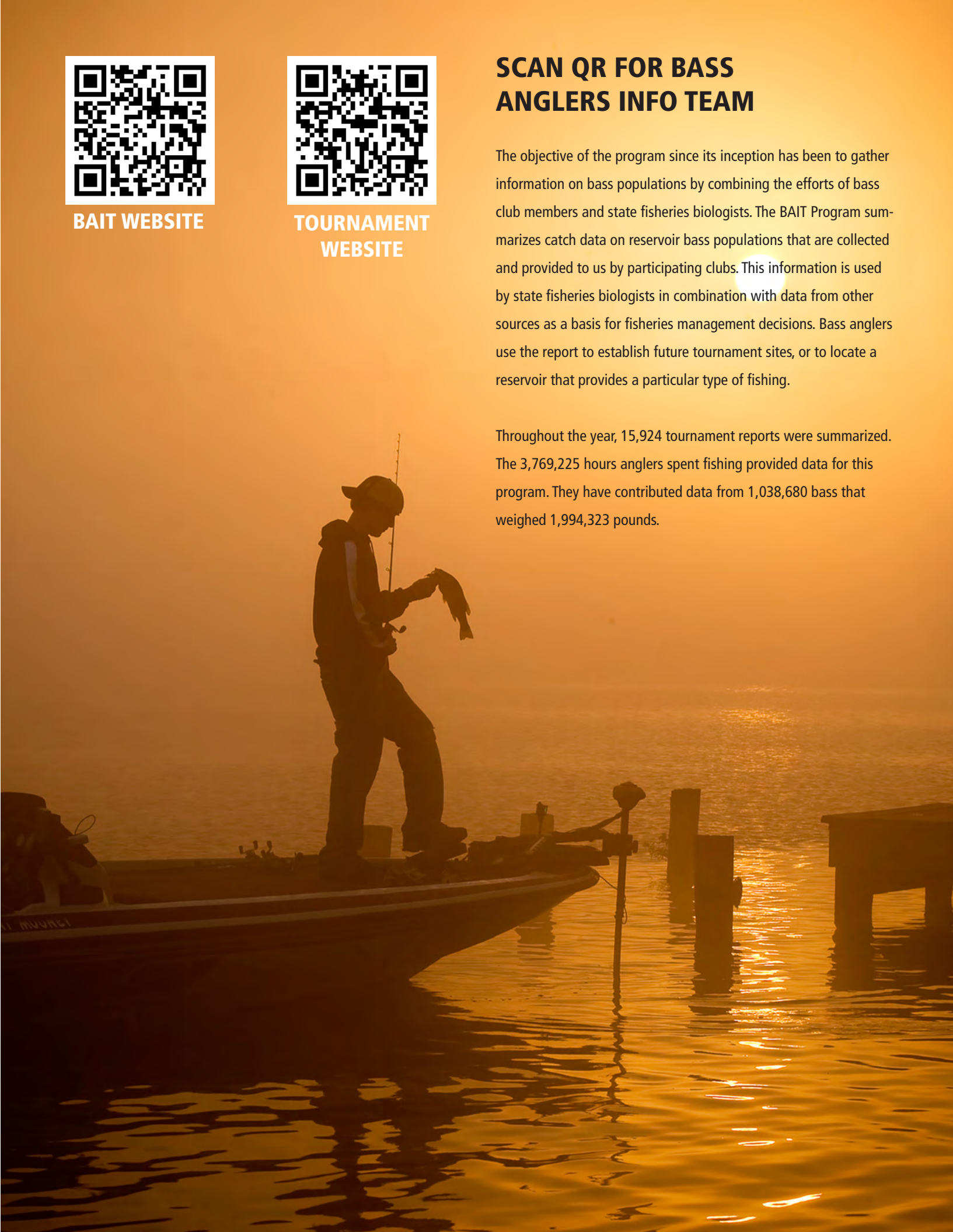


TOURNAMENT WEBSITE

SCAN QR FOR BASS ANGLERS INFO TEAM

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Throughout the year, 15,924 tournament reports were summarized. The 3,769,225 hours anglers spent fishing provided data for this program. They have contributed data from 1,038,680 bass that weighed 1,994,323 pounds.





PUBLIC WATER BASS STOCKING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WFF fisheries biologists routinely receive requests to stock sport fish species such as Largemouth Bass in specific public water bodies to improve the fisheries. Unfortunately, the utility and expectations of fish stocking are often grossly misunderstood by the angling public. This FAQ will provide more insight into this subject.

WHY DOESN'T WFF STOCK LARGEMOUTH BASS ANNUALLY IN PUBLIC WATERS?

Stocking hatchery produced Largemouth Bass fingerlings in water bodies where naturally spawned fish of similar genetics already exist is unproductive. The number of bass produced naturally each spring in Alabama reservoirs is virtually always sufficient to maintain quality fisheries. WFF fisheries biologists have performed hundreds of bass spawn checks with seines over the years and the results of these surveys have never indicated a failed spawn. When largemouth bass populations are established and recruitment to a catchable size is adequate, the stocking of hatchery fingerlings simply will not increase the number of fish available to anglers.

DOES STOCKING LARGEMOUTH BASS IN PUBLIC WATER BODIES INCREASE THEIR ABUNDANCE AND THUS MAKE FISHING BETTER?

If a particular species, such as Largemouth Bass, occupies a body of water and natural reproduction is occurring, then stocking additional fish will not increase the number of fish available to anglers. This management concept is difficult for many to accept; however, the explanation is not overly complicated. Lakes can only support a certain number of fish based on factors such as water quality and nutrient availability. This is called carrying capacity or the total weight of fish.

WHEN FISHING SUCCESS IN A WATER BODY BEGINS TO DECLINE, WILL STOCKING LARGEMOUTH BASS FINGERLINGS HELP THE FISHERY?

When angler catch rates are low it is usually the result of unfavorable environmental conditions that led to poor survival of one or more year-classes during their first year of life. The inverse also occurs, where favorable environmental conditions can lead to high survival of juveniles and thus an increase in fishing success follows a few years later. During the spring spawning season, dozens of species of juvenile fish all compete for food and space at the same time, thus survival of young bass in the wild is very low. Adult bass attempt to circumvent this fate by producing excessive amounts of offspring, but the reality is that very few young bass survive (often less than 1/2%) their first year of life. Since hatchery-stocked fish are subjected to the same environmental conditions as naturally spawned fish, they also suffer very high rates of mortality. In fact, stocked bass frequently have higher mortality rates than resident fish, since they must orient and acclimate to their new surroundings.

WHAT IS A FLORIDA LARGEMOUTH BASS AND HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM OTHER BASS?

The two recognized subspecies of Largemouth Bass are the Northern largemouth bass and the Florida Largemouth Bass. Without a genetic assessment or careful examination of external body features, these two subspecies cannot be distinguished from one another. In their native range, the Florida subspecies grows to a larger size than their Northern cousin.

DOES ALABAMA HAVE A FLORIDA LARGEMOUTH BASS STOCKING PROGRAM LIKE MANY OTHER STATES?

WFF began stocking Florida Largemouth Bass several decades ago spanning almost every reservoir in the state. WFF was one of the first state agencies to begin stocking Florida largemouth bass. More than 17 million have been stocked since the early 1970s. These stockings occurred before social media and other internet platforms were available; thus, most people do not even realize they occurred. The goal of these stockings was not to increase bass abundance, but rather to alter the genetics of native Northern largemouth bass and increase the potential for larger fish to be caught by anglers. The results of this program were very inconsistent, but the successful introduction of Florida genes was documented in some locations, such as Lake Guntersville. Once Florida Largemouth Bass genes are abundant in a population, the continuation of stocking this subspecies is unproductive.



PUBLIC WATER BASS STOCKING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS AN F1 HYBRID LARGEMOUTH BASS AND ARE THEY SUPERIOR?

An F1 hybrid is simply a term to designate a first-generation cross between a Northern and Florida Largemouth Bass. These offspring of mixed genetics have also been given other appealing coined names for marketing purposes. F1 hybrids have shown greater growth characteristics over Northern Largemouth Bass due to a phenomenon known as hybrid vigor, but this growth advantage does not persist. This is especially true in populations where both Northern and Florida largemouth bass genes already exist, like most Alabama public water bodies.

WHY DOES WFF ROUTINELY STOCK STRIPED BASS IN RESERVOIRS, BUT NOT LARGEMOUTH BASS?

Unlike Largemouth Bass, striped bass are no longer able to successfully reproduce in most of Alabama's public water bodies. Striped bass are considered an anadromous species, meaning they historically lived their lives in saltwater and only moved into freshwater rivers to spawn. Since dams now impede their spring spawning runs and thus eliminate the long stretches of free-flowing water necessary for egg maturation, WFF fish hatcheries must artificially spawn, raise, and stock this species to prevent them from disappearing from most of Alabama's reservoirs.

IS STOCKING FISH IN PUBLIC WATERS LEGAL IN ALABAMA?

Regulation 220-2-.129 prohibits the intentional stocking or release of any fish, mussel, snail, crayfish, or their embryos into the public waters of Alabama without written permission from WFF.



Fisheries biologists conduct a routine bass recruitment check.

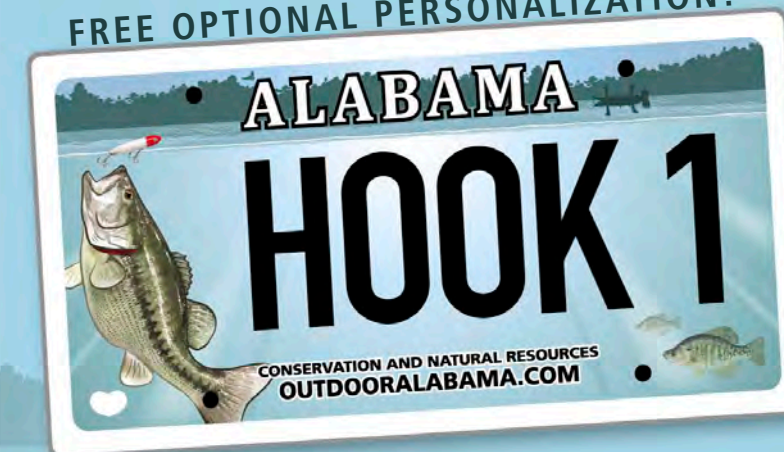
Fisheries biologists collect juvenile black bass species during a routine bass recruitment check.

FISHING TOURNAMENT WEBSITE



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Click here to post information about your tournament, then enter your tournament information including contacts, a link to your website, or even a copy of the registration form.

Fishing Tournaments

Please fill out the form below to post a fishing tournament.
All fields are required.

Tournament Types:

First Name:

Last Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Organization:

Target Species:

Water Body:

Boat Ramp:

Start Date:

End Date:

Start Time: :

Or ☐ Safe Day Light

☐ Safe Day Light

☐ To Be Determined

Show Time

End Time: :

Hours of Fishing:

To Be Determined

Show Time

Estimated Number of Boats:

Tournament Overview:

Web Address:

Upload File:

Select File

selected file size

PLEASE NOTE:
The tournament must be approved by the DCNR staff before it is displayed on OutdoorAlabama.com.

Submit

Fishing Tournaments

Post a New Fishing Tournament

Fishing Tournaments: Month and Year: Body: Target Species:

Get Tournaments

Freshwater Fishing Tournaments

Organization	Water Body	Boat Ramp	Start Date Time	End Date Time	Species
View Aluminum Fishing Series	Guntersville	Langston	08/04/2019 Safe Daylight	08/04/2019 3:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
View Alabama Bass Federation, Inc	Lay	Beeswax Creek	09/06/2019 Safe Daylight	09/07/2019 3:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
View American Bass Anglers - Open Series	Guntersville	Goose Pond	09/07/2019 Safe Daylight	09/08/2019 3:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
View God Is Bigger Movement	Logan Martin	Lakeside Park	09/07/2019 Safe Daylight	09/07/2019 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
View American Bass Anglers - Open Series	Logan Martin	Lakeside Park	09/14/2019 6:15 AM CT or Safe Daylight	09/15/2019 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
View FLW (T-H Marine BFL)	Guntersville	Guntersville State Park	09/14/2019 7:00 AM CT or Safe Daylight	09/15/2019 3:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
View FLW LLC BFL Bama Division	Eufaula	Lakepoint State Park Marina	09/28/2019 6:30 AM CT	09/29/2019 2:30 PM CT	Bass (Black)
	Tuscaloosa	Binion Creek	10/12/2019 6:00 AM CT	10/12/2019 1:30 PM CT	Bass (Black)
	Guntersville	Guntersville State Park	10/17/2019 6:00 AM CT	10/19/2019 4:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
	Eufaula	Lakepoint State Park	10/19/2019 Safe Daylight	10/19/2019 4:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
	Lay	Beeswax	10/19/2019 Safe Daylight	10/19/2019 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Guntersville	Goose Pond	10/25/2019 Safe Daylight	10/26/2019 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Wheeler	Ingalls Harbor	11/01/2019 6:30 AM CT	11/02/2019 3:00 PM CT	Catfish
	Weiss	Cowan Creek	11/03/2019 Safe Daylight	11/03/2019 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Guntersville	Guntersville State Park	11/09/2019 6:00 AM CT	11/09/2019 2:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
	Lay	Beeswax Creek	11/09/2019 Safe Daylight	11/09/2019 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Eufaula	Lakepoint State Park	02/14/2020 Safe Daylight of fishing	02/15/2020 7 Hours of fishing	Bass (Black)
	Jordan	Bonnors Landing	02/15/2020 3:00 AM CT or Safe Daylight	02/15/2020 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Guntersville	Guntersville State Park	02/22/2020 Safe Daylight	02/22/2020 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Jordan	Bonnors and State Boat Ramp	02/29/2020 Safe Daylight	02/29/2020 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Smith	Smith Lake Dam	03/21/2020 Safe Daylight	03/21/2020 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Millers Ferry	Roland Cooper State Park	03/21/2020 3:00 AM CT or Safe Daylight	03/21/2020 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Lay	Beeswax	03/28/2020 Safe Daylight	03/28/2020 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Neely Henry	Coosa Landing, Gadsden, AL	04/18/2020 Safe Daylight	04/18/2020 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Lay	Beeswax Creek	04/18/2020 3:00 AM CT or Safe Daylight	04/18/2020 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Eufaula	Lakepoint State Park Marina	04/25/2020 Safe Daylight	04/25/2020 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Logan Martin	Pell City Lakeside City Park	05/09/2020 Safe Daylight	05/09/2020 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)

Select from these options to search all tournaments being held statewide.

Please let other tournament anglers know about this website, and if you have questions or comments call (334) 242-3471.

This website exists for your convenience and we welcome any suggestions you might have that would improve this valuable tool.

NEW ONLINE B.A.I.T. REPORTING SYSTEM

To access the new online B.A.I.T. Reporting System, type <https://tournaments.dcnr.alabama.gov> in your web browser. This URL allows you to easily submit your tournament catch data online.

Reporter

Name: Email: Phone:

Fishing Club

Fishing Club: Representative:

Street: City:

State: Zip:

Tournament Dates, and Types

Reservoir: Launch Site:

Start Date: End Date:

Weighin: Format: Time:

Tournament Rules, Fish Type, and Number Caught

Creel Limit: Size Limit: No. of Hours Fished:

No. of LargeMouth Bass: No. of Spotted Bass: No. of SmallMouth Bass:

Total No. of Bass Caught: Total No. of Bass Released:

No. of Bass Over 5 Lbs: No. of Bass Over 8 Lbs:

No. of Anglers or Teams: No. of ANGLERS /TEAMS with Limits:

No. of ANGLERS/TEAMS with 1 or more Bass:

You can enter Weights in either Lbs or Lbs & Ozs ☐ Lbs ☒ Lbs & Ozs

Total Weight of Bass: Lbs Ozs

Big Bass Weight: Lbs Ozs

Winning Weight: Lbs Ozs

The online system is an additional option for submitting B.A.I.T. tournament reports. Anglers can still email their reports to Keith Henderson at keith.henderson@dcnr.alabama.gov. When submitting reports by email please use the Excel file found at www.outdooralabama.com/tournaments. Anglers can also mail in paper B.A.I.T. cards to: 64 N. Union St. Suite 551, Montgomery, AL 36130.

If you would like copies of the paper cards or have any questions, please call (334) 242-3471. The B.A.I.T. Program is a valuable fisheries management tool. Without the support of tournament anglers and organizers, this program would not exist. Thank you!

STATEWIDE TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Bass clubs submitted 161 BAIT tournament reports during 2020, down from 285 in 2019 (Table 1 and Figure 11). Club representatives did a great job filling out the cards and no reports were rejected due to incomplete or erroneous information. We want to thank the participants of the BAIT Program and urge them to keep up the good work! Twenty-two clubs provided data in 2020. Thirty-Eight reports from Alabama waters were received from Clint Peacock a fisheries biologist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, who summarizes tournament data from the Georgia Bass Federation. Additionally, 15 reports were received from Stan Crider a fisheries biologist with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks. Without their support, several Alabama reservoirs would not have been well represented in the Quality Indicator Rankings (Table 2). Once again, we must stress that reports from more locations increases the capability of the summaries to reflect actual fish population conditions and not just a good or poor day's fishing by one or two clubs.

In 2020, tournament reports were received from 25 bodies of water that were fished 79,101 hours (Table 1). The tables at the bottom of the page allow a comparison of 2020 statewide tournament data to both 2019 and historical (1986-2020) tournament data.

At first glance, it appears the quality of fishing decreased from 2019. However, the 2020 numbers are fairly impressive when you consider the results are derived from a lower number of tournament reports (or angling hours) during the spring. This makes it very difficult to draw meaningful conclusions when comparing the two years. Even with a lack of

2020 spring tournament data, almost all of the 2020 quality indicators were better than the historical quality indicators. Most 2020 reports were received from Eufaula (25) and Pickwick (23) accounting for 30% of the reports. We received 10 or fewer reports each from the remaining 23 reservoirs. Interesting to note is Guntersville only had eight BAIT tournament reports but had the third most hours of effort. A good distribution of reports provides more robust statistics from which accurate summaries can be prepared. All club representatives should understand that every report is important to the continued success of the BAIT Program.

The largest bass caught in 2020 came from Eufaula and weighed 9.58 pounds. With 58 bass weighing five pounds or larger, Eufaula led this category. Guntersville was next with 37 big bass over five pounds. Guntersville and Eufaula are two of the best reservoirs to catch big bass over 5 pounds. Be aware that we received more fishing hours of catch data from Eufaula (1st place with 16,409 hours) and Guntersville (3rd place with 10,658 hours) (Table 1) which inflates these numbers when compared to other reservoirs. We received the second most fishing hours of catch data from Pickwick (15,733 hours) which produced the third most fish (29) over 5 pounds (Table 1). The reservoir with the fourth most hours of catch data had 6,972 hours reported.

Of the 25 reservoirs represented by reports received, 13 had five or more tournament reports (Table 1). The following comments focus on these reservoirs, which are ranked by the quality indicators in Table 2. The percent of successful anglers (those with one or more fish) ranged from 72% at West Point to 96% at Harris. The average weight of bass caught ranged



2019 Statewide BAIT Statistics
15.17 – Average winning weight (5 fish)
3.75 – No. of bass weighed in per angler-day
8.84 – Pounds of bass weighed in per angler-day
2.36 – Average weight of bass caught*
212 – Hours required to catch a 5 pound bass
10.33 – Weight of the largest bass caught
18 – Number of bass 8 pounds and larger
394 – Number of bass 5 pounds and larger
81.70 – % Success (anglers with at least 1 fish)

Historical (1986–2020) Average Quality Indicators
2.76 – No. of bass weighed in per angler-day
5.29 – Pounds of bass weighed in per angler-day
1.92 – Average weight of bass caught*
288 – Hours required to catch a 5 pound bass
75.70 – % Success (anglers with at least 1 fish)

2020 Statewide BAIT Statistics
14.03 – Average winning weight (5 fish)
3.54 – Number of bass weighed in per angler-day
7.67 – Pounds of bass weighed in per angler-day
2.17 – Average weight of bass caught*
390 – Hours required to catch a 5-pound bass
9.58 – Weight of the largest bass caught
6 – Number of bass 8 pounds and larger
180 – Number of bass 5 pounds and larger
85 – % Success (anglers with at least 1 fish)

2020 Statewide Quality Indicators
3.54 – Number of bass weighed in per angler-day
7.67 – Pounds of bass weighed in per angler-day
2.17 – Average weight of bass caught*
390 – Hours required to catch a 5-pound bass
85 – % Success (anglers with at least 1 fish)

STATEWIDE TOURNAMENT RESULTS

from 1.50 pounds at the Mobile Delta to 2.75 pounds at Guntersville. Catch rates expressed as bass per angler-day ranged from 2.15 at West Point to 5.26 at Logan Martin. Catch rates as pounds per angler-day ranged from 3.41 at West Point to 10.04 at Logan Martin. Average big bass by reservoir ranged from 3.59 pounds at Logan Martin to 6.56 pounds at Guntersville with a statewide average of 4.94 pounds. Average winning weight by reservoir ranged from 9.38 pounds at West Point to 17.91 pounds at Pickwick with a statewide average of 14.03 pounds. (Table 1).

Wilson accumulated the most overall quality indicator points for the past six years, but in 2020 it was replaced by Weiss with 50 quality indicator points. Logan Martin (49), Harris (42), Eufaula (41), and Pickwick (39) rounded out the top five (Table 2). Wilson did not have enough tournament BAIT reports submitted to be included in the Quality Indicators rankings. Readers should note that the primary intent of Table 2 is not to determine the overall best reservoir, but to characterize the fishery of each reservoir. Anglers should first review the Quality Indicator that is most important to them. The overall rating would be used to narrow choices. For example, if an angler wanted to have the best chance to catch a bass greater than 5 pounds, then Eufaula, West Point, or Harris would be good choices. Clubs interested in having all its members catch good quality stringers would look at the pounds per angler-day rankings to find that Logan Martin, Weiss, and Pickwick offered the best opportunity. If catching lots of bass is important, then Logan Martin, Martin, or Weiss might be the best destination based upon their bass per angler-day rankings.

Bass data, as expressed in the BAIT report from reservoirs with harvest restrictions or length limits, will be biased since the data is a function of the restrictions. Length limits are imposed to increase the number of fish below a minimum length or within a specified length range (slot limit) which should eventually result in a greater supply of bass above the limit. Because all minimum lengths and length ranges will be above the 12-inch limit self-imposed by most tournaments, the restrictions will reduce the total harvest in numbers and possibly pounds. However, those fish weighed in will be larger (longer) by virtue of the minimum length (MLL) or slot limit. In the BAIT Report, length limit lakes should rank high for average weight and near the bottom for percent success and bass per angler-day.

The graphs throughout this report provide a historical record of how your favorite waters have performed in the BAIT Program. A few words of caution, however, these graphs are not restricted to bodies of water with five or more tournaments. Data points for some years may be represented by only a few tournaments. Those situations are restricted to water bodies that have not been included in the Quality Indicator rankings in Table 2. These graphs can be used to predict future fishing quality by looking for trends.

Bass fishing in Alabama has been excellent in recent years. Members of the BAIT program have a unique opportunity to contribute valuable biological data that helps make our bass fisheries some of the best in the country. BAIT members realize the value of this program, and we appreciate the individuals that provided their tournament catch data. Good luck fishing, and don't forget to take a child with you and introduce them to your sport. They are our future anglers and stewards of Alabama's resources.

LENGTH LIMITS REMAINED IN EFFECT DURING 2020 ON:

West Point (14-inch MLL on largemouth)

Eufaula (14-inch MLL on largemouth)

Little Bear Creek (13- to 16-inch slot on largemouth)

Smith (13- to 15-inch slot on all black bass)

Harris (13- to 16-inch slot on largemouth)

Pickwick* (15-in. MLL on largemouth or smallmouth bass)

Wilson* (15-in. MLL on smallmouth bass)

Wheeler* (15-in. MLL on smallmouth bass)

Guntersville* (15-in. MLL on smallmouth and largemouth bass)

**No more than five of the daily creel limit of 10 black bass may be smallmouth bass.*



<div>  <div> Table 1. Statewide summary of tournaments for bass clubs participating in the 2020 B.A.I.T. Program.  </div> </div>																	
Lake	No. of tournaments	% of anglers with a limit of fish	Total hrs. fished	% largemouth	% spotted bass	% smallmouth	% of bass released alive	Avg. bass weight		Bass over 5 lb.	Bass over 8 lb.	Avg. big bass weight	Avg. winning weight	% success (anglers with at least 1 fish)	Bass per day*	Lbs. per day*	Hrs. to catch a bass over 5 lbs.
Bankhead	1	41.7	192	82.6	17.4	0.0	97.8	1.54		0	0	4.68	.	75.0	2.40	3.70	.
Bartletts Ferry	3	46.7	288	58.5	41.5	0.0	100.0	1.41		1	0	4.44	9.38	90.0	3.68	5.18	288
Coffeeville	1	50.0	108	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	1.25		0	0	4.25	12.56	75.0	3.43	4.27	.
Demopolis	1	83.3	54	42.9	57.1	0.0	89.3	1.80		0	0	3.12	9.69	100.0	5.19	9.31	.
Eufaula	25	44.0	16,409	92.1	7.9	0.0	93.4	2.62		58	2	6.11	16.57	83.8	3.11	8.15	259
Gainesville	1	33.3	42	66.7	33.3	0.0	80.0	1.98		0	0	4.45	16.23	66.7	3.57	7.08	.
Guntersville	8	32.4	10,658	95.1	4.9	0.0	97.8	2.75		37	3	6.56	17.37	86.8	2.31	6.36	288
Harris	7	45.0	1,384	16.8	83.2	0.0	95.8	1.59		5	0	5.37	12.29	95.9	4.17	6.63	277
Holt	4	54.7	435	34.5	65.5	0.0	99.3	1.53		2	0	5.16	12.23	90.6	3.26	4.98	218
Jones Bluff	9	33.9	3,989	61.1	38.9	0.0	94.8	1.69		5	0	4.19	11.52	83.9	3.80	6.42	798
Jordan	7	30.6	2,695	11.8	88.2	0.0	99.7	2.32		7	0	4.67	15.96	84.8	3.42	7.93	385
Lay	4	55.4	1,783	53.7	46.3	0.0	99.1	1.93		4	0	4.82	12.75	74.8	4.17	8.06	446
Logan Martin	10	75.9	3,009	14.9	85.1	0.0	98.0	1.91		2	0	3.59	12.12	92.8	5.26	10.04	1505
Martin	10	67.5	6,972	20.7	79.3	0.0	98.6	1.67		2	0	4.22	12.38	89.5	5.03	8.39	3486
Mobile Delta	9	47.6	1,210	96.7	3.3	0.0	99.8	1.50		0	0	3.61	10.98	83.9	3.98	5.96	.
Millers Ferry	1	26.9	208	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	2.60		1	0	5.06	18.17	61.5	2.50	6.49	208
Mitchell	5	50.8	1,071	42.5	57.5	0.0	94.9	1.72		0	0	4.08	12.46	93.8	4.42	7.60	.
Neely Henry	7	35.6	5,761	59.4	40.6	0.0	96.5	1.75		7	0	4.89	13.79	81.4	3.50	6.12	823
Pickwick	23	32.0	15,733	88.2	8.8	2.9	97.2	2.54		29	1	5.75	17.91	83.2	3.32	8.44	282
Smith	3	52.5	1,752	31.4	68.7	0.0	98.7	1.44		1	0	4.27	17.29	74.0	3.93	5.67	1752
Upper Bear	1	31.3	128	32.0	68.0	0.0	100.0	1.16		0	0	3.90	.	87.5	1.95	2.28	.
Weiss	9	54.8	2,369	50.6	49.4	0.0	98.3	1.96		7	0	4.20	12.50	89.8	4.47	8.77	338
Wheeler	4	58.3	1,969	82.7	10.0	7.3	96.5	2.03		4	0	4.48	13.46	90.1	4.62	9.40	492
Wilson	2	78.0	339	84.6	1.3	14.1	98.7	2.82		6	0	5.33	25.50	87.8	4.40	12.40	57
West Point	6	13.8	545	43.6	56.4	0.0	99.1	1.59		2	0	4.43	9.38	72.3	2.15	3.41	273
Grand Total	161	43.6	79,101	56.2	43.2	0.6	96.8	2.17		180	6	4.94	14.03	85.0	3.54	7.67	390

Table 2. Ranking by quality indicators for all reservoirs with five or more tournament reports in the 2020 BAIT Program							
Rank	Percent Success	Average Bass Weight	Bass per Angler-Day	Pounds per Angler-Day	Hours per Bass > 5 lbs.	Overall	Value
1	Harris	Guntersville	Logan Martin	Logan Martin	Eufaula	Weiss	50
2	Mitchell	Eufaula	Martin	Weiss	West Point	Logan Martin	49
3	Logan Martin	Pickwick	Weiss	Pickwick	Harris	Harris	42
4	Weiss	Jordan	Mitchell	Martin	Pickwick	Eufaula	41
5	Martin	Weiss	Harris	Eufaula	Guntersville	Pickwick	39
6	Guntersville	Logan Martin	Mobile Delta	Jordan	Weiss	Martin	38
7	Jordan	Neely Henry	Jones Bluff	Mitchell	Jordan	Mitchell	37
8	Mobile Delta	Mitchell	Neely Henry	Harris	Jones Bluff	Jordan	37
9	Jones Bluff	Jones Bluff	Jordan	Jones Bluff	Neely Henry	Guntersville	36
10	Eufaula	Martin	Pickwick	Guntersville	Logan Martin	Jones Bluff	28
11	Pickwick	Harris	Eufaula	Neely Henry	Martin	Neely Henry	23
12	Neely Henry	West Point	Guntersville	Mobile Delta	Mitchell	Mobile Delta	18
13	West Point	Mobile Delta	West Point	West Point	Mobile Delta	West Point	17

Table 3. Statewide summary of tournaments for bass clubs participating in the 2020 B.A.I.T. Program.											
Month	No. of tournaments	% of anglers with a limit of fish	Avg. bass weight	Bass over 5 lb.	Bass over 8 lb.	Avg. big bass weight	Avg. winning weight	% success (anglers with at least 1 fish)	Bass per day*	Pounds per day*	Hrs. to catch a bass over 5 lbs.
JAN	6	61.9	1.97	6	0	5.06	15.90	82.99	4.32	8.50	199
FEB	20	36.7	2.20	38	2	5.48	15.61	91.59	3.64	8.01	252
MAR	16	34.1	2.42	28	0	5.36	17.32	75.35	2.76	6.69	130
APR	7	43.4	1.89	3	0	4.83	14.17	91.57	4.01	7.57	224
MAY	23	45.1	2.34	14	1	5.11	16.33	88.05	4.07	9.51	598
JUN	31	46.1	2.29	52	3	5.21	13.24	84.59	3.56	8.16	404
JUL	12	37.5	1.78	8	0	5.04	13.67	80.62	3.46	6.17	556
AUG	11	31.7	2.38	10	0	4.62	10.80	78.42	2.12	5.04	583
SEP	14	43.6	1.89	16	0	4.09	11.09	77.88	3.03	5.74	497
OCT	11	58.7	1.79	4	0	4.07	12.31	87.11	4.27	7.64	1479
NOV	6	25.2	1.59	1	0	4.36	11.67	84.55	3.43	5.44	970
DEC	4	47.5	1.49	0	0	3.88	10.28	86.44	3.70	5.50	.
GRAND TOTAL	161	43.6	2.17	180	6	4.94	14.03	84.97	3.54	7.67	390

Table 4. Clubs supporting the 2020 B.A.I.T. annual report			
Club Name	City	State	Representative
Alabama Bass Federation	Prattville	AL	Jim Sparrow
Dannelly Air National Guard (DANG Bass Club)	Prattville	AL	Jim Sparrow
Alabama Bass Trail	Decatur	AL	Justin Graves
Rumblin Waters B.A.S.S. Club	Eclectic	AL	Tomy Gamble
Ala-Tenn Bass Club	Lawrenceburg	TN	Jonathan Edwards
Alabama Children’s Classic Bass Tournament	Eufaula	AL	Sam Williams
MLFLW Toyota Series	Benton	KY	Mark McWha
BFL	Benton	KY	Mike Hale
Team Share the Gospel	Chatom	AL	Rev. Howard Gaston
American Bass Anglers Alabama East Central (Div. 88)	Cave Springs	GA	Rhonda Ford
National Bass Trail (GA/AL)	Cataula	GA	Blaine Souerwine
Bluff City Bassmasters	Eufaula	AL	Joe Dodewicz
Alabama B.A.S.S. Nation	Birmingham	AL	Eddie Plemons
BFL	Benton	KY	Alan Gray
Bay Area Bassmasters	Robertsdale	AL	Joe Barnett
Brookwood Bass Club	Tuscaloosa	AL	Jim Steadman
FLW Robert Evans	Benton	KY	Leroy Hensley
Miss. Div. Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks	Tupelo	MS	Stan Crider
Georgia DNR	Social Circle	GA	Clint Peacock
Alabama Student Angler Bass Fishing (Statewide)	Eufaula	AL	Tim Walker
Kowaliga Bassmasters	Tallassee	AL	Hank Golden
Carbon Hill Bass Club	Eldridge	AL	Mark Edmonds



Alabama's Top 10 Tournaments for Big Bass in 2020			
Club	Lake	Date	No ≥ 5lbs.
Alabama Bass Trail	Eufaula	Jun. 27	13
Alabama Bass Trail	Guntersville	Feb. 22	13
Alabama BASS Nation	Eufaula	Mar. 14	9
BFL	Guntersville	Aug. 29	8
FLW	Eufaula	Sep. 12	8
Alabama Children's Bass Classic	Eufaula	Jun. 13	7
Alabama BASS Nation	Guntersville	Feb. 8	7
BFL	Guntersville	Jun. 20	7
Alabama Bass Trail	Weiss	May 16	6
Ala-Tenn Bass Club	Wilson	Mar. 7	6

Alabama's Top 10 Tournaments for Single-Day Winning Weight in 2020			
Club	Lake	Date	Weight
Alabama Bass Trail	Guntersville	Feb. 22	30.33
Alabama BASS Nation	Eufaula	Mar. 14	29.60
Alabama Bass Trail	Eufaula	Jun. 27	26.22
Ala-Tenn Bass Club	Wilson	Mar. 7	25.50
MDWFP	Pickwick	Feb. 22	24.07
MDWFP	Pickwick	May 28	24.06
Alabama Bass Federation	Logan Martin	Jan. 18	23.50
MDWFP	Pickwick	May 29	22.63
Alabama Bass Trail	Weiss	May 16	22.60
Bluff City Bassmasters	Eufaula	Apr. 25	22.44

Records Set in 2020 (34 Year History of B.A.I.T. Reporting)		(Lakes with 5 or more reports)	
Waterbody	Record	2020 Value	Lake Average
Guntersville	Percent Success	86.80	71.60
Jordan	Avg. winning weight	15.96	14.35



Records Set in 2020 (34 Year History of B.A.I.T. Reporting)		(Lakes with 5 or more reports)	
Waterbody	Record	2020 Value	Lake Average
Guntersville	Percent Success	86.80	71.60
Jordan	Avg. winning weight	15.96	14.35

Alabama's Top 10 Tournament "Big Fish" from 2020 B.A.I.T. Reports			
Club	Lake	Date	Big Fish
Alabama Childrens Bass Classic	Eufaula	Jun. 13	9.58
Alabama Bass Trail	Guntersville	Feb. 22	8.93*
MLFLW Toyota Series	Pickwick	May. 29	8.56
Alabama Bass Trail	Eufaula	Jun. 27	8.34
BFL	Guntersville	Jun. 20	8.13
Brookwood Bass Club	Holt	Feb. 22	7.85
Alabama BASS Nation	Eufaula	Mar. 14	7.76
BFL	Guntersville	Aug. 29	7.63
MDWFP	Pickwick	Jan. 25	7.52
Rumblin' Waters Bass Club	Lay	May. 17	7.47

* Indicates two or more bass over eight pounds weighed in

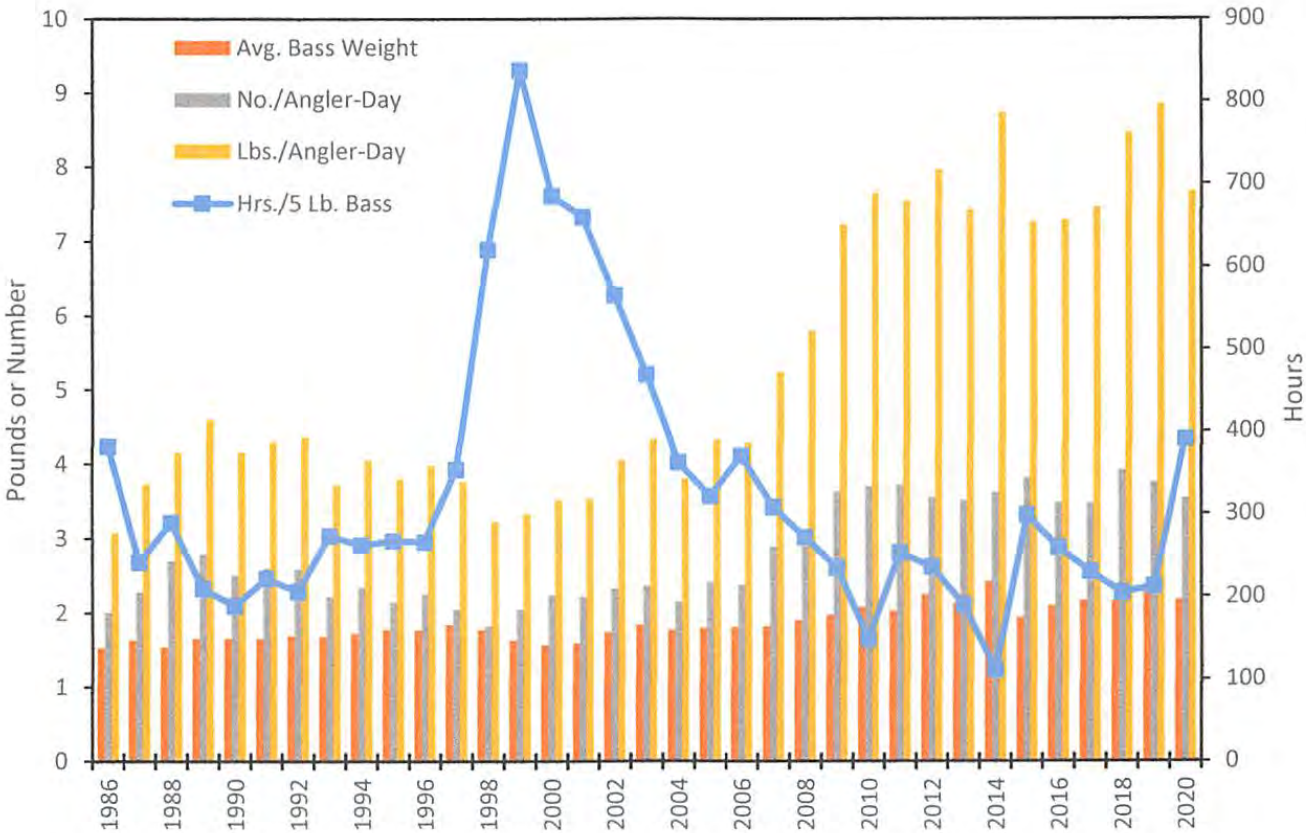


Figure 1: Annual Catch for B.A.I.T. Tournaments 1986-2020



ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

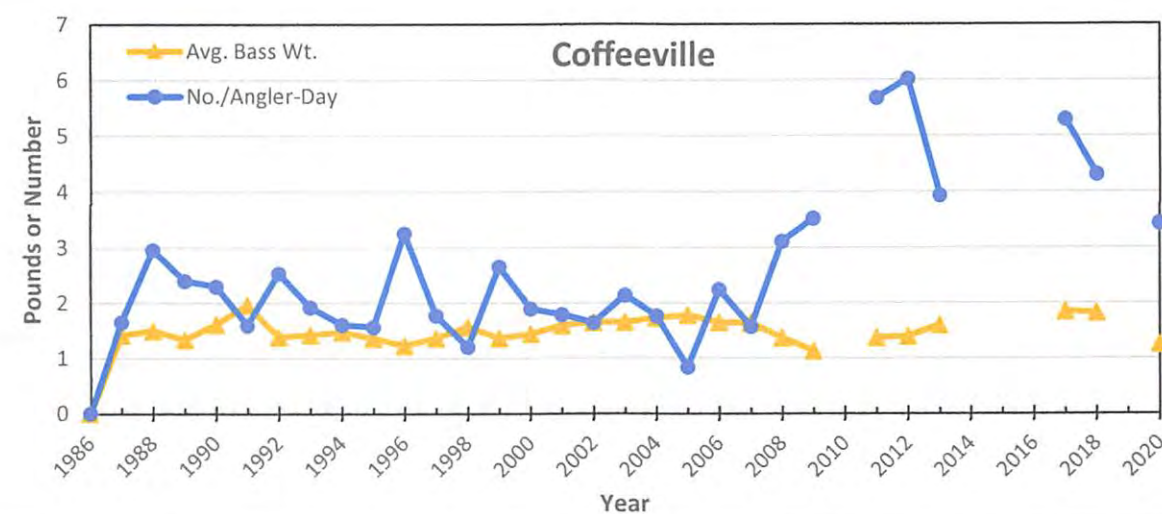
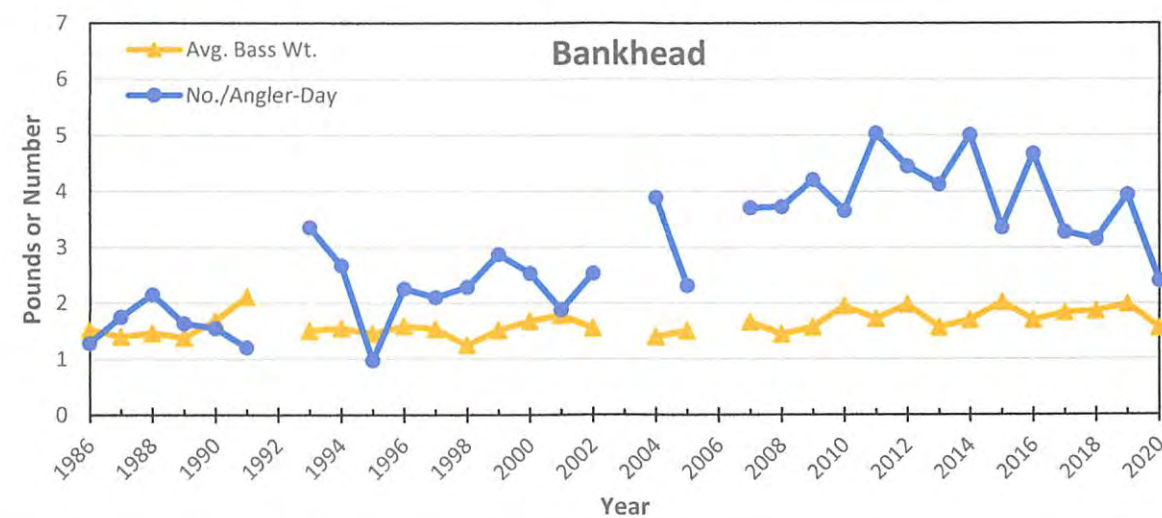
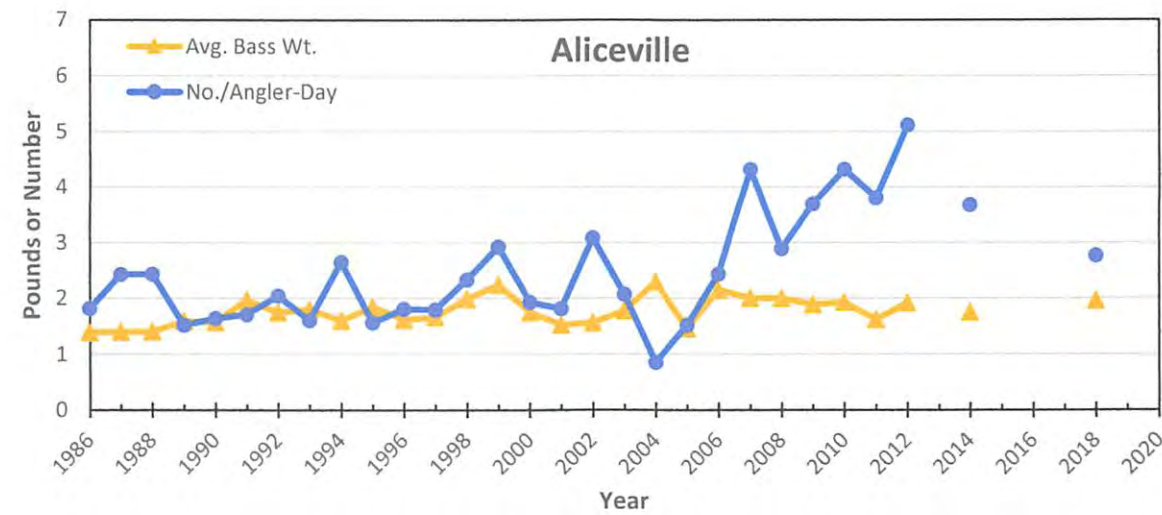


Figure 2. Annual Quality Indicators for Aliceville, Bankhead, and Coffeeville, through 2020.



ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

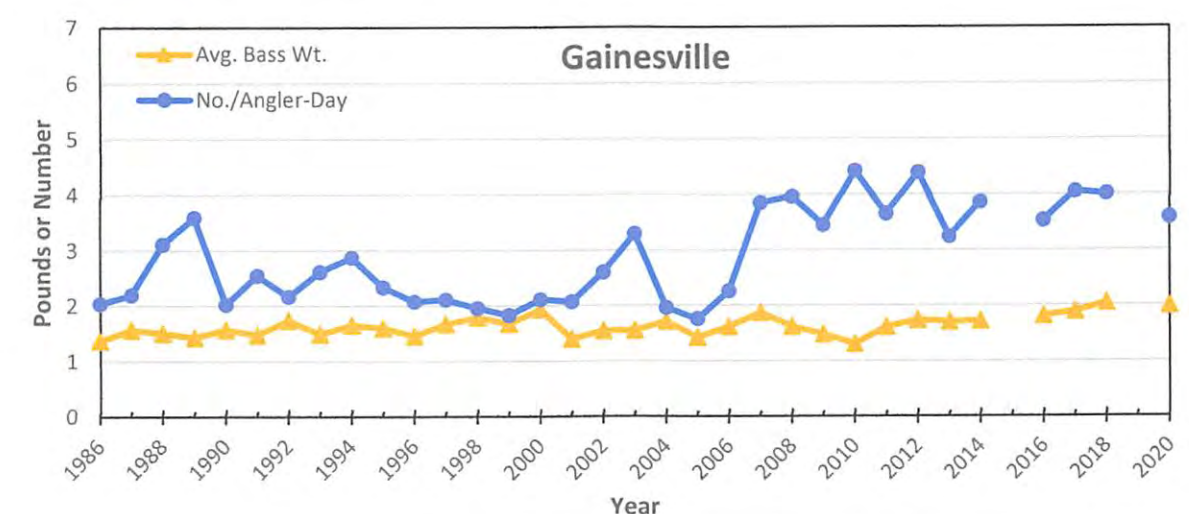
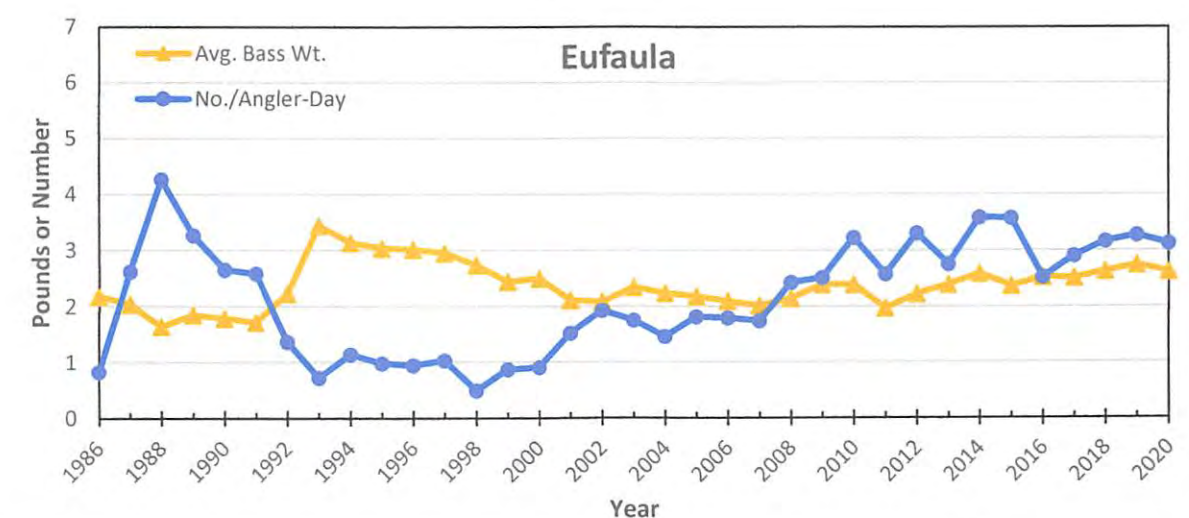
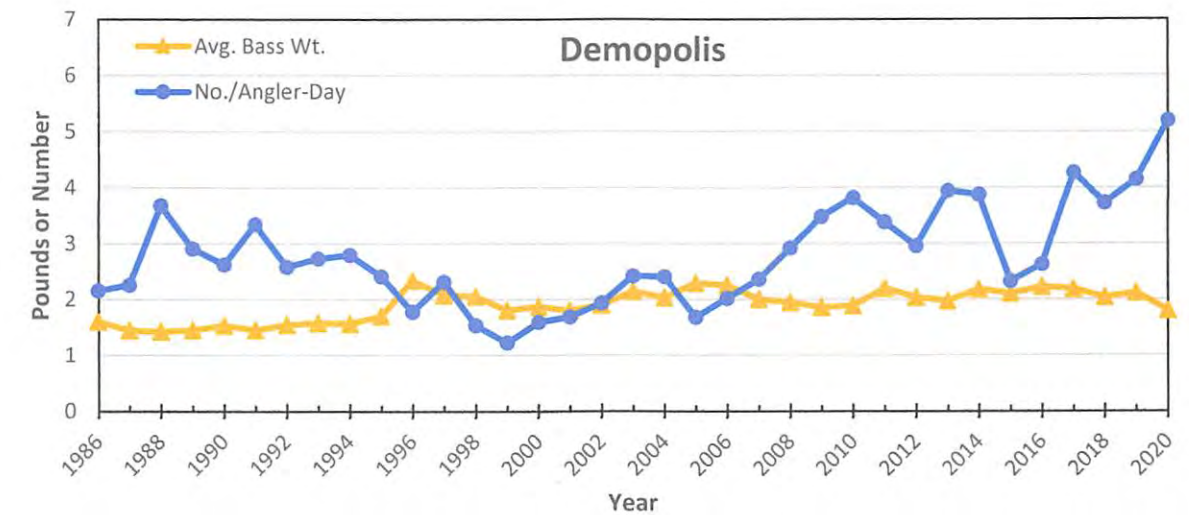


Figure 3. Annual Quality Indicators for Demopolis, Eufaula, and Gainesville, through 2020.



ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

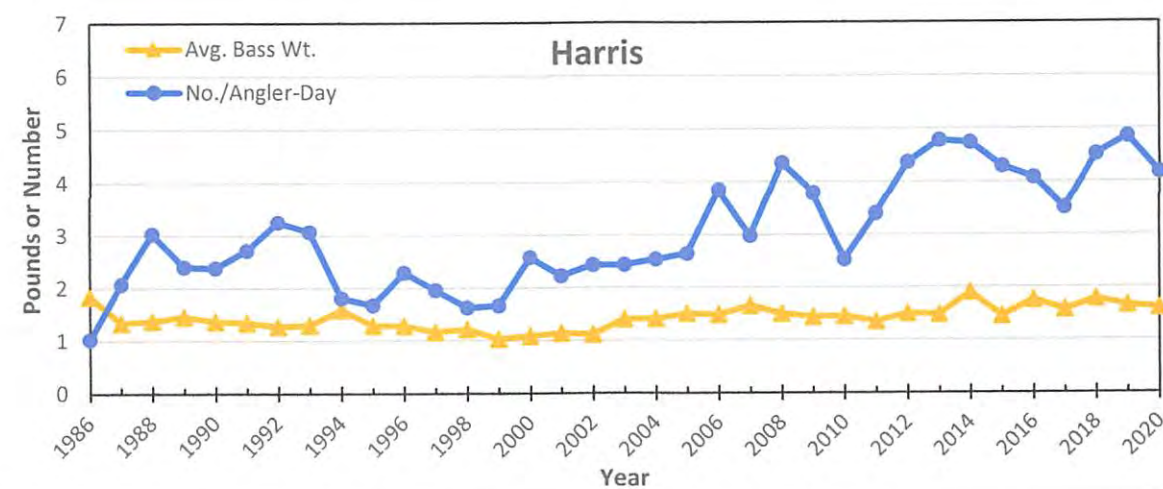
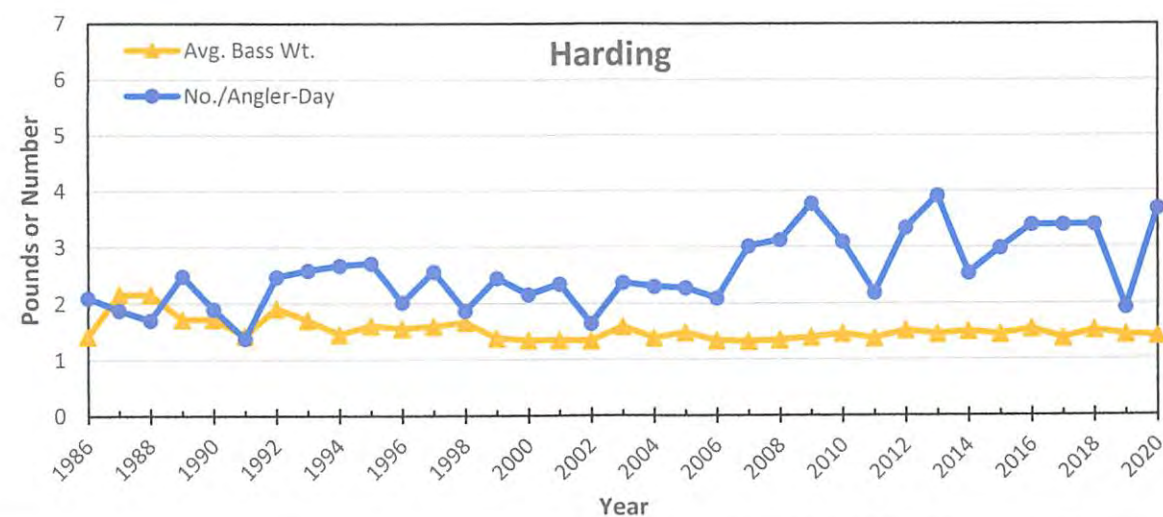
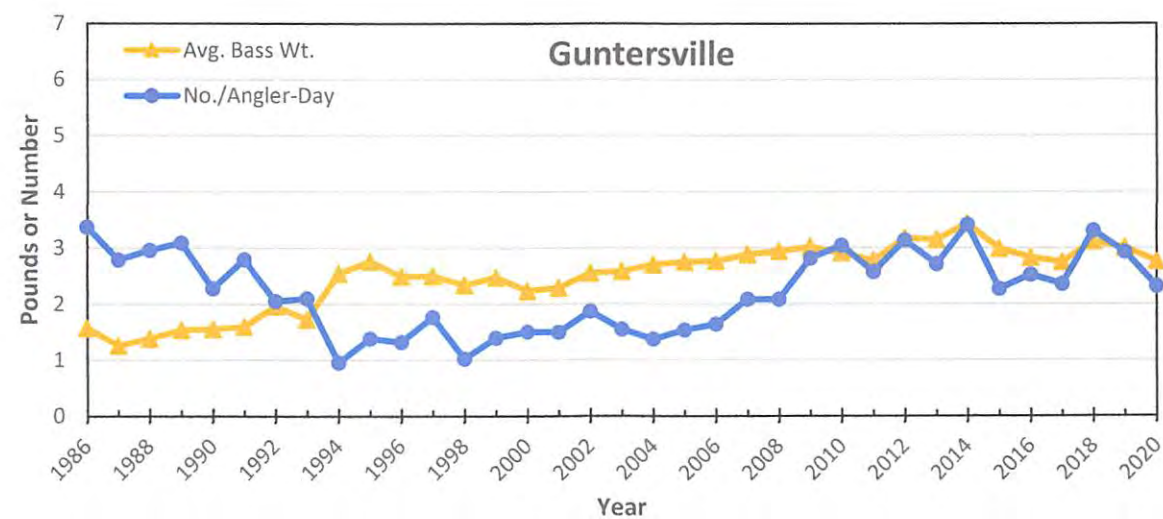


Figure 4. Annual Quality Indicators for Guntersville, Harding, and Harris, through 2020.



ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

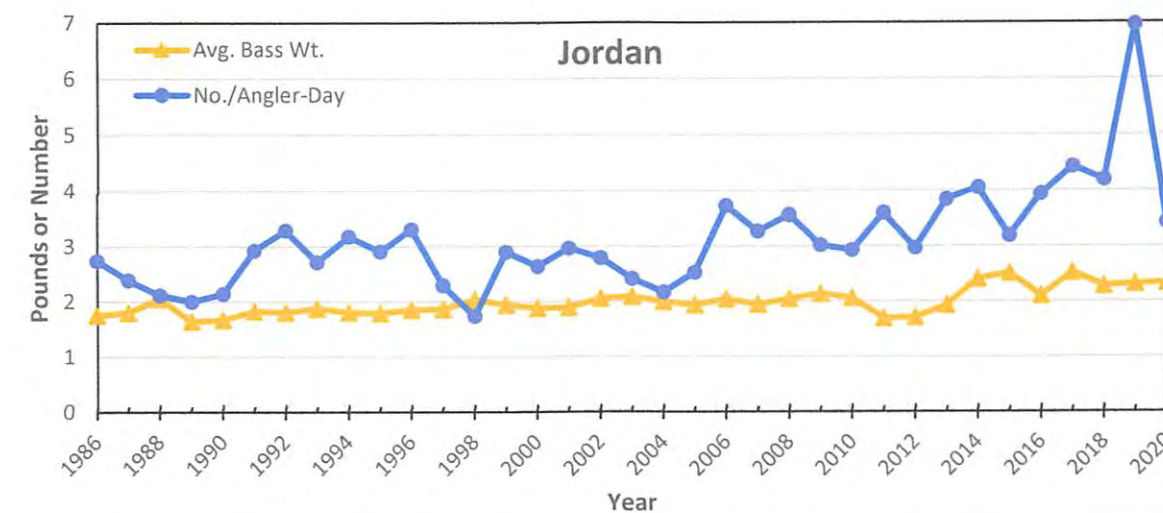
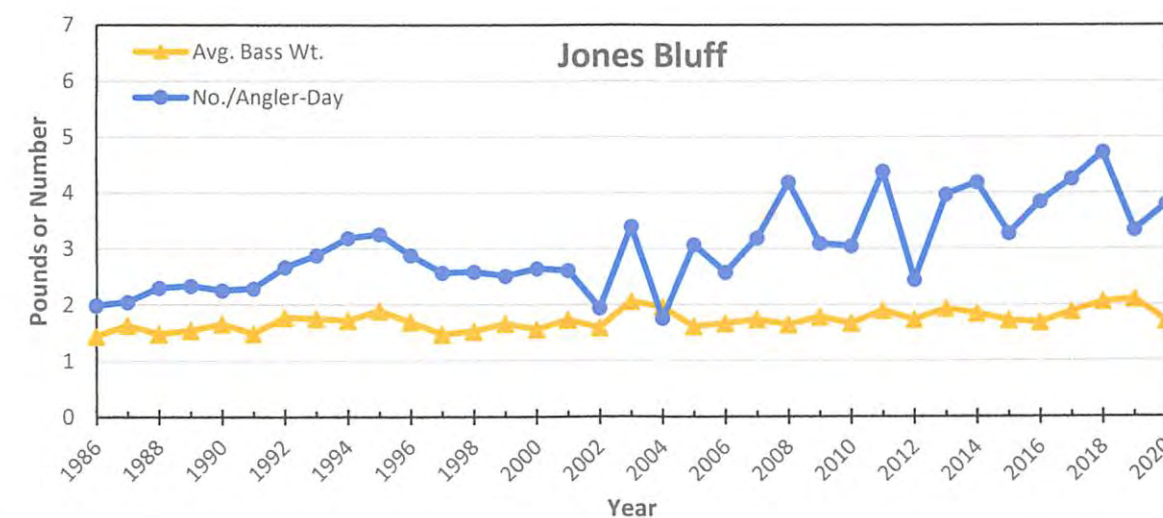
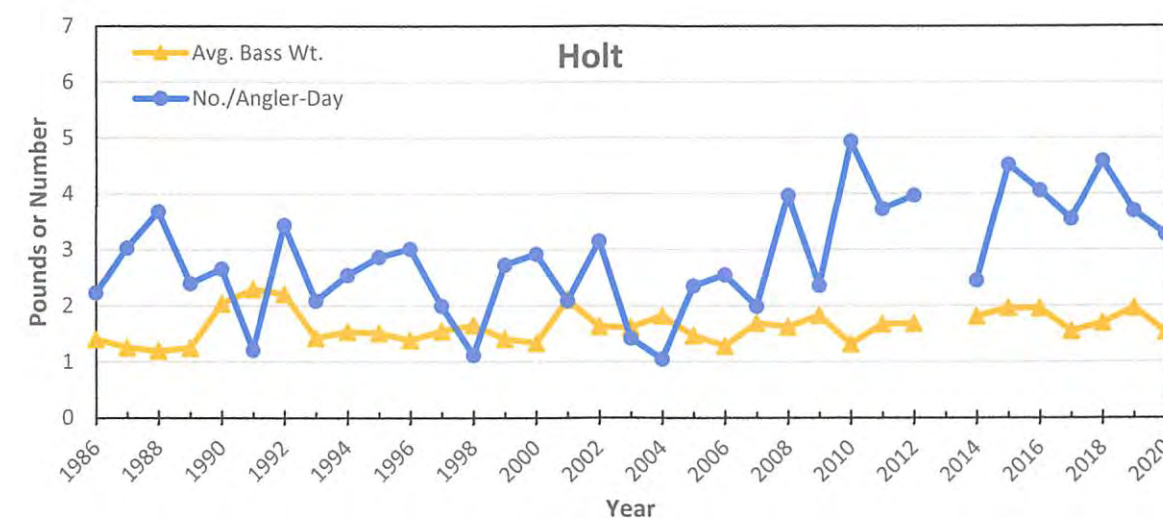


Figure 5. Annual Quality Indicators for Holt, Jones Bluff, and Jordan, through 2020.



ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

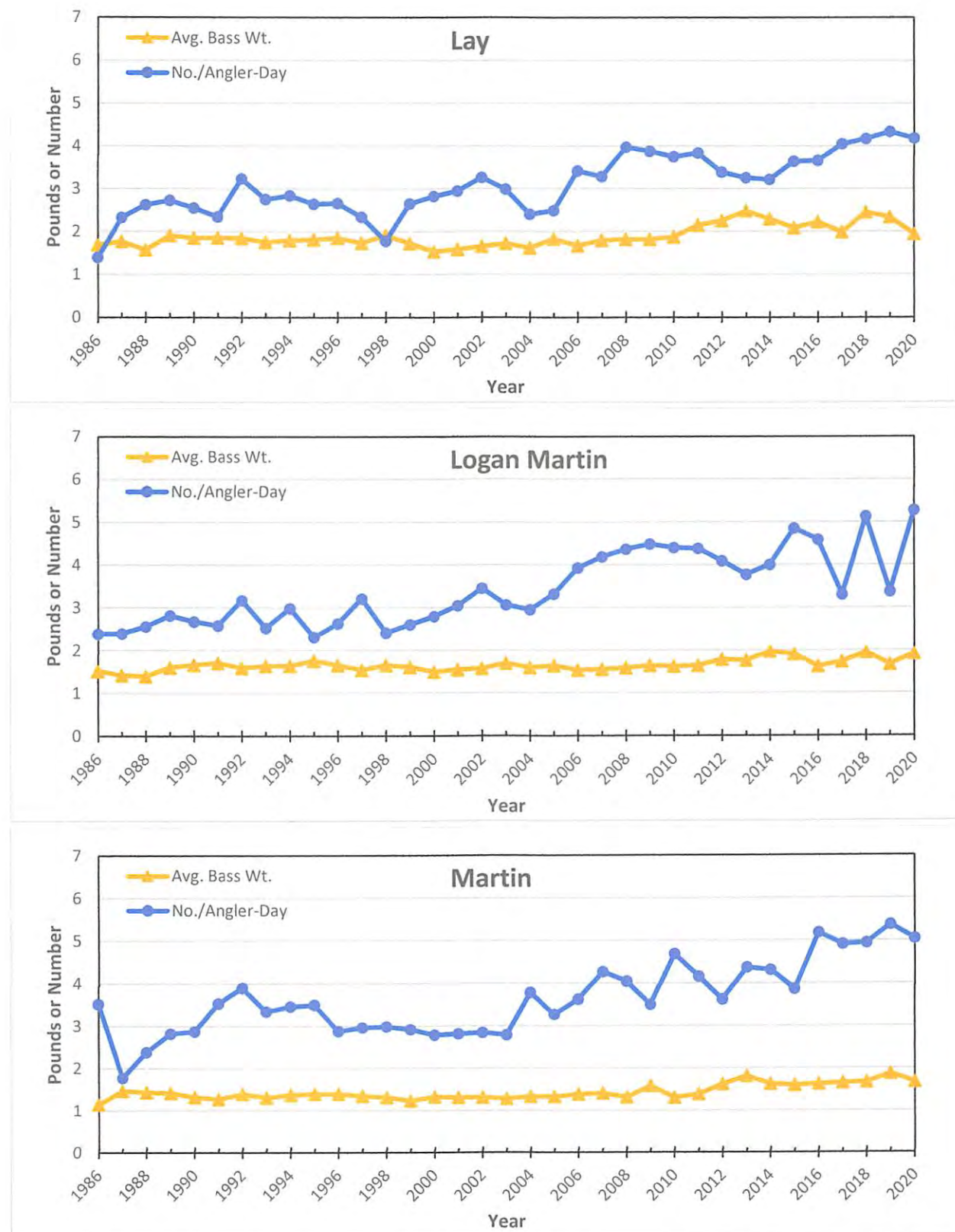


Figure 6. Annual Quality Indicators for Lay, Logan Martin, and Martin, through 2020.



ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

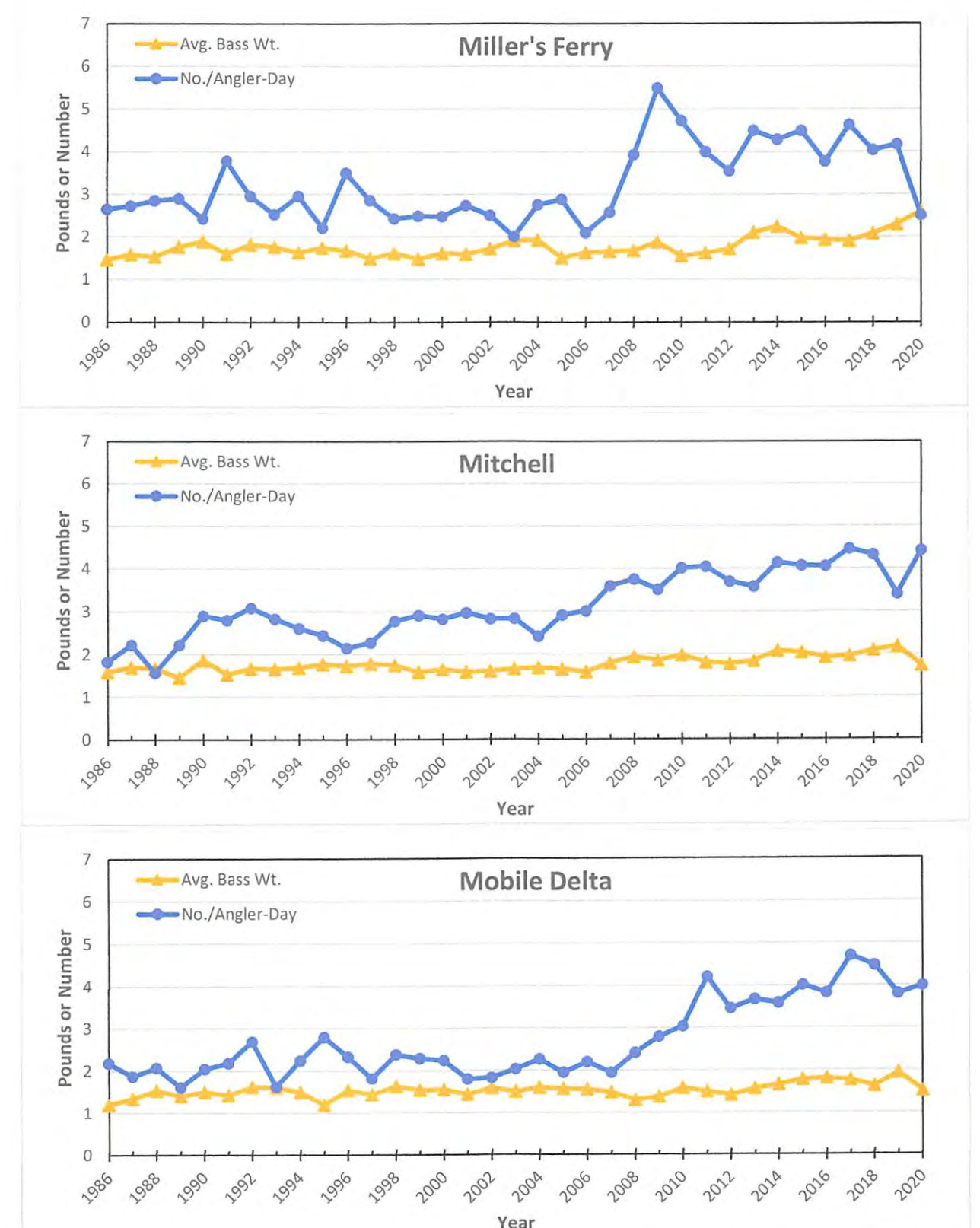


Figure 7. Annual Quality Indicators for Miller's Ferry, Mitchell, and Mobile Delta, through 2020.



ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

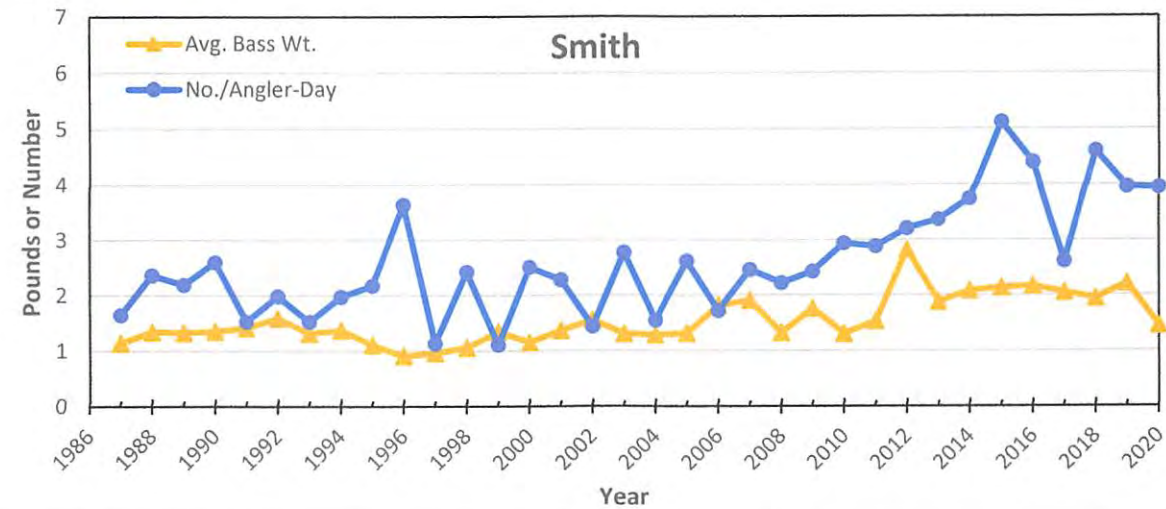
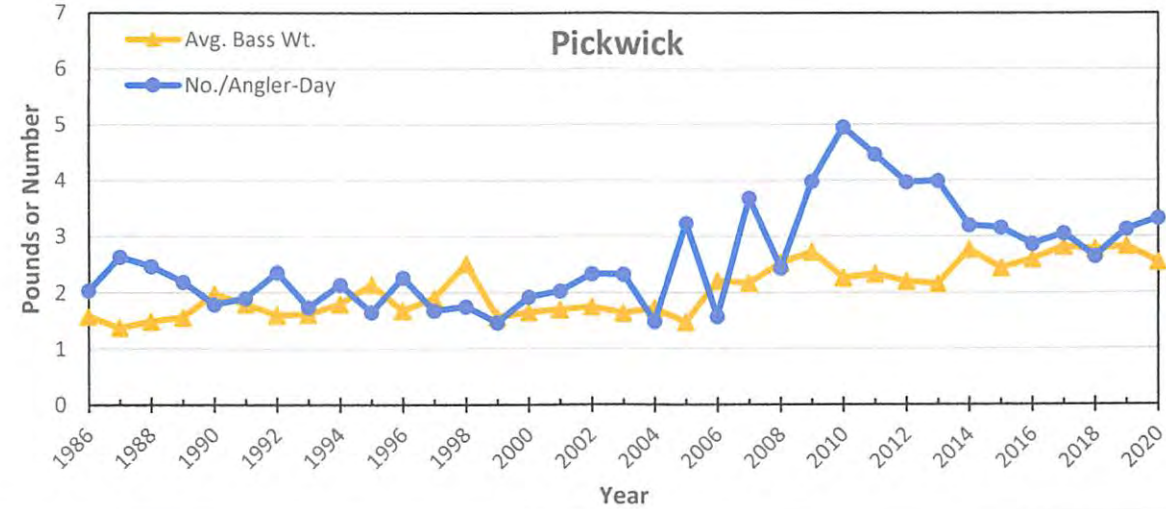
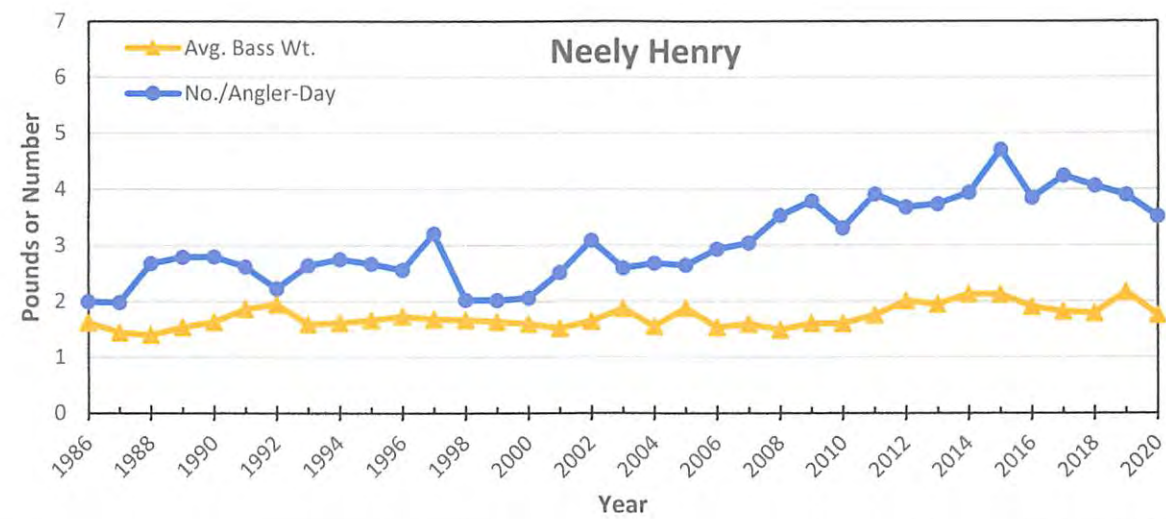


Figure 8. Annual Quality Indicators for Neely Henry, Pickwick, and Smith, through 2020.



ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

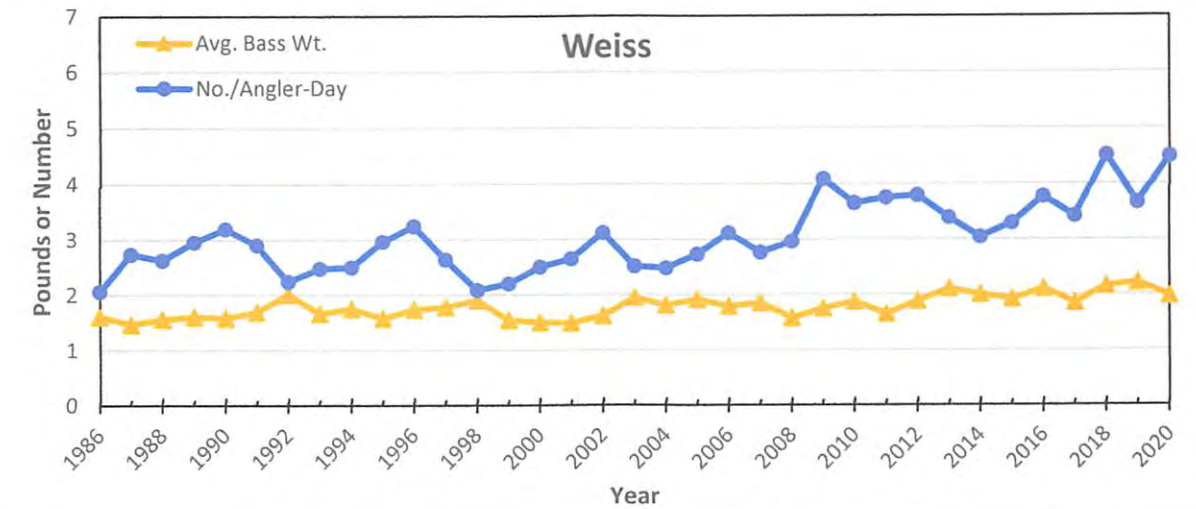
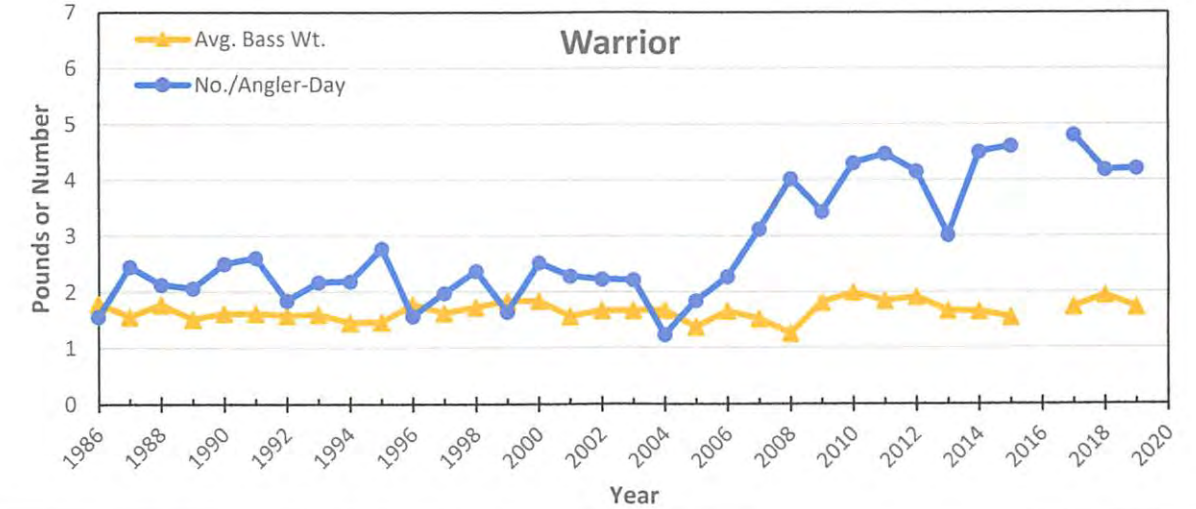
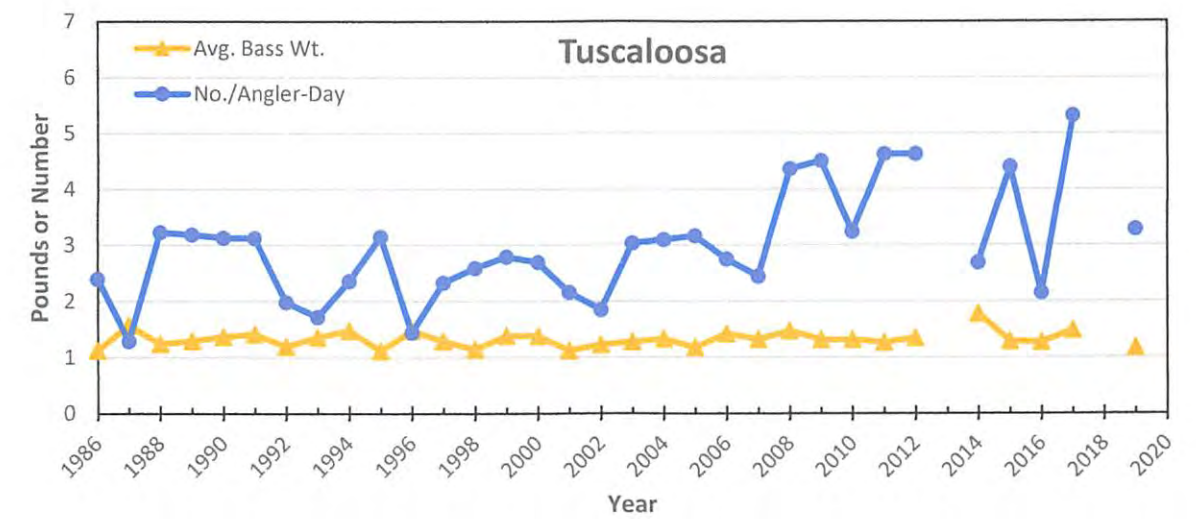


Figure 9. Annual Quality Indicators for Tuscaloosa, Warrior, and Weiss, through 2020.

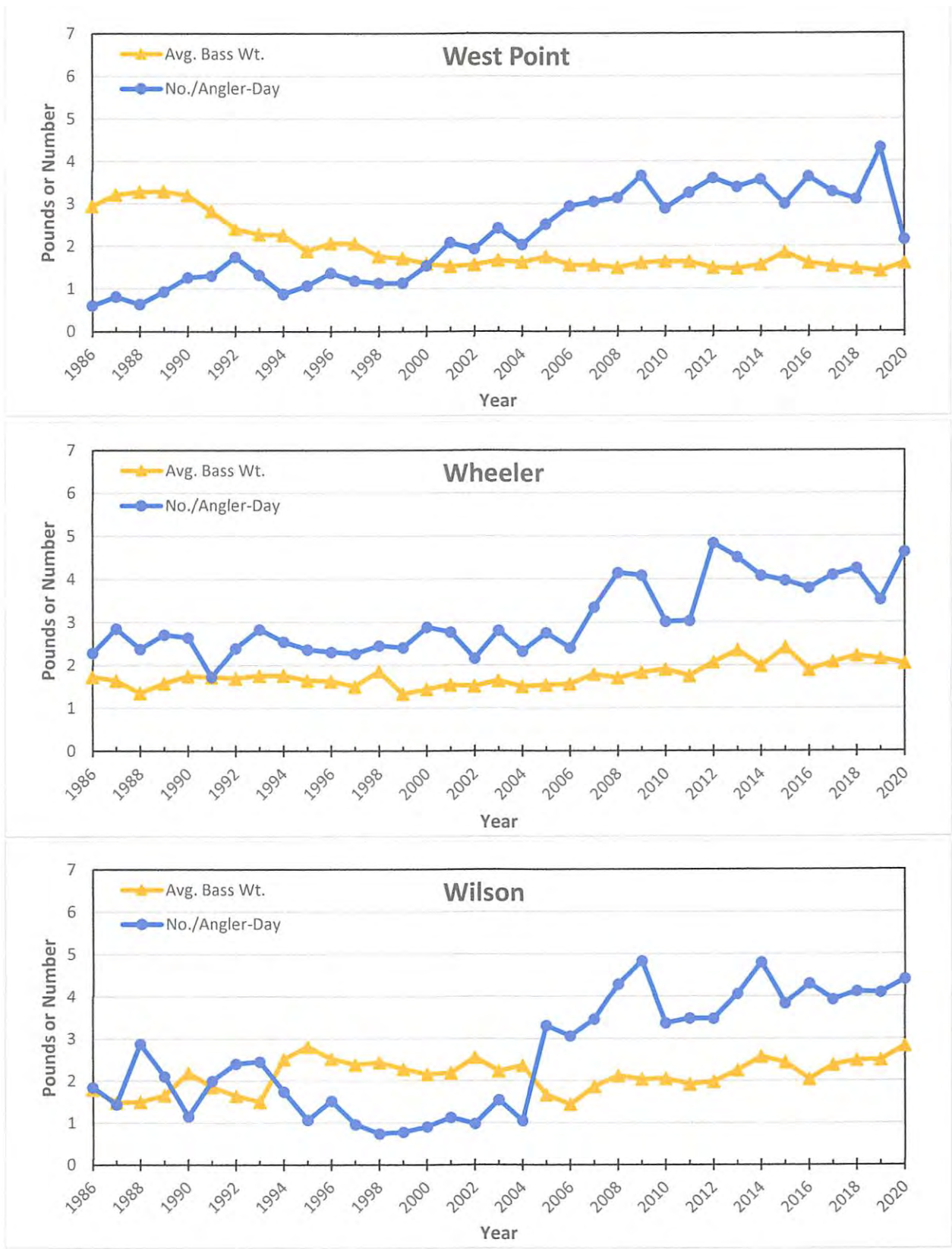


Figure 10. Annual Quality Indicators for West Point, Wheeler, and Wilson, through 2020.

Membership in the BAIT program is not a requirement for tournaments and clubs, but the program is only as good as the amount of tournament data that is submitted by the public and the amount of members/participation we receive every year. The BAIT program provides extremely valuable information to all bass anglers that enjoy fishing our public rivers and reservoirs and assists tournament directors in scheduling tournament trails based off quality of fishing at individual reservoirs. Additionally, the program provides the public a unique opportunity to be involved in helping provide biological data by partnering with WFF. The biological data provided assists WFF fisheries biologists in management decisions to help sustain quality reservoir fisheries, statewide.

Since 2001, we have been witnessing an alarming trend of steady decline in the number of BAIT tournament reports being submitted. That decline has increased since 2017 (Figure 11). The lack of data makes it difficult to summarize biological and fishing data to provide to the members. For this report, we were forced to remove the monthly reservoir tournament information due to a lack of data.

An interesting trend the historical participation data shows beginning around 2012 is a major increase in fishing hours reported. This is based on a comparison of the reported number of fishing hours to the number of BAIT tournament reports submitted. This leads us to conclude that we are either receiving more reports from larger tournaments, participation from the smaller bass clubs has declined, or a combination of both. While we greatly appreciate the support that our larger tournaments provide to the BAIT program, the data provided throughout the year by smaller bass clubs are equally important, providing many datapoints throughout the year.

We need your help to promote the program and urge other tournament directors and club presidents to become BAIT members. Your support helps WFF provide information that best represents the bass fisheries in Alabama's public waters. Most of the information requested through the BAIT program is information already collected by tournament directors and club presidents. Current BAIT members understand the value of this program, and we greatly appreciate the individuals that provide their tournament catch data. We hope you continue to see the benefit of supporting the BAIT program and hope for your continued support.

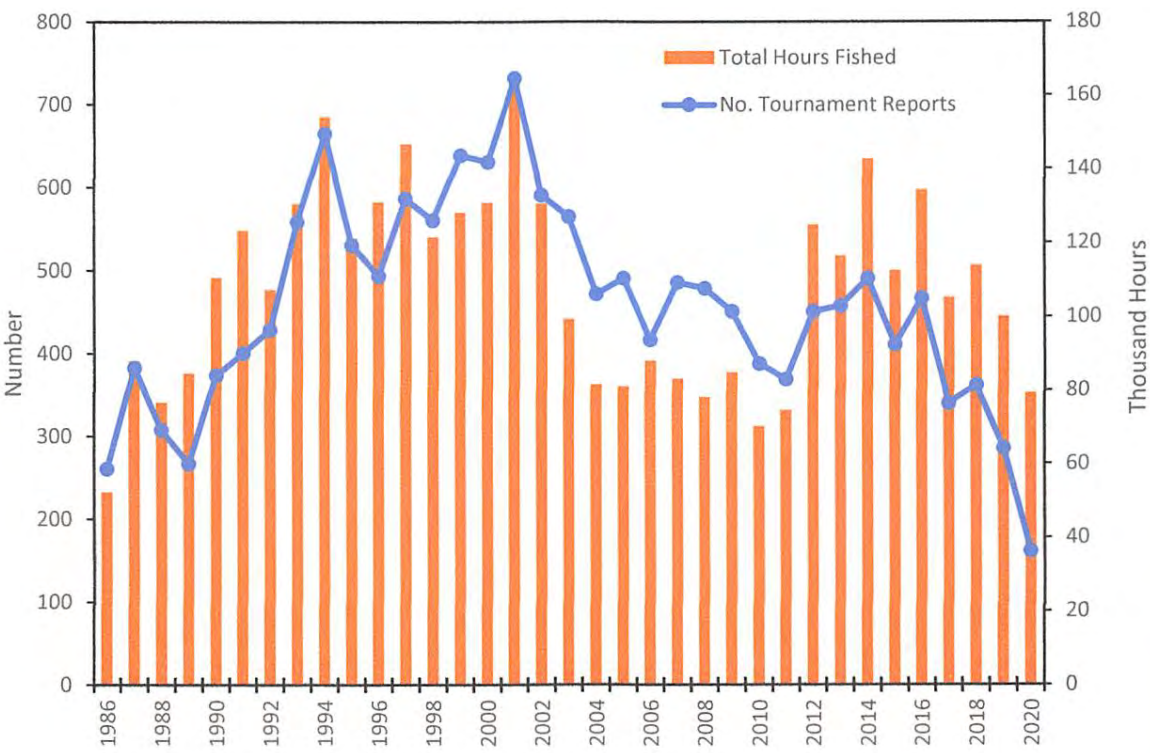


Figure 11: Annual B.A.I.T. Participation 1986 - 2020



BOATING ACCESS AREA IMPROVEMENTS

WFF maintains 114 public boating access areas statewide. Several of these facilities received upgrades during 2020. For more information about freshwater boating access in Alabama, visit www.outdooralabama.com/freshwater-boating-access.

Smith Lake Park Public Boat Ramp (Smith):

WFF partnered with Cullman County to complete a major expansion of the Smith Lake Park Public Boat Ramp. The renovation was completed in two phases over several years with the second phase commencing in 2020. The total project includes a six-lane launching slab that is 90-feet wide, a paved parking for 166 truck and trailer rigs and 10 cars (with both make ready and tie down areas), security lighting, one 45-foot stationary aluminum pier, two floating aluminum piers that are 150 feet and 60 feet, and a fixed aluminum pedestrian bridge to aid with facility navigation. The facility was designed to accommodate bass tournaments on Lewis Smith Reservoir. The facility is designed to be fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 2010. ADCNR leases the property from Cullman County. The county handles routine maintenance of the facility.



Smith Lake Park



Leesburg Public Boat Ramp (Weiss):

WFF partnered with the Town of Leesburg to provide a major boat ramp facility on Weiss Lake. The property containing the boat ramp is leased to ADCNR from Alabama Power Company. The property is located in Leesburg on the canal. Phase one of the project has been completed and phase two began in 2020. Phase one included construction of a concrete launching slab that is 60 feet wide, construction of paved entrance and exit roads with make-ready and tie-down areas, construction of paved parking for approximately 228 truck and trailer rigs, and construction of two 50-foot floating piers. Phase two includes the construction of a large wharf-style pier (400 feet by 8 feet) to accommodate additional vessels during periods of high use. The facility is being constructed to accommodate any bass tournaments on Weiss Reservoir. When completed, the facility will be ADA compliant. The Town of Leesburg is responsible for routine maintenance of the facility.



Leesburg



BOATING ACCESS AREA IMPROVEMENTS

WFF maintains 114 public boating access areas statewide. Several of these facilities received upgrades during 2020. For more information about freshwater boating access in Alabama, visit www.outdooralabama.com/freshwater-boating-access.

Smith Lake Dam Public Boat Ramp (Smith):

WFF replaced a degraded launching lane at the Smith Lake Dam Public Boat Ramp with a new concrete launching slab that is 30 feet wide, and an old pier was replaced with a new floating pier (150 feet). Modifications were made to an additional existing pier, bringing it into ADA compliance. WFF also partnered with the Union Sportsman's Alliance and the Alabama Power Company to install a modern fish weigh-in and care facility including a pavilion (20 feet by 40 feet) and a large concrete pad for tournament weigh-in trailers.

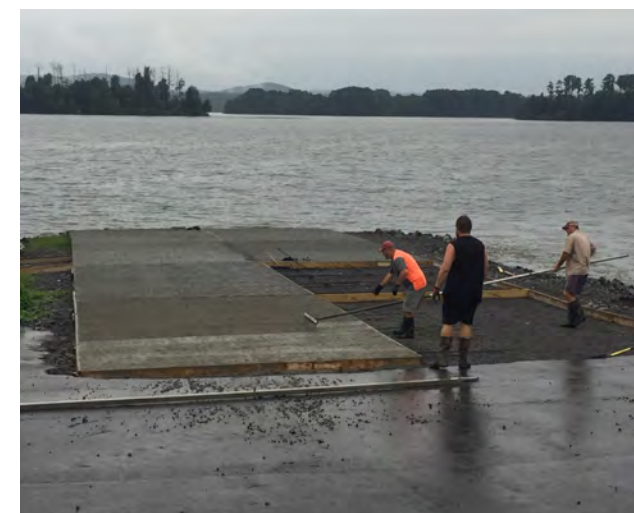


Smith Lake Dam



Claysville Public Boat Ramp (Guntersville):

WFF partnered with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the City of Guntersville on a major renovation at the Claysville Public Boat Ramp located in the City of Guntersville. Construction was completed in 2021 and included a new launching slab that is 30 feet wide, three stationary wooden access piers (100 feet, 80 feet, and 80 feet), a relocated floating pier, and a paved parking area for 62 trucks and trailers and eight cars (with make-ready and tie-down zones). The facility is ADA compliant. The City of Guntersville handles routine maintenance of the facility.



Claysville

Bonner's Point Public Boat Ramp (Jordan):

WFF completed renovations at Bonner's Point Public Boat Ramp to bring the facility into ADA compliance. Facility renovations include a large concrete pad for ADA parking and an ADA accessible route to the launching slab and piers.



Bonner's Point



TOURNAMENT PERMITS

WFF does not require tournament organizations to secure tournament permits for any of its events. However, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) Marine Patrol requires a Marine Event Permit for any event (including bass tournaments) with more than 100 boats participating. Applications can be obtained from the ALEA Marine Patrol free of charge by calling (334) 242-3630. The application must be completed and submitted at least 15 days prior to the event.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also requires a Special Use Permit for bass tournaments with more than 10 boats that are held on any of its reservoirs. Corps permits must be submitted 30 days prior to the event and can be obtained from your local U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project office or from <http://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Recreation/>.

CORPS OF ENGINEERS ANNUAL DAY USE PERMITS

Annual passes can be obtained from the guard station at all park entrances, or by contacting your local Corp of Engineers Resources Management office. These passes allow you to use any boat ramp operated and maintained by the Corps of Engineers, nationwide. The charge for these permits is \$40 and is good for one year from the date of purchase. Local and regional offices are listed on next page.

TRAILER TOURNAMENTS

Any tournaments where rules permit anglers to fish in various bodies of water and then bring their catch to a particular location for a weigh-in where fish are then released alive into one body of water are in direct violation of Alabama's Public Water Stocking (220-2-.129) regulation. Moving live fish from one lake to another can have a number of detrimental consequences; examples include 1) moving fish caught from lakes with consumption advisories into lakes without advisories, 2) introducing genetically inferior strains of Spotted Bass into our world-class Spotted Bass fisheries of the Coosa River, 3) introducing diseases such as the Largemouth Bass Virus which decimated many of our bass fisheries in Alabama beginning in the late-1990s, and 4) introducing non-native, potentially harmful species into lakes where they do not currently exist.

It is important for anglers to know that only the act of releasing fish into a public body of water other than where they were caught is illegal. If tournament organizations want to continue to offer these types of tournaments to their competitors, they are certainly free to do so only if the fish are released in the reservoirs from which they came. If you participate in one of these tournaments, do not release your fish into a lake where you did not catch them. Your fish can be eaten, donated to a charitable organization such as an orphanage, or returned to the reservoir where they were caught.

CATCH-AND-RELEASE

Access area creel surveys conducted by WFF fisheries biologists have revealed a significant decline in bass harvest rates statewide. Approximately 95% of all bass caught from public waters are released.

As the catch-and-release ethic has evolved during recent decades due to intense promotion by tournament organizations and participants, many well-intentioned anglers have become so passionate about this angling ethic that they feel a moral obligation to release every bass they catch. This often leads anglers to make some poor choices with regard to the handling of their fish.

An unfortunate consequence of catch-and-release is that tournament anglers are often so focused on releasing their fish alive that they sometimes fail to recognize when a fish is too far gone to survive the stress. Making this mistake can result in numerous dead fish floating in the water around the boat ramp the following day. The number of complaints received by ADCNR accusing tournament anglers of killing and wasting fish during organized bass tournaments is on the rise. Please encourage your anglers to be aware of this growing problem and consider adopting tournament rules that discourage the release of fish in poor condition following bass tournaments.



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS LOCAL AND REGIONAL OFFICES

Alabama River Lakes Site Office

Hayneville, AL
(334) 872-9554

Millers Ferry Resource Office

Camden, AL
(334) 682-4244

Holt Resource Office

Peterson, AL
(205) 553-9373

Black Warrior/Tombigbee Project Management Office

Tuscaloosa, AL
(205) 752-3571

Demopolis Site Office

Demopolis, AL
(334) 289-3540

Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Office

Carrollton, AL
(205) 373-8705



Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
64 N. Union St., Montgomery, AL 36130

OutdoorAlabama.com