

# **ILLINOIS URBAN FISHING PROGRAM**

## **Division of Fisheries**

**Fiscal Year 2012 Annual Report  
(July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2012)**

**Submitted by:**

**Illinois Urban Fishing Program Staff**

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, IDNR, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, Ill. 62702-1271; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Illinois Urban Fishing Program was introduced in Chicago in 1985 to teach individuals of all ages to fish, to enhance fishing opportunities in populated areas, and to give participants an understanding of and a greater appreciation for natural resources. In 1994 the Program was expanded statewide and now primarily consists of 1) free summer fishing clinics that include fishing at nearby stocked lagoons, 2) school fishing and non-fishing education programs, and 3) fishing and education programs at scout and 4-H camps, city and state parks, church camps, etc.

During FY >12 fish were stocked at 32 sites and summer fishing clinics were regularly held at 19 locations (see map). Fishing clinics were also held less frequently at 20 additional sites (see Central and Southern Illinois reports for these locations). Fishing clinics were held twice daily Monday through Friday for about nine weeks at each fishing site during the summer. Approximately 17,220 youngsters attended one of 872 summer fishing clinics that included fishing at a nearby stocked lagoon. Fish stocking remained important for the program and approximately 23,250 lbs. of channel catfish, 115,210 hybrid sunfish and 1,200 rainbow trout were stocked. Members of the public were also able to catch and take these fish at most sites.

Additional volunteers and volunteer organizations have become more involved in conducting and assisting with programs. Volunteers and volunteer organizations with IDNR training and assistance held 146 fishing clinics and events for more than 4,120 children and adults last year. These individuals and organizations play a very important role in the ongoing success of the program.

The initiation of fishing programs in schools, mainly in P.E. classes, is also becoming more popular. The fishing clinic=s educational session is presented at school and teachers then take students fishing numerous times at a nearby lagoon during their P.E. class in the last several weeks of the school year. This past year 2,175 students made fishing trips after learning basic fishing information in one of 21 school fishing clinics. IDNR Urban Fishing Coordinators also held an additional 56 fishing programs at schools that allowed 3,500 students to go fishing during the school year.

Urban Fishing Program coordinators held 182 non-fishing Education Programs for more than 29,340 participants at numerous schools and other settings during the year to teach environmental education and an appreciation for natural resources, and to promote summer fishing programs.

The popular *Access to Fishing* rod and reel loaner program was established in 1997. There are currently 141 *Access to Fishing* loaner sites in Illinois, and rods and reels were borrowed more than 15,260 times last year. The Urban Fishing Program held or sponsored a total of 1,482 fishing and non-fishing programs for more than 66,000 participants this past year.



## INTRODUCTION

In past generations, Americans fished frequently and often did so out of necessity for food. Times have changed and now fishing is often done for pleasure as a way to relax with family and friends and to spend time outdoors. Fish may still be kept for food but are many times released to be caught again. According to a recent American Sportfishing Association (ASA) survey 40 million Americans fish, which are more people than play golf (24.4 million) and tennis (10.4 million) combined. In addition, these 40 million anglers generate about \$45 billion in retail sales annually. Responsive Management reported that 30 million anglers sixteen years and older fished in 2006. The overall economic output from fishing is about \$125 billion annually and that supports more than 1 million jobs.

The sport of fishing presents an opportunity to instill outdoor ethics and to cultivate an appreciation for our natural resources. Realizing that we live on a planet that is 70% water, we must strive to be good stewards of our natural resources if we are to coexist with plants and animals.

Parts of Illinois have been transformed from quiet rural settings into urban sprawl and areas that were once pristine countrysides are now filled with houses, super malls, and fast food restaurants. Along with this change in the landscape came changes in attitudes, values, and priorities. Such changes have resulted in more single-parent families. With the burden of

rearing children and earning a living, outdoor ethics and an understanding of our natural resources are not always being taught. These situations along with society's other less desirable influences are producing many youngsters who desperately need outdoor experiences. Is there a solution? Can fishing be part of a solution that turns struggling members of our younger generation into good citizens? Research has shown many benefits of fishing, including its contribution to family cohesiveness and values, an enhanced and increased understanding of the environment, and many health-related benefits. Efforts to provide Illinois children with additional outdoor activities and experiences were expanded in 2010 with DNR's "No Child Left Inside" initiative.

There is hope on the horizon! Reports show that kids are more likely to fish when they become adults if they experience fishing before reaching high school age. A survey by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation showed that 20% of Hispanics and African Americans who do not fish would like to fish but do not participate for various reasons. This survey also showed that participation by members of these minority groups during their teen-aged years was important in influencing them to take up fishing as a lifelong hobby. Hispanics and African Americans tend to fish with others rather than by themselves and view fishing as an opportunity to socialize.

A recent survey by Responsive Management showed that most kids learn to fish from a parent/family member but they are willing to learn from someone else provided that person is skilled. A child must have fun while learning to fish, therefore it is important that they catch fish. Kids tend to get bored and show disinterest when they don't catch fish. Most want to touch what they catch. Some beginning anglers might shy away from fishing because they don't like to handle bait. Girls can get interested in fishing but surveys show many still think

of fishing as a boy=s sport. We must keep in mind that in today=s world there is competition for a child=s interest when they have access to video and computer games. These types of indoor games offer an almost sure chance of easy entertainment without being boring.

Another survey showed that most anglers under 35 years of age are not being introduced to fishing by their parents. If that is the case it means that our Urban Fishing Program can fill an important niche by bringing fishing to many people who might not otherwise experience it.

Responsive Management says that satisfaction is high for 90% of active anglers and very high for 67% of the participants. The majority of today=s anglers focus on the importance of fishing for relaxation and as a family activity, and sees catching big fish as being less important as the experience itself. It has been reported that two reasons people don=t fish as often are a lack of time and no close lakes that offer good fishing.

To address the needs to provide and get more Illinois children involved with outdoor activities and experiences the Department initiated the "No Child Left Inside" program in 2010.

## **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

The major objectives of the Illinois Urban Fishing Program include teaching children to fish, stocking sufficient numbers of catchable-sized fish in an effort to provide quality sport fishing opportunities for urban anglers, and attract and introduce citizens to the outdoors by instilling an interest and appreciation for plants and animals. These program objectives have remained the same each year.

Steps deemed necessary to get someone interested in fishing are 1) create a threshold experience, 2) have available equipment, 3) have a suitable place to fish, 4) have a mentor to teach fishing, and 5) have social support of friends and family. Our goal is to have the Urban Fishing Program provide for all or most of these five criteria.

## PROGRAMS

### Free Fishing Clinics

Summer fishing clinics were regularly held at 19 local park district sites (see map) and occasionally at 20 additional sites (see Central and Southern Illinois reports for these additional sites). Clinics began in mid-June and continued throughout July and into mid-August. Sessions were held twice daily, Monday through Friday. Instructors were hired and trained to conduct clinics at each site. Each clinic lasted about 2.5 hours and had two portions: 1) an approximate 45-minute educational session, and 2) a hands-on fishing session at a nearby stocked lake. The clinics are designed to teach safety, proper angler ethics, aquatic and general ecology, fish identification, knot tying, the importance of becoming good stewards of natural resources, and the importance of choosing good friends. Following the classroom educational session, attendees practiced casting, learned the art of setting the hook, and then were taken fishing.

The clinic instructor presented clinics using large laminated posters along with hands-on demonstrations using various types of fishing gear. Group size was generally limited to 20-30 per session. Larger groups were discouraged because angling education is less effective and instructors were not able to give adequate individual attention, plus it is easier to ensure safety

with smaller groups. A Catch and Release@ fishing was usually practiced during clinics. Reservations were requested for those attending the clinics, and individuals were encouraged to attend a clinic more than once. At many sites the local park district assisted by taking reservations.

### **Fish Stocking**

Surveys show that kids are more likely to become interested in fishing if they have fun while learning. This is more likely to happen if they catch fish. Therefore, the stocking of catchable-sized channel catfish and hybrid sunfish (green sunfish x bluegill) was an integral part of the Urban Fishing Program. The general public was also allowed to catch fish at most sites. Channel catfish were stocked only in some Chicago lagoons this past summer at the rate of approximately 200 lbs./acre, and hybrid sunfish were added at most sites at the rate of 500 fish/acre/year. Sunfish were added in 2 - 5 deliveries between late spring through early August. Catfish weighed an average of 1 - 4 lbs. and sunfish were 4 - 7 inches long.

### **OTHER PROGRAMS THAT INCLUDED FISHING**

Studies show that a program that teaches fishing is much more effective at getting participants hooked on the sport if participants are able to actually go fishing. Therefore, clinics included fishing if possible. Other programs which did include fishing were: special event clinics, events held by A volunteer instructors,@ fishing expos, daily fishing clinics at the state fair, school fishing programs, and fishing derbies.

### **Special Event Clinics**

Special event clinics were similar to regular summer clinics, but were held on weekends, after school, or at different locations near lakes with a suitable fish population.

### **AVolunteer Instructor@ Clinics**

The volunteer instructor fishing clinics were held by individuals, by employees of state or local parks, recreation department employees, by 4-H and scout camp leaders, etc., and were held at sites with a lake where fishing was available. The volunteers were trained and provided with Urban Fishing Clinic Program educational materials and with fishing poles. This portion of the Program has shown a great amount of growth and has the potential for more, and will allow additional children to learn to fish at a low cost.

### **Fishing Expos**

Fishing Expos were large fishing clinics where each topic of the Program was taught at a separate station by trained instructors. After completing each instructional station, participants then went fishing. These events were normally sponsored in part or entirely by local fishing clubs, service clubs, and/or private businesses. Expos were one-day events and were designed to accommodate between 100-500 participants.

### **Fishing Derbies**

Fishing Derbies usually involved a larger group of anglers (40-200 people), and included fishing without the educational part of the summer clinic program. Educational sessions may not have been practical due to large group size, participants arriving at different times, time constraints, etc.

School Fishing Programs consisted of school fishing field trips, after-school fishing programs, and P.E. fishing programs. For all programs the educational portion was presented at the school or by the lake before actual fishing. With many fishing field trips and after-school programs, parents or grandparents met the lower-grade students at the lake to help. These family-mentored angling programs were held in high esteem because it was more likely that these children and adults will go fishing again by themselves. With P.E. programs the teachers took students fishing during their P.E. classes for several weeks near the end of the school year with fishing poles that IDNR provided for their use. Teachers who offered these fishing programs were truly enthusiastic and dedicated. After-school rod and reel maintenance became a way of life for these teachers.

#### PROGRAMS THAT DID NOT INCLUDE FISHING

In Illinois, weather limits Program activities that include actual fishing to the warmer months of April through October. If inclement weather or other limitations such as large group size, time constraints, lack of a suitable body of water, etc. occurred, non-fishing activities were held. These programs included school classroom programs, fishing/outdoor shows, and outdoor Conservation Field Day programs.

#### School Classroom Programs

The School Classroom Programs included a variety of types of sessions. Some programs discussed lake ecosystems and related topics and then allowed students to pick up and handle live fish and other aquatic animals. Other programs included slide show fish related presentations followed by question and answer periods. Some programs were educational bingo-type fish games.

### **Fishing/Outdoor Shows**

Fishing/Outdoor Shows were usually held indoors during the winter and they were set up to handle hundreds of persons wanting to visit with vendors selling fishing and outdoor products. Our activities at times offered the use of a fish simulator that allowed participants to experience what it might be like to catch a large fish. We also promoted our various summer fishing programs and gave away aquatic and fish related literature.

### **Conservation Field Day Programs**

Conservation Field Day programs consisted of 15 - 25 minute presentations about fish and general aquatics, and were usually held outdoors at state parks for school groups that were on a field trip. Numerous groups of students participated and each group would rotate from station to station.

### ***ACCESS TO FISHING* PROGRAM**

The Illinois *Access to Fishing* rod and reel loaner program was started in 1997 and remains a unique way of allowing anglers to try fishing without having to buy equipment. Rods and reels which had been purchased by or donated to IDNR were placed in establishments such as libraries, lake-side concession stands, bait stores, etc. This equipment was available to be borrowed at no cost, and was handled much like checking out and returning a library book. Tackle packets (containing hooks, sinkers, a bobber, etc.) and instructional fishing literature were also available at no cost for users to keep when they borrowed a fishing pole. This Program is popular with recent fishing clinic participants, the first-time angler, and the

occasional angler who does not yet want to invest in equipment. It also made it possible for example, for a parent to take their children and additional neighborhood children fishing, and be able to provide a fishing pole for each person.

This equipment was maintained by local volunteers, employees of the lending facility that housed the equipment, and by IDNR employees, etc. Locations and phone numbers for [lender sites](#) in each area are shown in an appendix at the end of this report.

## **CHICAGO URBAN FISHING PROGRAM**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Illinois Urban Fishing Program was initiated in Chicago in 1985. Programs were held in city parks and consisted of summer educational fishing sessions which were followed by fishing at a nearby stocked lagoon. The summer clinic program has been expanded to additional parks but the original format remains the same.

We also offered other fishing and aquatic environmental educational programs throughout the year. These programs were held in schools and parks with senior and day care groups and were at various times including weekends. An important goal of this program was getting individuals interested in fishing so that they might develop it as a hobby in future years. If someone is to develop fishing as a hobby, it is most important that they actually go fishing when learning the sport. Activities in this report will be divided into those that included fishing and those that did not include fishing.

### **PROGRAMS THAT INCLUDED FISHING**

## Summer Fishing Clinics

Summer Fishing Clinics were started in 1985 at Marquette, Gompers, and Columbus Parks. The Program was expanded and now fishing clinics and/or fish stockings take place at the following parks: Auburn, Columbus, Douglas, Garfield, Gompers, Humboldt, Jackson, Palmisano, Marquette, McKinley, Riis, Sherman, and Washington. A total of 518 fishing clinics was held for 11,677 participants and this past year we stocked 22,250 pounds of catchable-sized channel catfish and 56,250 hybrid sunfish (Refer to Table 1 for fishing clinic and fish stocking information).

Table 1: Summer Fishing Clinics and Fish Stocking

| Park     | # of Clinics | # of Participants | Fish Stocking # Hybrid Sunfish | Fish Stocking lbs. Channel Catfish |
|----------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Auburn   | 0            | 0                 | 2500                           | 750                                |
| Columbus | 47           | 1,058             | 5,625                          | 1,850                              |
| Douglas  | 41           | 935               | 5,000                          | 1,800                              |
| Garfield | 0            | 0                 | 5,000                          | 1,800                              |
|          |              |                   |                                |                                    |

|            |     |        |        |        |
|------------|-----|--------|--------|--------|
| Gompers    | 68  | 1,585  | 2,500  | 800    |
| Humbolt    | 42  | 935    | 5,625  | 1,950  |
| Jackson    | 69  | 1,601  | 5,625  | 3,000  |
| Marquette  | 60  | 1,169  | 5,000  | 2,950  |
| McKinley   | 64  | 1,524  | 5,625  | 3,000  |
| Palmisano  | 0   | 0      | 3,250  | 0      |
| Sherman    | 56  | 1,138  | 5,000  | 2,400  |
| Riis       | 0   | 0      | 500    | 0      |
| Washington | 71  | 1,732  | 5,000  | 2,950  |
| Totals     | 518 | 1,1677 | 5,6250 | 22,250 |

IDNR provided fishing equipment and bait for the participants to use. Wax worms and spikes were the preferred bait and it was generously provided at cost by Henry=s Sports and Bait Shop, Inc. of Chicago.

#### Other Programs with Fishing

Special event clinics were conducted on weekends, after school, or times when the structured clinic schedule and/or site could not be utilized. Special events also meant clinics for "special" groups, such as special education and special recreation groups, block clubs, school groups, senior citizens, park districts, and others that had expressed an interest. During the year 2,985 participants took part in one of the four special event programs.

78<sup>th</sup> District State Representative, Deborah Graham, held her annual fishing derby at Columbus Park Lagoon. Three summer clinic instructors provided instruction and equipment for this event. Approximately 150 kids participated and caught bluegill and catfish.

A fishing derby for seniors was held at Channahon State Park by the Chicago Police Department=s 7<sup>th</sup> District=s yearly event. There were approximately 100 seniors who participated in the event. They enjoyed the presentations but as soon as the seniors began to cast the sky opened up and it began to pour rain. Everyone was disappointed that they didn=t get the opportunity to fish but there is always next year.

Representative Lightford held a fishing event at Wampum Lake which included 30 participants. The weather was hot but the kids caught bluegill and bass. Lots of pictures were taken and lunch was provided for everyone.

School fishing programs were held for elementary and high school students. Each program included a slide presentation which was followed by educational games. Ninety aquatic-outreach fishing clinics were provided in 20 Chicago Public Schools for 2,705 students. Urban Fishing T-shirts were awarded as prizes and most students went fishing at a later date.

#### PROGRAMS THAT DID NOT INCLUDE FISHING

The Chicago Urban Fishing Program participated in the sixth annual event called AKidzfest@ which was held in Joliet. The Chicago Urban Fishing Coordinator along with six of her instructors provided an informational table with literature, specimens of exotic species, and casting targets for kids. Artificial bait was used as prizes. Over 500 students participated in the casting and approximately 5,000 people attended this event. The students along with their parents had a great time.

#### PROGRAM TOTALS

A total of 15,162 individuals participated in the Chicago Urban Fishing Program during the year. Summer Fishing Clinics had 11,677 participants, Special Event Outreach Fishing Programs had 280 participants, School Fishing Programs had 2,705 participants, and Aquatic Outreach

Programs non-fishing programs had 500 participants.

### ***"ACCESS TO FISHING" PROGRAM***

The *"Access to Fishing"* rod and reel loaner program had 2,032 loans during the year. We have ten sites: Albany Park Branch Library, Sherman Park Library, Uptown Public Library, Humboldt Park Library, Douglas Park Library, McKinley Park Branch Library, Blackstone Library, Vodak East Side Library, Eden=s Place Nature Center, and Henry=s Bait Shop. Each site was provided with 25 rod and reel combos to lend out. In order to participate in the program, parents were required to sign an agreement which waived liability for the City of Chicago and the Chicago Public Libraries. A bar code was attached to each rod and reel and cataloged for their records. The rod and reel combo was checked out of the libraries using the same system for checking out books. Henry=s Bait Shop was also a loaner site and required a valid driver=s license to borrow fishing gear. Participants were allowed to borrow fishing poles for seven days. Locations and phone numbers for Aloaner sites@ are shown in an appendix at the end of this report.

### **FISCAL YEAR 2013 PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

Activities planned for the Chicago Urban Fishing Program will include summer fishing clinics at nine Chicago Park District sites and the stocking of catchable-sized fish at 13 park district lagoons.

We also plan to expand the Aquatic Outreach Program to additional schools.

If you have questions or comments regarding the Chicago Urban Fishing Program, please contact: Brenda McKinney, Chicago Urban Fishing Program Coordinator, 9511 Harrison

Street, Des Plaines, Illinois 60016 or call 847/294-4137, 312/771-9741, fax 847/294-4128,  
E-mail: [brenda.mckinney@illinois.gov](mailto:brenda.mckinney@illinois.gov)

## NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS URBAN FISHING PROGRAM

Currently, the northeastern Illinois Urban Fishing Program is limited to stocking catchable-sized fish at seven locations shown in Table 1 below. The *Access to Fishing* rod and reel loaner program is still available at 38 sites. Loaner locations are shown in the index at the end of this report.

Table 1. Fish Stockings

| City/Site Stocked                | Hybrid Sunfish<br>(#) |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Lyons/Cermak Quarry              | 816                   |
| Mundelein/Comm Park Pond         | 1,632                 |
| Wheaton/Elliot Park Lake         | 2,040                 |
| Schiller Park/Schiller Park Pond | 2,448                 |
| Northbrook/Lake Shermerville     | 1,088                 |
| Dolton/Flatfoot Lake             | 6,120                 |
| Alsip Park District Lake         | 1,088                 |
| Totals                           | 15,232                |

## NORTHWESTERN ILLINOIS URBAN FISHING PROGRAM

### INTRODUCTION

Since its humble beginnings in 1985, the Illinois Urban Fishing Program has been dedicated

to improving the sport of fishing by demonstrating proper safety and responsibility to beginning anglers. The skills demonstrated and the knowledge imparted are valuable in our modern society.

While school team sports usually become spectator sports after graduation, fishing can turn into a lifelong activity. Most anglers develop an appreciation for natural resources, wildlife, and a clean environment by participating in wholesome outdoor recreation.

As conservationists, our success is not only measured in the resources we pass on to our children and grandchildren, but also by the attitude we have instilled in them. They are the future custodians of our land, water, and wildlife. The Urban Fishing Program tries to instill an awareness of safety, a willingness to become involved in conservation, and an attitude of responsibility toward all of our natural resources.

Our programs teach fishing, aquatic education, or a combination of the two. Our programs may or may not include fishing. Those that include fishing are much more valuable in instilling a desire for a person to adopt fishing as a lifelong hobby.

## PROGRAMS THAT INCLUDED FISHING

### Fishing Clinics and Fish Stockings

The Northwestern Illinois Urban Fishing Program was initiated in 1995. Three sites were initially chosen based on population centers and availability of suitable waters. These sites were: Levings Lake in Rockford (Winnebago County), Glen Oak Park Lagoon in Peoria (Peoria County), and Riverside Lagoon in Moline (Rock Island County). Spencer Lake and the Mill Race Ponds in Belvidere were added to the Rockford clinic site in the spring of 1999. Participants were mostly school-age children, although a few adult and senior groups attended. Catchable-sized fish were stocked at most sites to improve fishing success. We held 56 clinics for 647 participants. (Refer to Table 1 for fishing clinic and fish stocking information). It should

be noted that fishing clinics were not held in Moline as no applications were received for that Clinic Instructor position.

**Table 1. Summer Fishing Clinics and Fish Stockings**

| Clinic Site          | # of Clinics | # of Participants | Hybrid Sunfish (#) |
|----------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Moline Area          | 0            | 0                 | 1,750              |
| Peoria/Glen Oak Park | 32           | 409               | 1,750              |
| Rockford/Belvidere   | 24           | 238               | 8,100              |
| <b>Totals</b>        | <b>56</b>    | <b>647</b>        | <b>11,600</b>      |

A Fishing Expo is a large single-day event that usually includes a large number of participants. 2012 marked the 14<sup>th</sup> annual AKids Fishing@ expo held at Baker=s Lake in Peru, Illinois, in cooperation with the Better Fishing Association (BFA). The BFA has a large number of dedicated volunteers, and they work very hard to make this a successful educational experience. At this year=s clinic, more than 160 volunteers worked to provide an outstanding experience for 650 children, and about the same number of adults. The BFA also sponsored the 26<sup>th</sup> Hennepin Canal Lock #14 Kid=s Fishing Tournament Expo. This tournament had 352 participants along with numerous adult volunteers. These programs and their totals are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Other Programs That Included Fishing**

| Program Type     | # of Events | # of Participants |
|------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Bakers Lake Expo | 1           | 650               |
| Hennepin Canal   | 1           | 352               |
| <b>Totals</b>    | <b>2</b>    | <b>1,002</b>      |

## PROGRAM TOTALS

A total of 1,649 individuals participated in the Northwestern Illinois Urban Fishing Program during the year. Summer Fishing Clinics had 647 participants and Fishing Expos/Kid=s Tournaments had 1,002 participants.

### *ACCESS TO FISHING@* PROGRAM

In the spring of 1997, sixteen *Access to Fishing@* sites were established in Northwestern Illinois. Since that time, additional locations have been added and we now have a total of 20 sites. Last year fishing poles were borrowed 408 times.

## FISCAL YEAR 2013 PLANNED ACTIVITIES

The high quality and successful Baker=s Lake Kids Fishing will again be cosponsored with the Better Fishing Association.

If you have any questions about this report or the Northwestern Illinois Urban Fishing Program, please contact: Dan Sallee, Region I Fisheries Administrator, 2317 E. Lincolnway, Suite A, Sterling, IL 61081, or call 815/625-2968; E-mail: [dan.sallee@illinois.gov](mailto:dan.sallee@illinois.gov)

## CENTRAL ILLINOIS URBAN FISHING PROGRAM

### INTRODUCTION

Fishing is a new activity for many participants in our program. We do our best to teach children the important aspects of fishing and the aquatic world, catch fish, become excited, and want to fish again. When individuals are introduced to fishing, they are being introduced to an activity they can enjoy their entire life. With today=s hectic pace, fishing can make one forget life=s pressures and just enjoy being outdoors. It is possible for fishing to give a child a good feeling and raise her/his level of self esteem. Fishing is a unique hobby that can be done alone or with friends or parents, and is an activity at which anyone can become an expert.

## PROGRAMS

Some of our programs included fishing and some did not have fishing. Actual fishing was always included if possible because individuals are more likely to want to fish again and to develop fishing as a hobby if they have the fishing experience. Multiple fishing trips are even better at teaching someone to fish and to get them interested in fishing for the rest of their life. Children are not likely to become interested in fishing if they don=t have the fishing experience.

Programs that included fishing were: summer fishing clinics, special fishing clinics, state fair fishing clinics, school fishing programs, A volunteer instructor@ fishing clinics, and fishing derbies. A total of 12,558 individuals participated in one of 422 of these fishing programs.

Programs that did not include fishing were geared more toward aquatic education and they were: school classroom programs, Conservation Field Day Programs, fishing/outdoor shows, and

informational talks to service clubs. There were a total of 26,800 participants in one of 156 of these non-fishing programs.

### PROGRAMS THAT INCLUDED FISHING

#### Fishing Clinics and Fish Stocking

Summer fishing clinics were held twice daily during week days for about nine weeks in the summer. A seasonal fishing instructor was hired by IDNR to teach fishing, and nearby ponds were stocked at most sites to help assure fishing success.

Sites for these programs included Crystal Lake Park in Urbana, Kaufman Lake in Champaign, Fairview Park in Decatur and Washington Park in Springfield. A total of 2,128 people (mostly children) attended one of 132 clinics. (Refer to Table 1 for specific numbers for fishing clinics and attendees, and the percent of anglers who caught at least one fish).

Table 1. Summer Fishing Clinics and Angler Totals and Angler Success

| Clinic Site             | # of Clinics | # of Anglers | % Anglers Catch at least one fish |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Crystal Lake, Urbana    | 18           | 265          | 87                                |
| Kaufman Lake, Champaign | 22           | 229          | 99                                |

|                                 |     |       |    |
|---------------------------------|-----|-------|----|
| Fairview Park,<br>Decatur       | 36  | 581   | 87 |
| Washington Park,<br>Springfield | 56  | 1,053 | 99 |
| Totals                          | 132 | 2,128 |    |

In order to increase attendance at clinics, promotional letters were sent to children=s groups such as day care centers, YMCAs, and Boys and Girls Clubs. News releases/interviews were also given to radio and TV stations and to newspapers.

Fish stocking has become an integral part of the Program. If children are to become interested in fishing, it is very important that they catch fish while they are learning. Fish were stocked on a bi-weekly schedule during the summer at most clinic sites to help improve success. Some offsite lakes used occasionally were not stocked because they had a sufficient fish population that allowed most attendees to catch fish. All lakes were pre-fished before programs to make sure fish were available. The stocking locations and numbers of catchable-sized fish that were stocked are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Fish Stocking Totals

| Clinic Site                  | Hybrid Sunfish<br>(#) |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Crystal Lake, Urbana         | 6,630                 |
| Kaufman Lake, Champaign      | 3,400                 |
| Washington Park, Springfield | 3,400                 |

|                                  |        |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| Fairview Park, Decatur           | 2,800  |
| Illinois State Fair, Springfield | 4,000  |
| Totals                           | 20,230 |

Fishing poles were rigged with small hooks ( size 12 circle hooks ) and small bobbers to catch mostly sunfish during clinics because those fish were more numerous and easier to catch. Kids are more likely to become interested in fishing if they catch fish. Catching a small fish is far superior to not catching anything.

Volunteer help during fishing programs has become an integral part of the Urban Fishing Program. The extra help provided more individual attention for children, which usually meant more success at catching fish, and also made events safer. Many volunteers helped our young anglers this year, and group leaders were always urged to bring enough adults to have a one-to-five adult/child ratio.

### Other Programs with Fishing

Other programs that included fishing were special fishing clinics, fishing derbies, school fishing programs, fishing clinics by volunteer instructors and state fair fish clinics. A total of 10,430 individuals fished in one of 290 programs that were held. These programs and their totals are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Other Programs That Included Fishing

| Program Type | # of Events | # of Participants |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------|
|--------------|-------------|-------------------|

|  |     |        |
|--|-----|--------|
| Special Fishing Clinics                      | 27  | 1,045  |
| Fishing Derbies by IDNR                      | 9   | 475    |
| School Fishing Clinics                       | 36  | 2,450  |
| School Student Fishing Trips led by Teachers | 32  | 1,800  |
| Clinics by Volunteer Instructors             | 115 | 1,630  |
| Derbies by Volunteer Instructors             | 22  | 1,400  |
| State Fair Fishing Clinics                   | 49  | 1,630  |
| Totals                                       | 290 | 10,430 |

The State Fair Fishing Program was exciting in its carnival atmosphere. It was again held using a small temporary pond about 2/3 the size of a tennis court near Conservation World's entrance. The pond was filled with water and then stocked with about 4,000 hybrid sunfish along with a few catfish and largemouth bass shortly before the fair started. As in the past, the fish were susceptible to being caught and most of the 1,630 anglers caught at least one fish. The pond's small size limited the number of attendees to 25 - 35 kids per session. Parents were always encouraged to participate by helping their children bait hooks and remove fish. Other volunteers also came forth to help.

The Touch a Fish station was located near the entrance to Conservation World where participants were allowed to touch or hold a fish, turtle, or crawdad and this was again extremely popular. It seemed to be a new experience for many. Approximately 22,500 individuals participated in this opportunity to touch something slimy or to hold one of these aquatic creatures.

School Fishing Programs consisted of school fishing field trips, after-school fishing programs, and P.E. fishing programs. For all programs the educational portion was presented at the school or by the lake before actual fishing. With field trips and after-school programs, parents or grandparents met the lower-grade students at the lake and helped with fishing. These family-mentored angling programs are held in very high esteem because it is more likely that these children and adults will go fishing again as a family activity without DNR assistance. This year 2450 students along with their assisting parents from 36 different schools went fishing.

With P.E. programs the teachers took students fishing during their P.E. classes for several weeks near the end of the school year. Schools participating in this program were Pana HS, Franklin MS and HS, Sullivan MS and HS, and Grant GS and Washington MS in Springfield.

A total of 760 rods and reels along with related terminal tackle and tackle boxes were delivered to schools for their use. These students accumulated approximately 1,800 fishing trips with fishing poles that DNR lent to them. Teachers who offer these fishing programs are truly enthusiastic and dedicated. After-school rod and reel repair became a way of life for these teachers. Several individuals also borrowed rods and reels and managed fishing programs for their local schools.

School programs presented a unique opportunity for many students to become interested in fishing. Teachers continue to say that fishing is a favorite P.E. activity for many students and that fishing field trips were their favorite field trips.

The **AVolunteer Instructor@** program is becoming a more important and larger part of the central

Illinois program. With this program fishing clinics were held by employees of a state or local park, a recreation department, church, 4-H or scout camp, individuals, etc. The employees of organizations or individuals were trained and given educational posters, fishing poles, and other program necessities. Numerous fishing clinics were held at each site, and these sites included: Weldon Springs State Park, Comlara Park in McLean County, Kennekuk Cove County Park near Danville, Scovill Zoo in Decatur, the Charleston Park District, the Quincy Park District, Heartland Community College in Bloomington, and boy scout camps Camp Rhodes-France near Pana, Camp Saukenauk and Camp Eastman in Adams County, and Camp Robert Drake near Danville. In addition, numerous fishing derbies were held at the Watseka Park District, and the 4-H Camp at Allerton Park near Monticello. IDNR trained new employees where necessary and helped repair/replace damaged fishing equipment at each site.

#### PROGRAMS THAT DID NOT INCLUDE FISHING

These programs included school classroom aquatic educational sessions, outdoor/fishing shows, Conservation Field Day programs, talks to service clubs, career day talks to area sixth grade students, and State Fair programs. (Refer to Table 4 for program and participant totals.)

**Table 4. Programs That Did Not Include Fishing**

| Program Type                      | # of Events  | # of Participants |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| School Classroom                  | 98           | 2,830             |
| <del>Outdoor/Fishing Shows</del>  | <del>2</del> | <del>450</del>    |
| Conservation Field Day            | 43           | 960               |
| Informational Talks               | 3            | 60                |
| State Fair ATouch a Fish@ Station | 10 days      | 22,500            |

|        |     |        |
|--------|-----|--------|
| Totals | 156 | 26,800 |
|--------|-----|--------|

### ***ACCESS TO FISHING* PROGRAM**

The *Access to Fishing* (rod and reel loaner program) program now has 30 loaner sites in the central Illinois area. Usually, eight or ten rod and reel combos were placed at each site, although several sites were given more. Large colorful promotional posters from the American Sportfishing Association were used to increase awareness. Fishing poles were used approximately 2,500 times during the year at these 30 sites. Locations and phone numbers for loaner sites are shown in the appendix at the end of this report. Some sites are designated as Super Loan Sites, meaning a minimum of 20 rods and reels will be loaned out for groups such as school classrooms, large scout groups, etc. These super sites are also noted in the appendix.

If you have questions or comments about this report or the Central Illinois Urban Fishing Program, please contact: Dan Stephenson at 217/782-6424 or email dan.stephenson@illinois.gov.

## **SOUTHERN ILLINOIS URBAN FISHING PROGRAM**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources Southern Illinois Urban Fishing Program is a fun-filled practical introduction to fishing for youth and persons of all ages. Thousands of

children and their families= receive basic training in the sport of angling each year through the efforts of the Urban Fishing staff.

The southern Illinois IDNR Urban Fishing programs are managed by the IDNR Division of Fisheries and are supported by fishing clubs, educators, service clubs and interested anglers. These groups and individuals share ownership of the program and promote fishing as a wholesome sport.

The Urban Fishing programs are basic fishing classes devoted to the sport of fishing, and ideally include an actual fishing experience. Students learn water safety and fishing ethics and many realize the lake ecosystem requires good conservation practices while they experience the freedom of the great outdoors. As young anglers build confidence with their newly acquired skills they become more aware of the world=s natural resources and the environment in which they live. Many participants come to enjoy fishing as a stress-free low-cost pastime while others mold the many facets of ichthyology into satisfying career paths.

This report separates these activities into fishing and non-fishing events. A total of 9,878 persons participated last year in the 39 counties of southern Illinois served by the Southern Illinois Urban Fishing Program Coordinator and 7,830 fished.

## **PROGRAMS THAT INCLUDED FISHING**

### **Fishing Clinics and Fish Stockings**

**Summer Fishing Clinics:** Fishing clinics were staffed by five IDNR Conservation Education Representatives (CER) clinic Instructors who taught 2,776 anglers. The CERs were headquartered at five locations: Gordon Moore Park in Alton, Jones Park in East St. Louis, Veterans Park in Mt. Vernon, Foundation Park in Centralia, and at Southern Illinois University Campus Lake in Carbondale. Fishing classes were scheduled twice daily. Large catchable-sized hybrid sunfish were stocked at the clinic sites to help improve success for the anglers. See Table 1 below for clinic student locations and fish stocking numbers. The asterisk\* indicates CER classes at other fishing sites.

**Table 1. Summer Fishing Clinics and Fish Stockings**

| Clinic Site                | # of Clinics | # of Participants | Hybrid Sunfish |
|----------------------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Alton/Gordon Moore Park    | 14           | 294               | 4,800          |
| Edwardsville/LeClair Lake* | 3            | 76                | 0              |
| Belk Park, Wood River      | 8            | 184               | 1,000          |
| Edwardsville Rod-Gun Club  | 4            | 153               | 0              |
| Belville Quail Club        | 4            | 126               | 0              |

|                            |     |       |        |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|--------|
| East St. Louis/Holten SP   | 51  | 715   | 5,100  |
| Carbondale/SIU Camp Lk     | 24  | 162   | 2,550  |
| Carbondale/SIU Tch-Natr    | 12  | 149   | 0      |
| Mt. Vernon/ Veteran=s Park | 16  | 150   | 1,190  |
| Centralia/ Foundation Park | 18  | 171   | 1,190  |
| Bush Creek Camp*           | 6   | 180   | 0      |
| Carlyle Camp Joy*          | 6   | 416   | 0      |
| Totals                     | 166 | 2,776 | 15,830 |

#### OTHER PROGRAMS THAT INCLUDED FISHING

Large outreach programs that the Southern Illinois Urban Fishing Program co-sponsored were the Twin Rivers Family Fun Fair at Pere Marquette State Park, the Southern Illinois Hunting and Fishing Days weekend at John A. Logan Community College, the Lewis and Clark Community

College Water Stewardship Festival and the national award winning Fish Tales program held at Shawnee Community College.

The Twin Rivers Family Fun Fair was the largest youth fishing event of the year in Illinois and attracted over 4,300 persons and had 1,928 children register for fishing instructions. At Pere Marquette State Park we hosted the 20<sup>th</sup> annual event during the IDNR "Free Fishing Days" weekend. The Urban Fishing staff and volunteers managed six of the 22 fun-fishing events which included a felt fish pond, one cast, the pitch and flip station, knot tying, the sportfishing simulator station, and the favorite of many, the Bluegill Pond, which was stocked with 510 hybrid sunfish and a few channel catfish. Youth who visited at least seven stations to learn fishing skills were qualified to fish for trout and were then eligible to select a prize from the prize tent. Special attractions included an appearance by Fred Bird, the mascot of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team, and the wildlife-trained antics of Camo-the-Clown (David Freeman). Also the 4,000-gallon aquarium "hog trough" with many species of Illinois fish, attracted many, as did the Cabela's scavenger hunt and fish preparation station. A new activity this year was a canoeing skills and safety demonstration at the Pere Marquette Marina. On-site radio broadcasting by the Disney station and television reporting helped make this annual event a favorite of many Illinois and St. Louis area families.

The annual fall Southern Illinois Celebration of Hunting and Fishing Days at John A. Logan Community College in Carterville attracted approximately 25,000 persons in September. The Urban Fishing Program stocked 1,300 lbs. of channel catfish and 2,000 hybrid sunfish in the college reflecting pool, and over 1,500 kids caught fish. The Urban Fishing trailer was a hit as kids and parents viewed large mounted fish including the state record bluegill, a three-pound

eight ounce trophy fish, and the 1995 record blue catfish (79lb. 12oz). The annual Southern Illinois Hunting and Fishing Days event has hosted over a half million sportsmen and their families since 1987. This free event, the largest of its kind in the United States, is held the fourth weekend each September and showcases outdoor recreation in Illinois.

The Lewis and Clark Community College Water Stewardship Festival attracted over 500 students and teachers from 18 schools. The educational emphasis of the event was to raise the awareness of the science of water. The Urban Fishing area enabled over 400 youth to catch fish during 15-minute fishing sessions. Many volunteers kept the hooks baited and practiced good catch and release methods with 1,000 hybrid sunfish that were stocked

The national award-winning Fish Tales program managers held their 10<sup>th</sup> annual fishing camp at Shawnee Community College in Ullin. A total of 205 participants from 10 schools and two home-schooled groups attended. During the training sessions the youth learned outdoor ethics as they enjoyed fishing in the well stocked community college lake.

The Hooked On Fishing-Not On Drugs<sup>7</sup> (HOFNOD) Program combines sportfishing, environmental education, a life learning skill, and drug prevention into one package. This portion of the Urban Fishing Program continued to be a highly regarded program used by elementary science teachers and high school environmental class room instructors.

Urban Fishing Programs that included fishing were special clinics and derbies. Totals for outreach programs that included fishing are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Other Programs That Included Fishing and Fish Stockings**

| Program Type              | # of Events | # of Participants | Channel Catfish (lbs.) | Hybrid Sunfish (#) | Trout (#)    |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Fishing Expos             | 5           | 4,193             | 1,300                  | 2,810              | 1,200        |
| HOFNOD7 Program           | 11          | 215               | -                      | -                  | -            |
| Special Fishing Clinics   | 15          | 300               | -                      | -                  | -            |
| Fishing Derbies           | 4           | 250               | -                      | -                  | -            |
| Volunteer Fishing Clinics | 7           | 96                | -                      | -                  | -            |
| <b>Totals</b>             | <b>42</b>   | <b>5,054</b>      | <b>1,300</b>           | <b>2,810</b>       | <b>1,200</b> |

**PROGRAMS THAT DID NOT INCLUDE FISHING**

These non-fishing programs were presented at fishing events, outdoor shows, fairs, and schools as well as non-school educational programs where various aspects of fishing and environmental appreciation were taught. Again this year members of the Urban Fishing Program staff were presenters during the Kids Day Safety activities at the Du Quoin State Fair. Totals for these events are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Programs That Did Not Include Fishing**

| Program Type   | # of Events | # of Participants |
|--|-------------|-------------------|
| School Aquatic Outreach Programs                                       | 8           | 295               |
| Non-School Aquatic Outreach Programs                                   | 1           | 78                |
| Du Quoin State Fair Casting Practice/Urban Fishing Tent<br>(ten days)* | 10          | 1,200             |
| Fishing Safety Clinics DuQuoin State Fair                              | 6           | 475               |
| <b>Totals</b>  | <b>25</b>   | <b>2,048</b>      |

\*The Urban Fishing Tent was open all 10 days of the Du Quoin State Fair

### ***ACCESS TO FISHING@*** PROGRAM

The Southern Illinois Urban Fishing *Access to Fishing* program continues to allow youth to experience the sport of fishing and the great outdoors by providing libraries and other loaner sites with fishing tackle that can easily be borrowed by youthful anglers.

Alton's Hayner Library was the first rod and reel loaner site in Illinois. There are now 43 sites in southern Illinois. During FY 2012, approximately 850 youth borrowed a fishing pole. Rods and reels are usually bar-coded by the libraries before being loaned out. Tackle packs containing hooks, sinkers, a bobber, and fishing tips are also available to each borrower.

A new loaner site was added to the program in FY =12. The Ullin City Hall now has loaner poles and tackle available. Locations and phone numbers for the Southern Illinois loaner sites are shown in the appendix at the end of this report.

## FISCAL YEAR 2013 PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Plans for the Southern Illinois Urban Fishing Program next year include:

Increasing the number of in-school fishing/environmental classes given at schools in the metro-east area and encouraging those students to bring their parents to actual fishing training that is available at the Urban Fishing Clinic sites, or to attend Family Fishing Events held at state and local parks.

Promote attendance at the regular Urban Fishing summer clinics. Encourage advanced reservations and informing youth groups about the free fishing clinics. Continue to involve the media to inform the public about the availability of the free fishing clinics in their area.

- 3) Offer Library [Access to Fishing Sites](#) training opportunities for their youthful patrons during their summer reading programs. Continue to promote the [Access to Fishing](#) sites.

Build upon past experience and successes to promote attendance at the Urban

Fishing Programs. Continue to perfect these quality programs that help instill a respect for the conservation of our natural resources and introduce sport fishing to our youth.

If you have any questions about this report or the Southern Illinois Urban Fishing Program, please contact the Alton Regional office at 618/462-1181 or Division of Fisheries in Springfield at 217/782-6424.