

2018 Upper Potomac River Walleye Summary

Walleye are a gamefish species growing in popularity in the mid-Atlantic region. First introduced in 1979, walleye can be found in the upper Potomac River from Cumberland, MD downstream to Washington D.C. The highest concentration of walleye are located in the middle section of the river between Dam 3 (Harpers Ferry) and Dam 5 (Clear Springs). In the spring, many of the adults move upstream and concentrate below the major river dams to spawn. The current Potomac River fishery is maintained through a combination of natural reproduction and supplemental juvenile stocking. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources Freshwater Fisheries Program monitors the fishery through annual spring and fall boat electrofishing surveys.

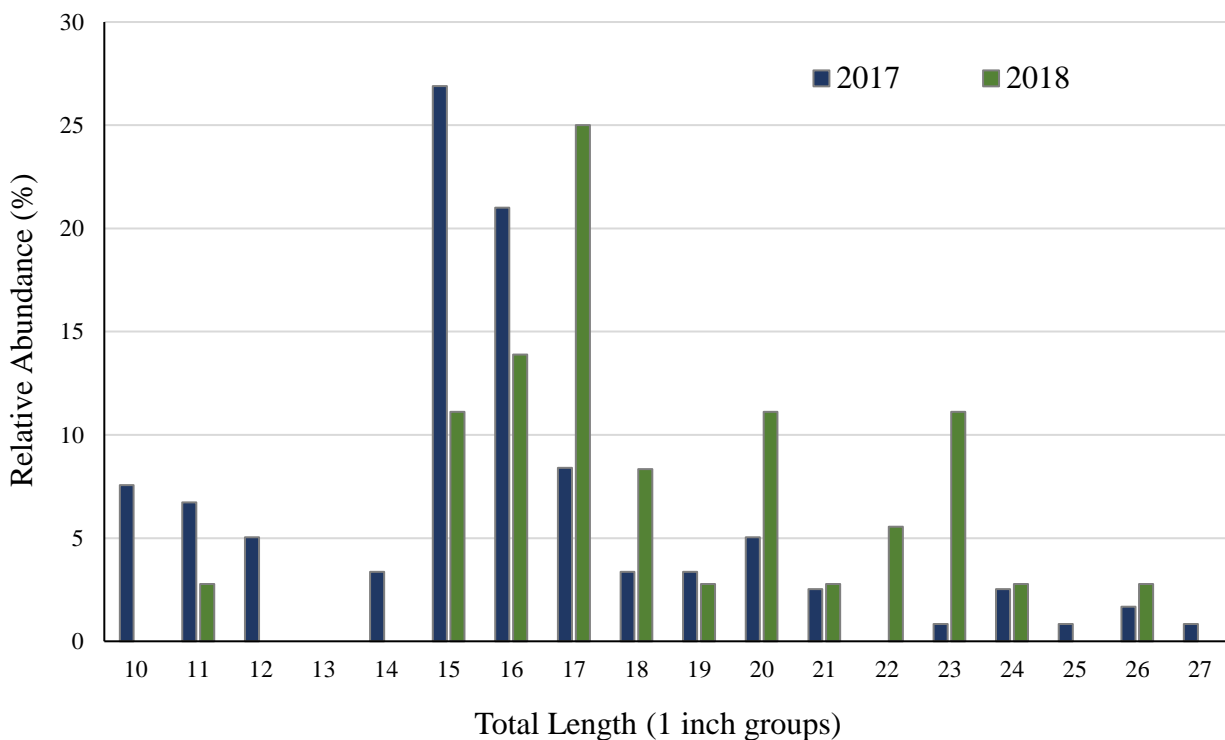


Figure 1. Size distribution of upper Potomac River walleye collected by boat electrofishing in spring 2017 and 2018.

Results from the 2018 spring electrofishing survey showed a good size distribution of young and old fish (Figure 1). Walleye ranged in size from 11.8-26.9 inches with an average total length of 18.9 inches. Adult fish from the strong 2015 and 2016 year-classes comprised 70% of the sample. Walleye from these two year-classes will support a very productive fishery over the next several years. Walleye greater than 20 inches made up 25% of the sample. These large adults are important in helping to sustain the population. A single large female can produce up to 400,000 eggs.



26 inch adult walleye collected from upper Potomac River, October 2018

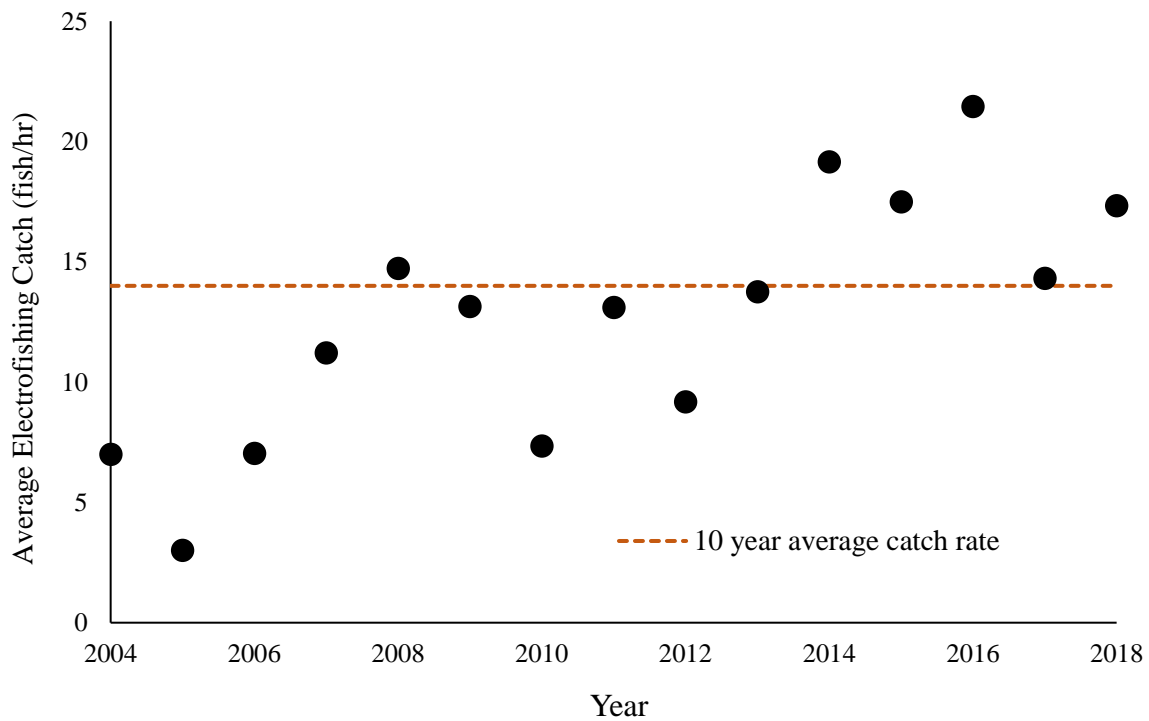


Figure 2. Adult walleye (>15 inches) fall boat electrofishing catch rates (2004-2018) collected from the upper Potomac River between Dam 3 and Dam 4.

The average 2018 electrofishing catch rate for adult walleye (>15 inches) was 17.3 fish/hour (Figure 2). This is above the 10 year average catch rate of 14.1 fish/hour. Since supplemental stocking of fingerling walleye began in 2012, the catch rates for adult walleye have steadily

improved to its current level. Analysis of juvenile walleye found a roughly 50% contribution of stocked fish to a given year's year-class. Supplemental fingerling stockings significantly contribute to the overall fishery. Broodstock collection and fingerling stocking will continue in 2019.

For 2019, anglers can expect good numbers of walleye greater than 15 inches thanks to the very strong 2015 and 2016 year-classes. These fish will be 3-4 years old and right in that 15-20 inch size range. Anglers are reminded of the current Maryland regulations for walleye.

- Year round minimum size = 15 inches
- January 1 – April 15 maximum size = 20 inches (mainstem Potomac River from Chain Bridge in DC to Cumberland, MD)
- Daily creel limit = 5 legal size fish

For more information or question regarding the upper Potomac River fisheries, please contact Michael Kashiwagi (Michael.kashiwagi@maryland.gov).



Adult walleye collect in 2018 fall boat electrofishing survey