

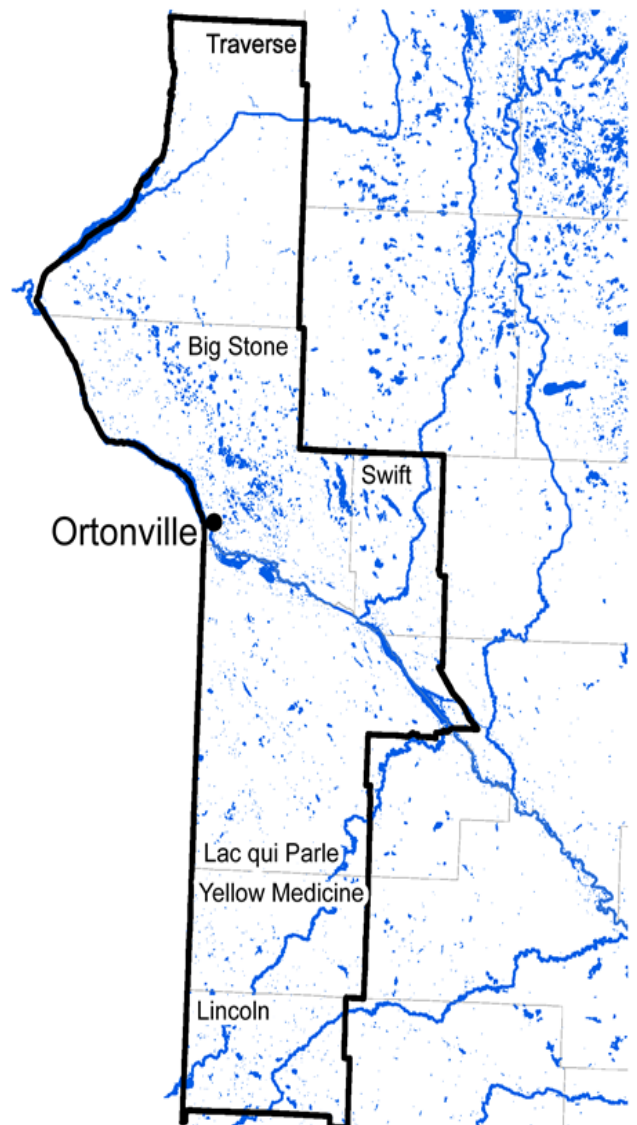
Ortonville Area Fisheries 2023 Fishing Outlook



The Ortonville Area Fisheries staff oversee fisheries management in Traverse, Big Stone, western Lac qui Parle, western Swift, western Yellow Medicine and northern Lincoln counties.

Popular Lakes include Artichoke, Big Stone, Hendricks, Lac qui Parle and Traverse. The Minnesota River and many smaller lakes and streams provide numerous additional angling opportunities. Due to the shallow, productive nature of these water bodies, fish grow fast and quality populations of Yellow Perch, Walleyes, crappies, Freshwater Drum and White Bass are common.

Fisheries staff routinely evaluate fish populations in area lakes and streams using gill nets, trap nets, seines and electrofishing. These data are used to make management decisions and are also available to anglers in reports which are useful for deciding where to fish. The data presented here are from the most recent surveys conducted.



Walleyes

Most lakes are regularly stocked with Walleyes, however good natural reproduction can also occur in several lakes and streams. Walleyes are most abundant in Artichoke, Traverse, Long and Steep Bank Lakes. Big Stone, Hendricks, Oliver and Lac qui Parle Lakes also have decent populations. Although "eater-sized" Walleyes (13-18 inches) are most common, plenty of larger Walleyes are also present. Walleye fishing can also be very good in the Minnesota and Pomme de Terre rivers, especially during spring and fall.



Yellow Perch

Yellow Perch fishing is very popular and there are numerous options in the area. Big Stone is a perennial favorite with high numbers of perch, many from 8-10 inches. Hendricks, Perch and Steep Bank Lakes are also worth giving a try. Yellow Perch grow fast in these lakes and reach 10 inches after 3-4 summers.



Crappies

Several lakes in the area can provide decent crappie fishing. Lac qui Parle Lake has provided a quality crappie population for many years. When the bite is on, good catches of 10-13 inch crappies are common. Artichoke Lake has a high number of smaller crappies that may be an angler acceptable size in 2023. Larger crappies are usually present

in Artichoke, and anglers do find them on occasion. Crappie numbers have been increasing in Big Stone and Traverse Lakes, and angling for them can be good, especially in the spring.

Bluegills

Only a few lakes provide decent bluegill fishing in the area. Improved water clarity has led to increased vegetation in Big Stone and Traverse Lakes. This has provided better Bluegill habitat. During the past several years Bluegill fishing has been very good on Big Stone Lake. Traverse can provide some good, localized catches at times. Anglers have a chance to catch a trophy in both lakes. Smaller Bluegills are common in Del Clark Lake.

Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass

Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass numbers have increased substantially in the area during recent years. Big Stone Lake is becoming known for its quality Largemouth Bass fishing. Increased vegetation has led to better survival and recruitment of bass. Growth is fast and many bass over five pounds are caught. Smallmouth Bass are present in Traverse and Oliver Lakes. Traverse has a substantial amount of rocky habitat and Oliver has abundant flooded timber, cover types that commonly hold bass.

Northern Pike

Limited numbers of fast growing Northern Pike are present in the area. Del Clark, Perch, Traverse, Hendricks and Lac qui Parle Lakes are the best pike fishing bets, and some lakes have decent numbers over 30 inches. Big Stone and Artichoke Lakes have lower pike numbers, but anglers have reported catching pike over 40 inches.



Catfish and Bullhead

The Minnesota River, Lac qui Parle and Traverse Lakes have high numbers of Channel Catfish. Catfish grow fast and fish over 30 inches are present. Big Stone and Lac qui Parle Lakes have decent numbers of large bullheads, and Hendricks Lake has a high number of medium sized bullheads. Black, Yellow and Brown Bullheads are present in the area.

Freshwater Drum and White Bass

Many area lakes and rivers provide good fishing for Freshwater Drum and White Bass. Freshwater Drum are commonly known as "sheepshead". Drum can be caught in Artichoke, Lac qui Parle and Big Stone Lakes, whereas the best bets for White Bass are Traverse, Big Stone and Hendricks Lakes. Both species can be caught from the Minnesota River as well. These species are good to eat and they continue to become more popular with

anglers. Their flavor can be improved by bleeding them prior to cleaning (cut through their gills when on a stringer or in the live-well), by keeping the slime off the meat during filleting and by trimming away the reddish "mud-line" flesh from outer edge of the fillets. Excellent recipes for preparing drum can be located on the internet by searching "drum recipes".

Lake Sturgeon

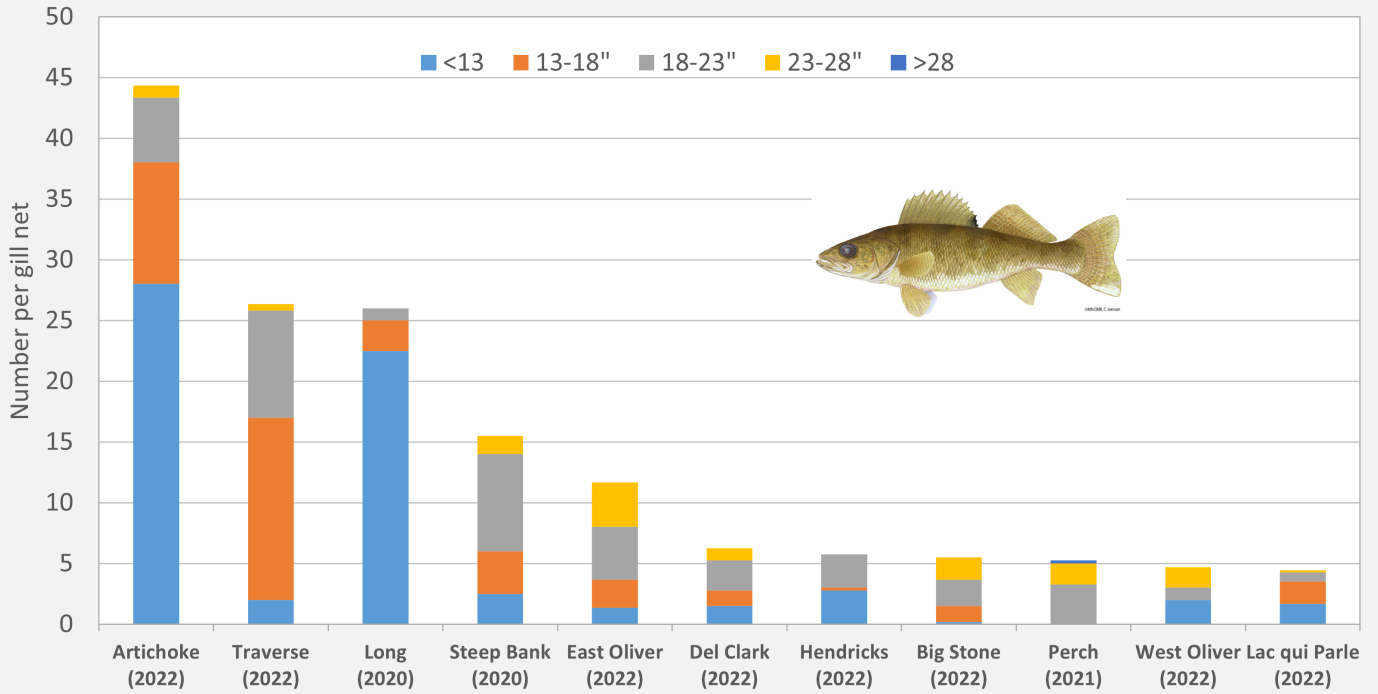
Lake Sturgeon were historically present in Big Stone Lake, but had disappeared by around 1950, likely due to winterkill, summerkill and barriers to spawning migration. Lake Sturgeon were reintroduced in 2014 and 4,000 fingerlings have been stocked annually since then. The stockings have been successful and sturgeon are frequently caught by anglers, and in DNR sampling. Lake Sturgeon will continue to be stocked until a self-sustaining population has been reestablished.

Enjoy fishing our valuable area lakes and streams, Sincerely the Ortonville Area Fisheries staff.



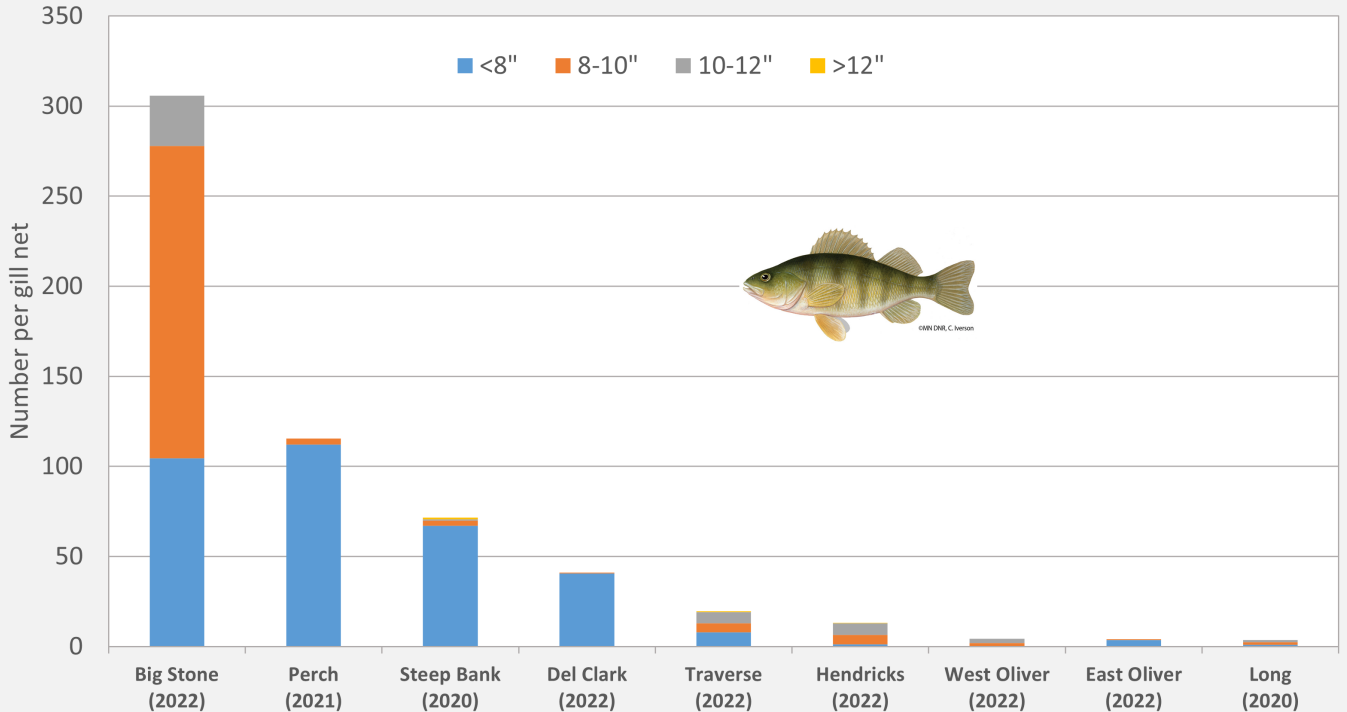
Recent Walleye Net Catches

(Survey year in parenthesis)



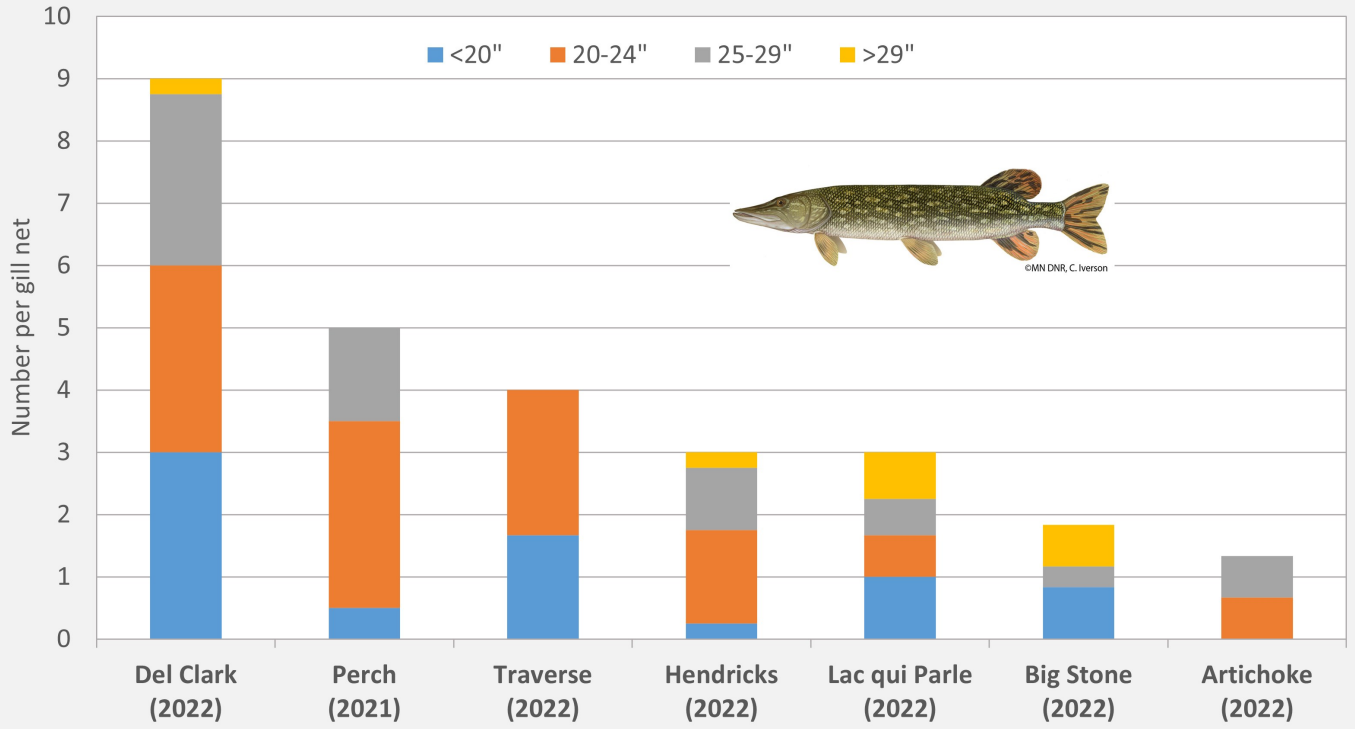
Recent Yellow Perch Net Catches

(Survey year in parenthesis)



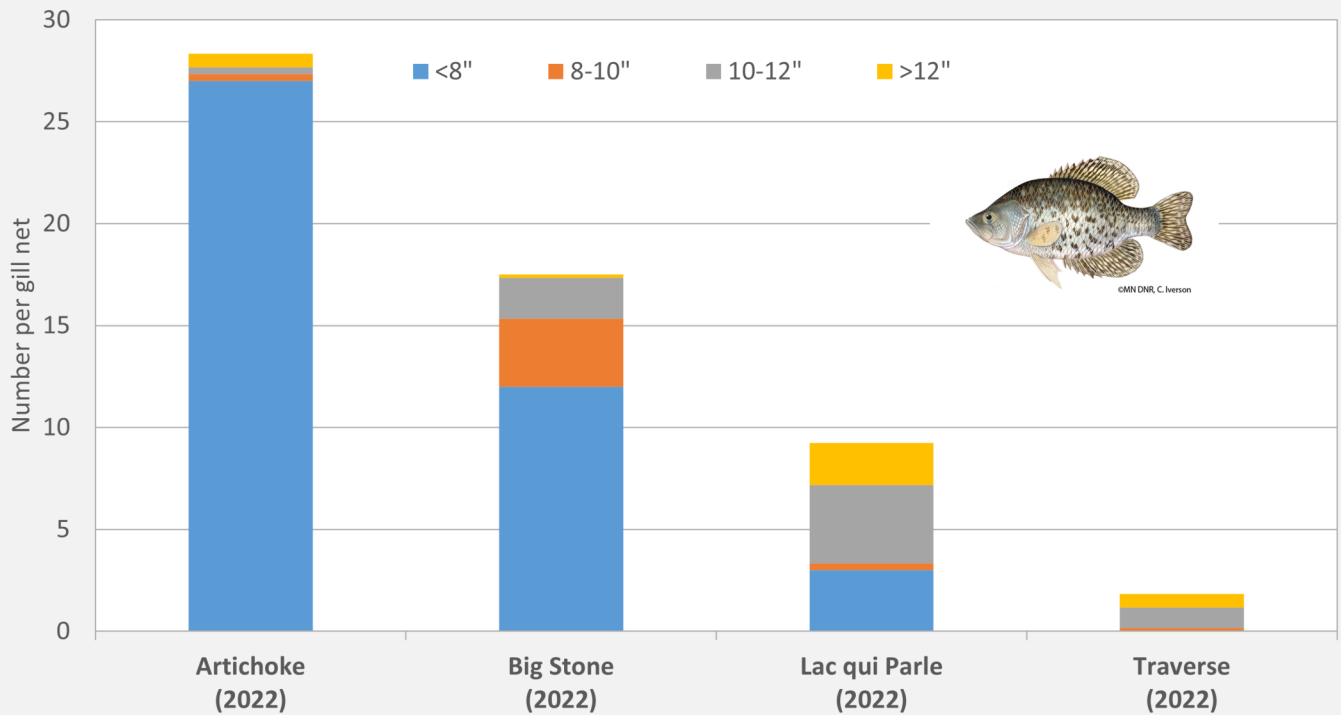
Recent Northern Pike Net Catches

(Survey year in parenthesis)



Recent Black Crappie Net Catches

(Survey year in parenthesis)



For more information search “Ortonville Fisheries” or “Lakefinder” on the MNDNR webpage <http://mndnr.gov>



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