



# WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## Fisheries Information Sheet

LAKE: LITTLE FALLS LAKE

COUNTY: ST. CROIX

YEAR: 2025

### Introduction

Little Falls Lake is located within Willow River State Park near Hudson, Wisconsin. The 172-acre flowage has a maximum depth of 18 feet and approximately 4.86 miles of mostly undeveloped shoreline. The upper part of the water body is shallow and contains a flooded river channel and delta. Little Falls Lake is a hard water, eutrophic lake that historically suffered from periodic algal blooms. A non-motorized boat ramp is located in the state park, as well as several disabled accessible fishing platforms. Due to structural and safety concerns with the dam, the lake was drawn down in the summer of 2015 and remained drawn down during the period required to rebuild the dam until 2019. During the draw down, fish habitat was installed on the lakebed in the form of 25 boulder clusters, 140 fish cribs and several tree drops along the shoreline. Along with the installed habitat, vegetation, trees and old crib structures were present on the lakebed during refill and provided excellent fish habitat as well. Aquatic invasive species found in Little Falls Lake prior to dam rebuild included Eurasian watermilfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum* and curly-leaf pondweed *Potamogeton crispus*.

The lake was surveyed in the spring of 2022, 2023 and 2025 to evaluate fish stocking and the status of the fishery. Spring, electrofishing gear was used at night to assess the fishery after water temperatures reached the required 55-70°F temperature range. The shoreline was divided up into two-0.5-mile panfish stations and three gamefish stations totaling 1.5 miles. All fish were measured to the nearest tenth of an inch. Relative abundance of each species was calculated as catch per unit effort (CPUE) or the number of fish captured per mile of shoreline. Within Wisconsin's lakes classification system, Little Falls Lake is classified as a Simple Riverine Lake. Percentiles for catch rates (CPUE) and average length of each species were assigned based on percentiles calculated for Simple Riverine lakes throughout Wisconsin. Percentiles are listed in parentheses within the tables.

Table 1. Stocking history of Little Falls Lake after lake refill.

Year	Species	Age Class	Number Fish Stocked	Avg Fish Length (IN)
2020	LARGEMOUTH BASS	LARGE FINGERLING	8396	2.3
2020	BLUEGILL	SMALL FINGERLING	42415	1.1
2021	LARGEMOUTH BASS	LARGE FINGERLING	10178	2.8
2021	YELLOW PERCH	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	110	7
2021	SMALLMOUTH BASS	LARGE FINGERLING	4343	4.4
2021	WALLEYE	SMALL FINGERLING	6558	1.5
2021	BLACK CRAPPIE	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	4	10
2021	BLUEGILL	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	84	7
2021	NORTHERN PIKE	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	6	18
2022	YELLOW PERCH	SMALL FINGERLING	3655	1.5
2022	BLUEGILL	LARGE FINGERLING	43401	1.6
2022	LARGEMOUTH BASS	LARGE FINGERLING	5448	2.7
2022	SMALLMOUTH BASS	LARGE FINGERLING	4270	3.1

BLACK CRAPPIE



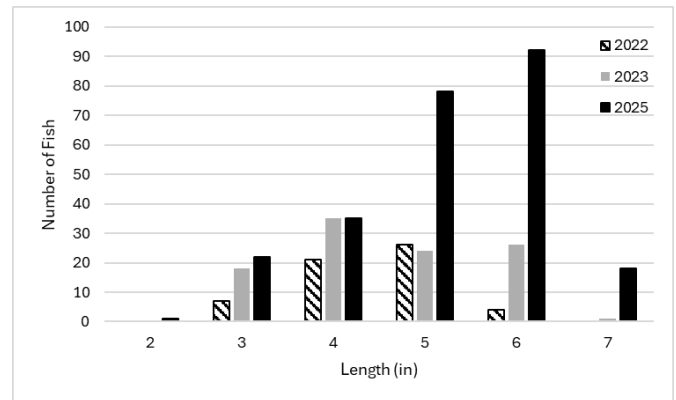
Black crappie relative abundance increased slightly in the 2025 survey, but black crappie abundance still remains relatively low.

	2022	2023	2025
CPUE (fish per mile)	1	1	14
Length Range (inches)	6.7	8	6.1-8.4
Mean Length (inches)	6.7	8	7.5

## BLUEGILL



Bluegill relative abundance has increased from 58 fish per mile in 2022 to 246 fish per mile in 2025. The maximum length of bluegill captured increased from 2023 to 2025 from 7.0 to 7.7 inches respectively which is currently in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for maximum length of bluegill in similar lakes. Mean length of bluegill also increased from 5.0 inches in 2022 and 2023 to 5.6 inches in 2025. Multiple year classes of bluegill were present during all survey years.



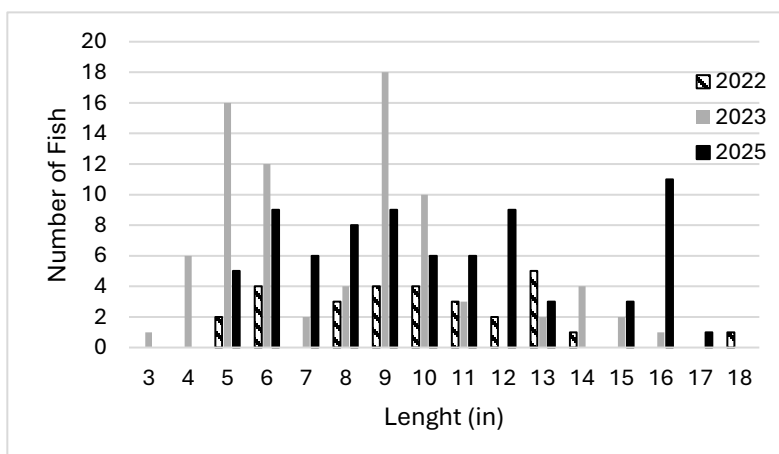
	2022	2023	2025
<b>CPUE (fish per mile)</b>	58 (25)	104 (50)	246 (75)
<b>Length Range (inches)</b>	3.4 to 6.1	3.3 to 7.0	2.7 to 7.7
<b>Mean Length (inches)</b>	5 (95)	5 (95)	5.6 (100)

	2022	2023	2025
<b>CPUE (fish per mile)</b>	8.7 (25)	29.7 (50)	30.5 (50)
<b>Length Range (inches)</b>	5 to 18.5	3.7 to 16.6	5 to 17
<b>Mean Length (inches)</b>	10.4 (75)	8.5 (75)	10.5 (75)

## LARGEMOUTH BASS



Largemouth bass were the most common gamefish surveyed in all three survey years. Relative abundance has remained stable from 2023 to 2025 with current catch rates in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile for Simple Riverine lakes. Multiple year classes of largemouth bass were present in 2022, 2023 and 2025. Mean length of largemouth bass during all three years of sampling was within the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.





## NORTHERN PIKE



Northern pike relative abundance decreased from 1.8 per mile in 2023 to 0.4 per mile in 2025. A total of two fish were captured in 2022, five were captured in 2023 and only one fish was captured in 2025. The mean length of northern pike was low in 2023 and within the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile.

	2022	2023	2025
<b>CPUE (fish/mile)</b>	0.5	1.8	0.4
<b>Length Range (in)</b>	20.5-23.1	10.5-18	29
<b>Mean Length (in)</b>	21.8 (90)	14.1 (50)	29 (100)

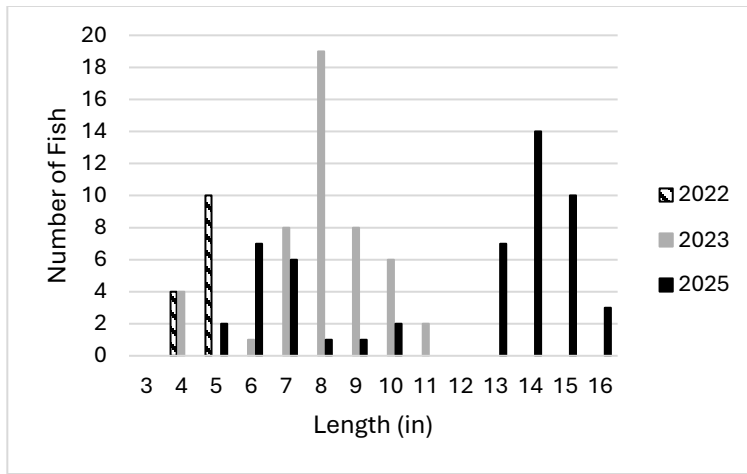
## PUMPKINSEED



Pumpkinseed were present in low abundance in 2022 and moderate abundance in 2023 and 2025. Maximum length of pumpkinseed has increased slightly while mean length was similar between all years.

	2022	2023	2025
<b>CPUE (fish per mile)</b>	6 (25)	19 (50)	17 (50)
<b>Length Range (inches)</b>	4.2 to 5.7	3.9 to 6	2.7 to 7.7
<b>Mean Length (inches)</b>	5 (100)	5 (100)	5.5 (100)



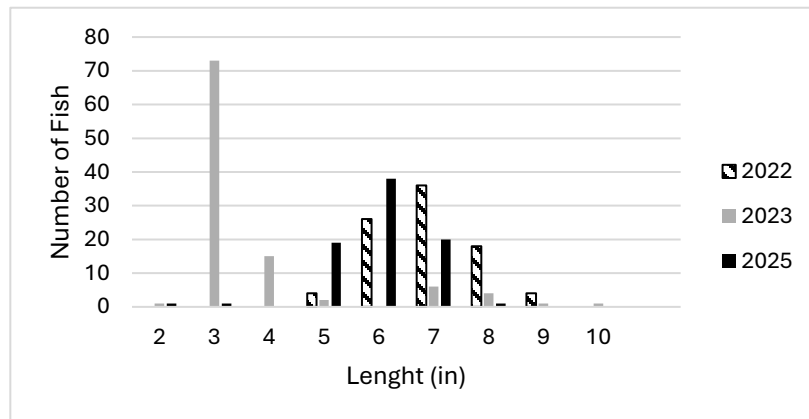


## SMALLMOUTH BASS



Smallmouth bass relative abundance has also increased over the past three surveys. Relative abundance is now considered high and smallmouth bass are the second most common gamefish in Little Falls Lake. Maximum length of smallmouth has also increased from 11.5 inches in 2023 to 16.9 inches in 2025. The mean length of smallmouth bass has improved as well and was within the 100<sup>th</sup> percentile in 2025.

	2022	2023	2025
<b>CPUE (fish per mile)</b>	4.1 (50)	17.4 (75)	19.1 (75)
<b>Length Range (inches)</b>	4 to 5.5	4 to 11.5	5.5 to 16.9
<b>Mean Length (inches)</b>	5.0 (10)	8.2 (50)	11.8 (100)



## YELLOW PERCH



Yellow perch were common during all three survey years. Multiple year classes of yellow perch were present despite only one year of stocking which indicates the occurrence of natural reproduction. Mean length of yellow perch increased from 2023 to 2025 and was within the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile in 2025.

	2022	2023	2025
<b>CPUE (fish per mile)</b>	88	103	80
<b>Length Range (inches)</b>	5.8 to 9.4	2.8 to 10.5	2.7 to 8
<b>Mean Length (inches)</b>	7.4 (100)	4.3 (50)	6.5 (90)



## Summary

Gamefish and panfish relative abundance has increased during the past three sampling years since the lake was refilled in 2020 and stocking was initiated from 2020-2022. Bluegill, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, pumpkinseed and yellow perch are now present in moderate to high abundance. Maximum length of bluegill, pumpkinseed and smallmouth bass has increased, and multiple year classes are present of each of these species. Yellow perch, bluegill, pumpkinseed, smallmouth and largemouth bass are currently providing a good fishery based off of size structure and overall abundance levels that are currently present. Additionally, yellow perch, bluegill, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and pumpkinseed are naturally reproducing based on length frequency distributions.

Black crappie were scarce in 2022 and 2023 with a slight increase in 2025. Additional stocking is still needed for the population to fully establish. Black crappie or northern pike are currently not available from department hatchery sources. Adult bluegill, yellow perch, northern pike and black crappie were captured with electrofishing gear from New Richmond Flowage and transferred to Little Falls in 2021. Additional transfers from New Richmond Flowage may be needed to further supplement the northern pike and black crappie populations within Little Falls Lake. The one year class of walleye stocked in 2021 has not been documented in surveys done in 2022, 2023 or 2025. It's possible a few fish may be present however the lake is best managed for northern pike bass and panfish at this time.

Overall, species have increased in abundance and multiple species of panfish and gamefish are present in adequate numbers to provide a good fishery for anglers. Additional stocking of black crappie and northern pike is recommended based on low densities and limited size structure present.

*Table 2. General fishing regulations for Little Falls Lake in St. Croix County, Wisconsin.*

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	DAILY BAG LIMIT	SIZE LIMIT
Largemouth Bass & Smallmouth Bass	Harvest-1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday in May to 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in March	5	14 inch minimum
Northern Pike	Saturday in May to 1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday in March	5	None
Panfish (bluegill, pumpkinseed, black crappie and yellow perch)	Open all year	10	None

## Acknowledgements

For answers to questions about fisheries management activities on Little Falls Lake contact:

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