

Lakes managed by the DNR Waterville Area Fisheries range from deep, stable lakes to prairie potholes - and provide a true variety of fishing opportunity for anglers. Waterville Fisheries staff follow strategic lake management plans, conducting rotating lake surveys to monitor fish populations in Le Sueur, Blue Earth, Faribault, Waseca, Steele, Dodge, Freeborn, Mower, and Rice counties in southern Minnesota.

The data provided here show a breakdown of fish caught during sampling in 2021, 2022, and 2023 for selected species, by size.

### **Winterkill**

A number of area lakes suffered winter kill in 2022-2023. Lakes with severe winterkill included Henry Lake, Lake Elysian, Eagle Lake and Cody Lake. Lakes with moderate winterkill include Circle Lake and Crystal Lake. Winterkill may have also occurred in lakes not listed.

### **Bluegill and crappie**

Many small lakes in the area hold large numbers of mid-sized Bluegills. Anglers looking for numbers should check out lakes such as St. Olaf or Reeds. Anglers looking for larger fish should head to lakes with lower Bluegill numbers such as Madison Lake, Fountain Lake, or German Lake. The daily limit for sunfish at Lake Mazaska is 5 and the daily limit at Lake Washington and Shields Lake is 10. Please release big Bluegills (greater than 9 inches), they ensure quality size and take many years to replace.

Almost all area lakes offer decent crappie fishing. Pick a lake and give it a go. For larger fish try lakes like Duck, Lura, or Hunt.

### **Yellow Perch**

Large Yellow Perch are typically associated with large, shallow "Walleye lakes" and can be tough to come by in southern Minnesota. However, some area lakes do offer quality Yellow Perch including German Lake and Sabre Lake. Many lakes managed primarily for Yellow Perch such as Pickeral Lake and Lake Geneva are

low due to lack of rain or drawdown. Freeborn Lake should provide good Yellow Perch fishing this winter.

### **Walleye**

Traditional Mankato area favorites Madison Lake and Lake Washington have healthy Walleye populations along with Lake Tetonka and Fox Lake. Be aware that many small, shallow lakes used as Walleye rearing ponds suffered winter kill in 2022-2023 and may not provide fishing in 2024. Lakes that had winterkill include Lake Henry, Lake Elysian, Eagle Lake, and Cody Lake – and potentially others.

### **Northern Pike**

Northern Pike numbers in most lakes are in the range considered desirable by anglers and managers alike. Few lakes in the area suffer from the "hammerhandle" problem common in other parts of the state. Northern Pike over 24 inches can be found at many lakes including Lura Lake, Madison Lake, and Lake Tetonka.

Waterville area lakes are fall under the Southern Zone Northern Pike regulations. St. Olaf Lake near New Richland has a 30 inch minimum size limit.

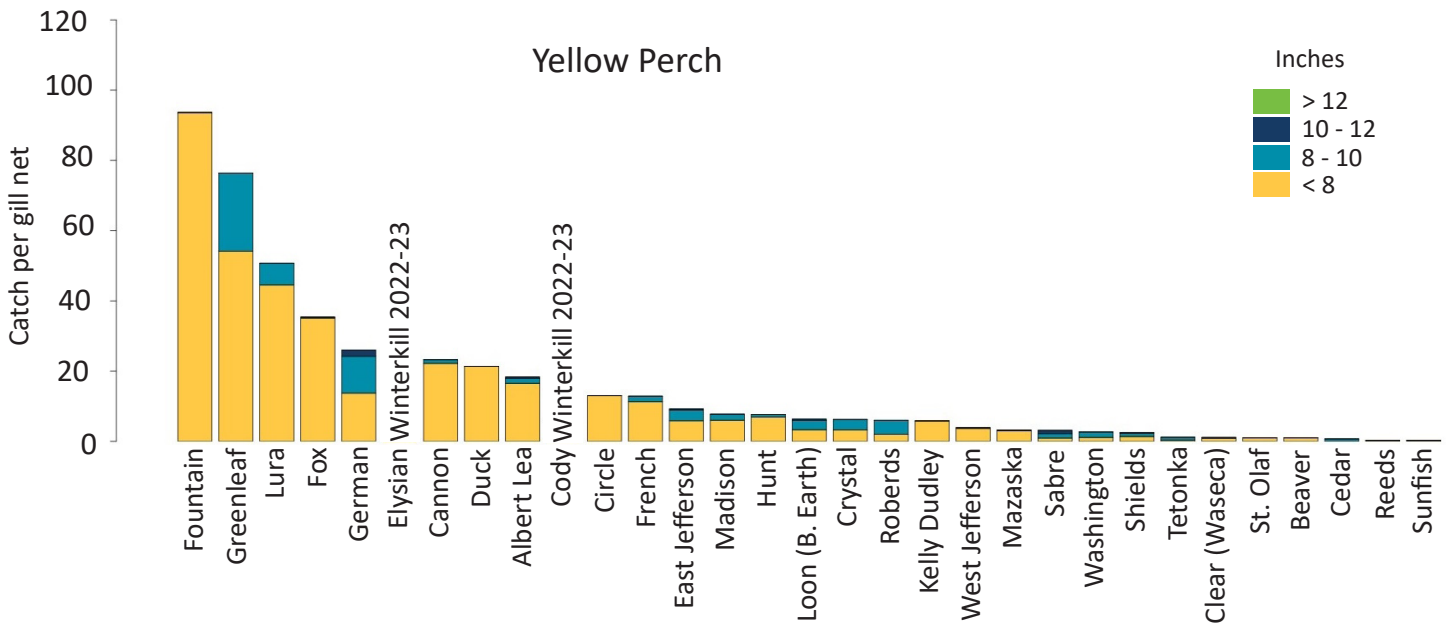
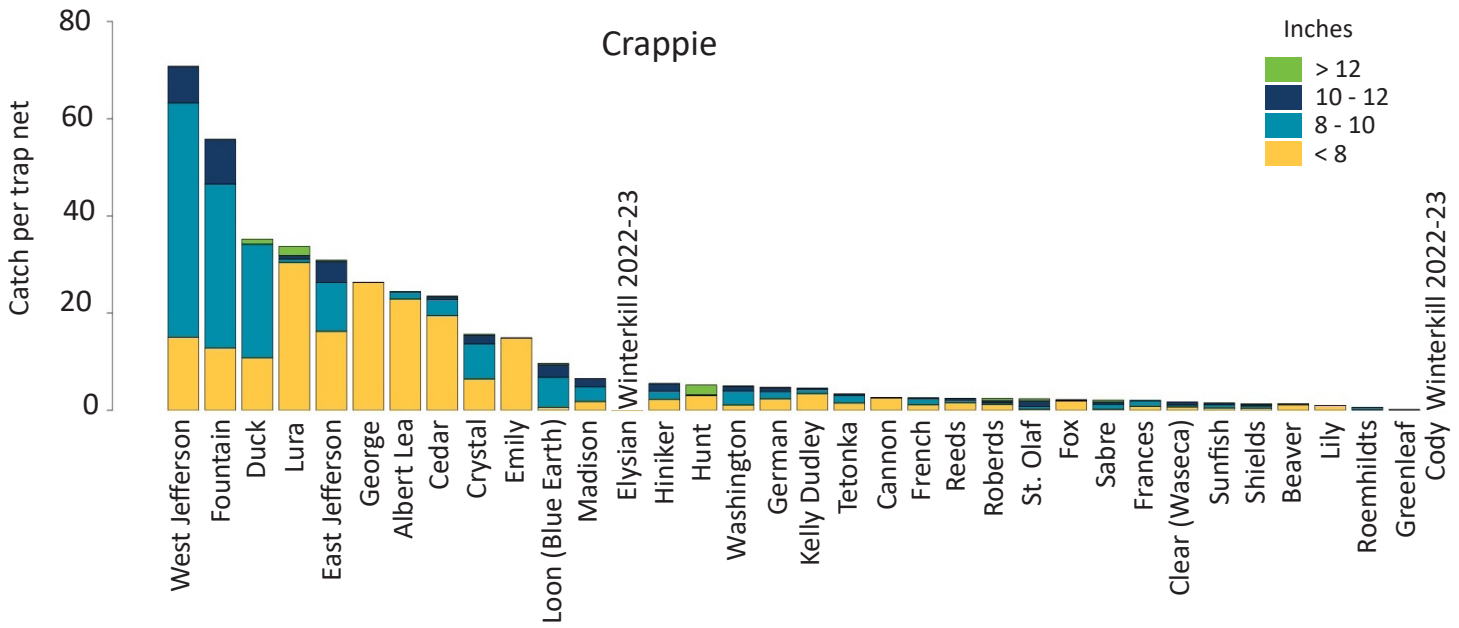
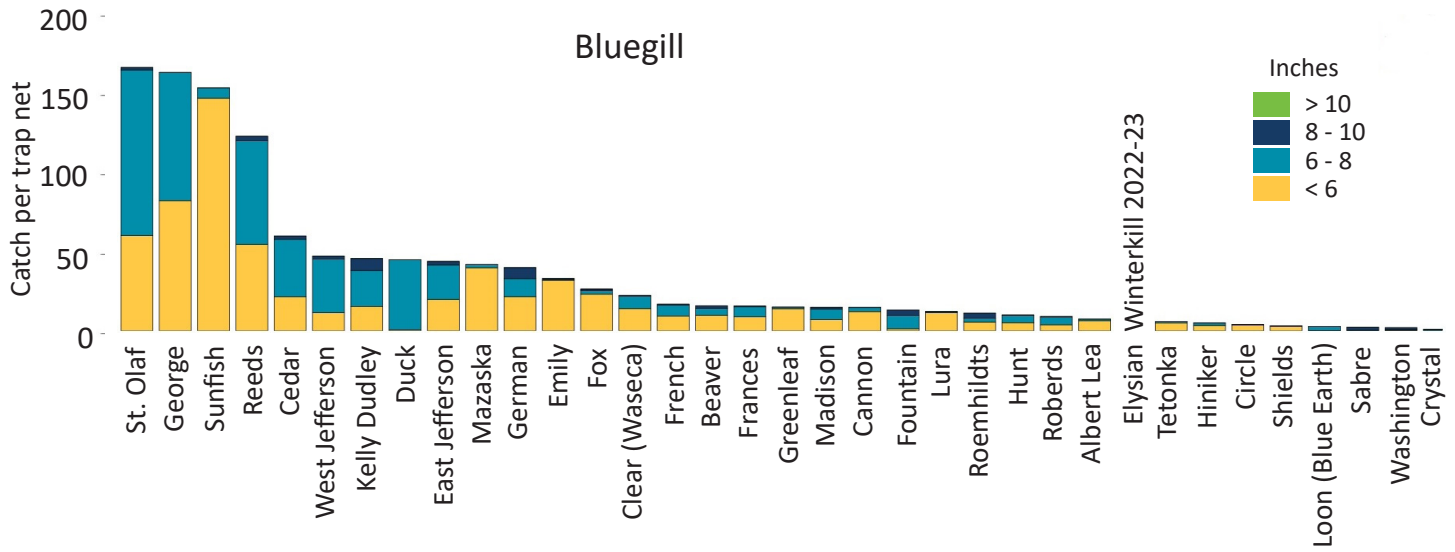
### **Largemouth Bass**

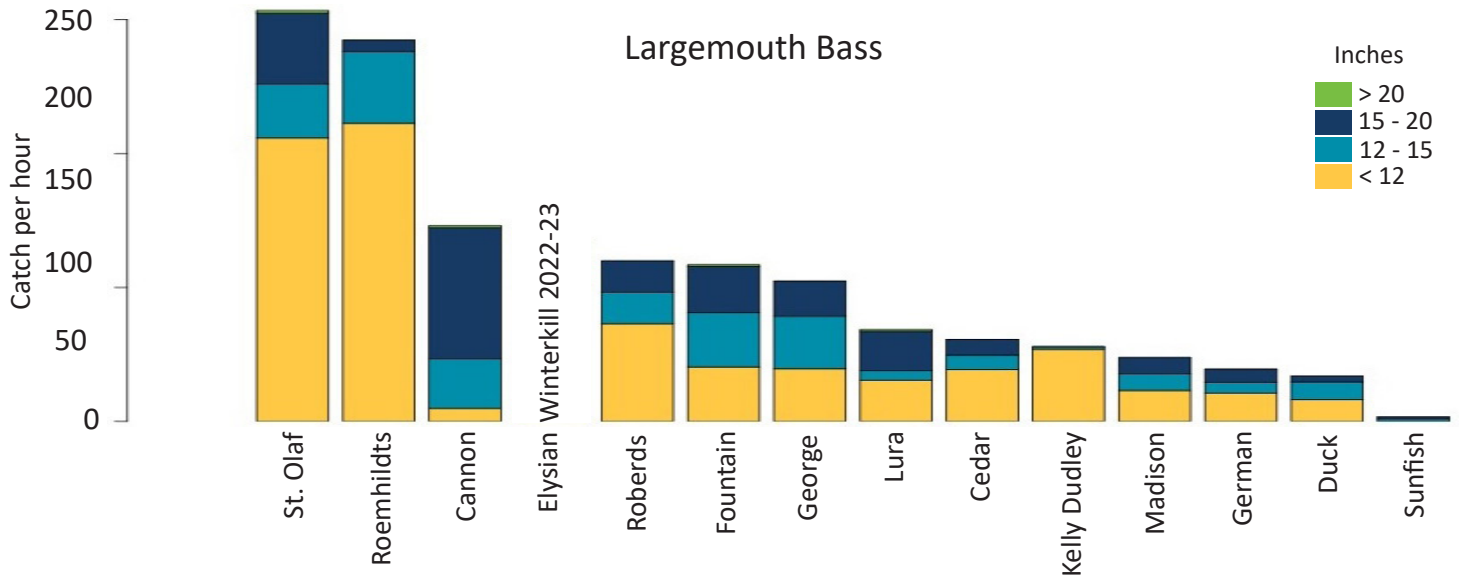
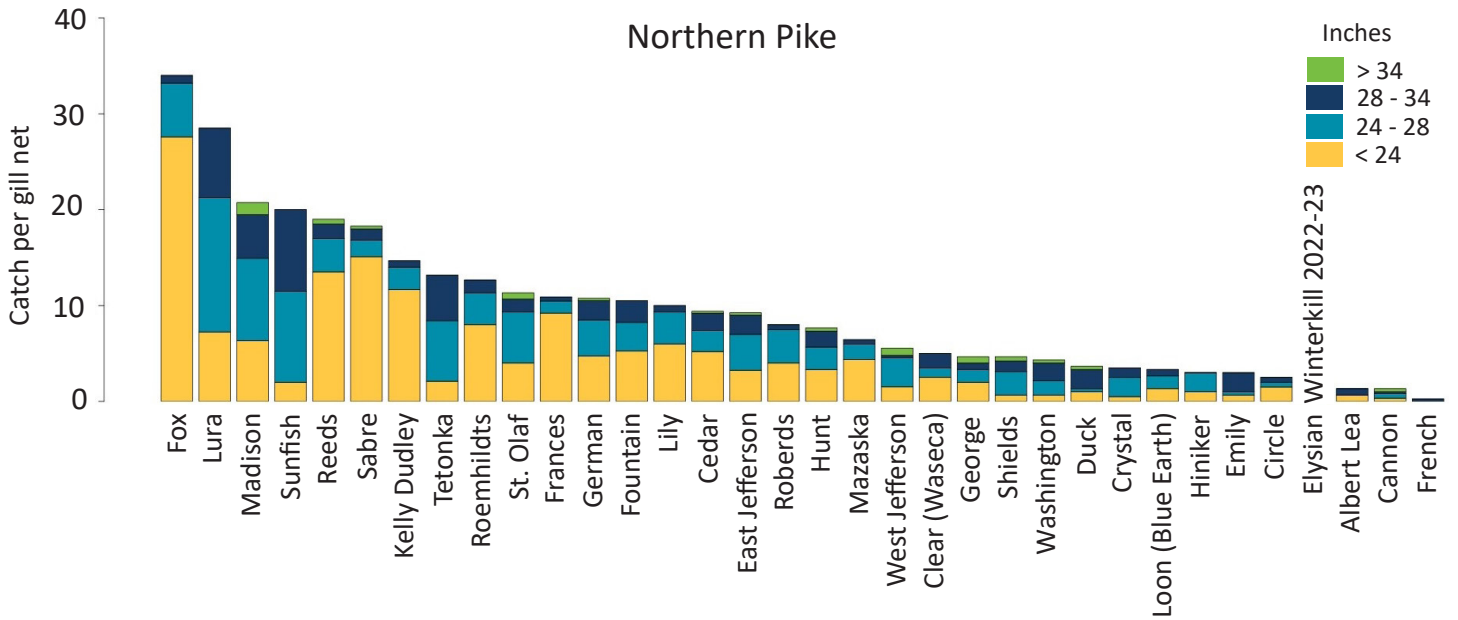
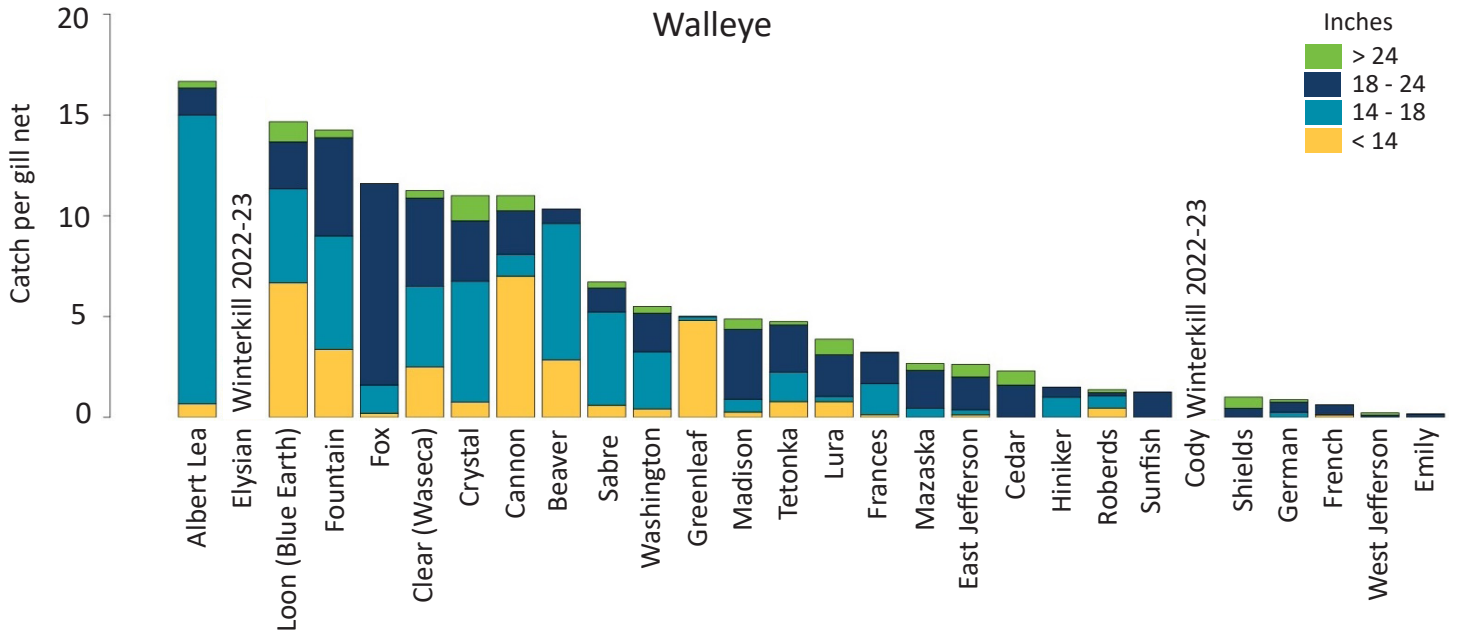
For fast action anglers should check out lakes with high bass numbers such as St. Olaf Lake or Fountain Lake. Lakes with low to medium densities of bass such as Cannon Lake, Cedar Lake, and Lake Tetonka often offer the best crack at fish topping the 20 inch mark. Clear Lake in Waseca has a no kill regulation for Largemouth Bass.

### **Catfish**

The Minnesota River is the best bet for channel catfish and flathead catfish in the Waterville area. The stretch from Courtland to Henderson holds a variety of catfish habitat, especially woody snags. The Le Sueur and Blue Earth rivers are also excellent choices for channel catfish. If you prefer to chase Channel Catfish in lakes try Roberds Lake, Lake Tetonka, or Cannon Lake.

*(More species on back page)*





## Bullheads

Bullheads remain a popular target for Waterville area anglers. We field many calls each year asking where to go for good bullhead fishing. All Waterville Area lakes have bullheads, the graph at the right shows the lakes with the highest net catches. Most bullheads sampled are Black Bullheads.

## Muskellunge

French Lake, near Faribault, is the only muskie lake in the Waterville area. Recent sampling shows a population of about 200 adult muskies in the lake, or 1 fish for every 4 acres of water. French Lake muskies average 40 inches and fish over 50 inches are a real possibility.

## Trout

A few options exist for those seeking trout in the Waterville area. Rainbow Trout are stocked every spring at St. Peter AMA and in Wolf Creek within the city of Austin.

If you prefer to fish moving water, check out Rice Creek, near Dundas, for brook trout. Rice Creek is loaded with small to medium sized brook trout and some large fish. Rice Creek is accessible to anglers via an angling easement. To learn more about angling easements and trout fishing in general, see DNR's trout stream webpage <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing/trout/index.html>

## Other Species

For those seeking something off the beaten track, the Waterville area offers a host of "other" fish. Lakes like German and Mazaska offer Longnose Gar. Mazaska also sports a healthy population of big, hard fighting White Bass. The Minnesota, Le Sueur, and Blue Earth rivers (as well as other, smaller rivers) are a bonanza for anglers looking for less sought-after species like various redhorse, White Suckers, Shovelnose Sturgeon (catch and release only!), and gar. Lake Tetonka, along with the Cannon River, Straight River, and the Minnesota River offer an opportunity to catch a Smallmouth Bass or two. Options are nearly endless for anglers or those looking to arrow a Common Carp.

For more information visit LakeFinder on the MN DNR website. <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/index.html>

