

2022 CRAPPIE TOURNAMENT SUMMARY



FISHERIES BUREAU



MISSISSIPPI WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

1505 Eastover Drive
Jackson, MS 39211



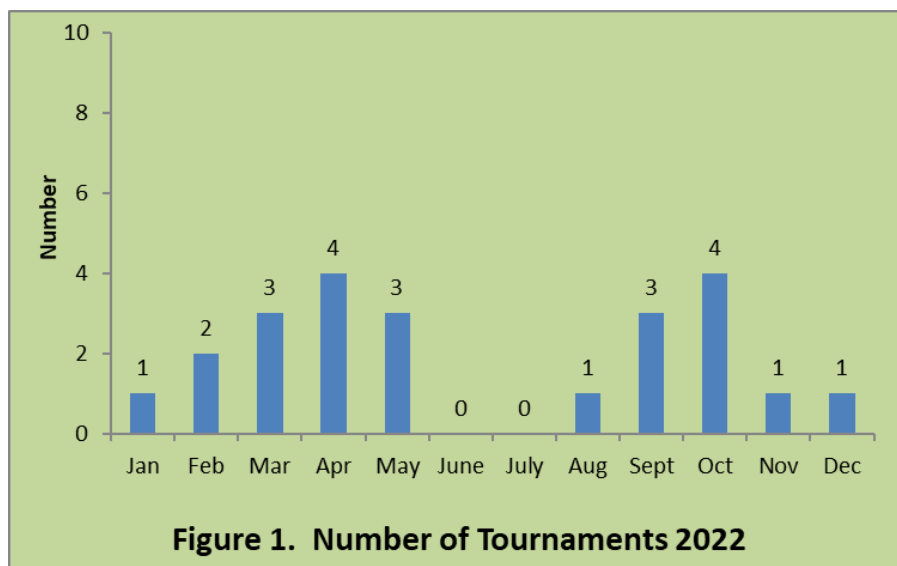
Your purchase of fishing equipment and motor boat fuels supports Sport Fish Restoration and boating access facilities.

In 2011, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) biologists began to archive information from crappie tournaments throughout the state. These data should prove helpful in managing Mississippi's most popular sport fish, as well as provide crappie anglers with insights for what to expect at different lakes for future tournaments.

N2 (hours fished to catch a crappie 2-pounds or larger) was changed in 2020 to more accurately reflect fishing quality. In events where no fish \geq 2-pounds were caught, N2 was assigned a value of 1000 hours. That figure was averaged with other N2 results for events on that lake. Like golf, a lower N2 score is better.

A "tournament" was identified as such if daily results for two or three-day events (or pro and amateur divisions) were reported separately or not. Most tournaments were one day. All events had 7-crappie daily bag limits per team. MDWFP obtained results from twenty-three tournaments at ten different lakes from six sources (see acknowledgements). The most notable findings in 2022 were:

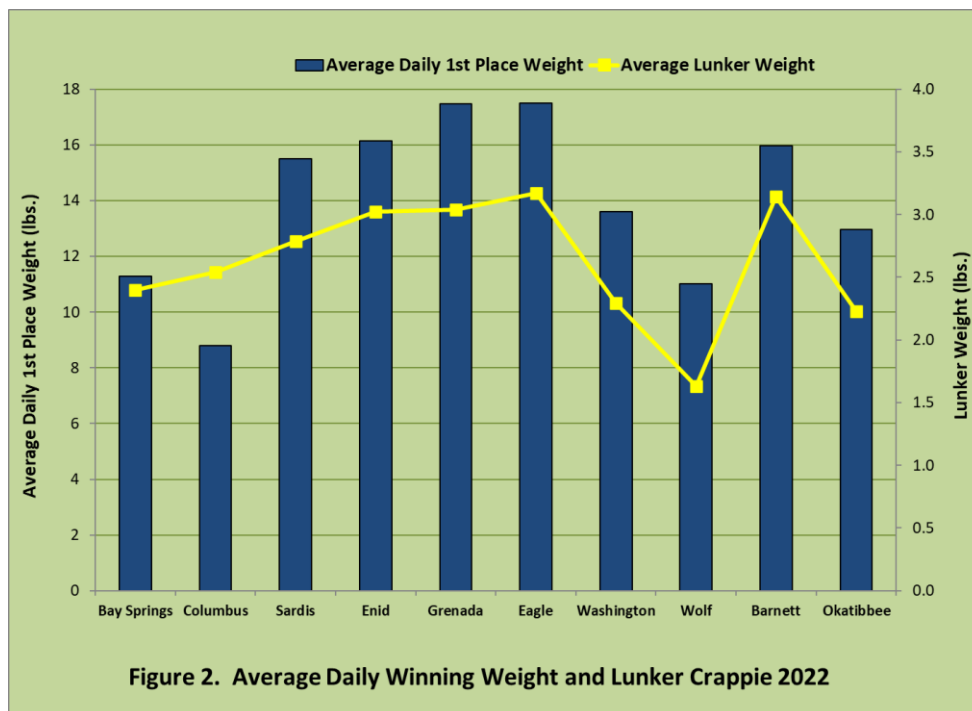
- A total of 1,977 crappie anglers fished 16,934 hours. Grenada had ten tournaments, 43% of all events. Other lakes had one or two reported events. Anglers know there are good and bad fishing days. Lakes with few tournaments may not accurately reflect the quality of those fisheries.
- No tournaments were postponed or canceled due to COVID19 in 2022. Club events were more likely to be postponed by weather or scheduling conflicts. Most tournaments were in spring and fall (Figure 1).



- All statewide metrics improved from 2021 to 2022 (Table 1). Several prior years had high water on many lakes that created more spawning habitat and forage; flooded cover likely reduced spring angler harvest. These lakes produced more and larger crappie in 2022 when they returned to more normal water levels. However, improved metrics were also likely from greater use of advanced sonar technology, based on MDWFP angler surveys.

Table 1. Statewide Tournament Statistics, 2021 vs 2022			
2021	-	2022	
2.89	-	3.37	Number of crappie caught per angler-day
4.09	-	5.14	Pounds of crappie caught per angler day
1.46	-	1.56	Average weight of crappie caught (pounds)
369	-	147	Hours to catch a two-pound crappie
2.40	-	2.63	Average lunker or weight of biggest crappie (pounds)
13.11	-	14.03	Average daily 1 st place weight (pounds)

- The average statewide daily first place weight was 14.03 pounds (Table 1), ranging from 17.50 pounds at Eagle to 8.80 pounds at Columbus (Figure 2). All metrics improved from 2021 to 2022; N2 was more than halved.



- Seven of the top ten heaviest daily first place limits came from Grenada (Table 2). Grenada's March 11 weigh-in had 11 teams with limits over 21 pounds; 5 of those teams had over 22 pounds.

Table 2. Top 10 Heaviest daily 7-fish limits from 2022.

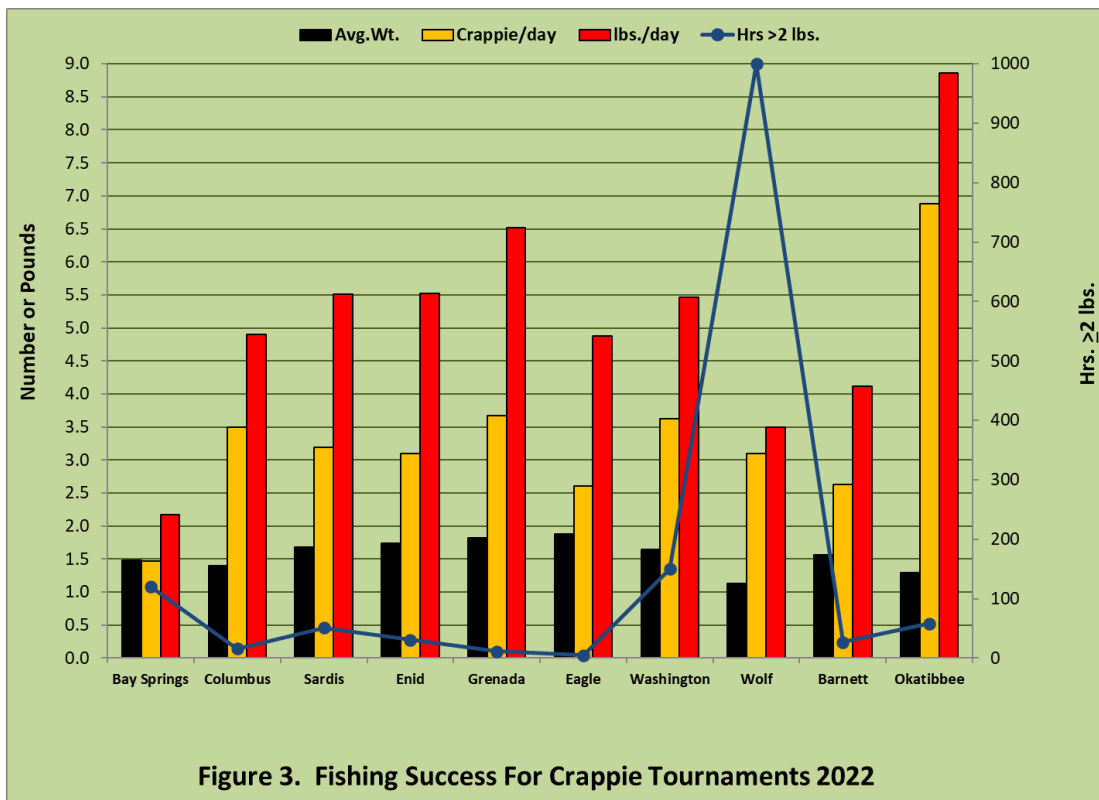
<u>Lake</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Tournament</u>	<u>Daily 1st Place Weight (lbs.)</u>
Grenada	March 11	Crappie Masters	22.77
Grenada	March 12	Crappie Masters	21.72
Grenada	March 19	Magnolia Crappie Club	20.02
Grenada	April 16	Crappie USA	19.85
Grenada	May 21	Magnolia Crappie Club	17.77
Sardis	January 29	Magnolia Crappie Club	17.58
Eagle	February 19	Magnolia Crappie Club	17.50
Grenada	September 17	Magnolia Crappie Club	17.19
Barnett	April 9	Magnolia Crappie Club	17.19
Grenada	September 23	Crappie Masters Ntl Champ	17.18

- The top 10 big fish came from 5 lakes; all were over 3-pounds (Table 3). The March 11-12 Grenada event produced 4 fish over 4-pounds. Other lakes also weighed-in multiple fish heavier than 3-pounds.

Table 3. Top 10 Heaviest Big Fish Weights from 2022.

<u>Lake</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Tournament</u>	<u>Big Fish Weight (lbs.)</u>
Grenada	March 11-12	Crappie Masters	4.26
Barnett	April 9	Magnolia Crappie Club	3.84
Grenada	March 19	Magnolia Crappie Club	3.47
Grenada	April 16	Crappie USA	3.44
Enid	April 2	Crappie Masters MS Trails	3.19
Eagle	February 19	Magnolia Crappie Club	3.17
Sardis	January 29	Magnolia Crappie Club	3.15
Grenada	May 21	Magnolia Crappie Club	3.12
Grenada	September 23-24	Crappie Masters Ntl Champ	3.10
Grenada	September 9-10	American Crappie Trail	3.04

- The average big fish ranged from 3.17 pounds at Eagle to 1.63 pounds at Wolf (Figure 2, Table 4); both lakes only had one tournament. The statewide average big fish in 2022 was slightly larger than 2021 (Table 1). With sonar technologies that allow anglers to target specific fish, these statistics will be watched carefully for future trends.
- Average crappie weight ranged from 1.87 pounds at Eagle to 1.13 pounds at Wolf (Figure 3, Table 4). Average number of fish caught per angler per day was highest at Okatibbee (6.88) and lowest at Bay Springs (1.47). Average pounds caught per angler per day were also highest at Okatibbee (8.86) and lowest at Bay Springs (2.17).
- The number of hours required to catch a 2 pound or larger crappie (N2, Figure 3, Table 4), was lowest at Eagle (5 hours) and highest at Wolf (1000 hours = none). Again, both lakes had only one tournament, so these results may not be representative of these fisheries.



- N2 seems to be a good indicator of larger fish abundance, but it depends on many factors. For instance, average N2 on Sardis was 51 (Table 4). That average was from an N2 of only 3 hrs in a January event near winter pool and an N2 of 98 hrs in a May event above summer pool. The rise in N2 was likely due to a combination of higher water spreading fish out, larger fish being harvested during the spawn, and some larger fish losing weight (spawned out). Figure 3 and Table 4 show N2 was lowest and crappie/day was next to lowest at Eagle, suggesting few but big fish. Wolf's high N2 and rank at or near the bottom in other categories indicated few fish and very few big fish. Grenada ranked second in N2 and most other categories, indicating large, plentiful fish. N2 on Washington rose from 35 hrs in 2021 to 150 hrs in 2022, suggesting a possible decline in numbers of larger crappie.
- Despite its fishing pressure, Grenada finished first in overall quality indicator rankings (Table 4). Since 2021, some lakes changed rankings or weren't represented in 2022 because of few or no events. Washington ranked second in 2021 but fell to seventh in 2022. Except N2, most of Washington's 2022 parameters were similar to 2021. However, other lakes' metrics improved from 2021.

More reported events evenly distributed among more lakes would allow MDWFP to better compare and monitor Mississippi's crappie fisheries. Detecting trends in these fisheries becomes more critical as angling technology improves, fishing pressure increases, habitat in aging reservoirs declines, and the potential impact on these resources grows. Some tournament organizations have discussed reducing tournament limits but have not so far. One national tournament trail is planning to have referees in each boat to weigh fish on the water (like some bass tournament trails) in 2023.

So, how good is crappie fishing in Mississippi? Compared to bass fisheries (relative to their respective world record weights), a state average 2.63-pound big fish (white crappie) would equal an 11.28-pound largemouth bass. A state average 13.11-pound, 7-crappie tournament limit would equal a 42.98 pound, 5-bass tournament limit (an 8.60-pound average).

Since tournament anglers weigh in their seven largest crappie, tournament results differ from the catches of average crappie anglers. This report augments data from other MDWFP surveys (creel, electrofishing, netting, etc.) used to evaluate, monitor, and manage Mississippi's nationally acclaimed crappie fisheries. It also can be utilized by other biologists, average crappie anglers, and tournament organizations to improve crappie management, increase angling success, and maximize tournament success and participation.

Acknowledgements: Results were obtained from websites and/or Facebook pages of the American Crappie Trail, Crappie Masters, and Crappie USA national tournament organizations, the Magnolia Crappie Club, and the Crappie Masters Mississippi Trail - Eastern and Western divisions.

Tournament organizers that want to participate directly in next year's Crappie Tournament Summary can email their 2023 tournament results to either:

Keith Meals keith.meals@wfp.ms.gov or Arthur Dunn Arthur.Dunn@wfp.ms.gov

Table 4. Final rankings of crappie tournament lakes in Mississippi based on 2022 results.

Overall Rank	Hours to catch a crappie \geq 2 lbs.	Average daily 1 st place weight (lbs.)	Average Lunker (lbs.)	Average weight (lbs.) of fish	Average number of crappie per angler per day	Average lbs. per angler per day
#1 Grenada (10)*	Eagle 5	Eagle 17.50	Eagle 3.17	Eagle 1.87	Okatibbee 6.88	Okatibbee 8.86
#2 Eagle (1)	Grenada 11	Grenada 17.49	Barnett 3.15	Grenada 1.82	Grenada 3.67	Grenada 6.51
#3 Enid (2)	Columbus 16	Enid 16.15	Grenada 3.04	Enid 1.74	Washington 3.62	Enid 5.52
#4 Sardis (2)	Barnett 27	Barnett 15.97	Enid 3.03	Sardis 1.68	Columbus 3.50	Sardis 5.51
#5 Barnett (2)	Enid 31	Sardis 15.51	Sardis 2.79	Washington 1.65	Sardis 3.19	Washington 5.47
#6 Okatibbee (1)	Sardis 51	Washington 13.62	Columbus 2.54	Barnett 1.57	Wolf 3.10	Columbus 4.91
#7 Washington (2)	Okatibbee 58	Okatibbee 12.96	Bay Springs 2.40	Bay Springs 1.48	Enid 3.09	Eagle 4.88
#8 Columbus (1)	Bay Springs 120	Bay Springs 11.29	Washington 2.30	Columbus 1.40	Barnett 2.63	Barnett 4.12
#9 Bay Springs (1)	Washington 150	Columbus 11.01	Okatibbee 2.23	Okatibbee 1.29	Eagle 2.60	Wolf 3.49
#10 Wolf (1)	Wolf 1000	Wolf 8.80	Wolf 1.63	Wolf 1.13	Bay Springs 1.47	Bay Springs 2.17

*Number of tournaments in parentheses.

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