



# BAIT 2022

BASS ANGLERS INFORMATION TEAM

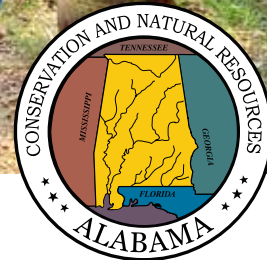
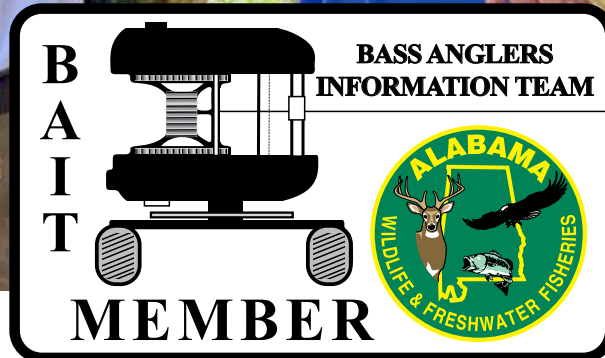
## ANNUAL REPORT

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ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
WILDLIFE AND FRESHWATER FISHERIES DIVISION



# BAIT 2022



*By Keith Henderson*

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**Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries**

**Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**

*Funded in part by the Federal Aid to Sport Fish Restoration Program*



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# BAIT 2022

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We would like to thank the participating bass clubs, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks for their genuine interest in this program and their willingness to take a proactive approach to managing bass fisheries in Alabama's reservoirs. Without their cooperation, assistance, and enthusiasm this program would not be possible.



## INTRODUCTIONS AND METHODS

The 2022 Bass Angler Information Team (BAIT) Annual Report marks the 37th year of the BAIT Program. The objective of the program since its inception has been to gather information on bass populations by combining the efforts of bass club members and state fisheries biologists. The BAIT Program summarizes catch data on reservoir bass populations that are collected and provided to us by participating clubs and tournament organizations. This information is used by state fisheries biologists in combination with data from other sources as potential indicators to issues that may need further attention through standardized sampling or research to assist with management decisions. Bass anglers use the report to establish future tournament sites, or to locate a reservoir that provides a particular type of fishing. Additionally, the catch data allows biologists to understand how each reservoir is performing from an angling perspective and how that compares to the standardized sampling data.

From 1986-2022, we have summarized 16,492 tournament reports. Anglers spent 4,048,247 hours collecting data for this program. They contributed data from 1,130,557 bass that weighed 2,194,123 pounds.

This report also contains information related to the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries' (WFF) Boating Access Maintenance and Development Program which maintains 116 boating access areas statewide. The accomplishments made by this program during 2022 may be of particular interest to tournament bass anglers and their organizations.

Every year, we attempt to maintain the support of the previous year's clubs and to enlist the support of new clubs through public meetings, news releases, and letters. Participating club officers or tournament directors are sent the previous year's annual report and tournament report postcards to be completed following each tournament. As tournament

cards are received, they are checked for accuracy and entered into a computer database. Club officers are contacted when data are suspected to be erroneous. We compile and analyze the data after receiving the December tournament reports. Tournament results are sorted by reservoir and month.

To rank reservoirs, five fishing quality indicators are used, including the percent of successful anglers (percent of anglers with one or more bass at weigh-in), average bass weight, number of bass per angler-day, pounds of bass per angler-day, and hours required to catch a bass five pounds or larger. Since the length of a fishing day varies between tournaments, an angler-day is defined as one angler fishing for 10 hours. In this report, an angler-day may simply be referred to as a day of fishing. A minimum of five tournaments for an individual reservoir is considered necessary for minimum confidence in each reservoir dataset. Reservoirs with five or more tournament reports are ranked for each of the quality indicators. Values are assigned to each category and an overall rank is determined for each reservoir by summing the values of the five quality indicators. This ranking system is intended to be a quick reference for tournament site selection. It does not constitute a best/worst list of Alabama reservoirs and should not be interpreted that way.

Tournament results are also broken down by month for statewide tournament results. This section is intended to aid clubs and tournament directors in scheduling tournaments seasonally, since the quality of fishing can vary considerably from one season to the next. It also allows anglers to better understand their chances of achieving a particular goal (i.e., catching a big bass) by studying, in detail, how anglers performed each month of the year. In previous years, the results were broken down by month for each reservoir. Due in part to an insufficient amount BAIT reports, individual reservoir summaries are no longer reported by month.

In 2021 outdoor recreation, including competitive fishing, began a return to normal as the Covid-19 pandemic faded. As a result, the data we received in 2021 made for a good comparison to the data we received in 2022. The pandemic canceled many fishing tournaments, which made it difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions with the 2021 data when compared to the 2020 data. Now with a little fishing consistency for consecutive years it should be easier for anglers to pick up on current trends within the BAIT report.

Overall, bass fishing in Alabama has remained good for the past several years. Fishing quality has decreased a little statewide when compared to 2021 but is not concerning given the natural cycles bass populations go through. For the most part, Alabama's reservoirs and rivers are fishing better than historical averages. BAIT participation has continued to increase from 2020 and 2021 levels, but our overall number of BAIT tournament submissions are still near an all-time low. While it is possible the small sample size of tournament submissions allows other factors to play a role in the overall data which can make interpretation difficult; it is obvious that our reservoirs and rivers are still fishing at quality levels when compared to the historical data.

Reservoirs are ranked by the quality indicators for reservoirs with five or more BAIT tournament reports. Reservoirs with less than five BAIT tournament reports are not considered for the quality indicator rankings but are included in the table summarizing tournament data by reservoir (Table 1). Since tournament reports increased from 2021, we saw some of the traditional reservoirs return to the rankings. However, from a historical perspective the reports were still down in 2022, causing some of the other traditional reservoirs to be excluded from the rankings or some reservoirs to be represented with a small sample size of BAIT tournament submissions. All 2022 combined quality indicators slightly decreased from 2021 levels with the exception of average weight of bass which remained at 2.2 pounds. All 2022 quality indicators remained above the 36-year average.

In 2022, the average bass weight remained 2.2 pounds, which is 9.1% above average. Percent success (where an angler weighs in at least one bass) decreased 0.6% and is 3.9% above average. The number of bass per angler-day (one angler-day equals one angler fishing for 10 hours) decreased by 5.9% and is 12.5% above average. Pounds of bass per angler-day decreased by 5.4% and is 22.9% above average. Finally, the number of hours required to catch a 5-pound bass

increased by 41.5%, which is 13.7% above the average. Although the larger Tennessee River impoundments have been traditional angler favorites, there were 5 different drainage basins represented in the top 6 of the overall Quality Indicator Rankings and two newcomers at the top. Below are some notable facts revealed after summarizing the 2022 BAIT tournament submissions.

## NOTABLE FACTS

Although the larger Tennessee River impoundments have been traditional angler favorites, there were five different drainage basins represented in the top six of the overall Quality Indicator Rankings. Below are some notable facts revealed after summarizing the 2022 BAIT tournament submissions.

- After a long absence from the quality indicator rankings, Millers Ferry and Demopolis, claimed the top two spots with 88 and 87 points respectively.
- Wilson claimed the top spot in the Quality Indicator Rankings for eight out of the last nine years (with 2020 being the only exception the last it was excluded for lacking the minimum amount of tournament reports). Wilson fell to 12th overall out of 20 reservoirs represented in the 2022 Quality Indicator Rankings.
- The top five reservoirs with the highest overall Quality Indicator Rankings for 2022 are Millers Ferry (88), Demopolis (87), Wheeler (86), Harris (67), and Guntersville (65).
- The top reservoirs for catching the most legal fish after considering the percent success and number of bass per angler day Quality Indicator Rankings are Harris, Martin, Millers Ferry, Logan Martin, Mitchell, Demopolis, and Wheeler.
- The top reservoirs with the largest average size fish were Guntersville, Pickwick, and Wheeler while the three best reservoirs to catch a bass over 5 pounds were Demopolis, Wheeler, and Weiss.
- The top three reservoirs to catch the largest five fish bags were Demopolis, Millers Ferry, and Wheeler.
- There were several large reservoirs that historically are included in the Quality Indicator Rankings that were left out due the lack of BAIT tournament report submissions, or are poorly represented by a low sample size of BAIT tournament report submissions.

## 2022 STATEWIDE B.A.I.T. STATISTICS

14.5 – Average winning weight for five fish  
 3.2 – Number of bass weighed in per angler-day  
 7.0 – Pounds of bass weighed in per angler-day  
 2.2 – Average weight of bass caught  
 79.0 - % Success Anglers (with at least one fish)

334.5 – Hours required to catch a 5-pound bass  
 10.44 – Weight of the largest bass caught  
 12 – Number of bass 8 pounds and larger  
 354 – Number of bass 5 pounds and larger



## ALABAMA STANDARDIZED SAMPLING OF BASS FOR POPULATION MANAGEMENT

Alabama Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) fisheries biologists are often seen on reservoirs during the spring and fall collecting sport fish for standardized reservoir sampling. Through five district offices, WFF manages 45 public reservoirs encompassing more than half a million acres of water throughout the state. Inside the front cover of this publication, each district office is listed along with the reservoirs within their area of responsibility. Each reservoir is sampled on a routine basis to monitor the population structure of its sport fish species. These samples are conducted in a standardized manner according to the guidelines of the Alabama Reservoir Management Manual so that changes in population characteristics can be monitored over time by comparing to previous samples. Most reservoirs are sampled on a 3-year cycle. Management recommendations such as length and creel limits are determined from this research.

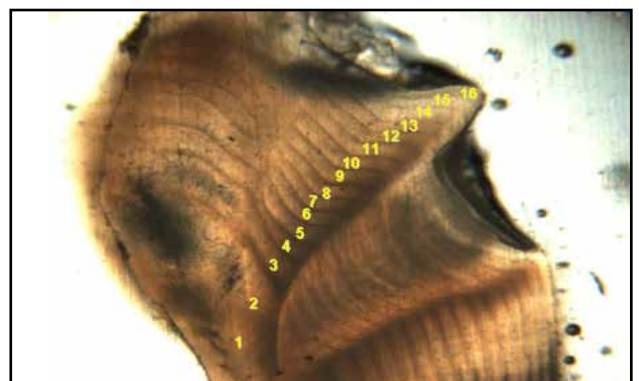
Various sampling gear is used to obtain standardized samples. That gear is specific to the fish that the biologists are targeting. In the spring, biologists use specially designed electrofishing boats that temporarily stun fish so they can be netted. Spring electrofishing surveys usually target largemouth bass, spotted bass, and sometimes crappie. On occasion biologists also collect other species such as bluegill sunfish, redear sunfish, shad, or catfish. In the fall and early winter, gill nets and trap nets are used to collect fish species that prefer open water, or deep areas where electrofishing is not effective. Gill nets are made of monofilament, and capture fish when they swim into it. Gill nets are primarily

used to collect striped bass, hybrid striped bass, white bass, sauger, and walleye. Trap nets are box-shaped nets made of nylon that are specifically designed to collect young crappie. They are an effective tool to evaluate young crappie produced from the previous spring, which provides a good indication of the abundance of adults in future years.

Fish collected in reservoir samples are measured for total length and weight, and age is determined. The length and weight data combined, allow biologists to examine how plump the fish are, which is an indication of whether the appropriate amount of food is available. Length data is used to assess whether the correct proportion of catchable size fish are available for anglers to harvest. Age data in conjunction with length data allows biologists to determine how fast fish are growing. In order to age fish, the inner ear bone (otolith) must be removed and looked at under a microscope. Fish begin laying down a new circular mark on the otolith each spring. The circular marks on the otolith correspond to years of age. These circular marks, or rings, are formed because calcium is deposited at a constant rate no matter how fast the fish is growing. During winter, when the fish is not actively growing, the calcium is deposited in a more concentrated area, and leaves behind a ring once the fish's growth-rate increases as water temperatures become warmer. The number of fish collected at each age is used to determine how quickly fish are dying out of the population, either from fishing or natural causes.

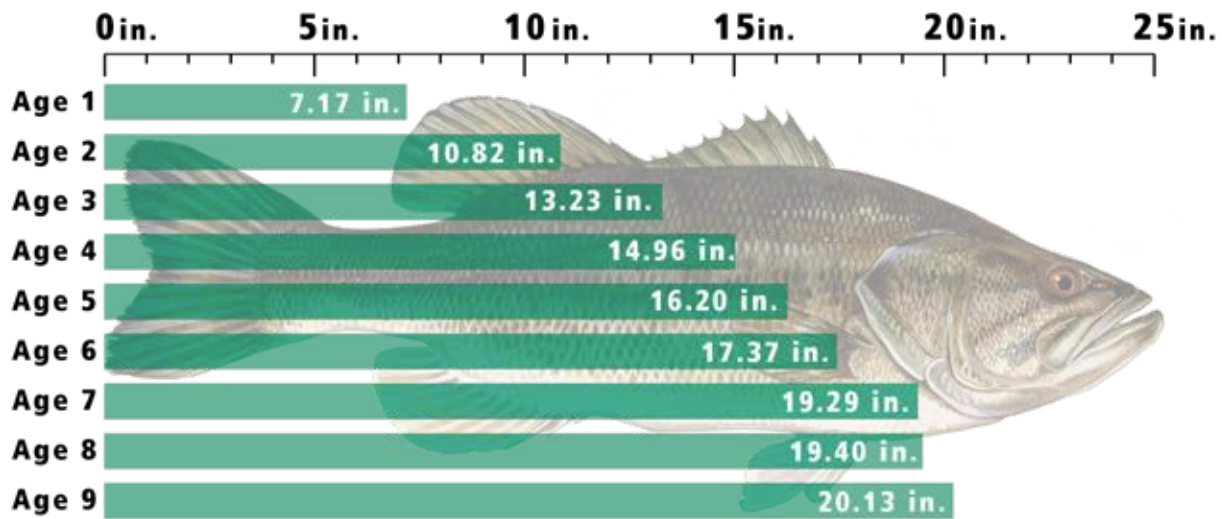


Bass are weighed and measured so that biologists can determine the size structure of the population, growth rates, and relative condition.



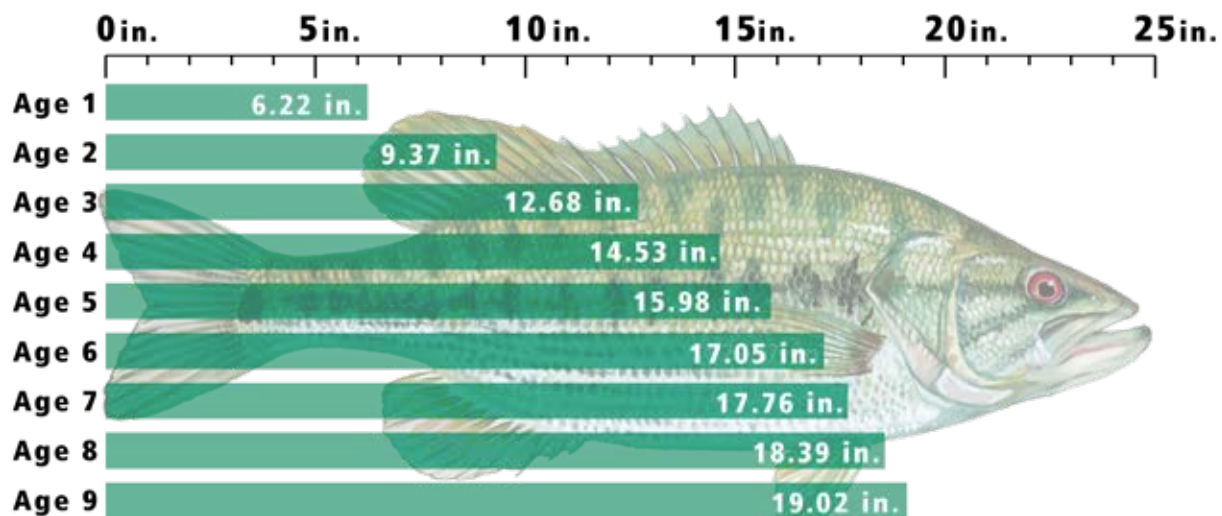
Cross-section of an otolith from a 16-year-old largemouth bass.

## LARGEMOUTH BASS AVERAGE LENGTH AT AGE



Fisheries biologists collect a nice largemouth bass and some nice spotted bass during standardized electrofishing samples.

## SPOTTED BASS AVERAGE LENGTH AT AGE







## BLACK BASS, DATA ANALYSIS, REGULATIONS, AND RESEARCH

All of the data is analyzed and compared to previous samples from the individual reservoir and to statewide average data from all reservoirs. Biologists can then determine if harvest regulations need to be changed to improve the fishery. The most common type of regulation on a reservoir fish population is a daily creel limit, or simply how many fish an angler can keep each day. Daily creel limits are used to prevent angler harvest from becoming too high to sustain the fishery. Length limits are another regulation used when fishing pressure or angler harvest is too high on fish of a particular size. Length limits are sometimes used to protect young fish so they can reach maturity or to increase the number of large fish for anglers.

Complex statistical models are sometimes developed to predict how fish populations might respond to changes in the length or bag limits imposed on each reservoir. Over time, the predictive ability of these models can be validated by comparing the predicted effects to the actual fishery responses to the changes in harvest restrictions. In general, harvest restrictions have minimal impacts unless the rate of fish dying from angling exceeds the rate of fish dying naturally. There is little biological justification for protecting fish that are dying primarily of natural causes. Since bass harvest in Alabama is generally very low, few reservoirs have restrictive length limits at this time. However, routine monitoring of bass populations will allow changes in harvest restrictions to be made whenever necessary.

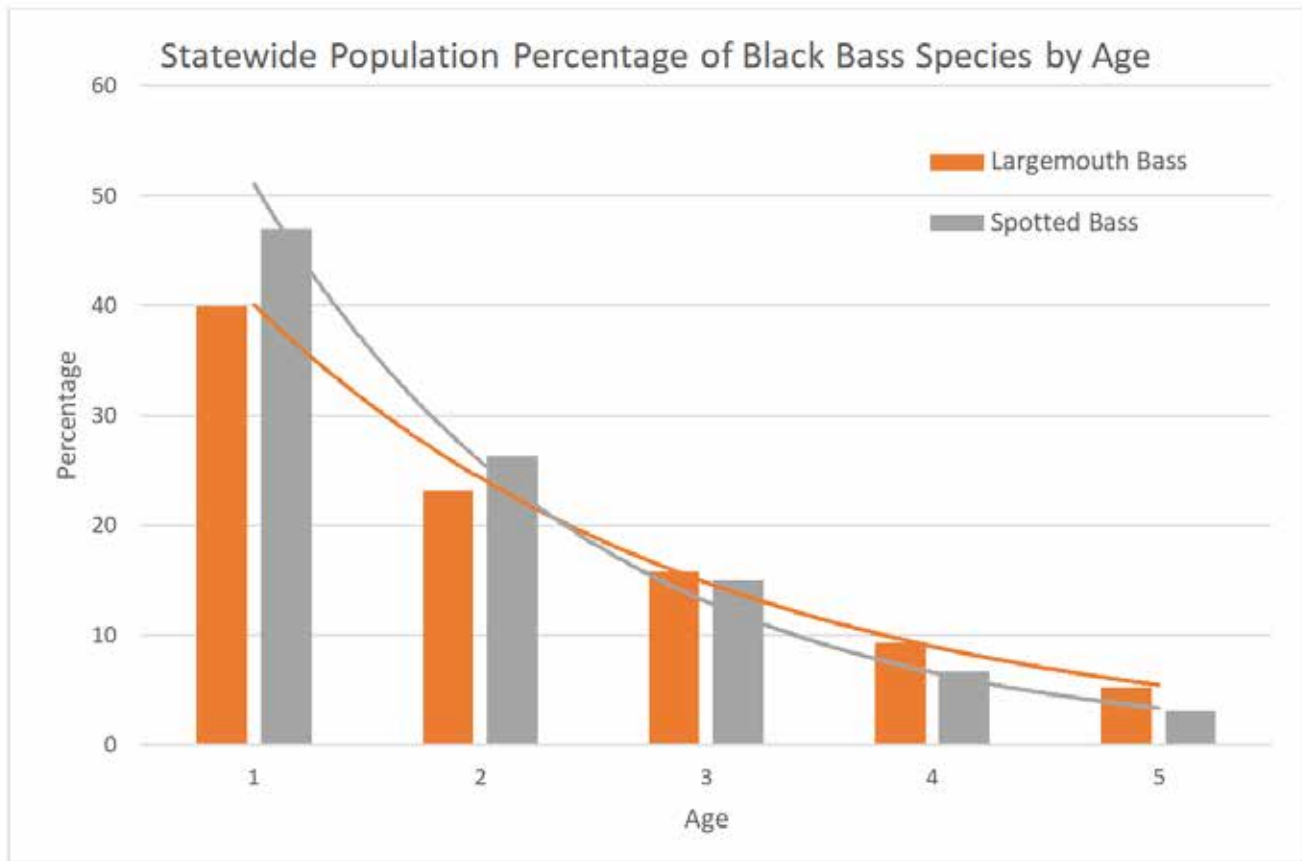
A complex combination of variables ultimately determines the quality of each fishery in each reservoir. Even with good management, reservoirs with low fertility or poor water quality do not have the potential to produce outstanding fisheries. Depending on the results of these investigations, some management objectives may include the reduction of small bass through the use of slot limits or increasing the

number of larger fish using minimum length limits, which can also reduce the effects of variable recruitment.

You may also occasionally notice biologists interviewing anglers at boat ramps. These interviews are known as access point creel surveys and give biologists important information about what kinds and sizes of fish anglers are catching as well as bass harvest rates. They also provide biologists information about what anglers want to catch and highlight any issues anglers may be having in a particular reservoir. Access point creel surveys are a very important component of reservoir fisheries management because management decisions are ultimately made to benefit the people using the resource.

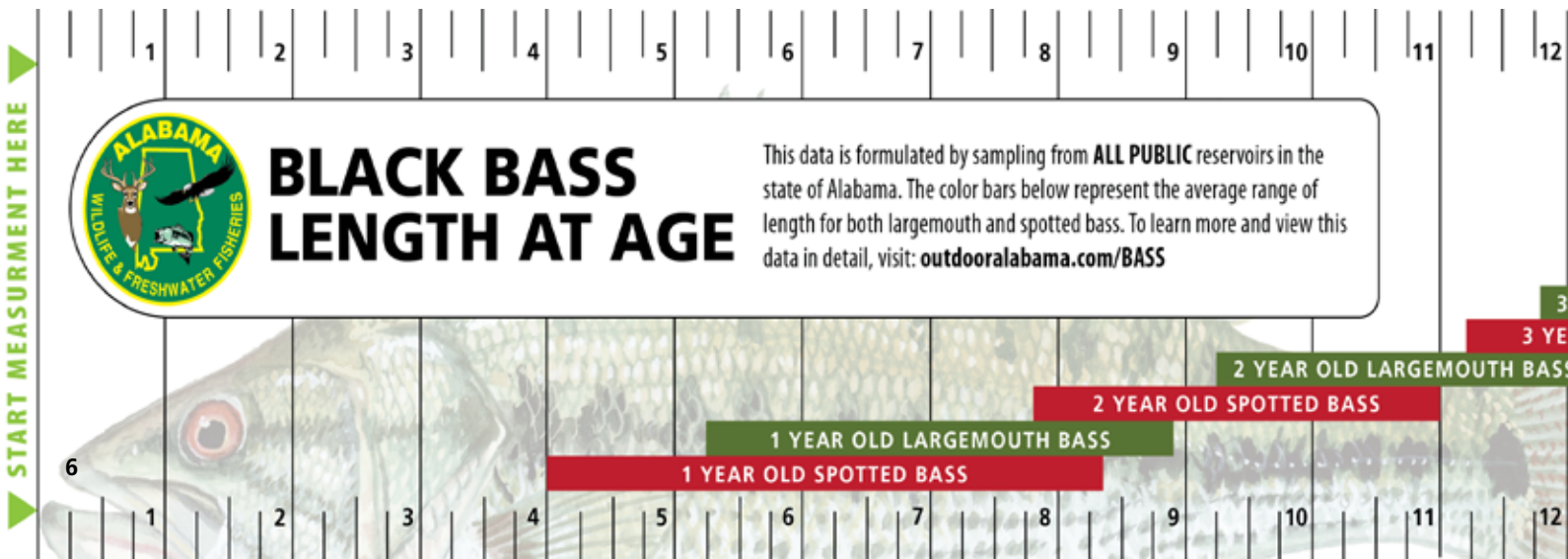
In addition to baseline reservoir monitoring, research projects are often needed to address specific fisheries problems. Some research projects are conducted by WFF Fisheries Section biologists while others are performed by researchers from various universities. These research projects span a wide array of fisheries issues but often pertain to sport fish and black bass species in Alabama's rivers and reservoirs where tournaments take place. These projects may look at specific problems with black bass species or other fish species that could have an indirect effect on black bass species in Alabama's waterways.

Standardized sampling data for black bass species have been collected, analyzed, and compiled in a database since 1986, and contain information from over 60,000 bass statewide. The following graphs and tables demonstrate the average length at age distribution and abundance for each age class for largemouth bass and spotted bass statewide. They also demonstrate the variability in size within each year class for both species. This is pooled data collected from fish from every reservoir in the state. The information is not intended to represent individual reservoir fish populations.



Largemouth bass have been collected up to 16 years old and spotted bass have been collected up to 12 years old in our standardized samples. Fish over five years old (about 2-2.5 lbs.) make up less than 7% of largemouth bass and 2% of spotted bass from historical population datasets, which is why they were not included. Bass exceeding 9-10 years old are rare; therefore, they were not included in the figures.

The data and information collected through standardized reservoir sampling surveys is vital for biologists to make wise management decisions for anglers. The Reservoir Management Program is the primary source of data that determines whether a fish population is in good condition, is overfished, or if a specific issue needs to be studied. The work is a necessary part of WFF's mission to preserve, protect, and enhance Alabama's aquatic resources.



Largemouth bass Length at Age (Inches)				
Age	Minimum	Average	Maximum	Sample Size
1	0.94	7.17	13.74	19,190
2	4.92	10.82	16.93	11,130
3	7.17	13.23	19.65	7,602
4	8.78	14.96	20.55	4,475
5	10.16	16.20	22.64	2,501
6	11.02	17.37	22.72	1,401
7	13.47	19.29	24.41	848
8	12.91	19.40	23.90	522
9	14.06	20.13	24.29	247
10	14.88	20.39	25.24	147

Spotted Bass Length at Age (Inches)				
Age	Minimum	Average	Maximum	Sample Size
1	1.65	6.22	13.46	6,791
2	3.66	9.37	17.48	3,803
3	7.05	12.68	17.80	2,163
4	9.53	14.53	18.50	964
5	10.83	15.98	20.16	446
6	12.95	17.05	20.20	159
7	13.82	17.76	20.51	76
8	15.00	18.39	20.98	27
9	16.42	19.02	22.24	15

## SCAN QR FOR BASS ANGLERS INFO TEAM

The objective of the program since its inception has been to gather information on bass populations by combining the efforts of bass club members and state fisheries biologists. The BAIT Program summarizes catch data on reservoir bass populations that are collected and provided to us by participating clubs. This information is used by state fisheries biologists in combination with data from other sources as a basis for fisheries management decisions. Bass anglers use the report to establish future tournament sites, or to locate a reservoir that provides a particular type of fishing.

From 1986-2022, we have summarized 16,492 tournament reports. Anglers spent 4,048,247 hours collecting data for this program. They contributed data from 1,130,557 bass that weighed 2,194,123 pounds.

## FOR YOUR OWN BASS LENGTH BOARD OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have questions or comments regarding hunting or freshwater fishing laws, regulations, freshwater fisheries or wildlife programs, or to report violations, please contact your local District Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries District Office.

For information on boating, such as registration, license requirements or other information, contact the ALEA Marine Trooper Division (800) 272-7930.



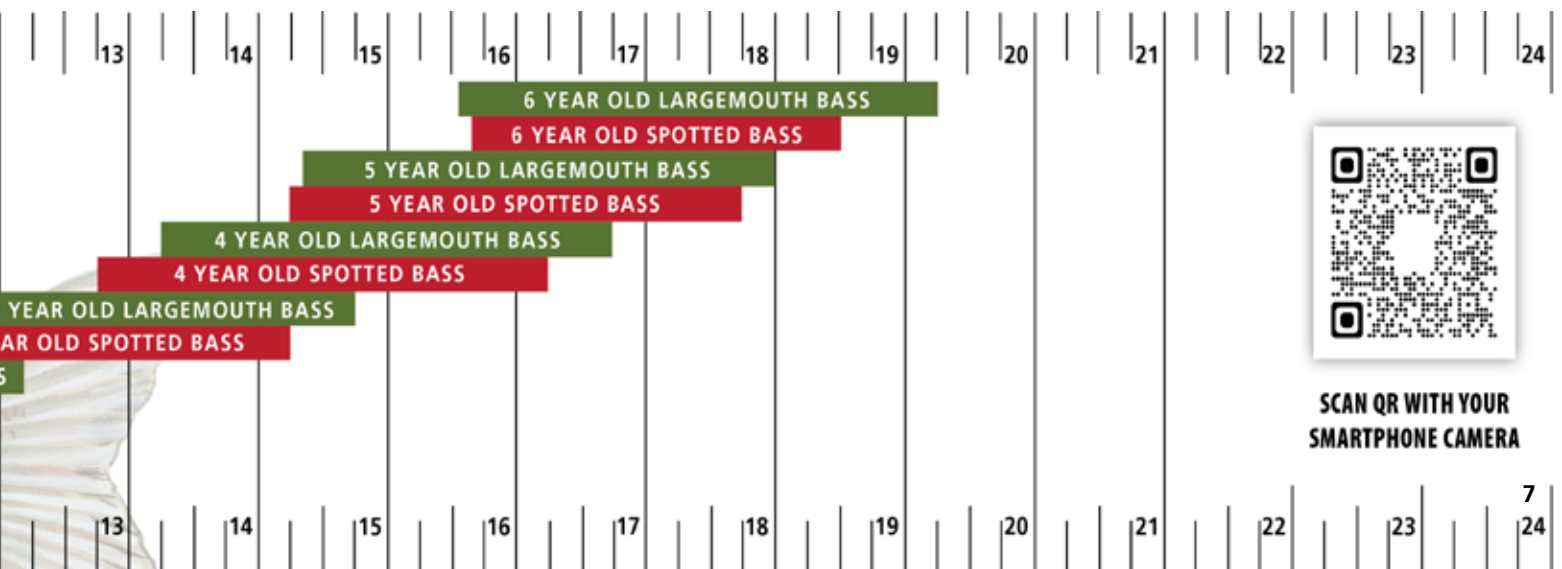
**BAIT WEBSITE**



**TOURNAMENT WEBSITE**



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**SCAN QR WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE CAMERA**



## PUBLIC WATER BASS STOCKING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WFF fisheries biologists routinely receive requests to stock sport fish species such as Largemouth bass in specific public water bodies to improve the fisheries. Unfortunately, the utility and expectations of fish stocking are often grossly misunderstood by the angling public. This FAQ will provide more insight into this subject.

### **WHY DOESN'T WFF STOCK LARGEMOUTH BASS ANNUALLY IN PUBLIC WATERS?**

Stocking hatchery produced largemouth bass fingerlings in water bodies where naturally spawned fish of similar genetics already exist is unproductive. The number of bass produced naturally each spring in Alabama reservoirs is virtually always sufficient to maintain quality fisheries. WFF fisheries biologists have performed hundreds of bass spawn checks with seines over the years and the results of these surveys have never indicated a failed spawn. When largemouth bass populations are established and recruitment to a catchable size is adequate, the stocking of hatchery fingerlings simply will not increase the number of fish available to anglers.

### **DOES STOCKING LARGEMOUTH BASS IN PUBLIC WATER BODIES INCREASE THEIR ABUNDANCE AND THUS MAKE FISHING BETTER?**

If a particular species, such as largemouth bass, occupies a body of water and natural reproduction is occurring, then stocking additional fish will not increase the number of fish available to anglers. This management concept is difficult for many to accept; however, the explanation is not overly complicated. Lakes can only support a certain number of fish based on factors such as water quality and nutrient availability. This is called "carrying capacity" or the total weight of fish.

### **WHEN FISHING SUCCESS IN A WATER BODY BEGINS TO DECLINE, WILL STOCKING LARGEMOUTH BASS FINGERLINGS HELP THE FISHERY?**

When angler catch rates are low it is usually the result of unfavorable environmental conditions that led to poor survival of one or more year-classes during their first year of life. The inverse also occurs, where favorable environmental conditions can lead to high survival of juveniles and thus an increase in fishing success follows a few years later. During the spring spawning season, dozens of species of juvenile fish all compete for food and space at the same time, thus survival of young bass in the wild is very low. Adult bass attempt to circumvent this fate by producing excessive amounts of offspring, but the reality is that very few young bass survive (often less than 0.5%) their first year of life. Since hatchery stocked, fish are subjected to the same environmental conditions as naturally spawned fish, they also suffer very high rates of mortality. In fact, stocked bass frequently have higher mortality rates than resident fish, since they must orient and acclimate to their new surroundings.

### **WHAT IS A FLORIDA LARGEMOUTH BASS AND HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM OTHER BASS?**

The two recognized subspecies of largemouth bass are the Northern largemouth bass and the Florida largemouth bass. Without a genetic assessment or careful examination of external body features, these two subspecies cannot be distinguished from one another. In their native range, the Florida subspecies grows to a larger size than their Northern cousin.

### **DOES ALABAMA HAVE A FLORIDA LARGEMOUTH BASS STOCKING PROGRAM LIKE MANY OTHER STATES?**

WFF began stocking Florida largemouth bass several decades ago spanning almost every reservoir in the state. WFF was one of the first state agencies to begin stocking Florida largemouth bass. More than 17 million have been stocked since the early 1970s. These stockings occurred before social media and other internet platforms were available; thus, most people do not even realize they occurred. The goal of these stockings was not to increase bass abundance, but rather to alter the genetics of native Northern largemouth bass and increase the potential for larger fish to be caught by anglers. The results of this program were very inconsistent, but the successful introduction of Florida genes was documented in some locations, such as Lake Gunterville. Once Florida largemouth bass genes are abundant in a population, the continuation of stocking this subspecies is unproductive.



## PUBLIC WATER BASS STOCKING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### WHAT IS AN F1 HYBRID LARGEMOUTH BASS AND ARE THEY SUPERIOR?

An F1 hybrid is simply a term to designate a first-generation cross between a Northern and Florida largemouth bass. These offspring of mixed genetics have also been given other appealing coined names for marketing purposes. F1 hybrids have shown greater growth characteristics over Northern largemouth bass due to a phenomenon known as “hybrid vigor,” but this growth advantage does not persist. This is especially true in populations where both Northern and Florida largemouth bass genes already exist, like most Alabama public water bodies.

### WHY DOES WFF ROUTINELY STOCK STRIPED BASS IN RESERVOIRS, BUT NOT LARGEMOUTH BASS?

Unlike largemouth bass, striped bass are no longer able to successfully reproduce in most of Alabama’s public water bodies. Striped bass are considered an anadromous species, meaning they historically lived their life in saltwater and only moved into freshwater rivers to spawn. Since dams now impede their spring spawning runs and thus eliminate the long stretches of free-flowing water necessary for egg maturation, WFF fish hatcheries must artificially spawn, raise, and stock this species to prevent them from disappearing from most of Alabama’s reservoirs.

### IS STOCKING FISH IN PUBLIC WATERS LEGAL IN ALABAMA?

**Regulation 220-2-.129** prohibits the intentional stocking or release of any fish, mussel, snail, crayfish, or their embryos into the public waters of Alabama without written permission from WFF.

Fisheries biologists collect juvenile black bass species during a routine bass recruitment check.





## ALABAMA BASS FISHING SPOTLIGHT: WHY DO SLOT LIMITS EXIST?

Length/slot limits are a very common fisheries management tool utilized by fisheries biologists all over the country on public waters to manage the size structure of fish populations. Length/slot limits can often frustrate tournament bass anglers because it regulates the size of fish anglers are allowed to legally possess and ultimately count towards their bag. Length limits simply protect a certain size fish vulnerable to overharvest. Length limits are often used to protect smaller fish allowing them to reach maturity, and ultimately provide a greater abundance of large fish. It is important to understand though that length limits are most effective when fishing mortality of a particular size fish exceeds natural mortality. On the other hand, slot limits are a little more complicated.

It is common for tournament directors to contact WFF and request slot exemptions for tournaments on reservoirs where slot limits exist. Anglers often ask why slot limits exist on certain reservoirs and question their effectiveness. This article will explain in detail how slot limits are intended to work, why WFF does not approve tournament slot limit exemptions, and how tournaments can potentially increase the effectiveness of slot limits on reservoirs where slot limits exist.

Slot limits are effective in theory. They were designed to thin the population of small fish below the slot limit to reduce competition which increases growth rates and survival of the remaining fish, and then protects fish in the slot range so that an increased number of larger fish will be available above the slot limit. Slot limits are only effective when there is substantial and sustained harvest below the slot range. Without the harvest of small bass, the slot limit is not effective. WFF has put slot limits on reservoirs that have the potential to benefit from slot limits. However, it is only beneficial when the small fish are removed from the population. Previous BAIT reports have highlighted how bass harvest among today's tournament anglers are minimal. Fisheries research supports that very few people harvest bass in public waters.

It is common to see tournaments implement self-imposed regulations that only allow anglers to weigh in "overs" on lakes in Alabama that contain slot limits. This is very counter productive on lakes with slot limits. Even with 95% or more of black bass being released statewide, delayed tournament mortality still exists. It may not be apparent during a weigh-in because fish may appear healthy when released alive, but many will die of stress and disease days after the weigh-in. WFF often receives fish kill reports near boat ramps in the days following large tournaments, particularly during warmer months. Allowing anglers to weigh in sub-slot limit bass could potentially help with the effectiveness of the slot limit. To do their part, tournaments should be harvesting all sub-slot limit bass instead of releasing them.

Anglers may wonder why WFF does not allow catch and release tournaments to have slot exemptions since they will be releasing their fish after the weigh-in. One reason is the enforcement issue it would create. It is nearly impossible for WFF law enforcement to determine which anglers are actively participating in a catch and release tournament and which anglers are not. Another reason is that delayed fishing mortality exists among tournaments even after fish appear to be released alive and may be as high as 70-80%. We are currently conducting research to study the impacts of tournament angling on fish populations in certain reservoirs. This information will help us to develop regulations that will ultimately produce bigger bass in our reservoirs.

We encourage anglers to help WFF manage Alabama's freshwater fish populations through management tools such as slot limits and to enjoy our abundant natural resources for years to come. If you have any questions about fisheries regulations, please contact your local district fisheries office.



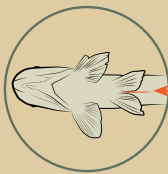
ATTENTION ALABAMA ANGLERS – BE ON THE LOOKOUT

# INVASIVE CARP

[OutdoorAlabama.com/invasive-carp-alabama](http://OutdoorAlabama.com/invasive-carp-alabama)

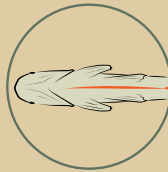


## BIGHEAD CARP



**SHORT KEEL**  
(located on underside of fish)

## SILVER CARP



**LONGER KEEL**  
(located on underside of fish)

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- » Low-set eye; large upturned mouth without barbels
- » Silver in color; Bighead Carp have dark blotches on the back and sides
- » Scaleless head; body scales are very small
- » Adults typically weigh 5-50 lbs. and measure 1-3 ft.
- » Silver Carp may jump out of the water when disturbed by boat motors

**PLEASE DO NOT RELEASE THESE SPECIES BACK INTO THE WATER.**

**DISPATCH AND DISPOSE OF THEM PROPERLY.**

**IT IS ILLEGAL TO TRANSPORT LIVE WILD CAUGHT BAITFISH TO OR FROM THE WATERS IN WHICH THEY ARE CAUGHT.**

(REGULATION 220-2-.162)

### JUVENILE BAITFISH:



Gizzard Shad (*native*)



Bighead Carp



Silver Carp

**REPORT ANY SIGHTINGS, WITH EXACT LOCATIONS, TO:**

Alabama Wildlife  
& Freshwater Fisheries

**(256) 353-2634**

[asiancarp@dcnr.alabama.gov](mailto:asiancarp@dcnr.alabama.gov)





[www.outdooralabama.com/tournaments](http://www.outdooralabama.com/tournaments)

Type the above link into your web browser to access the improved "Fishing Tournaments" webpage where you can post your tournaments or view those posted by other organizations.

Click here to post information about your tournament, then enter your tournament information including contacts, a link to your website, or even a copy of the registration form.

Fishing Tournaments

[Post a New Fishing Tournament](#)

Fishing Tournaments:

Tournament Type:  Month and Year:  Body:  Target Species:

Organization	Water Body	Boat Ramp	Start Date Time	End Date Time	Species
<a href="#">View</a> Aluminum Fishing Series	Gunterville	Langdon	08/04/2019 Safe Daylight	08/04/2019 3:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
<a href="#">View</a> Alabama Bass Federation, Inc	Lay	Beeswax Creek	09/06/2019 Safe Daylight	09/07/2019 3:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
<a href="#">View</a> American Bass Anglers - Open Series	Gunterville	Goose Pond	09/07/2019 Safe Daylight	09/08/2019 3:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
<a href="#">View</a> God Is Bigger Movement	Logan Martin	Lakeside Park	09/07/2019 Safe Daylight	09/07/2019 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
<a href="#">View</a> American Bass Anglers - Open Series	Logan Martin	Lakeside Park	09/14/2019 5:15 AM CT or Safe Daylight	09/15/2019 2:30 PM CT	Bass (Black)
<a href="#">View</a> FLW (T-H Marine BFL)	Gunterville	Gunterville State Park	09/14/2019 7:00 AM CT or Safe Daylight	09/15/2019 3:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
<a href="#">View</a> FLW LLC BFL Bama Division	Eufaula	Lakepoint State Park Marina	09/28/2019 5:30 AM CT	09/29/2019 2:30 PM CT	Bass (Black)
	Tuscaloosa	Brown Creek	10/12/2019 6:00 AM CT	10/12/2019 1:30 PM CT	Bass (Black)
	Gunterville	Gunterville State Park	10/17/2019 6:00 AM CT	10/19/2019 4:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
	Eufaula	Lakepoint State Park	10/19/2019 Safe Daylight	10/19/2019 4:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
	Lay	Beeswax	10/19/2019 Safe Daylight	10/19/2019 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Gunterville	Goose Pond	10/25/2019 Safe Daylight	10/26/2019 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Wheeler	Ingalls Harbor	11/01/2019 6:30 AM CT	11/02/2019 3:00 PM CT	Catfish
	Weiss	Cowan Creek	11/03/2019 Safe Daylight	11/03/2019 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Gunterville	Gunterville State Park	11/09/2019 5:00 AM CT	11/09/2019 2:00 PM CT	Bass (Black)
	Lay	Beeswax Creek	11/09/2019 Safe Daylight	11/09/2019 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Eufaula	Lakepoint State Park	02/14/2020 Safe Daylight	02/15/2020 7 Hours of fishing	Bass (Black)
	Jordan	Bonnors Landing	02/15/2020 3:00 AM CT or Safe Daylight	02/15/2020 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Gunterville	Gunterville State Park	02/22/2020 Safe Daylight	02/22/2020 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Jordan	Bonnors and State Boat Ramp	02/29/2020 Safe Daylight	02/29/2020 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Smith	Smith Lake Dam	03/21/2020 Safe Daylight	03/21/2020 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Millers Ferry	Roland Cooper State Park	03/21/2020 3:00 AM CT or Safe Daylight	03/21/2020 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Lay	Beeswax	03/28/2020 Safe Daylight	03/28/2020 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Neely Henry	Coosa Landing, Gadsden, AL	04/18/2020 Safe Daylight	04/18/2020 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Lay	Beeswax Creek	04/18/2020 3:00 AM CT or Safe Daylight	04/18/2020 3:00 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Eufaula	Lakepoint State Park Marina	04/25/2020 Safe Daylight	04/25/2020 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)
	Logan Martin	Pell City Lakeside Ct. Park	05/09/2020 Safe Daylight	05/09/2020 2:30 PM CT Weigh-in	Bass (Black)

Select from these options to search all tournaments being held statewide.

Please let other tournament anglers know about this website, and if you have questions or comments call (334) 242-3471.

This website exists for your convenience and we welcome any suggestions you might have that would improve this valuable tool.

Fishing Tournaments

Please fill out the form below to post a fishing tournament.  
All fields are required.

Tournament Types:

First Name:

Last Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Organization:

Target Species:

Water Body:

Boat Ramp:

Start Date:

End Date:

Start Time:

Or:  Safe Day Light  
 Safe Day Light  
 To Be Determined

End Time:

Or:  Weigh-In  
 Hours of Fishing  
 To Be Determined

Estimated Number of Boats:

Tournament Overview:

Web Address:

Upload File:

selected file also

**PLEASE NOTE:**  
The tournament must be approved by the DCNR staff before it is displayed on OutdoorAlabama.com.





# NEW ONLINE B.A.I.T. REPORTING SYSTEM

To access the new online B.A.I.T. Reporting System, type <https://tournaments.dcnr.alabama.gov> in your web browser. This URL allows you to easily submit your tournament catch data online.

Reporter			
Name	<input type="text"/>	Email	<input type="text"/>
Phone	<input type="text"/>		
Fishing Club			
Fishing Club	<input type="text" value="-Select one-"/>	Representative	<input type="text"/>
Street	<input type="text"/>		City
State	<input type="text" value="-Select one-"/>	Zip	<input type="text"/>
<a href="#">Add New Club</a>			
Tournament Dates, and Types			
Reservoir	<input type="text" value="-Select one-"/>	Launch Site	<input type="text" value="(Optional)"/>
Start Date	<input type="text" value="5/5/2020"/>	End Date	<input type="text" value="5/5/2020"/>
WeighIn	<input type="text" value="-Select one-"/>	Format	<input type="text" value="-Select one-"/>
Time	<input type="text" value="-Select one-"/>		
Tournament Rules, Fish Type, and Number Caught			
Creel Limit	<input type="text" value="5"/>	Size Limit	<input type="text" value="12"/>
No. of LargeMouth Bass	<input type="text" value="(Optional)"/>	No. of Spotted Bass	<input type="text" value="(Optional)"/>
No. of SmallMouth Bass	<input type="text" value="(Optional)"/>		
No. of Hours Fished	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>		
Total No. of Bass Caught	<input type="text" value="0"/>	Total No. of Bass Released	<input type="text" value="(Optional)"/>
No. of Bass Over 5 Lbs	<input type="text" value="0"/>	No. of Bass Over 8 Lbs	<input type="text" value="0"/>
No. of Anglers or Teams	<input type="text" value="0"/>	No. of ANGLERS /TEAMS with Limits	<input type="text" value="0"/>
No. of ANGLERS/TEAMS with 1 or more Bass	<input type="text" value="0"/>		
You can enter Weights in either Lbs or Lbs & Ozs			
<input type="radio"/> Lbs <input checked="" type="radio"/> Lbs & Ozs			
Total Weight of Bass	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>	Lbs	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Big Bass Weight	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>	Lbs	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Winning Weight	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>	Lbs	<input type="text" value="0"/>

The online system is an additional option for submitting B.A.I.T. tournament reports. Anglers can still email their reports to Keith Henderson at [keith.henderson@dcnr.alabama.gov](mailto:keith.henderson@dcnr.alabama.gov). When submitting reports by email please use the Excel file found at [www.outdooralabama.com/tournaments](http://www.outdooralabama.com/tournaments). Anglers can also mail in paper B.A.I.T. cards to: 64 N. Union St. Suite 551, Montgomery, AL 36130.

If you would like copies of the paper cards or have any questions, please call (334) 242-3471. The B.A.I.T. Program is a valuable fisheries management tool. Without the support of tournament anglers and organizers, this program would not exist. Thank you!



# STATEWIDE BAIT TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Bass clubs submitted 314 BAIT tournament reports during 2022, up from 254 in 2021 (Table 1 and Figure 11). Club representatives did a great job filling out the cards and few reports were rejected due to incomplete or erroneous information. We want to thank the participants of the BAIT Program and urge them to keep up the good work! Forty-five clubs provided data in 2022 – two more than in 2021. Forty-nine reports from Alabama waters were received from Clint Peacock a fisheries biologist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, who summarizes tournament data from the Georgia Bass Federation. Additionally, 38 reports were received from Stan Crider a fisheries biologist with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks. Without their support, several Alabama reservoirs would not have been well represented in the Quality Indicator Rankings (Table 2). Once again, we must stress that reports from more locations increases the capability of the summaries to reflect actual fish population conditions and not just a good or poor day’s fishing by one or two clubs.

In 2022, tournament reports were received from 30 bodies of water that were fished 149,853 hours (Table 1). The tables at the bottom of the page allow a comparison of 2022 statewide tournament data to both 2021 and historical (1986-2020) tournament data.

The quality of fishing decreased slightly from 2021 with the exception of average weight of bass, which remained the same, and a slight increase in the number of 8-pound bass and weight of the largest bass caught. As mentioned earlier, this slight decrease in fishing quality is not a surprise given the natural cycles our bass populations go through. All 2022 combined quality indicators remain above the historical

average combined quality indicators with exception of hours required to catch a 5-pound bass. This suggests that fishing remains at a high quality even with the recent decreasing trend in fishing quality. Important to note here is that the combined data is not necessarily indictive of the quality of fishing in the state of Alabama, as it is a representation of the tournament reports we received. In other words, the combined data is weighted heavily towards the reservoirs that reported the most fishing pressure, and those reservoirs are not necessarily fished consistently every year. Most 2022 reports were received from Pickwick (41), Eufaula (39), and Martin (27) which accounted for 34% of the reports. This is a much better distribution when compared to 2021 which consisted of 60 percent of the reports belonging to Guntersville, Pickwick, and Eufaula. Thirteen out of the 30 reservoirs represented in this report contained 10 or more BAIT tournament report submissions compared to 10 out of 28 in 2021. A good distribution of reports provides more robust statistics from which accurate summaries can be prepared. All club representatives should understand that every report is important to the continued success of the BAIT Program.

The largest bass caught in 2022 came from Eufaula and weighed 10.44 pounds. With 72 bass weighing 5 pounds or larger, Eufaula led this category. Guntersville and Pickwick were next with 47 big bass over 5 pounds each. Even though there were fewer bass over 5 pounds caught, and it took longer to catch a 5 pound bass in 2022 when compared to 2021; Eufaula, Pickwick, and Guntersville continue to round out the top three reservoirs to catch big bass over 5 pounds for the second consecutive year. Be aware that we received more fishing hours of catch data from Pickwick (1st place with 27,835 hours), Guntersville (2nd place with 24,974 hours),

## 2021 COMBINED BAIT STATISTICS

- 14.8 – Average winning weight (5 fish)
- 3.4 – Number of bass weighed in per angler-day
- 7.4 – Pounds of bass weighed in per angler-day
- 2.2 – Average weight of bass caught
- 196 – Hours required to catch a 5-pound bass
- 10.24 – Weight of the largest bass caught
- 11 – Number of bass 8 pounds and larger
- 550 – Number of bass 5 pounds and larger
- 79.5 – % Success (anglers with at least 1 fish)

## HISTORICAL (1986–2021)

### AVERAGE COMBINED QUALITY INDICATORS

- 2.8 – Number of bass weighed in per angler-day
- 5.4 – Pounds of bass weighed in per angler-day
- 2.0 – Average weight of bass caught
- 286 – Hours required to catch a 5-pound bass
- 75.8 – % success (anglers with at least 1 fish)

## 2022 COMBINED BAIT STATISTICS

- 14.5 – Average winning weight (5 fish)
- 3.2 – Number of bass weighed in per angler-day
- 7.0 – Pounds of bass weighed in per angler-day
- 2.2 – Average weight of bass caught
- 335 – Hours required to catch a 5-pound bass
- 10.44 – Weight of the largest bass caught
- 12 – Number of bass 8 pounds and larger
- 354 – Number of bass 5 pounds and larger
- 79.0 – % success (anglers with at least 1 fish)

## 2022 COMBINED QUALITY INDICATORS

- 3.2 – Number of bass weighed in per angler-day
- 7.0 – Pounds of bass weighed in per angler-day
- 2.2 – Average weight of bass caught
- 335 – Hours required to catch a 5-pound bass
- 79.0 – % success (anglers with at least 1 fish)



# STATEWIDE BAIT TOURNAMENT RESULTS

and Eufaula (3rd place with 18,226 hours), which inflates these numbers when compared to other reservoirs (Table 1). Pickwick, Guntersville, and Eufaula made up nearly 50% of the total reported angling hours for all reservoirs represented in the 2022 BAIT report.

Of the 30 reservoirs represented by reports received, 20 had five or more tournament reports (Table 1). The following comments focus on these reservoirs, which are ranked by the quality indicators in Table 2. The percent of successful anglers (those with one or more fish) ranged from 60% at Aliceville to 98% at Harris. The average weight of bass caught ranged from 0.9 pounds at Yates and Cedar to 3.0 pounds at Guntersville. Catch rates expressed as bass per angler-day ranged from 2.0 at West Point to 5.2 at Tuscaloosa. Catch rates as pounds per angler-day ranged from 2.7 at Cedar to 11.7 at Demopolis. Average big bass by reservoir ranged from 2.4 pounds at Tuscaloosa to 7.1 pounds at Guntersville with a combined cumulative average of 4.8 pounds (Table 1). Average winning weight by reservoir ranged from 4.8 pounds at the Cedar to 20.7 pounds at Guntersville with a combined cumulative average of 14.5 pounds (Table 1).

Wilson had accumulated the most overall Quality Indicator Ranking points for the past 8 of 9 years with the only off year coming in 2020 when it failed to reach the minimum five tournament reports to be included in the rankings. However, Miller's Ferry accumulated the most Quality Indicator Ranking points in 2022 with 88 points and Wilson fell to 12th with 47 points. Demopolis (87), Wheeler (86), Harris (67), and Guntersville (65) rounded out the top five (Table 2). Anglers should note that the primary intent of Table 2 is not to determine the overall best reservoir, but to characterize the fishery of each reservoir. First review the Quality Indicator that is most important to you. The overall rating would be used to narrow choices. For example, if an angler wanted to have the best chance to catch a bass greater than 5 pounds, then Demopolis, Wheeler, or Weiss would be good choices. Clubs interested in having all its members catch good quality stringers would look at the pounds per angler-day rankings to find that

Demopolis, Millers Ferry, and Wheeler offered the best opportunity. If catching lots of bass is important, then Martin, Millers Ferry, or Demopolis might be the best destination based upon their bass per angler-day rankings.

Bass data, as expressed in the BAIT report from reservoirs with harvest restrictions or length limits, will be biased since the data is a function of the restrictions. Length limits are imposed to increase the number of fish below a minimum length or within a specified length range (slot limit) which should eventually result in a greater supply of bass above the limit. Because all minimum lengths and length ranges will be above the 12-inch limit self-imposed by most tournaments, the restrictions will reduce the total harvest in numbers and possibly pounds. However, those fish weighed in will be larger (longer) by virtue of the minimum length (MLL) or slot limit. In the BAIT Report, length limit lakes should rank high for average weight and near the bottom for percent success and bass per angler-day.

The graphs throughout this report provide a historical record of how your favorite waters have performed in the BAIT Program. A few words of caution, however, these graphs are not restricted to bodies of water with five or more tournaments. Data points for some years may be represented by only a few tournaments. Those situations are restricted to water bodies that have not been included in the Quality Indicator rankings in Table 2. These graphs can be used to predict future fishing quality by looking for trends.

Bass fishing in Alabama has remained at a quality level over the past decade. Members of the BAIT program have a unique opportunity to contribute valuable biological data that helps make our bass fisheries some of the best in the country. BAIT members realize the value of this program, and we appreciate the individuals that provided their tournament catch data. Good luck fishing, and don't forget to take a child with you and introduce them to your sport. They are our future anglers and stewards of Alabama's resources.

## LENGTH LIMITS REMAINED IN EFFECT DURING 2022 ON:

West Point (14-inch MLL on largemouth)

Eufaula (14-inch MLL on largemouth)

Little Bear Creek (13- to 16-inch slot on largemouth)

Smith (13- to 15-inch slot on all black bass)

Harris (13- to 16-inch slot on largemouth)

Pickwick\* (15-inch MLL on largemouth and smallmouth bass)

Wilson\* (15-inch MLL on smallmouth bass)

Wheeler\* (15-inch MLL on smallmouth bass)

Guntersville\* (15-inch MLL on smallmouth and largemouth bass)

\*No more than five of the daily creel limit of 10 black bass may be smallmouth bass.



Table 1. Statewide summary of tournaments for bass clubs participating in the 2022 B.A.I.T. Program.

Lake	No. of tournaments	% of anglers w/ a limit of fish	Total hrs. fished	% largemouth	% spotted bass	% smallmouth	Percent of bass released alive
Aliceville	6	54.0	845	.	.	.	100.0
Bankhead	4	47.0	528	92.0	8.0	0.0	97.5
Bartlett's Ferry	4	37.0	432	21.1	78.9	0.0	98.3
Cedar	1	23.5	136	62.5	37.5	0.0	100.0
Demopolis	11	69.1	1546	45.8	54.2	0.0	99.5
Eufaula	<b>39</b>	28.4	<b>18226</b>	91.2	8.8	0.0	98.0
Gainesville	2	53.9	108	46.7	53.3	0.0	95.6
Guntersville	21	26.0	<b>24972</b>	97.2	2.4	0.4	99.5
Harris	6	73.5	709	15.2	84.8	0.0	98.8
Holt	4	26.7	364	51.7	48.3	0.0	100.0
Jones Bluff	7	38.7	4152	44.2	55.8	0.0	98.5
Jordan	12	58.5	4367	22.1	78.0	0.0	99.3
Lay	14	31.3	5170	58.1	41.9	0.0	98.2
Lewis Smith	9	26.8	9098	11.2	88.8	0.0	99.8
Little Bear	2	61.9	158	12.1	83.3	4.6	97.3
Logan Martin	11	57.2	5834	27.4	72.6	0.0	99.4
Martin	<b>27</b>	<b>78.8</b>	12934	35.9	64.1	0.0	99.1
Millers Ferry	5	<b>78.6</b>	850	50.0	50.0	0.0	99.7
Mitchell	11	59.5	4038	43.6	56.4	0.0	99.4
Mobile Delta	18	39.1	2402	94.7	5.3	0.0	98.2
Neely Henry	15	31.9	9209	64.2	35.8	0.0	97.5
Pickwick	<b>41</b>	27.7	<b>27835</b>	73.3	8.6	18.1	98.2
Tuscaloosa	1	<b>75.0</b>	64	.	.	.	100.0
Upper Bear	2	68.6	304	46.5	53.5	0.0	96.0
Warrior	2	45.5	176	.	.	.	100.0
Weiss	8	38.5	3712	55.1	44.9	0.0	99.5
West Point	13	35.7	4631	26.9	73.1	0.0	99.3
Wheeler	10	63.5	4530	89.2	3.3	7.5	97.8
Wilson	7	66.1	1027	90.5	0.3	9.2	95.8
Yates	1	40.0	80	.	.	.	100.0
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>149853</b>	<b>59.9</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>98.8</b>

Avg. bass weight	Bass over 5lb.	Bass over 8lb.	Avg. big bass weight	Avg. winning weight	% success (anglers w/ at least 1 fish)	Bass per day*	Pounds per day*	Hrs. to catch a bass over 5 lb.
1.82	0	0	4.2	11.8	60.0	4.4	8.0	.
1.71	2	0	4.7	18.0	84.9	3.0	5.2	264.0
1.7	2	0	5.1	11.8	85.2	4.1	6.8	216.0
0.9	0	0	3.4	4.8	82.4	2.9	2.7	.
2.4	19	0	5.2	15.7	83.8	4.8	<b>11.7</b>	<b>90.9</b>
2.2	<b>72</b>	<b>2</b>	5.5	15.6	69.5	2.9	6.5	235.8
1.5	0	0	2.5	9.1	84.6	4.2	6.4	.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>20.7</b>	77.6	2.8	8.2	197.4
1.6	3	0	3.9	11.9	<b>97.6</b>	4.7	7.5	236.3
1.8	0	0	4.0	9.9	75.6	2.8	5.2	.
2.1	11	0	4.5	14.1	82.9	3.4	7.3	377.5
1.9	4	0	4.0	13.1	81.3	4.2	7.9	1091.6
1.9	10	0	4.1	12.1	69.6	3.0	5.6	517.0
1.8	4	0	4.1	14.8	81.9	3.0	5.2	920.5
1.3	0	0	3.8	7.5	85.7	4.7	5.8	.
1.9	20	0	4.4	13.8	88.1	4.1	7.7	291.7
1.5	19	0	4.3	12.3	<b>91.3</b>	<b>5.0</b>	7.4	680.8
2.3	4	0	4.3	13.5	88.1	<b>4.9</b>	<b>11.1</b>	212.5
1.7	0	0	4.1	12.2	88.1	4.6	7.6	.
1.6	6	0	4.3	12.7	79.5	4.0	6.2	376.6
2.0	27	0	4.9	13.7	72.6	2.5	5.0	393.5
<b>2.8</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>18.3</b>	62.2	2.5	6.8	385.9
1.3	0	0	2.4	7.6	87.5	<b>5.2</b>	6.5	.
1.5	2	0	5.1	8.9	<b>91.4</b>	3.3	5.0	<b>152.0</b>
1.5	0	0	3.6	10.6	72.7	3.6	5.4	.
2.2	20	0	<b>5.7</b>	14.3	80.6	3.5	7.5	185.6
1.6	4	0	4.2	10.6	86.4	2.0	3.1	1157.8
<b>2.5</b>	30	0	5.0	<b>15.9</b>	87.5	4.3	<b>10.6</b>	<b>151.0</b>
2.1	1	0	4.3	14.9	85.0	3.5	7.2	1027.0
0.9	0	0	3.1	7.3	80.0	3.6	3.3	.
2.2	354	12	4.8	14.5	79.0	3.2	7.0	334.5

Table 2. Ranking by quality indicators for all reservoirs with five or more tournament reports in the 2022 BAIT Program

Rank	Percent Success	Average Bass Weight	Bass per Angler-Day	Pounds per Angler-Day	Hours per Bass > 5 lbs.	Overall	Value
1	Harris	Guntersville	Martin	Demopolis	Demopolis	Millers Ferry	88
2	Martin	Pickwick	Millers Ferry	Millers Ferry	Wheeler	Demopolis	87
3	Millers Ferry	Wheeler	Demopolis	Wheeler	Weiss	Wheeler	86
4	Logan Martin	Demopolis	Harris	Guntersville	Guntersville	Harris	67
5	Mitchell	Millers Ferry	Wheeler	Aliceville	Millers Ferry	Guntersville	65
6	Wheeler	Eufaula	Mitchell	Jordan	Eufaula	Logan Martin	63
7	West Point	Weiss	Aliceville	Logan Martin	Harris	Weiss	61
8	Wilson	Jones Bluff	Jordan	Mitchell	Logan Martin	Martin	57
9	Demopolis	Wilson	Mobile Delta	Harris	Mobile Delta	Jones Bluff	52
10	Jones Bluff	Neely Henry	Logan Martin	Weiss	Jones Bluff	Jordan	51
11	Lewis Smith	Jordan	Weiss	Martin	Pickwick	Mitchell	50
12	Jordan	Lay	Wilson	Jones Bluff	Neely Henry	Wilson	47
13	Weiss	Logan Martin	Jones Bluff	Wilson	Lay	Eufaula	42
14	Mobile Delta	Aliceville	Lay	Pickwick	Martin	Pickwick	40
15	Guntersville	Lewis Smith	Lewis Smith	Mobile Delta	Lewis Smith	Aliceville	39
16	Neely Henry	Mitchell	Guntersville	Eufaula	Wilson	Mobile Delta	39
17	Lay	Harris	Eufaula	Lay	Jordan	Lay	32
18	Eufaula	West Point	Neely Henry	Lewis Smith	West Point	Lewis Smith	31
19	Pickwick	Mobile Delta	Pickwick	Neely Henry	Aliceville	Neely Henry	30
20	Aliceville	Martin	West Point	West Point	Mitchell	West Point	22

Table 3. Statewide summary of tournaments for bass clubs participating in the 2022 B.A.I.T. Program

Month	No. of tournaments	% of anglers w/ a limit of fish	Avg. bass weight	Bass over 5lb.	Bass over 8lb.	Avg. big bass weight	Avg. winning weight	% success (anglers w/ at least 1 fish)	Bass per day*	Pounds per day*	Hrs. to catch a bass over 5 lb.
Jan	17	<b>56.8</b>	2.1	20	0	4.7	13.6	80.3	<b>4.0</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>212.4</b>
Feb	<b>38</b>	23.9	<b>2.5</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>15.4</b>	78.5	2.6	6.5	382.7
Mar	<b>42</b>	<b>55.6</b>	2.1	<b>70</b>	<b>1</b>	4.8	14.8	<b>84.7</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>8.6</b>	228.6
Apr	<b>54</b>	45.1	2.1	<b>103</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>16.6</b>	76.9	3.7	7.9	230.8
May	32	<b>53.9</b>	2.1	49	0	4.9	14.6	<b>83.7</b>	3.9	<b>8.4</b>	251.8
Jun	33	45.7	<b>2.4</b>	16	<b>1</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>15.5</b>	77.4	3.5	<b>8.3</b>	702.5
Jul	9	35.3	1.9	5	0	4.4	12.4	71.4	3.3	6.2	<b>217.1</b>
Aug	14	32.6	1.7	5	0	4.2	9.2	80.3	3.1	5.3	<b>214.5</b>
Sep	15	18.6	<b>2.2</b>	10	0	4.5	14.2	68.3	1.8	3.9	828.5
Oct	<b>38</b>	26.1	1.9	14	0	4.1	12.7	77.2	2.8	5.2	1166.3
Nov	15	46.8	1.8	11	0	4.5	14.3	75.7	2.4	4.3	604.4
Dec	7	50.0	1.4	1	0	3.8	8.8	<b>87.0</b>	<b>4.2</b>	5.9	763.0

\*A Day is defined as one angler fishing for 10 hours.

TOP THREE VALUES IN BOLD



Table 4. Clubs supporting the 2022 B.A.I.T. annual report

Club Name	City	State	Representative
Alabama B.A.S.S. Nation	Birmingham	AL	Eddie Plemons
Alabama Bass Federation	Prattville	AL	Jim Sparrow
Alabama BASS Nation - Southern Collegiate BASS Open Series	Headland	AL	Jeffrey McCord
Alabama BASS Nation High School Trail	Auburn	AL	Darrel High
Alabama BASS Nation Junior Division	Auburn	AL	Darrel High
Alabama Bass Trail	Decatur	AL	Kay Donaldson
Alabama Bass Trail 100 Series	Decatur	AL	Kay Donaldson
Alabama Classic Bass Tournament	Eufaula	AL	Sam Williams
Alabama Student Angler Bass Fishing Association (Statewide)	Wetumpka	AL	Barry Corbman
Ala-Tenn Bass Club	Lawrenceburg	TN	Jonathan Edwards
Alexander City Bassmasters	Alexander City	AL	Andrew Vitu
American Bass Anglers	Athens	AL	Floyd Vaughn
American Bass Anglers AFT Georgia-Eufaula (Div. 12)	Eufaula	AL	Danny Christ
American Bass Anglers Couples (Div. 10)	Eufaula	AL	Danny Christ
Auburn Bassmasters	Auburn	AL	Mike Freeman
Bay Area Bassmasters	Millry	AL	Joey Smith
Brookwood Bass Club	Tuscaloosa	AL	Jim Steadman
Carbon Hill Bass Club	Eldridge	AL	Mark Edmonds
Christian Bassmen of Montgomery	Wetumpka	AL	Brian Selix
City of Athens Relay for Life	Athens	AL	Holly Hollman
City of Gadsden	Southside	AL	Eddie Jackson
Coosa River Team Trail LLC.	Lincoln	AL	Eddie Jackson
Dannelly Air National Guard (DANG Bass Club)	Prattville	AL	Jim Sparrow
Deep South Bass Club	Irvington	AL	Jimmie McLain
Delta Family Bass Tournament	Williamson	GA	Anthony O'Connell
Gadsden Bassmasters	Piedmont	AL	Jay McCain
Georgia DNR	Social Circle	GA	Clint Peacock
Gulf Coast Patriots Bass Club	Pace	FL	Lisa Cox
Heartland Anglers	Toney	AL	David Lott
Lake Guntersville Bassmasters	Madison	AL	Charles Rehage
Miss. Div. Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks	Purvis	MS	Stan Crider
MLF Abu Garcia College Fishing	Benton	KY	Kevin Hunt
MLF Phoenix Bass Fishing League	Benton	KY	Robert Evans
MLF Toyota Series	Benton	KY	Mark McWha
MLF US High School Open	Benton	KY	Kevin Hunt
MLF5	Benton	KY	Leroy Hensley
Money Monday's Bass Fishing Tournament	Dutton	AL	Christy Vaughn
National Bass Trail (GA/AL)	Cataula	GA	Blaine Souerwine
Northport Bass Club	Tuscaloosa	AL	Doug Robertson
OGS Tournament Trails	Auburn	AL	Mike Freeman
Pals & Gals	Tuscaloosa	AL	Tony Johnson
Tenn River Bass Club	Burnsville	MS	Richard Phillips
The Eufaula Angler	Headland	AL	Bill Knight
West Alabama Tournament Trail	Gallion	AL	John McAlpine
XtremeBass	Gallion	AL	John McAlpine

Alabama's Top 10 Tournaments for Big Bass in 2022			
Club	Lake	Date	No ≥ 5lbs.
American Bass Anglers	Eufaula	3/4	12
Coosa River Team Trail LLC.	Logan Martin	3/26	12
Coosa River Team Trail LLC.	Neely Henry	4/9	12
Alabama Bass Trail	Wheeler	5/21	12
MLF Phoenix Bass Fishing League	Guntersville	2/5	11
MLF Phoenix Bass Fishing League	Wheeler	4/10	11
Coosa River Team Trail LLC.	Weiss	3/5	10
Miss. Div. Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks	Pickwick	2/5	9
Alabama Bass Trail	Jones Bluff	4/9	7
City of Gadsden	Neely Henry	4/2	7
Alabama's Top 10 Tournaments for Single-Day Winning Weight in 2022			
Club	Lake	Date	Weight
MLF Abu Garcia College Fishing	Guntersville	3/4	29.75
Miss. Div. Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks	Pickwick	2/5	28.72
MLF Phoenix Bass Fishing League	Guntersville	2/5	26.88
Coosa River Team Trail LLC.	Neely Henry	4/9	25.09
Alabama Bass Trail 100 Series	Pickwick	11/19	25.03
Alabama Bass Trail	Guntersville	6/11	24.57
Alabama Bass Trail	Wheeler	5/21	24.27
MLF Phoenix Bass Fishing League	Wheeler	4/10	24.13
The Eufaula Angler	Eufaula	9/17	23.87
American Bass Anglers AFT Georgia-Eufaula (Div. 12)	Eufaula	11/13	23.80
Records Set in 2022 (36 Year History of B.A.I.T. Reporting)		(Lakes with 5 or more reports)	
Waterbody	Record	2022	Old Record
Demopolis	Hours to Catch a 5lb Bass	90.94	121.88
Demopolis	Pounds Per Angler-Day	11.69	8.74
Demopolis	Bass Per Angler-Day	4.81	4.14
Demopolis	Average Fish Weight	2.43	2.33
Jones Bluff	Average Fish Weight	2.14	2.10
Millers Ferry	Pounds Per Angler-Day	11.09	10.24
Mitchell	Bass Per Angler-Day	4.58	4.51
Wheeler	Pounds Per Angler-Day	10.60	10.55
Wheeler	Average Fish Weight	2.45	2.41
Alabama's Top 10 Tournament "Big Fish" from 2022 B.A.I.T. Reports			
Club	Lake	Date	Big Fish
The Eufaula Angler	Eufaula	4/15	10.44
MLF Phoenix Bass Fishing League	Guntersville	2/5	9.69
Alabama Student Angler Bass Fishing Association (Statewide)	Guntersville	4/9	9.14*
Heartland Anglers	Guntersville	4/10	8.94
MLF Toyota Series	Guntersville	2/22	8.75
Alabama Student Angler Bass Fishing Association (Statewide)	Pickwick	4/23	8.51
MLF Toyota Series	Guntersville	2/23	8.44*
The Eufaula Angler	Eufaula	6/4	8.34
Georgia DNR	Guntersville	3/19	8.31
MLF Toyota Series	Guntersville	2/24	8.13

\* Indicates two or more bass over eight pounds weighed in



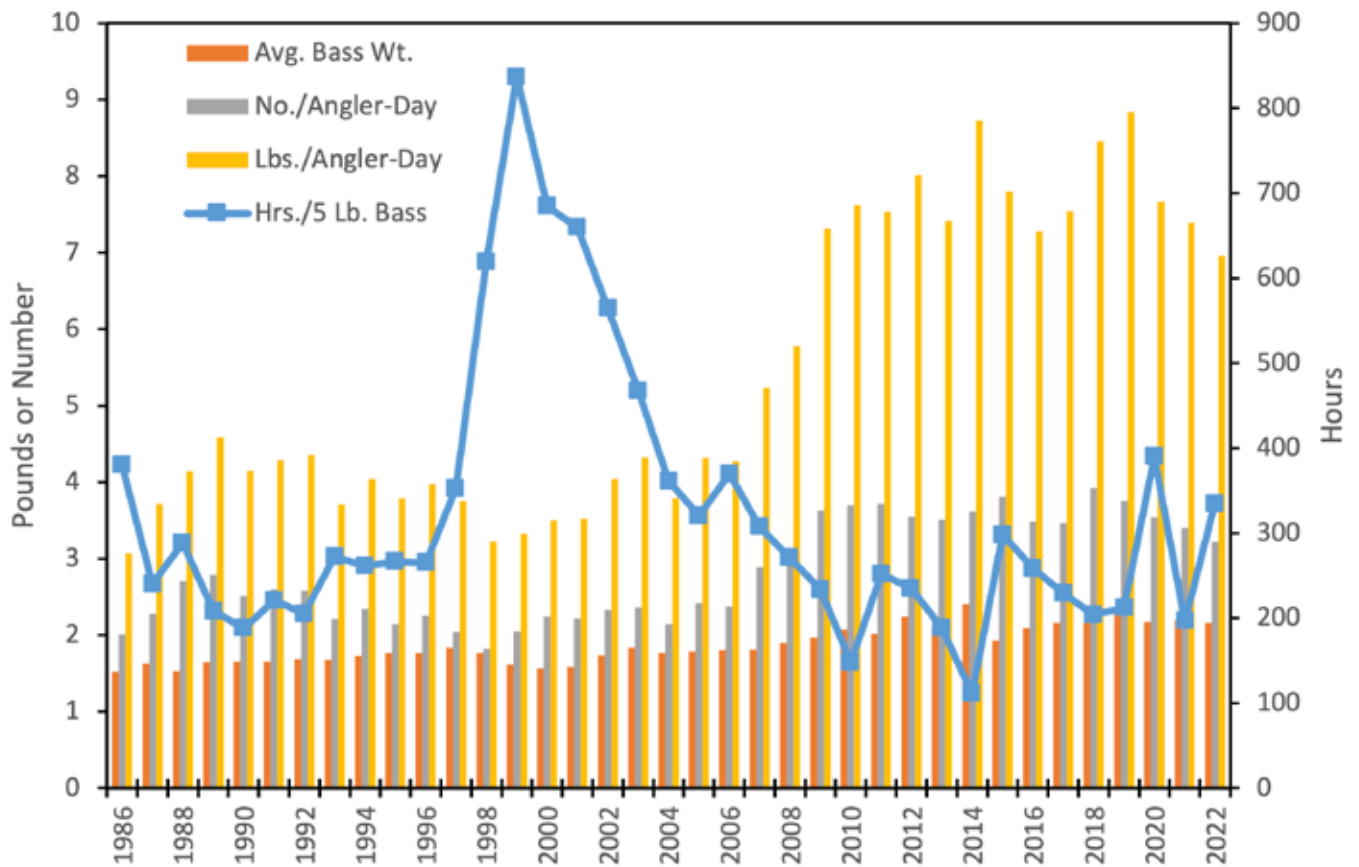
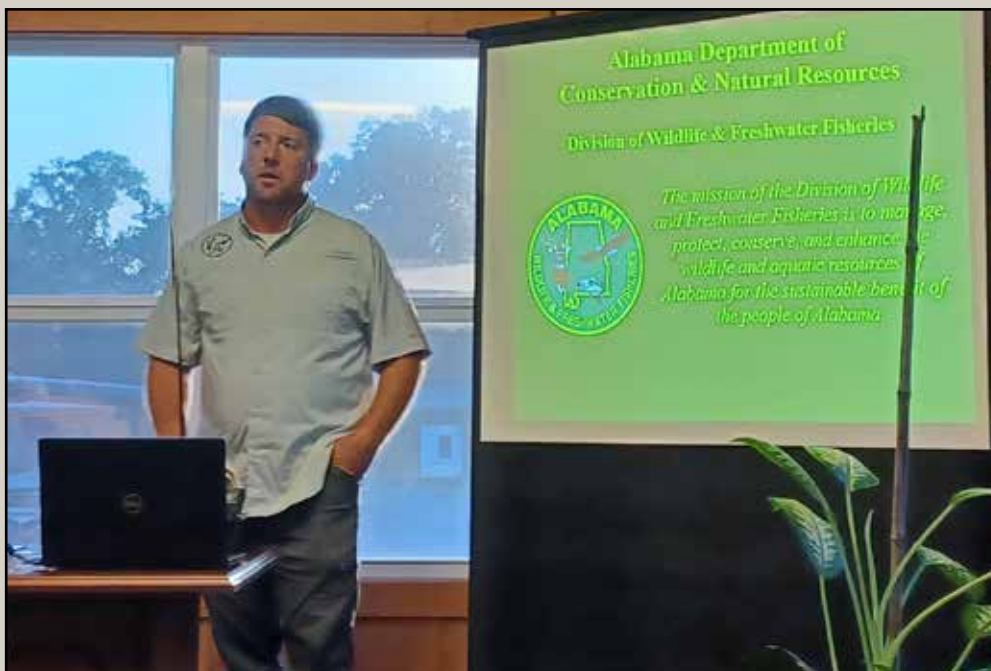


Figure 1: Annual Catch for BAIT Tournaments 1986-2022

## BIOLOGIST CAN PRESENT TOPICS AT YOUR LOCAL BASS CLUB MEETINGS



“Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division employees on staff with the Fisheries Section are willing to present various fisheries topics at your local bass club/organization meetings. This is a great way for our fisheries staff do get to meet some of our clubs represented in the BAIT program and to create a relationship with the angling public. Clubs/organizations need to be BAIT members in order to be eligible for a presentation. Submit your tournament reports to become a member.”



# ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

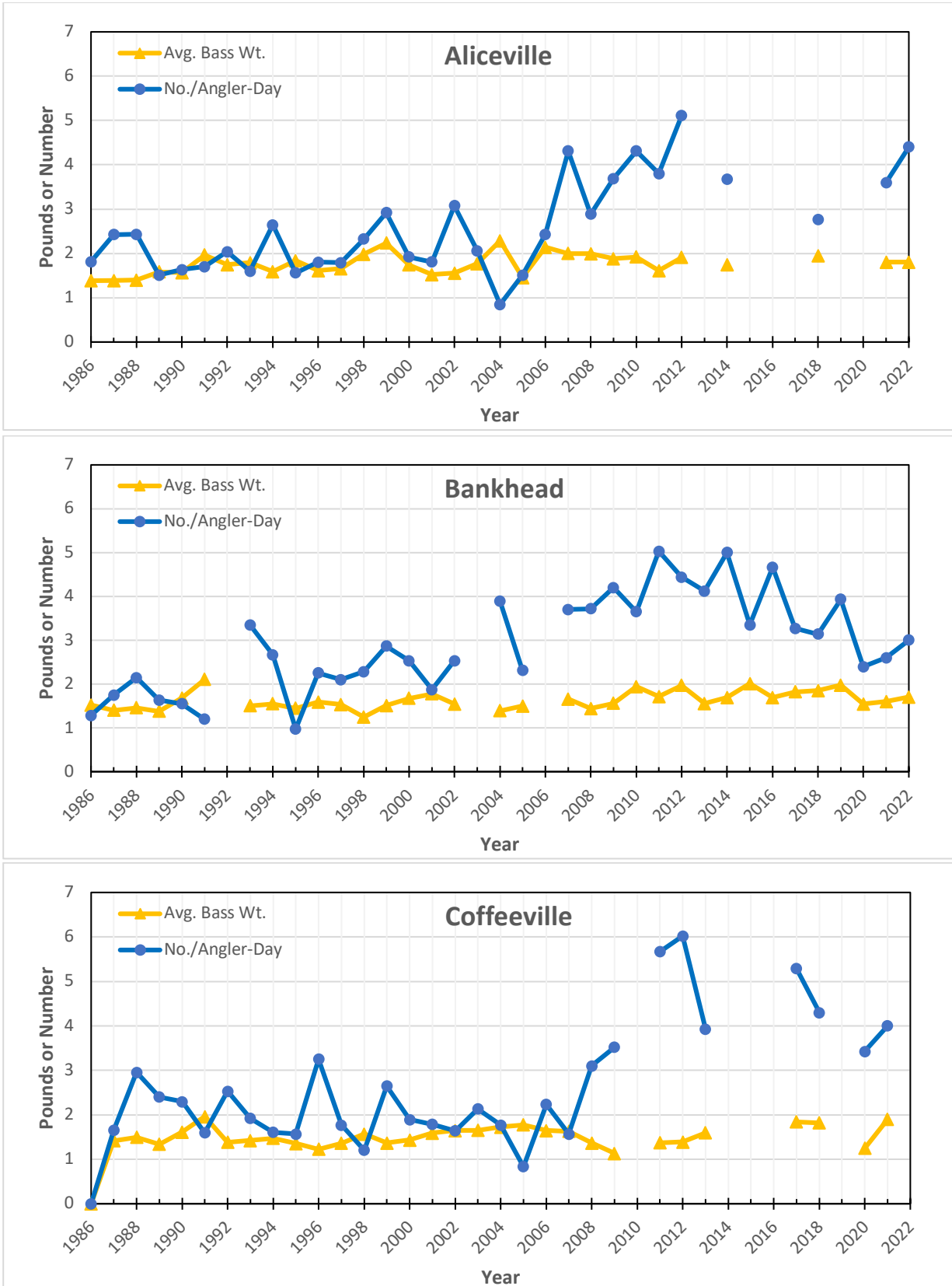


Figure 2. Annual Quality Indicators for Aliceville, Bankhead, and Coffeeville through 2022.



# ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

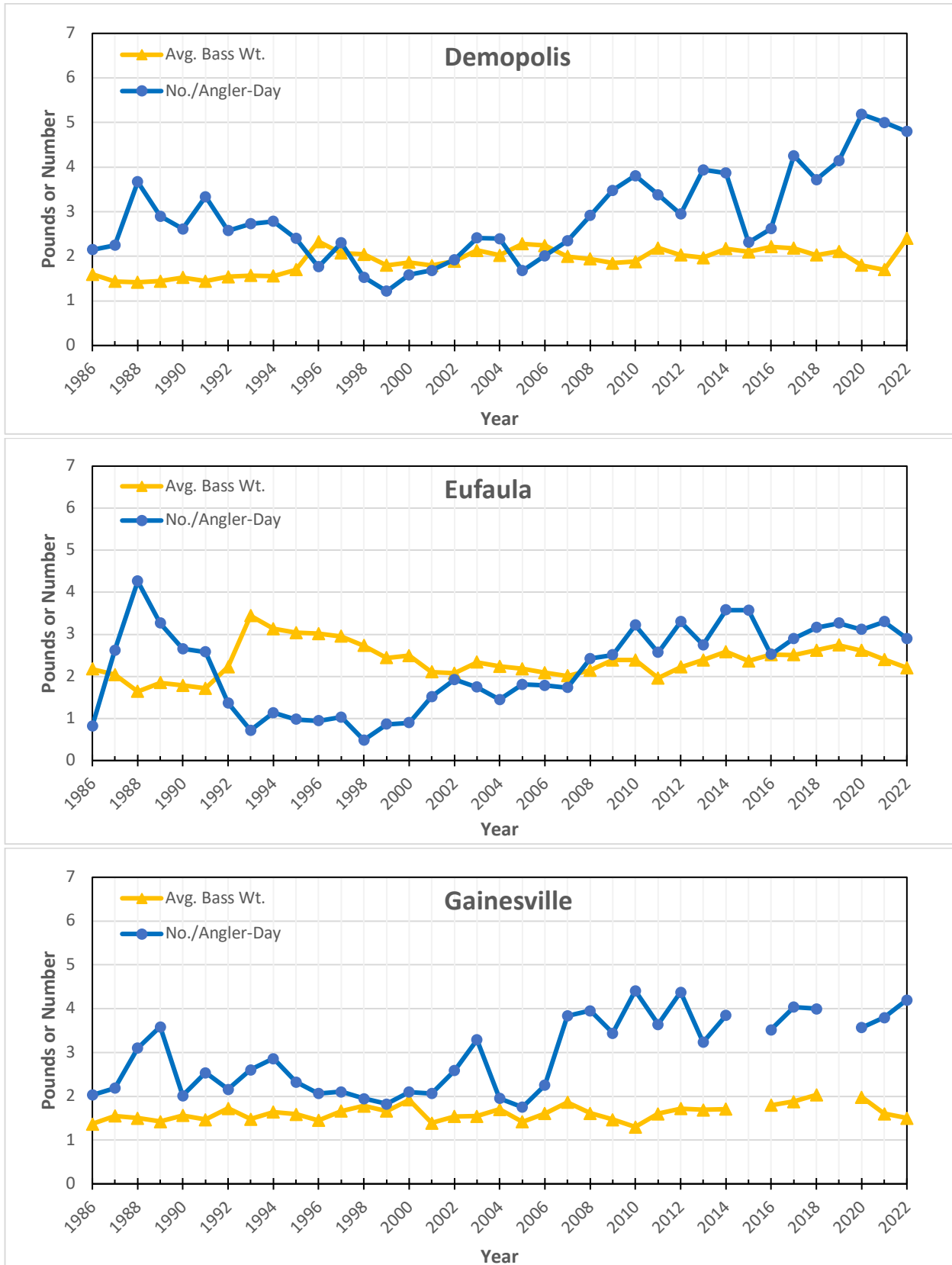


Figure 3. Annual Quality Indicators for Demopolis, Eufaula, and Gainesville through 2022.



# ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

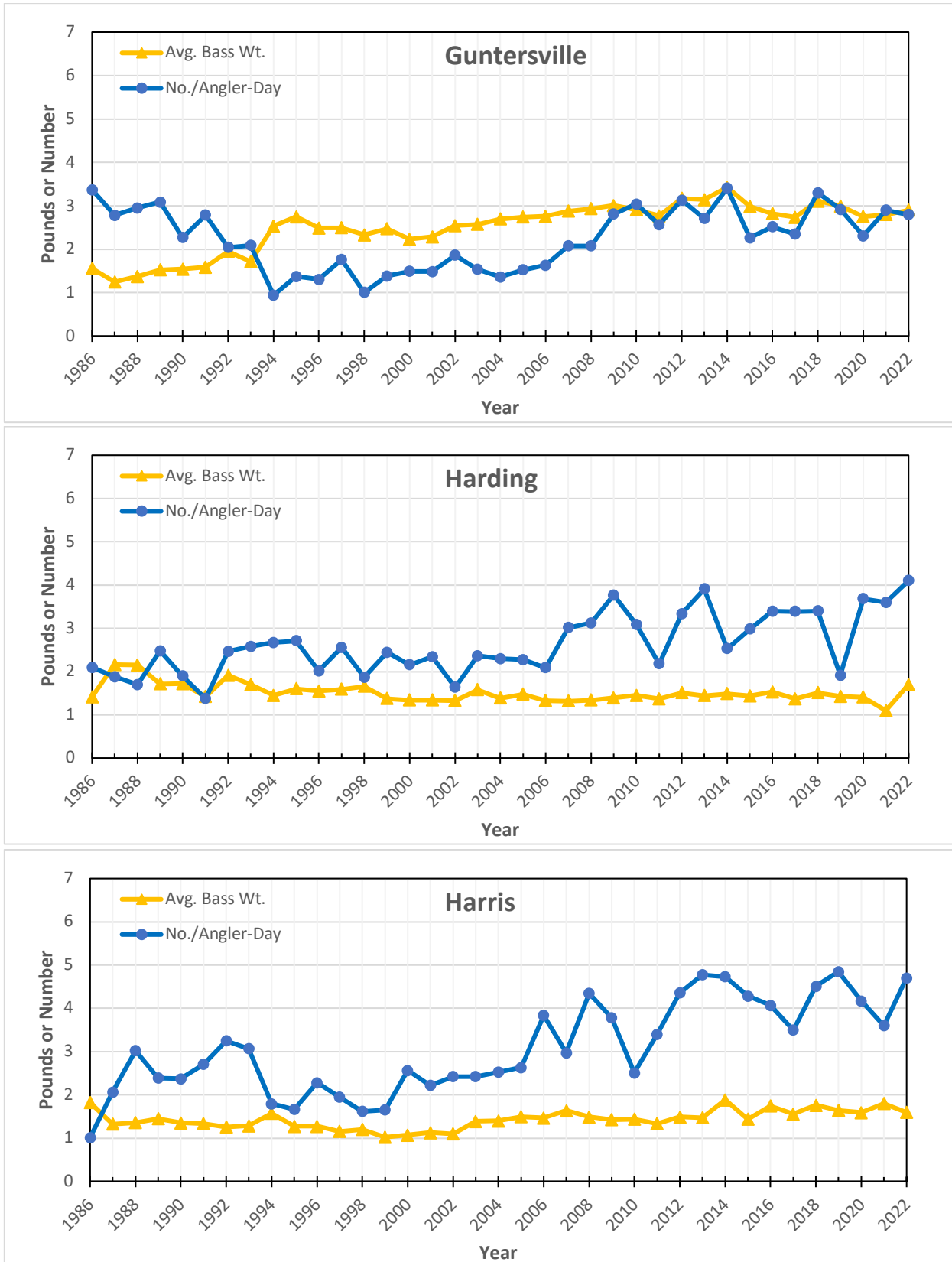


Figure 4. Annual Quality Indicators for Guntersville, Harding, and Harris through 2022.



# ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

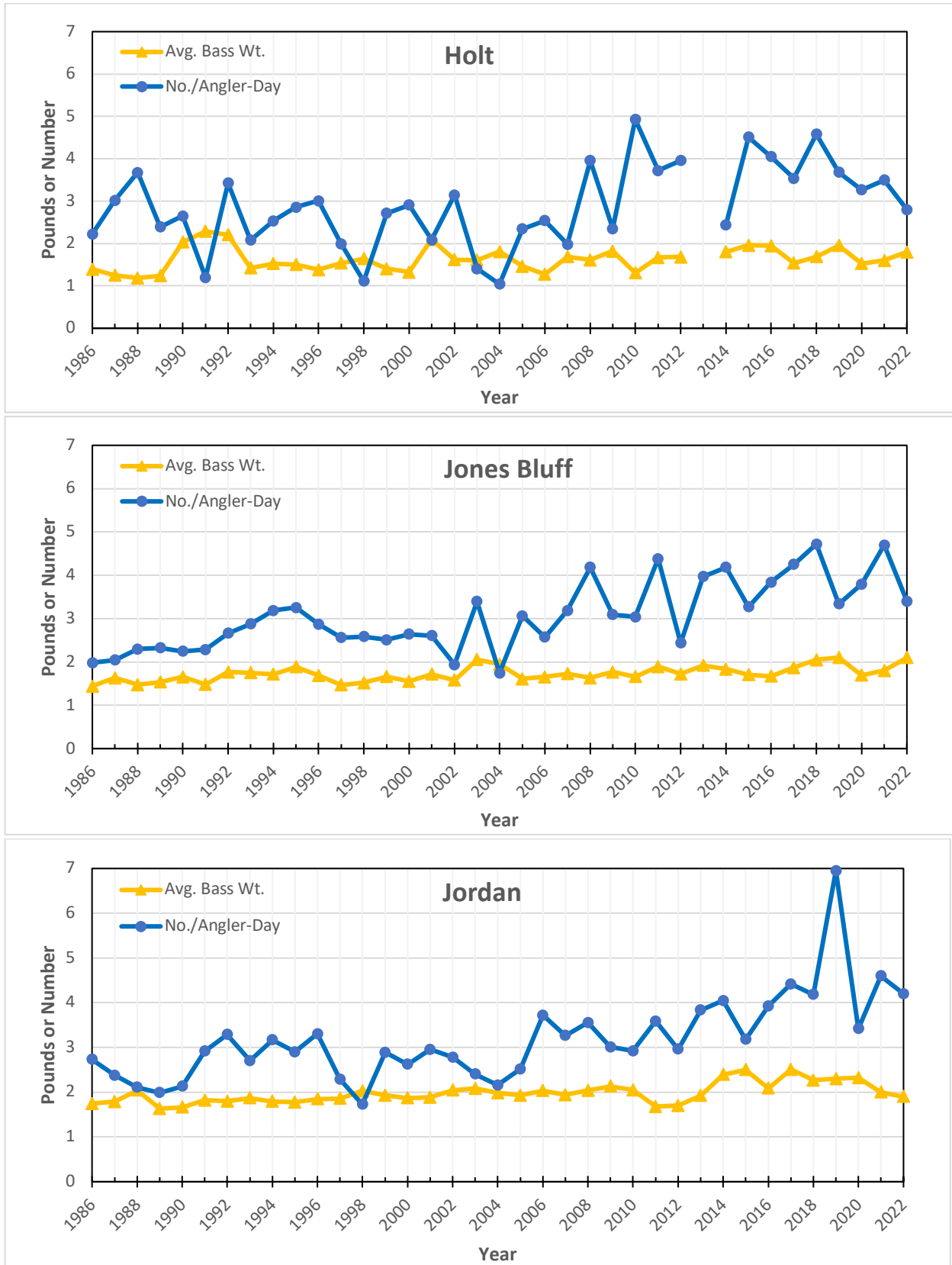


Figure 5. Annual Quality Indicators for Holt, Jones Bluff, and Jordan through 2022.



# ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

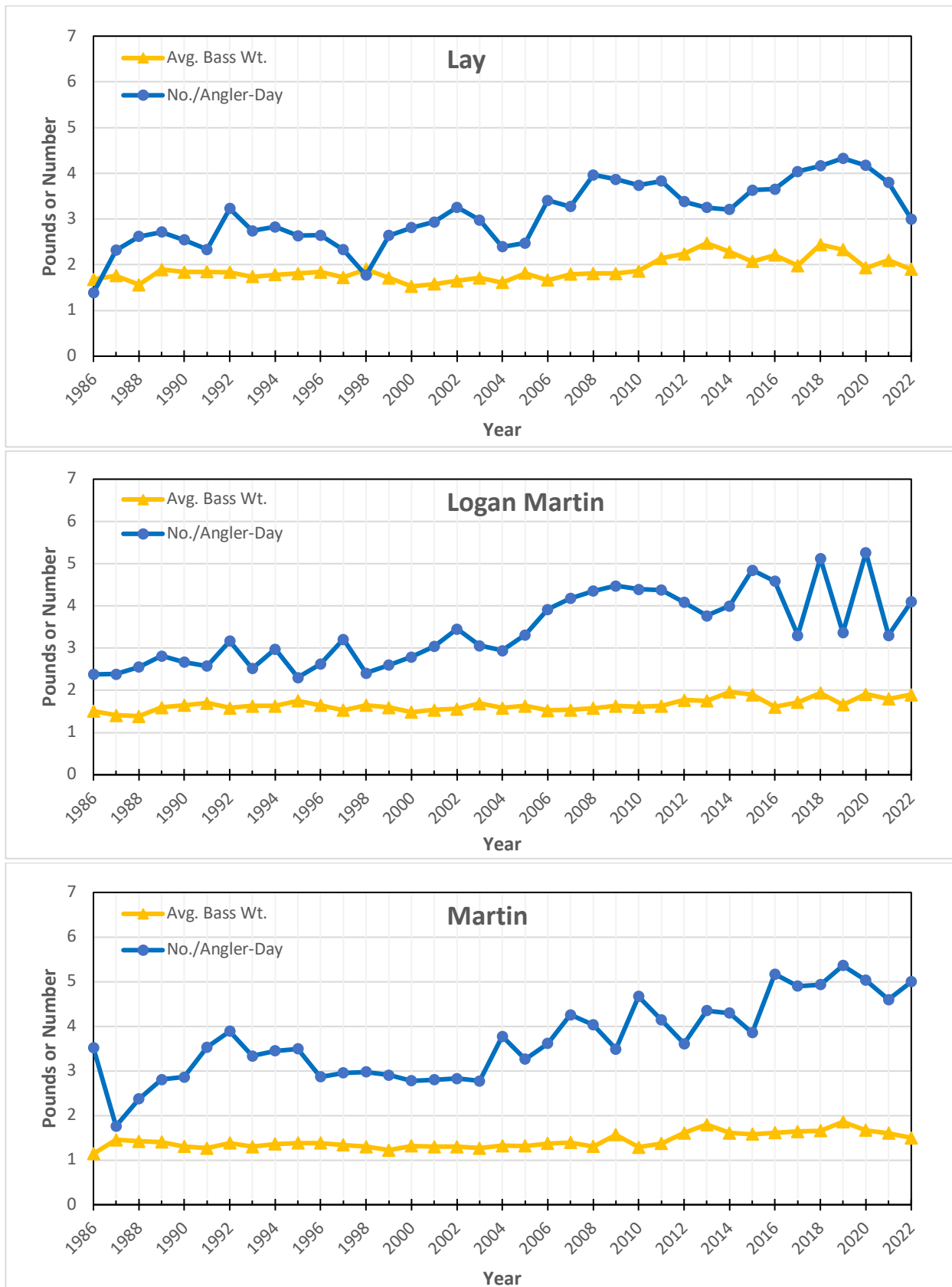


Figure 6. Annual Quality Indicators for Lay, Logan Martin, and Martin through 2022.



# ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

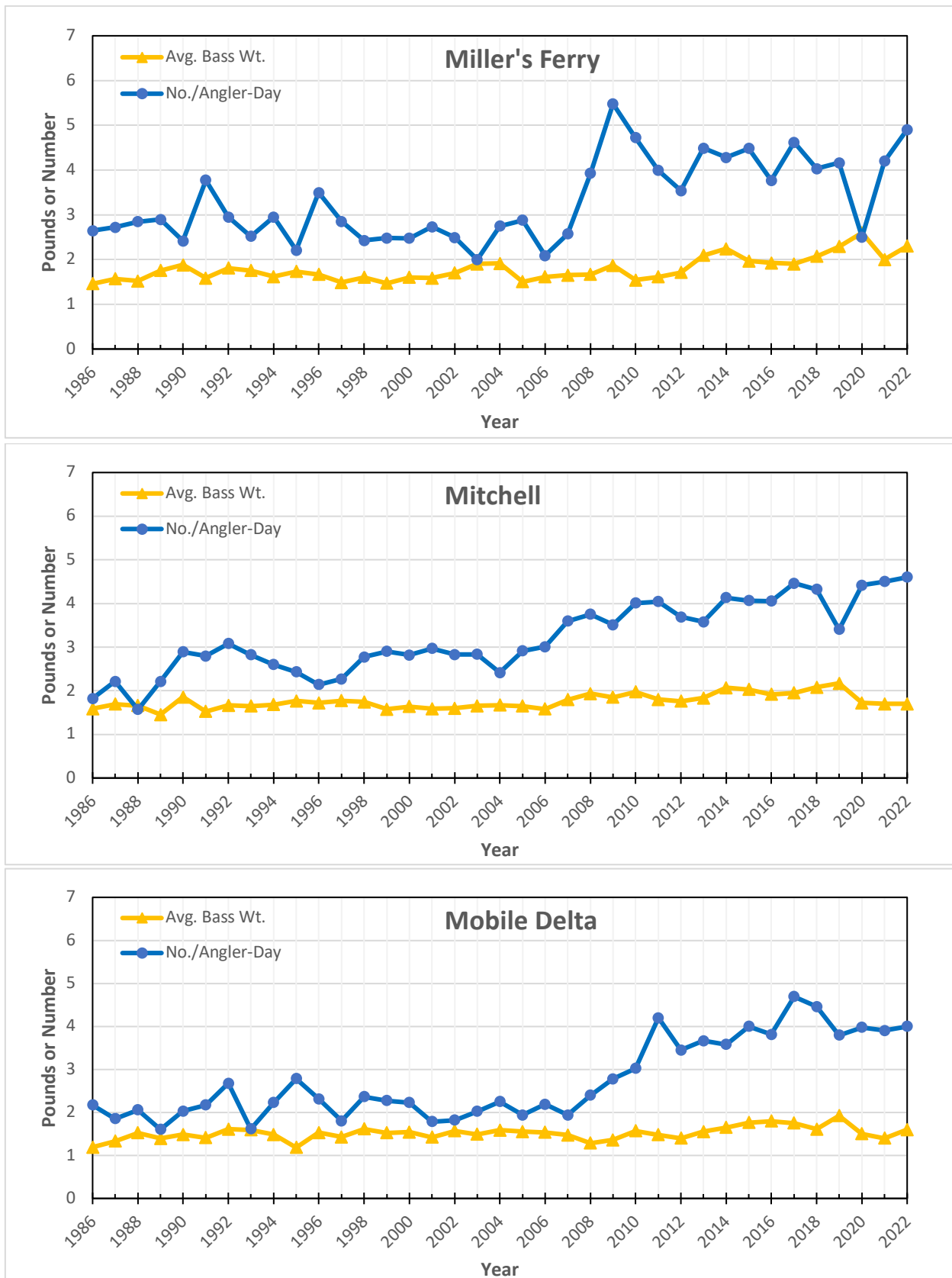


Figure 7. Annual Quality Indicators for Miller's Ferry, Mitchell, and Mobile Delta through 2022.



# ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

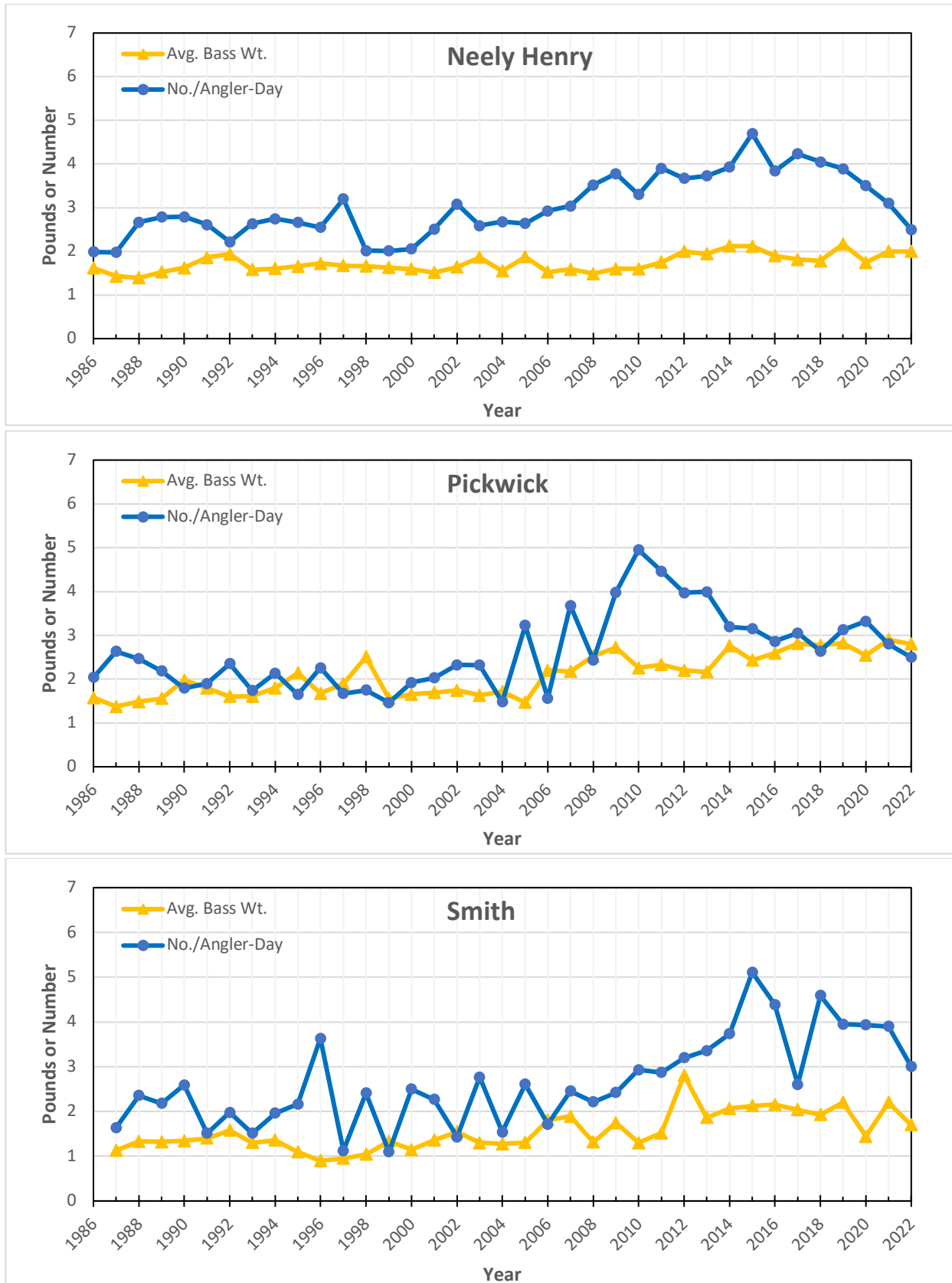


Figure 8. Annual Quality Indicators for Neely Henry, Pickwick, and Smith through 2022.





# ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

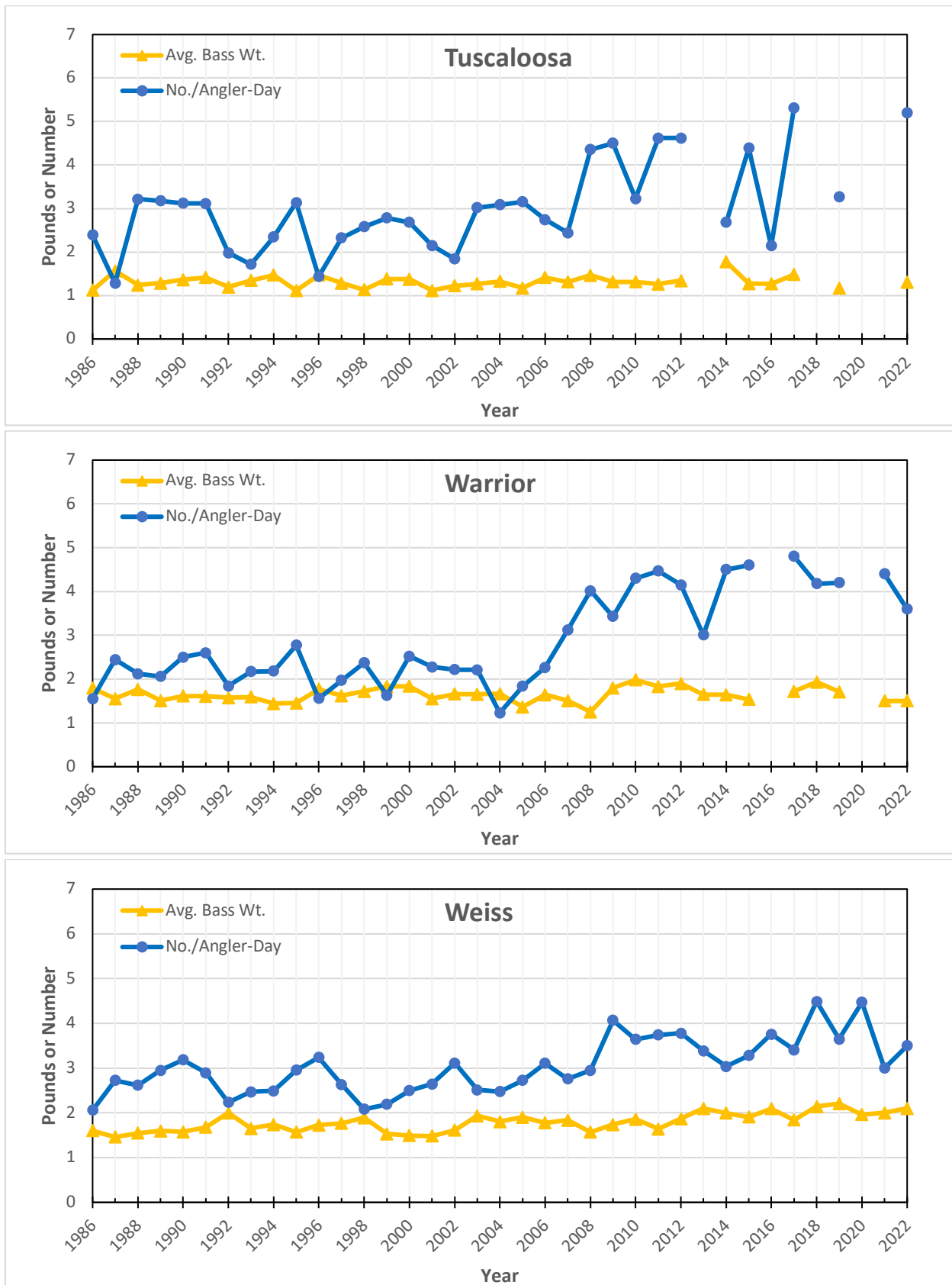


Figure 9. Annual Quality Indicators for Tuscaloosa, Warrior, and Weiss through 2022.



# ANNUAL QUALITY INDICATORS

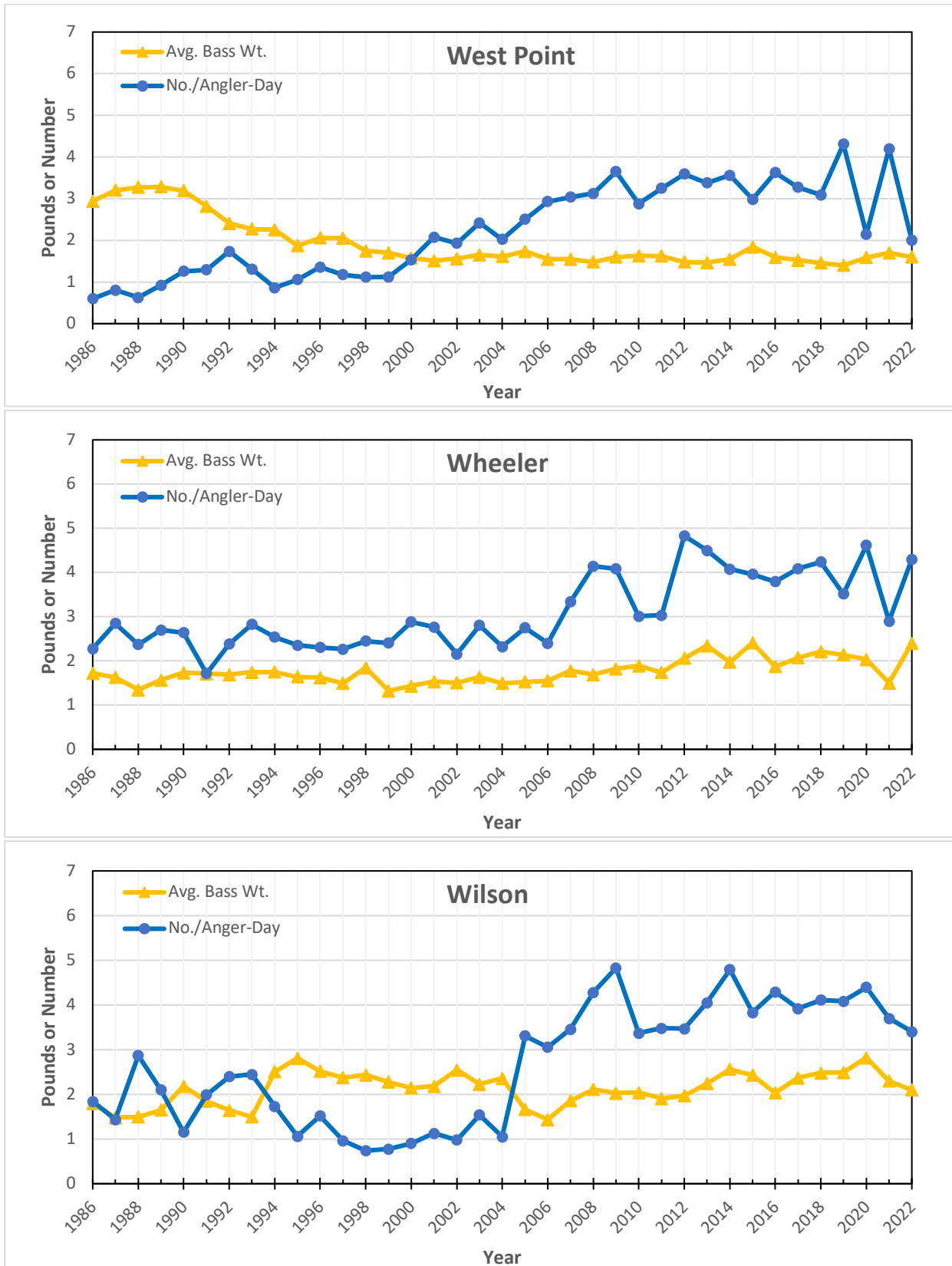


Figure 10. Annual Quality Indicators for West Point, Wheeler, and Wilson through 2022.



# BAIT PARTICIPATION

Membership in the BAIT program is not a requirement for tournaments and clubs, but the program is only as good as the amount of tournament data that is submitted by the public and the amount of members/participation we receive every year. The BAIT program provides valuable information to all bass anglers that enjoy fishing our public rivers and reservoirs and assists tournament directors in scheduling tournament trails based off quality of fishing at individual reservoirs. Additionally, the program provides the public a unique opportunity to be involved in helping provide data by partnering with WFF. The fishing data provided assists WFF fisheries biologists in management decisions to help sustain quality reservoir fisheries statewide.

From 2001 to 2020, we witnessed an alarming trend of steady decline in the number of BAIT tournament reports being submitted. However, 2022 saw the most BAIT tournament report submissions since 2018 (Figure 11). Additionally, the amount of fishing hours reported in 2022 is the most reported since 2001. Overall, when compared to historical participation based off the number of BAIT tournament reports, participation in 2022 was low. There is still plenty of room for improvement. With everybody's help promoting the program, the goal is for participation to continue to increase. The shortage of data makes it difficult to summarize biological and fishing data to provide to the members. Similar to the 2020 and 2021 reports, we were forced to remove the monthly reservoir tournament summary due in part to the shortage of data in the 2022 report.

An interesting trend the historical participation data demonstrates is beginning around 2012, a major increase in fishing hours was reported. This is based on a comparison of the reported number of fishing hours to the number of BAIT tournament reports submitted. In 2022, that discrepancy of fishing hours to number of BAIT tournament reports continued to grow. This data continues to suggest that we are either receiving more reports from larger tournaments, participation from the smaller bass clubs has declined, or a combination of

both. While we greatly appreciate the support that our larger tournaments provide to the BAIT program, the data provided throughout the year by smaller bass clubs are equally important, providing many datapoints throughout the year. Large tournaments can often supply a large amount of data on a single day which can be greatly influenced by the weather on that day/weekend. Smaller tournaments often provide data more distributed throughout the year which can help to provide a clearer picture of the fisheries in our reservoirs and rivers. This assumption is based on the fact there are more small club tournaments than there are large tournaments and a small club makes a data point based off fewer anglers which helps to distribute effort throughout the year. It is important to understand that no club or tournament trail is too small to be included.

We need your help to promote the program and urge other tournament directors and club presidents to become BAIT members. Your support helps WFF provide information that best represents the bass fisheries in Alabama's public waters. Most of the information requested through the BAIT program is information already collected by tournament directors and club presidents. Current BAIT members understand the value of this program, and we greatly appreciate the individuals that provide their tournament catch data. We hope you continue to see the benefit of supporting the BAIT program and hope for your continued support.

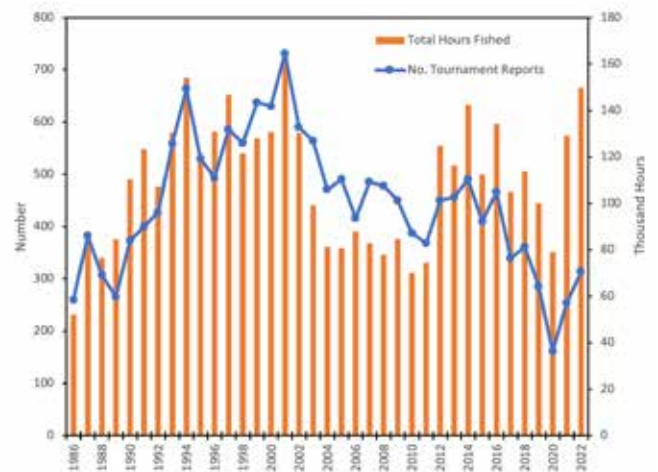


Figure 11: Annual Catch for BAIT Tournaments 1986-2022



# BOATING ACCESS AREA IMPROVEMENTS

WFF maintains 116 public boating access areas statewide. Several of these facilities received upgrades during 2022. For more information about freshwater boating access in Alabama, visit [www.outdooralabama.com/freshwater-boating-access](http://www.outdooralabama.com/freshwater-boating-access).



## Demopolis Public Boat Ramp (Demopolis)

WFF partnered with the City of Demopolis on a major facility renovation and expansion of the Demopolis City Landing. Part of the facility is located on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property sub-leased to WFF through the City of Demopolis. The remaining property is leased to WFF from the City of Demopolis. The facility was completed in 2022, and includes a new 60-foot-wide, four-lane launching slab, paved parking for 58 truck and trailers with make ready and tie down zones, 240-foot aluminum wharf style floating pier, and several acres of greenspace for overflow parking. The facility was designed to accommodate most local and regional fishing tournaments on Demopolis Reservoir. The facility is American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. The City of Demopolis handles routine maintenance of the facility.



## Claysville Public Boat Ramp (Guntersville)

WFF installed a new floating access pier at Claysville Public Boat Ramp. WFF partnered financially with the City of Guntersville for the upgrade. The new access pier is fully ADA compliant along with the entire boating access facility. The City of Guntersville handles routine maintenance at the facility.



## Eureka Public Boat Ramp (Alabama River)

WFF partnered with Monroe County on a facility renovation and expansion of the Eureka Public Boat Ramp. The property containing the facility was leased to WFF from Monroe County. The renovation began in the fall of 2022, and will include a new paved parking area for 14 truck and trailers. This access area serves as the only public access point to the Alabama River in southern Monroe County. The concrete parking lot will prevent erosion during times of high water and will be easy to clean and maintain. The facility will be ADA compliant when completed. Monroe County will handle routine maintenance of the facility.





# BOATING ACCESS AREA IMPROVEMENTS

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## Mink Creek Public Boat Ramp (Guntersville)

WFF partnered with the City of Scottsboro on a major facility renovation and expansion of the Mink Creek Public Boat Ramp. The property containing the facility was deeded to WFF from the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The renovation began in the summer of 2022 and includes a new 30-foot-wide, two-lane launching slab and paved parking for 40 truck and trailers with associated make ready and tie-down areas. The existing pier was relocated to make room for the expanded launching slab. The facility was designed to accommodate most local fishing tournaments on Guntersville Reservoir. The facility will be ADA compliant when completed. The City of Scottsboro will handle routine maintenance of the facility.



## Tom Jackson Park Public Boat Ramp (Guntersville)

WFF installed a new floating access pier at Tom Jackson Park Public Boat Ramp. WFF partnered financially with the City of Guntersville for the upgrade. The new access pier is fully ADA compliant along with the entire boating access facility. The City of Guntersville handles routine maintenance at the facility.



## B.B. Comer Public Boat Ramp (Guntersville)

WFF recently expanded the access pier at the B.B. Comer Public Boat Ramp. This is a popular access area for anglers. The original pier was not sufficient for the current boating demand.





## TOURNAMENT PERMITS

WFF does not require tournament organizations to secure tournament permits for any of their events. However, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) Marine Patrol requires a Marine Event Permit for any event (including bass tournaments) with more than 100 boats participating. Applications can be obtained from the ALEA Marine Patrol free of charge by calling (334) 242-3630. The application must be completed and submitted to them at least 15 days prior to the event.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also requires a Special Use Permit for bass tournaments with more than 10 boats that are held on any of their reservoirs. Corps permits must be submitted 30 days prior to the event and can be obtained from your local project office or from their website at [www.sam.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Recreation/](http://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Recreation/).

## U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS ANNUAL DAY USE PERMITS

Annual passes can be obtained from the guard station at all park entrances, or by contacting your local U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Management office. These passes allow you to use any boat ramp operated and maintained by the Corps of Engineers, nationwide. The fee for these permits is \$40 and is good for one year from the date of purchase. Local and regional offices are located on the next page.

## TRAILER TOURNAMENTS

Any tournaments where rules permit anglers to fish in various bodies of water and then trailer their catch to a particular location for a weigh-in where fish are then released alive into one body of water are in direct violation of Alabama's Public Water Stocking (220-2-.129) regulation. Moving live fish from one lake to another can have a number of detrimental consequences; examples include 1) moving fish caught from lakes with consumption advisories into lakes without advisories, 2) introducing genetically inferior strains of spotted bass into our world-class spotted bass (Alabama Bass) fisheries of the Coosa River, 3) introducing diseases such as the large-mouth bass virus which decimated many of our bass fisheries in Alabama beginning in the late-1990s, and 4) introducing non-native, potentially harmful species into lakes where they do not currently exist.

It is important for anglers to know that only the act of releasing fish into a public body of water other than where they were caught is illegal. If tournament organizations want to continue to offer these types of tournaments to their competitors, they are certainly free to do so but only if the fish are released in the reservoirs from which they came. If you participate in one of these tournaments, do not release your fish into a lake where they weren't caught. Your fish can be eaten, donated to a charitable organization such as an orphanage, or returned to the reservoir where they were caught.

## CATCH-AND-RELEASE

Access area creel surveys conducted by WFF fisheries biologists have revealed a significant decline in bass harvest rates statewide. Approximately 95% of all bass caught from public waters are released.

As the catch-and-release ethic has evolved during recent decades due to intense promotion by tournament organizations and participants, many well-intentioned anglers have become so passionate about this angling ethic that they feel a moral obligation to release every bass they catch. This often leads anglers to make some poor choices with regard to the handling of their fish.

An unfortunate consequence of catch-and-release is that tournament anglers are often so focused on releasing their fish alive that they sometimes fail to recognize when a fish is too stressed to survive. Making this mistake can result in numerous dead fish floating in the water around the boat ramp the following day. The number of complaints received by ADCNR accusing tournament anglers of killing and wasting fish during organized bass tournaments is on the rise. Please encourage your anglers to be aware of this growing problem and consider adopting tournament rules that discourage the release of fish in poor condition following bass tournaments.

### U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS LOCAL AND REGIONAL OFFICES

**Alabama River Lakes Site Office**  
Hayneville, AL  
(334) 872-9554

**Millers Ferry Resource Office**  
Camden, AL  
(334) 682-4244

**Holt Resource Office**  
Peterson, AL  
(205) 553-9373

**Black Warrior/Tombigbee Project  
Management Office**  
Tuscaloosa, AL  
(205) 752-3571

**Demopolis Site Office**  
Demopolis, AL  
(334) 289-3540

**Tennessee-Tombigbee  
Waterway Office**  
Carrollton, AL  
(205) 373-8705



# BAIT 2022



Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
64 N. Union St., Montgomery, AL 36130

[OutdoorAlabama.com](http://OutdoorAlabama.com)