

Lake of the Woods Stock Status Update, 2025

Walleye

- Walleye catch in the 2025 gill net sample averaged 15.5 per net, below the 2002 to 2024 average of 16.6 (Figure 1). The 3-year average for abundance (18.0) exceeded the fisheries quality objective (14 per net).
- The 2018, 2021 and 2023-year classes were strong, while 2017, 2019 and 2020-year classes were weak (Figure 2).
- Early observations of the 2024- and 2025-year classes are predicted to be average to weak (based on trawl and gill net catches).
- Catches of small Walleye 7 to 10 inches long are well below average (Figure 3). Walleye from 12 to 16 inches were well above average in 2025. Walleye 17 to 25 inches were at or above the historic average.

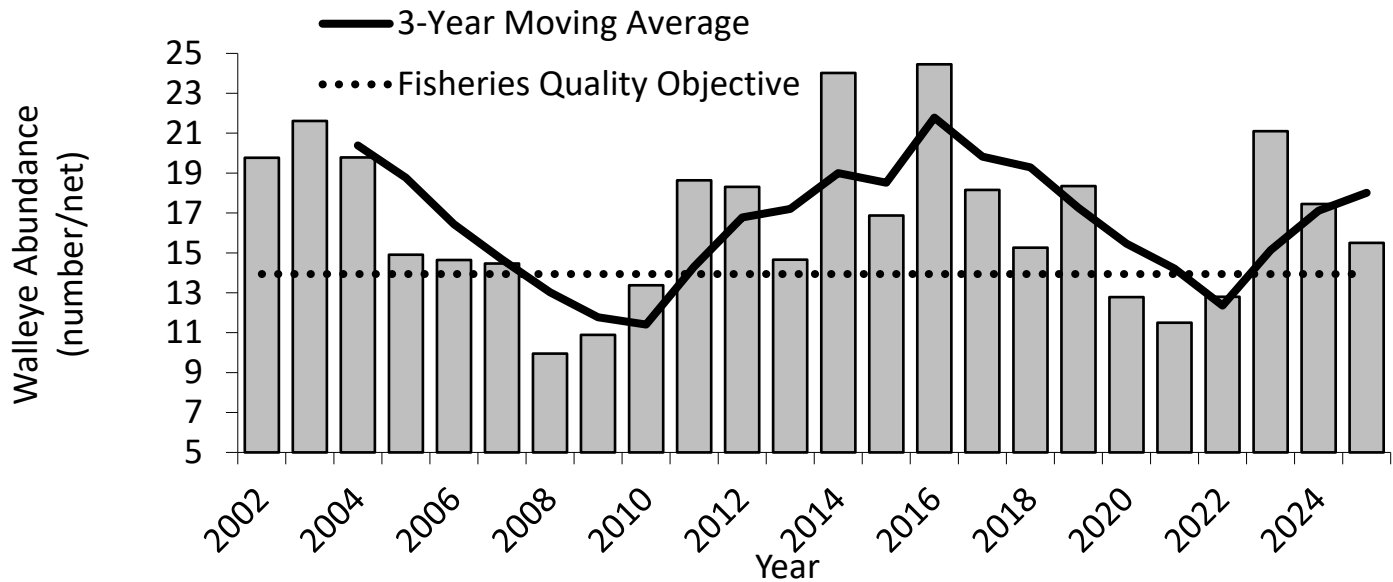


Figure 1. Average of near shore and offshore catch per unit effort of Walleye in September gill nets, 2002 through 2025.

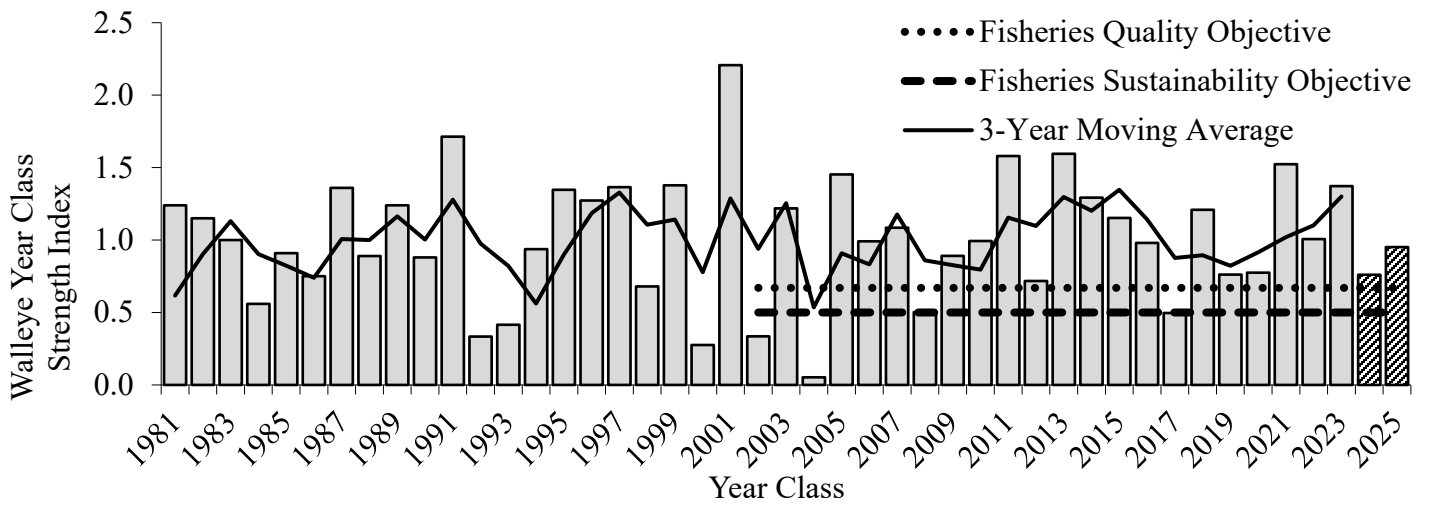


Figure 2. Year class strength of Walleye in Lake of the Woods from 1981-2025. Fishes hatched in 2024 and 2025 are not considered fully vulnerable to gill nets; therefore, strength values are predicted.

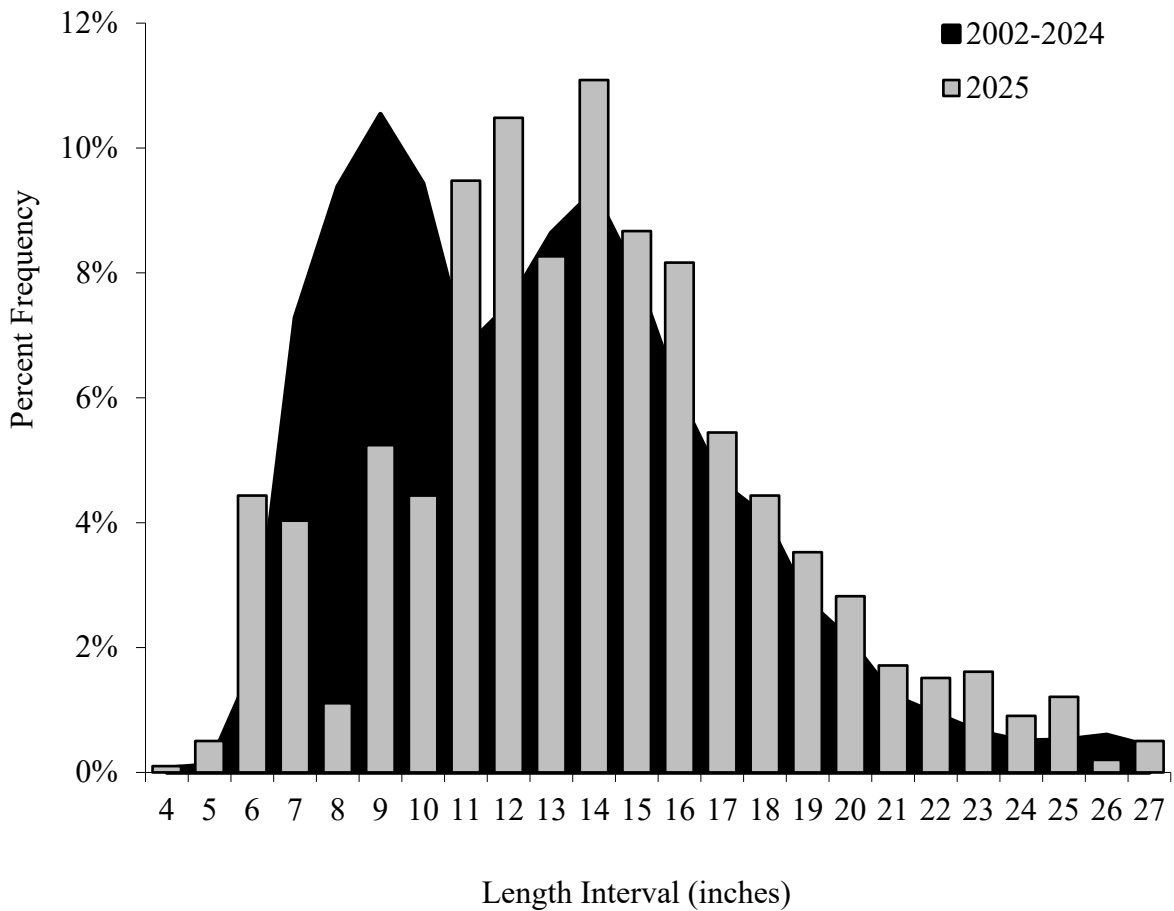


Figure 3. Walleye size distribution from 2025 fall gill net survey (gray bars). Shaded area denotes the average length frequency from 2002-2024.

Sauger

- Sauger catch in the 2025 gill net sample averaged 17.1 per net, below the 2002 to 2024 average of 20.5 (Figure 4). The 3-year average for abundance (18.8) exceeded the fisheries quality objective (16 per net)
- Strong year classes were produced from 2017, 2019, 2022 and 2023 (Figure 5).
- Catches of 9-inch Sauger are well above average and 10-14 inches are at or above average in abundance (Figure 6).

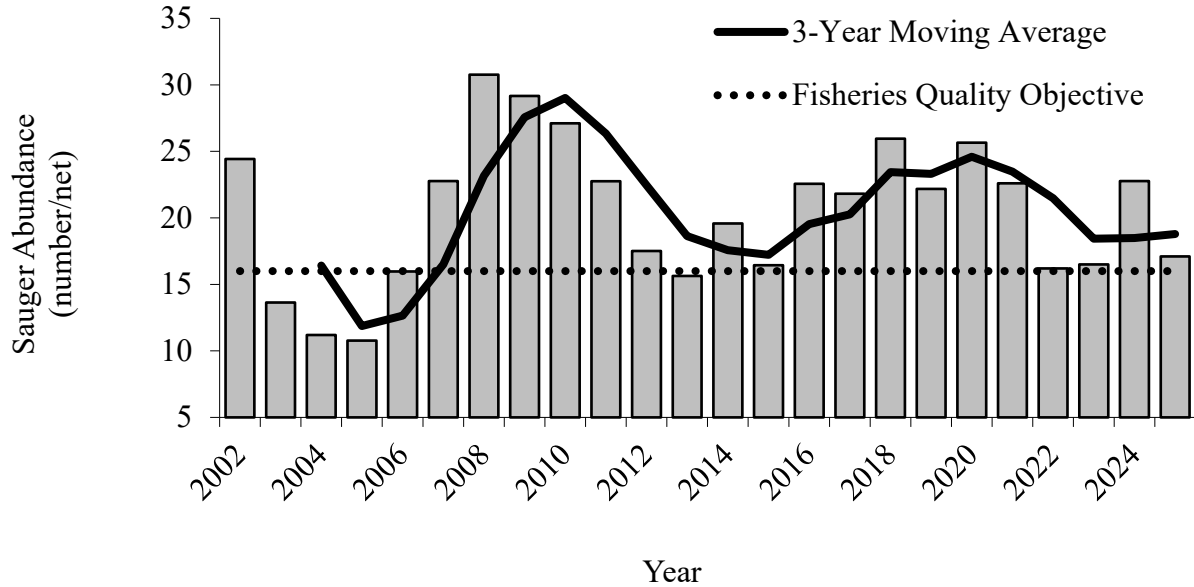


Figure 4. Average of near shore and offshore catch per unit effort of Sauger in September gill nets, 2002 through 2025.

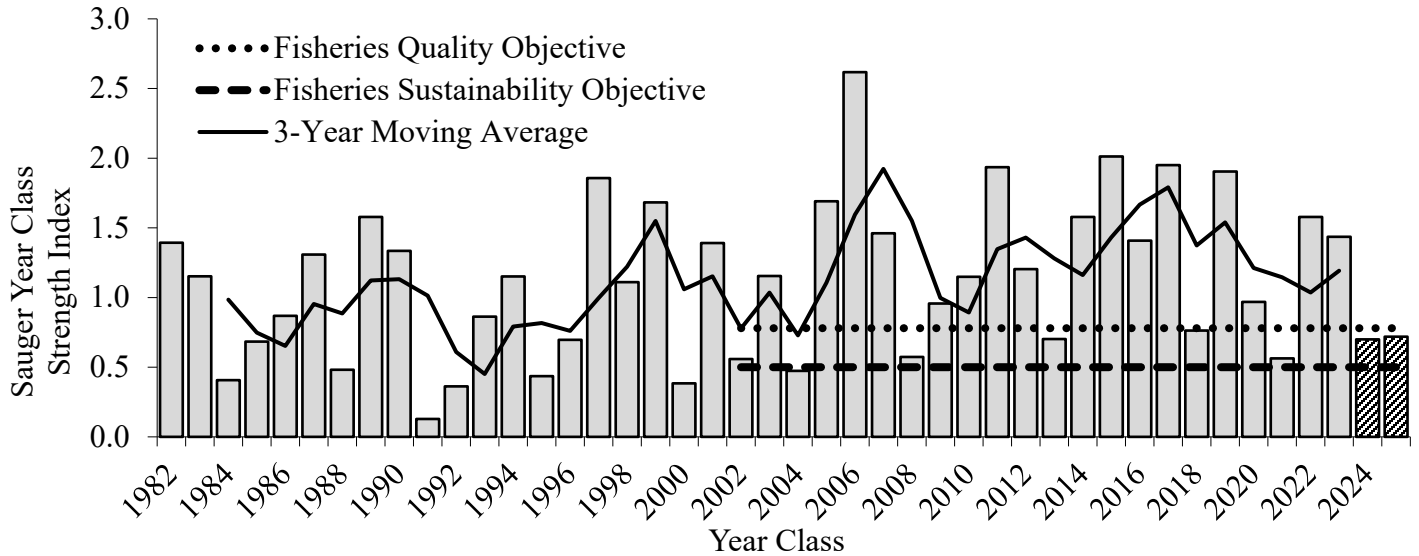


Figure 5. Year class strength of Sauger in Lake of the Woods from 1982-2025. Fishes hatched in 2024 and 2025 are not considered fully vulnerable to gill nets; therefore, strength values are predicted.

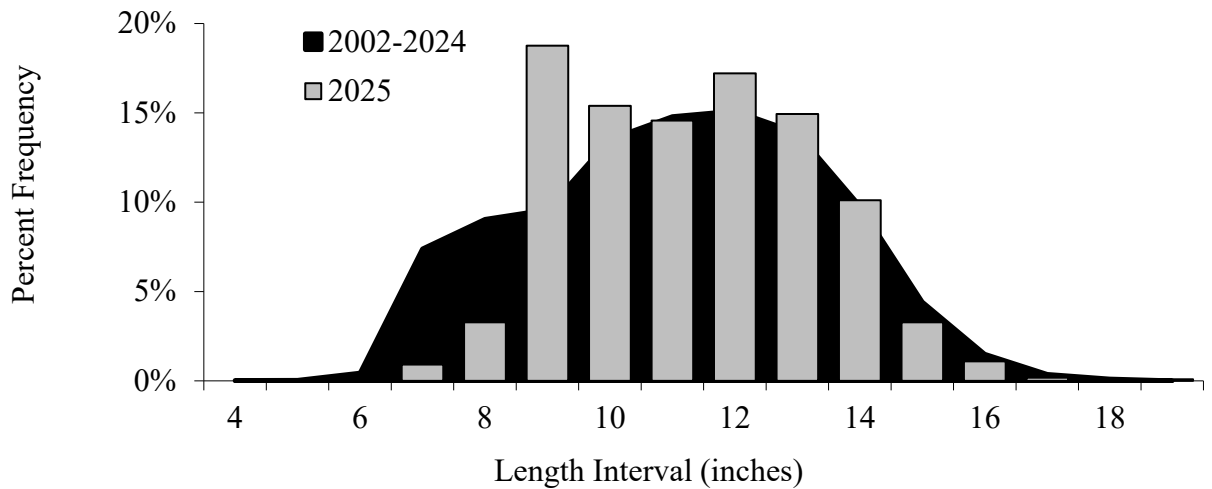


Figure 6. Sauger size distribution from 2025 fall gill net survey (gray bars). Shaded area denotes the average length frequency from 2002-2024.

Creel Survey Highlights

- Winter 2024 - 2025: Winter fishing pressure was estimated at 2 million angler-hours, approximately double the previous year.
- Current six-year average winter harvest is just above 160,000 pounds for Walleye and 230,000 pounds for Sauger. Winter harvest in 2024-25 was 175,000 pounds for Walleye, and 150,000 pounds for Sauger.
- Summer 2023: Summer fishing pressure was at 600,000 angler-hours and is the lowest observed since the mid-2000s. Summer harvest in 2023 was 175,000 pounds for Walleye, and 45,000 pounds for Sauger (both also below the current six-year average).