

The yellow perch volunteer angler survey has provided a wealth of information since its inception in 2008. The information provided by anglers provides a snapshot of the length frequency of the catch, both kept and released. In addition, we can determine catch (all yellow perch caught) per angler hour (CPAH) and harvest (only kept yellow perch) per angler hour (HPAH). Both of those values are indicators of relative abundance.

Volunteer angler surveys do contain some bias because people may not accurately remember their results or because people participating in the survey may not be representative of the entire fishing population. Another source of bias is that participants may only relate particularly successful trips. Nevertheless, the information provides valuable insight into the performance of the fishery.

ANGLER PARTICIPATION

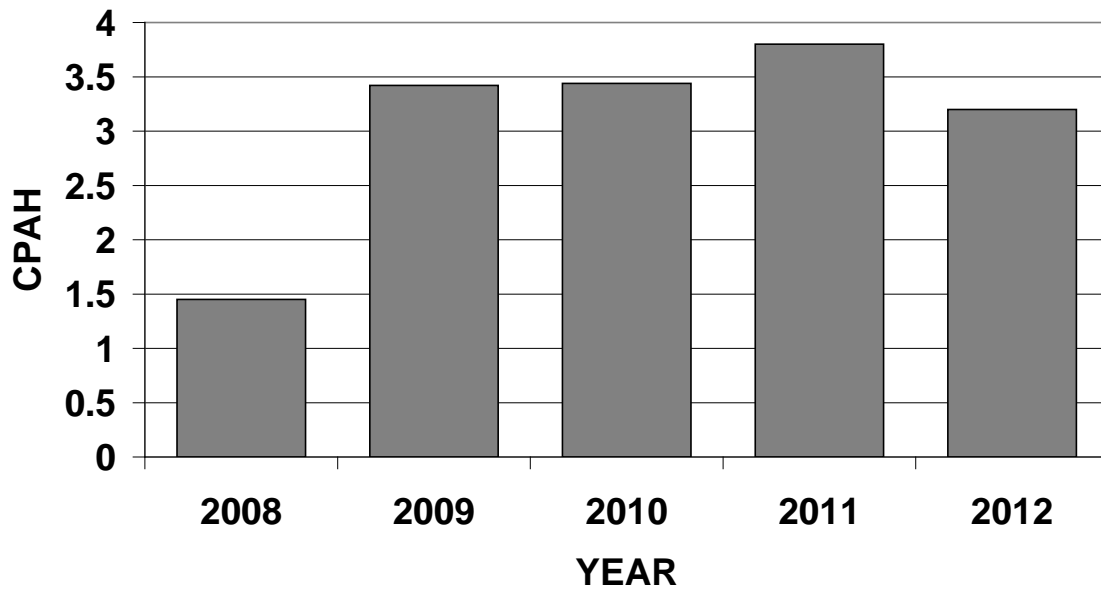
The following table summarizes angler participation since 2008. The number of anglers responding to the survey has dropped 73% since 2008, and the number of trips has dropped 51%, but the number of lengths submitted by anglers was higher than 2008. Although the number of river systems has been impressive (22 tidal systems represented in 2010), those levels are declining and many of the systems have less than 5 responses.

Year	Anglers	Trips	Lengths	Systems
2008	142	216	809	27
2009	81	189	3,896	23
2010	95	154	3,259	22
2011	92	161	4,493	18
2012	38	106	1,451	14

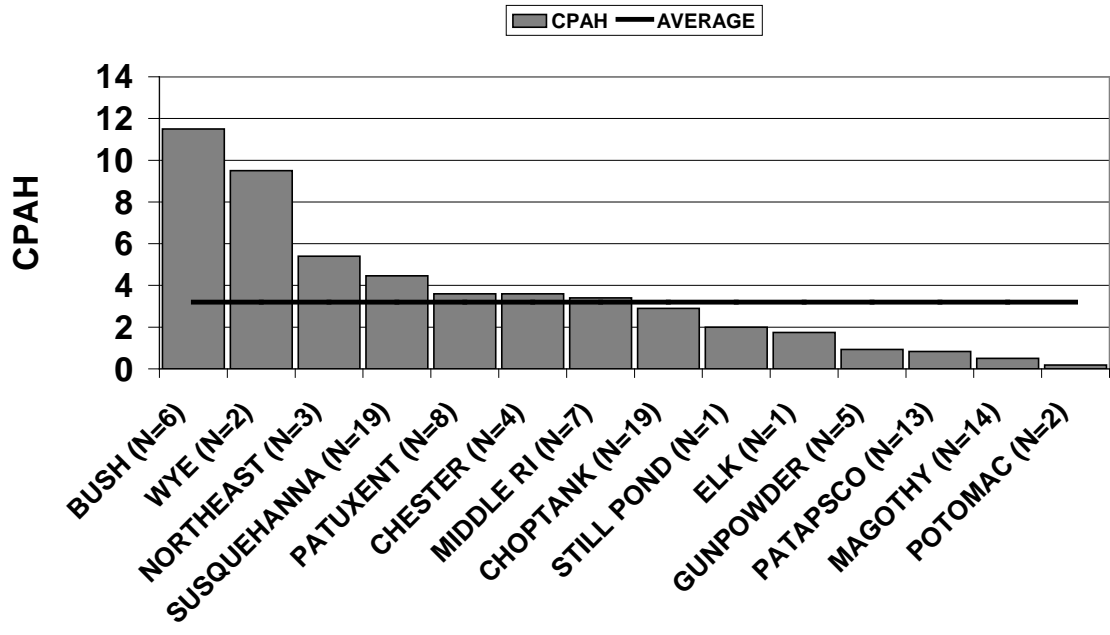
CATCH PER ANGLER HOUR AND HARVEST PER ANGLER HOUR

The number of yellow perch caught per angler hour (CPAH) is a good barometer of the availability of yellow perch in any year. Harvest per angler hour (HPAH) is a good indication of the quality of the fishery. Even though many anglers practice catch and release fishing, a high HPAH value indicates that there are a fair amount of large yellow perch being caught. The length data provided by anglers indicated that the probability of a yellow perch being kept increases dramatically at and above 11", an indication of angler preference.

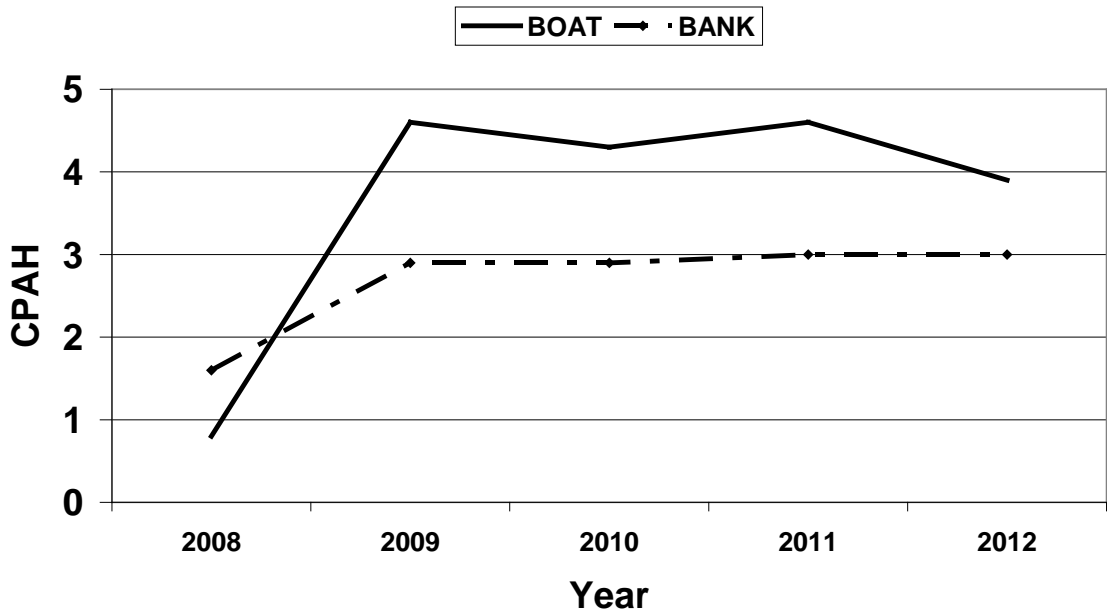
Yellow perch catch per angler hour (CPAH) from on-line survey, 2008 - 2012



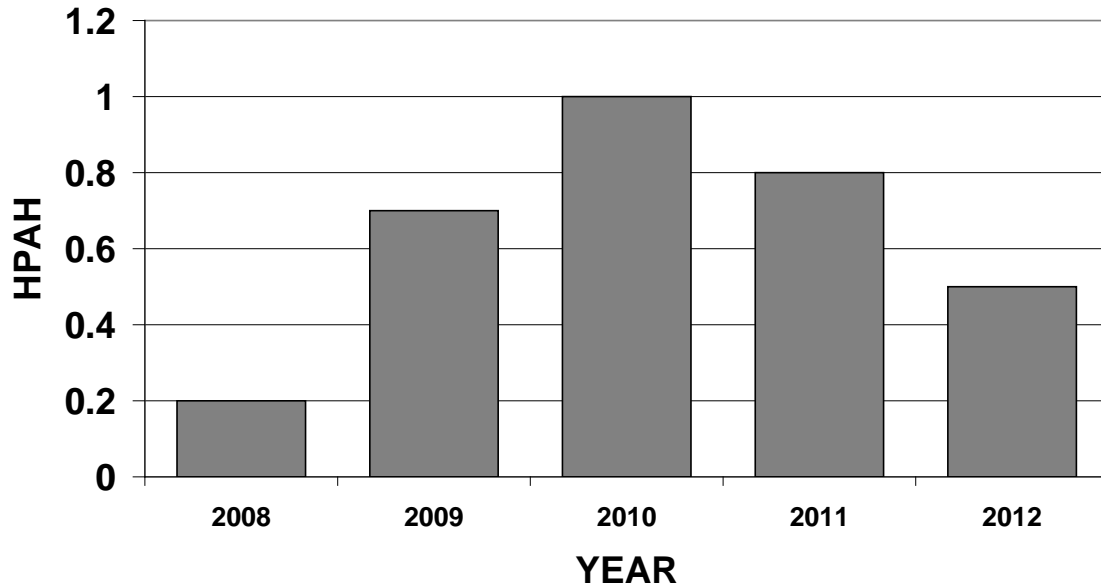
2012 Yellow perch catch per angler hour by system
(N=Number of reports from each system)



Yellow perch catch per angler hour (CPAH) for
boat and bank anglers, 2008 - 2012



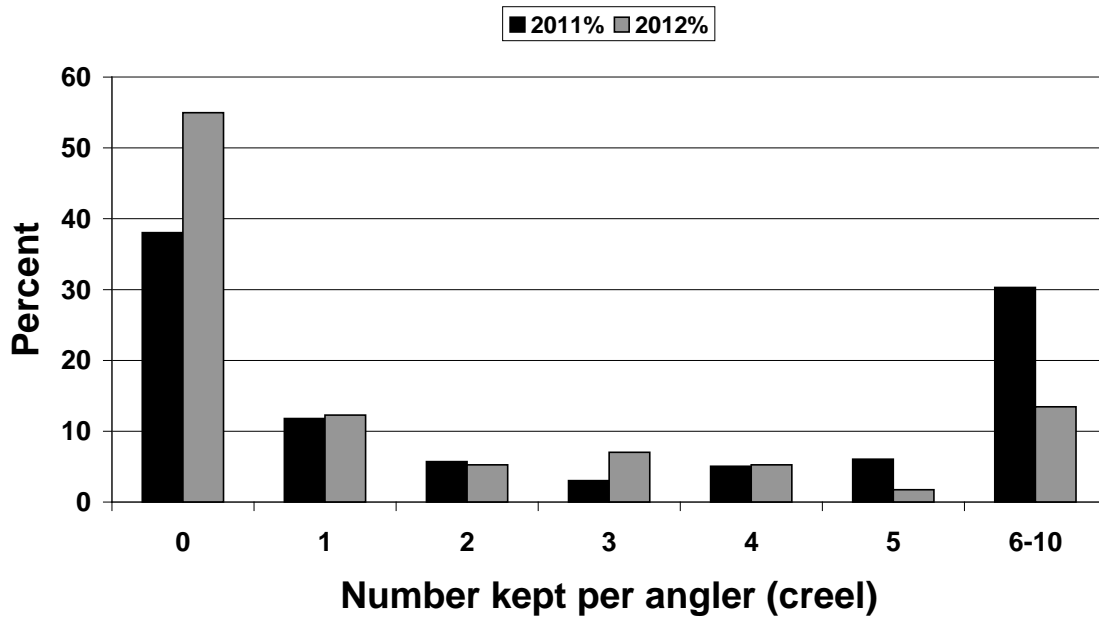
**Yellow perch harvest per angler hour (HPAH) from
on-line survey, 2008 - 2012**



CREEL DISTRIBUTION

Some 62% of the yellow perch anglers responding to the survey in 2011 kept at least one yellow perch, and 31% kept between 6 and 10 yellow perch. During 2012, the percentage of anglers that kept six or more yellow perch declined to 14% of survey respondents.

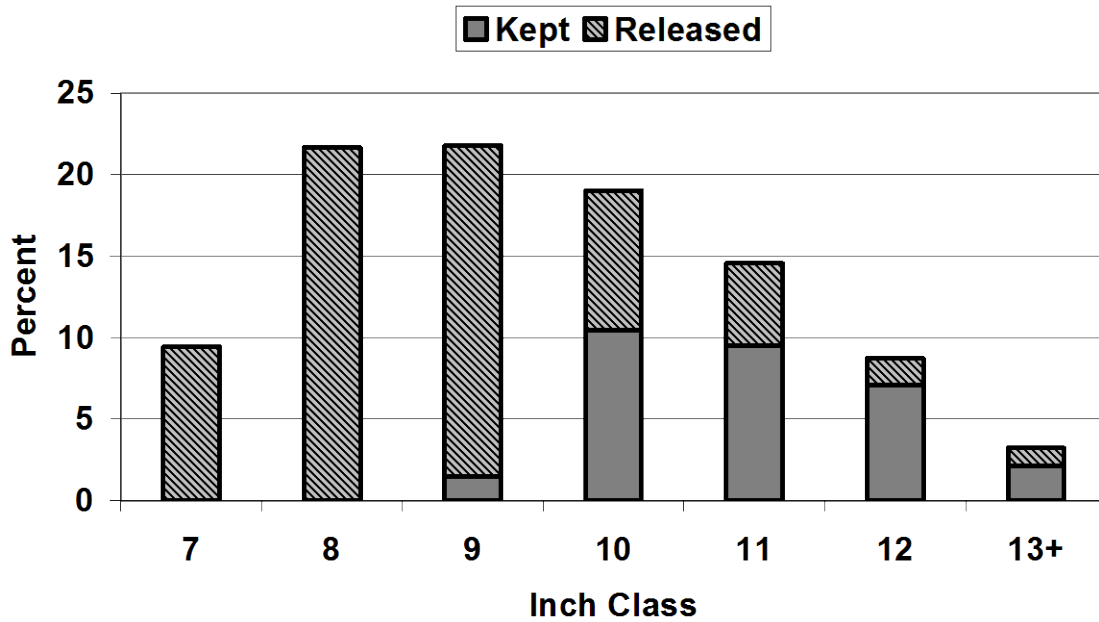
Yellow perch creel distribution from on-line survey, 2011 - 2012



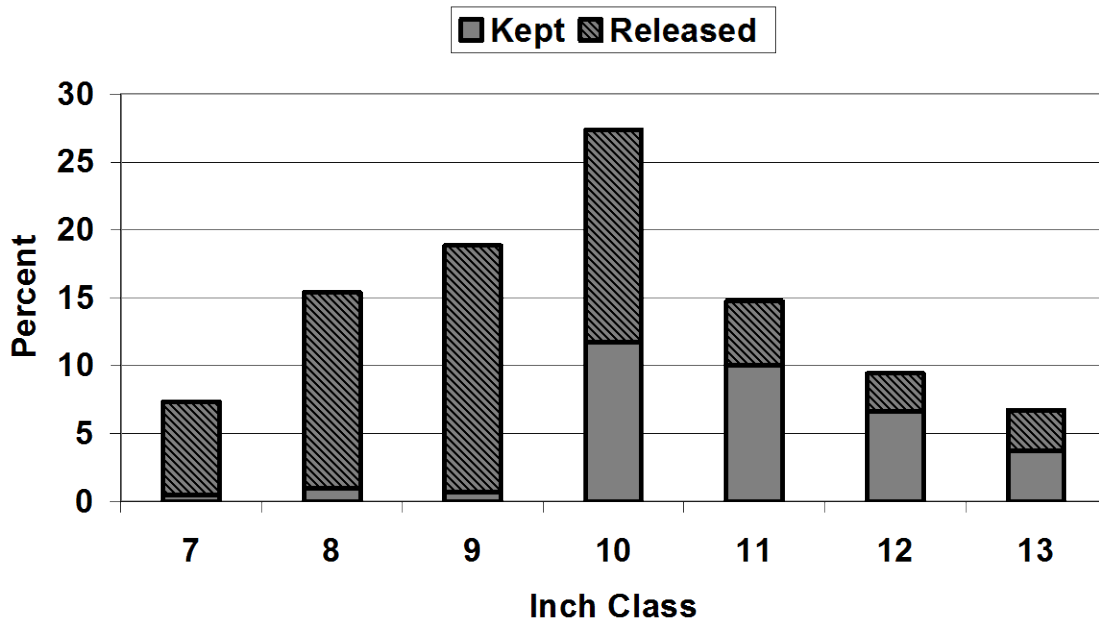
LENGTH DISTRIBUTIONS

Length distributions of the catch can reveal many aspects of fish populations. For example, 8" and 9" yellow perch accounted for about 45% of the catch in 2009, and grew out to the 10" and 11" size classes in 2010 and 2011. The length distributions during this time period also indicated a high quality fishery with about 1/3 of the catch greater than 10". Length distributions showed a reversal in 2012, in that the majority of the catch was 7" – 9".

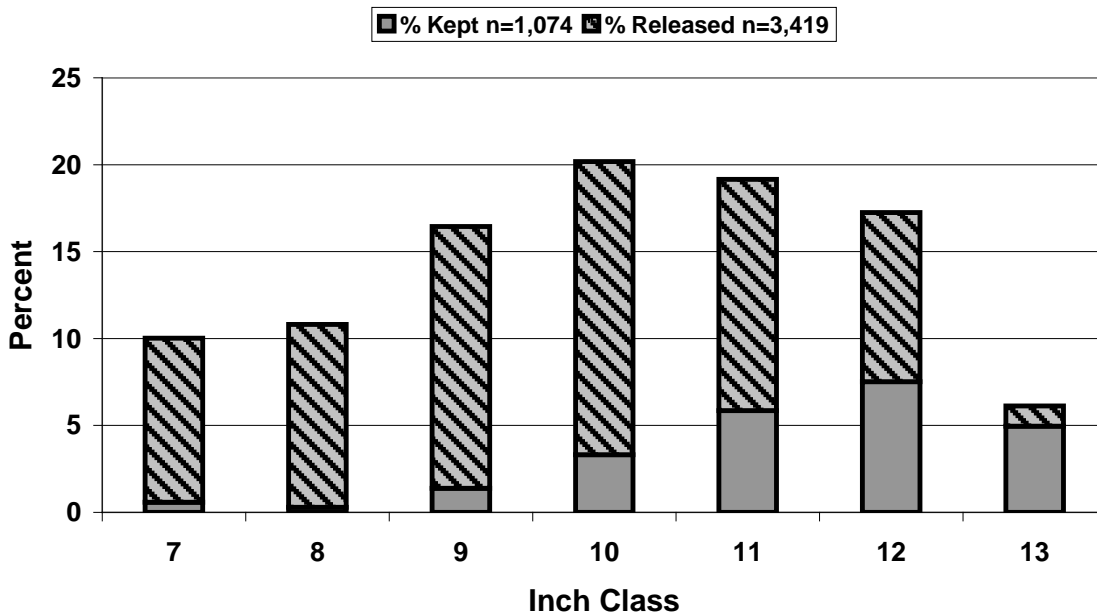
2009 Yellow Perch Length Distribution from Volunteer Angler Survey



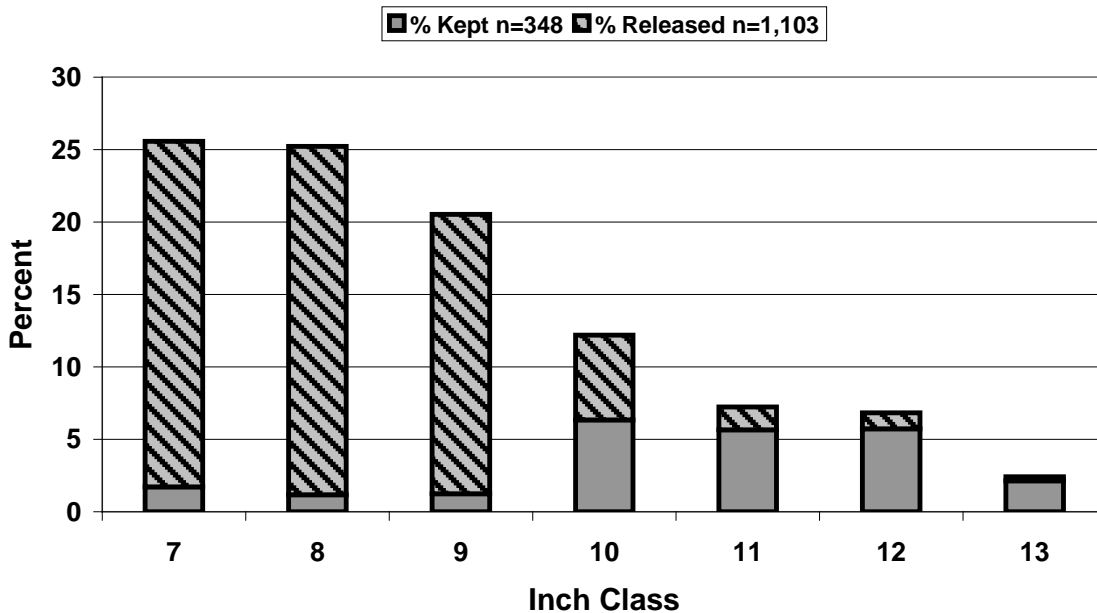
2010 Yellow Perch Length Distribution from Volunteer Angler Survey



2011 Yellow perch length distribution from on-line survey



2012 Yellow perch length distribution from on-line survey



CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE NEEDS

The volunteer angler survey has added greatly to our yellow perch knowledge base and has verified trends evidenced in our population models. Poor recruitment in a few of the last several years has caused a population decline, so some of these year-classes are not filling in the larger length intervals. This is demonstrated in the 2012 length distribution from the volunteer angler survey. Relatively strong year-classes, however, were produced in 2009 and 2011 which should fully recruit to the fishery over the next few years and provide enhanced angling opportunities.

Continued support from the recreational fishery is vital. The number of length measurements submitted by our cooperating anglers is outstanding. However, the low number of reports from many of the river systems decreases our ability to characterize the local fishery. For example, the Chester River fishery is one of the most popular and successful fisheries, but only 4 reports were submitted. In previous years, reports from the Chester River were among the most frequent submissions. In addition, please be reminded that even a poor day's fishing is data! Please submit reports when catching or targeting yellow perch regardless of your success.