Big Lake
2016 Largemouth Bass Survey

Lake Information: 226 acres, 70 feet maximum depth
Located: Big Lake, IN; Noble County
Access: Boat ramp on south shore; no fee
GPS Coordinates: N 41.2766°; W -85.5004°
Amenities: Boat Ramp; Seasonal Pier; Port-a-John
Outboard Motor Restriction: None
Fishing Regulations: Statewide
Recent Stocking: None

Best Fishing: Bluegills, catch-and-release small bass
DNR Contact Information:
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Report Approved By: Jeremy Price, Reg. Supervisor
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Background
Largemouth bass populations increased in many northern Indiana natural lakes during recent decades in response to imposition of minimum size limits and adoption of a catch-and-release ethic among anglers. At several lakes, increases in bass numbers led to declines in size structure caused by slow growth and generated angler complaints about the scarcity of large bass. Big Lake is a classic example and prompted temporary implementation of a “reverse slot limit” in 2011 designed to encourage anglers to harvest small, overcrowded bass. Although anglers removed 44% of the estimated 10- to 14-inch bass within 90 days, the limit had little initial effect on size. The standard 14-inch minimum size limit is back in effect.

Methods
• Dates: 5/2 and 5/9/16
• Night DC electrofishing for one hour per night with two dip netters.

Summary
• A total of 597 bass (≥8-in) were captured.
• The catch rate of bass less than 14 inches (292/hr) was the second highest on record.
• The catch rate of 14-inch and larger bass remained very low (7/hr).
• Only three bass were 18 inches or larger.
• Growth remained slow with average annual increments of 4.2, 3.1, 2.4, 1.7, and 1.4 inches for ages 1 through 5, respectively.

Analysis
The 2016 sampling reaffirms the reverse slot limit had no lasting effect on bass numbers and size structure in Big Lake. Additional measures are needed to address the problem. It is recommended that Big Lake be one of several lakes added to a list where alternative rules could be in place to allow anglers more opportunities to harvest small bass.

Previous available report

Electrofishing catch per hour of sub-legal and legal-size largemouth bass at Big Lake from 1990 through 2016.
Your purchase of fishing equipment and motor boat fuel supports boating access and Sport Fish Restoration.

Indiana Fishing Regulation Guide:
http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/2347.htm