



# BRAIDWOOD LAKE

## FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

**LOCATION** – Braidwood Lake is located in Will County approximately 1¼ miles south of the Village of Braidwood adjacent to U.S. Route 53.

**DESCRIPTION** – Braidwood Lake is a 2,640 acre, partially perched cooling lake. When impounded in 1981 several old strip-mine pits were flooded within the lake proper. No horsepower limitations; maximum speed limit is 40 mph except in designated "no wake" and "hazard" areas; working gasoline engine required as main propulsion unit; boats under 14' are not recommended. County Line Road Access (South access) has a four-lane concrete boat ramp with 35 car/trailer parking. An additional 75+ car lot is located adjacent to the ramp area. Cemetery Road Access (North access) has a two-lane concrete boat ramp with parking for 35 car/trailers. A majority of the shoreline is open to bank fishing, and these areas are clearly marked. Access to the interior islands by anglers is prohibited. Steep drop-offs, rock piles, man-made habitat, current, thermal breaks, and woody cover are all present. The nature of this lake requires extreme care in boating and a good topographic map is well worth the expense.

**HISTORY AND STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY** – The fishery is evaluated via biennial major surveys and species-specific ancillary surveys. Fish habitat enhancement has been conducted for several years and most recently involves the installation of commercially made units. Braidwood Lake supports a persistent phytoplankton bloom which suppresses rooted aquatic vegetation.

*No special mercury advisory or other contaminant-related consumption advisories pertain. However, the statewide methylmercury advisory for sensitive populations is in effect (one meal per week of predatory sportfish for the most sensitive populations).*

Braidwood Lake is maintained by periodically pumping water from the Kankakee River. As a result, the lake supports a variety of fish species which include common carp, quillback, freshwater drum and others. Braidwood Lake is supported by a thriving gizzard and threadfin shad forage base as well as various other minnow species. In terms of stocking, the lake receives annual stockings of Largemouth Bass, Blue Catfish, and Hybrid Striped Bass.

**LARGEMOUTH BASS** – While the 2021 Largemouth Bass catch rate declined to a 4-year low, the number of fish over 8-inches greatly improved over the 2019 survey. The Proportional Size Distribution (PSD) was 88, which means that 88% of the adult population was comprised of fish  $\geq$  8 inches (this is double the 2019 value). The proportion of adults  $\geq$  15 inches remained unchanged (26%). The RSD-18 (proportion of adults  $\geq$  18-inches) declined as these fish remain somewhat rare in Fall surveys (typical for this lake). Body condition was excellent for all size groupings indicating good growth potential. Largemouth Bass are requested from the State Hatchery System on an annual basis to augment natural reproduction (which appears to be sub-par) with ~55,000 fish stocked in 2021 (split evenly between Fingerlings and Advanced-Fingerlings). Fifteen tournaments were approved for the 2021 season, with the top 5 Largemouth Bass caught being 7.8, 7.25, 4.69, 4.5, and 4.5 lbs. Tournaments are not permitted in March or during Summer months (July and August). **15-inch Minimum Length Limit (3 Fish Daily Harvest Limit).**

**BLUEGILL** – The 2021 Bluegill catch rate increased over the 2019 survey, though fish  $\geq$  8 inches remain elusive. The average length was 4.6 inches. Found throughout the lake, Bluegills are more commonly collected in or near rip-rapped shorelines.

**CHANNEL CATFISH** – Channel Catfish collected in the 2021 survey ranged from 6.5 – 36.2 inches. The average size from the 2021 collection increased to 15.6 inches. A combination of very successful natural reproduction and high survival of young fish leads to a population dominated by smaller fish.

**BLUE CATFISH** – Blue Catfish stockings were initiated in 2003 and with few exceptions, have occurred annually to 2018. None were stocked in 2019. Fall sampling has generally provided an inadequate sample of the population for the most part and ancillary sampling is needed to obtain a more accurate assessment. The 2021 survey results fell short from the previous survey as a total of 10 Blue Catfish were collected ranging from 22.5 – 30.5 inches (average length was 28 inches).

**HYBRID STRIPED BASS** – The Hybrid Striped Bass stocking program began in 2011. With the exception of 2013, 2017, and 2018, Fingerlings have been stocked annually. Roughly 51,500 fish were stocked in 2021 (split between Fingerlings and Advanced Fingerlings received from the State Hatchery System and Exelon’s Quad Cities Hatchery). Fall sampling has generally provided an inadequate sample of the population for the most part and ancillary sampling is needed to obtain a more accurate assessment. **10 Fish Daily Harvest Limit (only 3 Fish may be 17-inches or larger).**

**FISHING REGULATIONS** – Statewide fishing regulations apply.

**Additional Site Information:** Swimming, wading, water skiing and sail boating are prohibited. Braidwood Lake is open to fishing daily from 6:00 a.m. till sunset from March 1 until 10 days prior to the opening of the waterfowl season (Central Zone). Portions of Braidwood Lake are restricted to unauthorized access (these areas are clearly marked), and bank fishing boundaries are posted. **Fishing within the old Walleye Rearing Pond is permitted.** Since windy conditions can produce treacherous waves, the lake can be closed at the discretion of the site superintendent.

**Additional Site-Specific Fishing Regulations:**

All Fish Species: 2 Pole and Line Fishing Only.

Large or Smallmouth Bass – 15-inch Minimum Length Limit (3 Fish Daily Harvest Limit)

Striped, White, or Hybrid Striped Bass – 10 Fish Daily Harvest Limit (only 3 Fish may be 17-inches or larger)

**CONTACT INFORMATION** – Mazonia/Braidwood State Fish and Wildlife Area: 815-263-0063.  
IDNR Fisheries County Biologist: 630-553-6680.

