

## Fishing Information for Valley Water Mill Lake

**Information provided by:** Fisheries Management, Missouri Department of Conservation

### UPDATE/CURRENT STATUS-- **CLOSED**

Valley Water Mill Lake has been closed to fishing for some time, but each day we get one step closer to once again having a great fishing spot on the north side of Springfield. Read below for some information on the history and character of the lake, the fisheries management plan for the lake, and other Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's). We are making every effort to provide a premier fishing destination for the Ozarks region.

What can anglers do? Please be patient as we let the new populations develop!! The lake renovation process has taken time, but we are almost to the finish line. Illegal harvest will reduce the overall quality of the new fishery, and if excessive, can derail the entire process. For more information on the developing fishery at Valley Water Mill Lake, please contact the Missouri Department of Conservation, at 417/895-6880.

### Lake History and Characteristics

Valley Water Mill Lake is located in northeast Springfield, Missouri. The dam is situated near the intersection of Valley Water Mill Road and Barnes Avenue (FR 171) in section 5, T29N, R21W, and impounds 13 acres at full pool (1,200 feet msl). Valley Water Mill Dam and the surrounding land are owned by City Utilities of Springfield (Springfield Water Company). The Watershed Committee of the Ozarks is under a long term lease with City Utilities to develop and provide outdoor educational opportunities focused on water resources.

The original dam at Valley Water Mill was built in the 1850s to hold back water for the operation of McCracken Mill (a grist mill). Water released from McCracken Mill, emptied into the South Dry Sac and immediately went underground, only to resurface again at Fulbright Spring which was Springfield's main water supply in the late 1800s. In 1899 the mill property and lake was sold to a private waterworks company, and a taller dam was built shortly afterwards. In 1957, Valley Water Mill Lake and the surrounding area were purchased by City Utilities of Springfield. The dam has been rebuilt and repaired on several occasions, including as recently as 2008.

Historically the lake has sustained good bass and bluegill populations through natural reproduction. The lake has not received much attention from a fish management standpoint, but today the fishery is being managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) through a Corporate and Agency Partnership Program (CAPP) agreement with the Watershed

Committee of the Ozarks. In 2006, the Valley Water Mill property was incorporated into the Springfield/Greene County Parks system. The Park board is assisting in the maintenance of the grounds and housing the Outdoors Initiative program from the site. In 2008, the Watershed Committee successfully installed two fishing platforms, a boardwalk, and a bridge across the spillway of the dam. These added amenities will make fishing accessible to a large portion of the lake's shoreline.

Valley Water Mill Lake is fed by two springs, Sanders and Jarrett and thus is extremely clear with Secchi disc readings exceeding 48 inches. Aquatic vegetation will be an on-going issue at the lake; it has already survived the multiple drawdown periods. In 2006, the aquatic vegetation cover was extensive and consisted of coontail, milfoil, water purslane, *Chara*, leafy pondweed, and *Naiads*. Filamentous algae is also prevalent during the spring, summer, and fall months. Reeds canary grass also dominates the wetland area that was re-graded and re-planted in 2004. The maximum depth of the lake after sediment was removed was 14 feet at full pool.

### Management Plan and Philosophy

A mixture of fingerling and one-year old largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish are now residing in the lake. Before opening the Lake to fishing pressure, the individual fish populations will need to have fish in all size ranges and be self-sustaining. Typically new ponds and lakes are stocked with just fingerling sized fish, and it takes approximately three growing seasons before their populations can withstand fishing or fishing pressure. By going with a mixture of fingerling and one-year old fish, we hope to reduce the amount of time that it takes to get the populations established.

The Department will periodically sample the lake to monitor the development of the populations. The first "sneak peak" will be in September 2009. At that time we will collect age and weight information to assist in monitoring growth rates. A second "sneak peak" is schedule for early summer 2010 to verify reproduction. Once sufficient reproduction is occurring and fish are present in all size ranges, a date can be set for opening the lake to fishing. If the lake is opened to fishing prior to the populations being ready and self-sustaining, the fishery will never have a chance to become established and provide quality fishing opportunities.

While waiting for these populations to develop, efforts are being made to improve the fish habitat in the lake. Installing some additional brushpiles in the lake will provide more cover for small fish and create future fishing hot spots for anglers. Seven (7), small brushpiles are already present in the lake. The additional brushpiles will be placed in areas that will be easily fishable from the bank. Due to the extremely clear water and past vegetation issues,

representatives from MDC, the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks, and City Utilities of Springfield are currently working a vegetation management plan for the lake. The plan will identify the types of aquatic vegetation in the lake, identify the best control methods for each plant species, and define the areas and level of treatment required for quality fishing.

## FAQ'S

>When will the Lake be open to fishing?

--Once the newly stocked fish have been able to establish themselves and reproduce in the lake in a sustainable manner, the lake can be opened. The first surveying opportunities will occur in the fall of 2009 and early summer of 2010.

>How do I get there?

--Valley Water Mill Lake is on the north side of Springfield nestled in between Highway H and Highway 65 on Valley Watermill Rd. From Hwy H, take Valley Watermill Rd. to the east. From Hwy 65 take County Rd. 102 to the west. Look for Watershed Center and Valley Water Mill Park signs at the entrance to access the lake.

>Can I launch a boat or a canoe?

-- NO. The lake is managed by City Utilities of Springfield as a drinking water supply reservoir and as such is under strict regulations related to human contact. If you see an un-authorized individual in a boat on the lake, please call the WCO office at (417) 866-1127 or the Missouri Department of Conservation at (417) 895-6880.

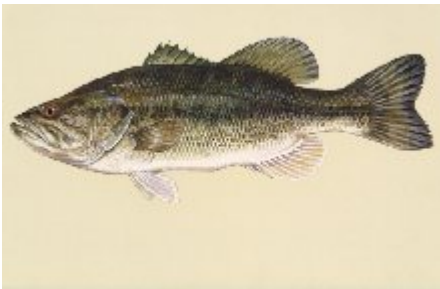
>What kind of fish are in the lake?

-- Largemouth bass, Bluegill, and Channel catfish (See below for further information)

The following provides some additional life history information about the three actively managed fish species in Valley Water Mill Lake. (Text is provided by <http://www.mdc.mo.gov/> and the pictures are provided by Duane Raver/USFWS.)

## Largemouth Bass

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**Family:** Sunfish

**Scientific Name:** *Micropterus salmoides*  
*Micropterus* in Greek means "small fin," the name resulting from an injury to the type specimen that made it appear that the posterior rays of the soft dorsal formed a separate fin. *Salmoides* is from the Latin word *salmo*, the trout, because this species was often called "trout" in southern states.

**Status:** Game Fish

**Other Names:** lineside bass, bigmouth bass

**Average Size of Adults:**

- 10 to 20 inches long and 0.5 to 4.5 pounds
- Maximum 24 inches long and 15 pounds

**Lifespan:**

10 to 15 years

**Habitat:**

Lowland lakes, artificial impoundments of all sizes, permanent pools of streams, and quiet backwaters of large rivers. Thrives in warm, moderately clear waters with little or no current.

**Food:**

Carnivorous, feeding on fish, crayfish, large insects, and, occasionally, frogs, mice, snakes or other small animals that fall into the water.

**Most Active:**

Dawn and dusk

**Identifying Characteristics:**

- Large, elongated fish with a very large mouth.
- Upper jaw reaches far beyond the rear margin of the eye, except in small young.
- Upper parts are greenish; the lower sides and belly are white without dark spots or with spots that are irregularly arranged. Midside has a broad, dark continuous stripe.

**Interesting Facts:**

- Most popular freshwater game fish in North America.
- Two distinct sub-species: the northern and the Florida.
- Most closely related to smallmouth and spotted bass.

## Bluegill

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**Scientific Name:** *Lepomis macrochirus*

From Greek, *lepomis* means "scaled gill cover," and *macrochirus* means "large hand," probably in reference to the body shape.

**Other Names:** bream, brim, pond perch

**Family:** Sunfish

**Average Size of Adults:**

- 6 to 9.5 inches and 0.5 to 0.75 pounds
- Maximum size of 11 inches and 1 pound

**Lifespan:**

4 to 6 years

**Habitat:**

Lowland lakes, artificial impoundments of all sizes, permanent pools of streams, and the quiet backwaters of large rivers. Thrives in warm, moderately clear waters with little or no current

**Food:**

Carnivorous, feeding primarily on insects, but also on small crustaceans and small fish

**Most Active:**

Daylight

**Identifying Characteristics:**

- Deep and slab-sided sunfish with a small-sized mouth, the upper jaw not reaching past the front of the eye
- Back and sides are dark olive-green with emerald and brassy reflections.
- Breast and belly are yellow or reddish-orange.
- Sides often have dark, vertical bars.
- Chin and lower part of the gill cover are blue, and the ear flap is entirely black.

**Interesting Facts:**

- Virtually absent from northwestern Missouri until it was widely stocked in farm ponds as a source of food for largemouth bass.
- One of the most popular panfishes in North America and puts up a vigorous fight when hooked.
- Most closely related to green, redear, and other sunfishes.

## Channel Catfish

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**Scientific Name:** *Ictalurus punctatus*

*Ictalurus* from Greek meaning "fish cat;" *punctatus* from Latin meaning "spotted" in reference to the dark spots on the body.

**Status:** Game Fish

**Other Names:** spotted cat, blue catfiddler, lady cat, chucklehead cat, willow cat

**Family:** Catfish

**Average Size of Adults:**

- 12 to 32 inches, weighing 1 to 15 pounds

- Specimens as large as 45 pounds have been caught elsewhere, but are uncommon in Missouri.

**Lifespan:**

6 to 7 years, but can live more than 20 years

**Habitat:**

Prefer sand- or gravel-bottomed lakes or large streams with low current.

**Food:**

- Omnivorous bottom feeders, eating insects, mollusks, crustaceans, fish and plant material.
- Channel catfish less than 4 inches long eat mostly small insects.
- Locate food primarily by taste and smell.

**Most Active:**

Adults stay in deep water of larger pools during the day and move to shallows or near cover at night to feed.

**Identifying Characteristics:**

- Like all catfish, the channel cat has smooth, scaleless skin and barbels ("whiskers") around the mouth.
- The channel catfish, like the blue catfish, has a deeply forked tail, but can be distinguished by having dark spots on its sides and an anal fin with a rounded edge.

**Interesting Facts:**

- Spawn in late spring or early summer when water temperatures reach 75° F
- Males select nest sites in dark secluded areas such as cavities in drift piles, logs, undercut banks and rocks.
- Males guard the nest. Fry remain in the nest, guarded by the male, for about a week after they hatch.
- One of the most sought after fish in Missouri
- A wide variety of baits is used to catch channel catfish including liver, worms, grasshoppers, shrimp, chicken, cheese and stinkbait. Trot or jug lines, or rod and reel are favored fishing methods.
- Raised commercially for food in catfish "farms"
- Established as the official Missouri state fish on May 23, 1997