

# Bonnet Carré Spillway Fishing



## Fish Species of Special Concern

In the Bonnet Carré Spillway, there are four fish species of special concern; the pallid sturgeon, shovelnose sturgeon, gulf sturgeon and paddlefish. Please help us conserve these unique members of the native fish community.

### Pallid Sturgeon

The pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) is both federal and state listed as an endangered species. The native range for this fish is the Mississippi River drainage basin, including the Atchafalaya River and Bonnet Carré Spillway. After the 2008 opening of the spillway, researchers sampled the ponds and waterways of the spillway for the presence of this rare fish and were able to capture a total of 14. These fish were measured, tagged and released back into the Mississippi River near the spillway.



### Shovelnose Sturgeon

The shovelnose sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus platorhynchus*) closely resembles the pallid sturgeon, but has several distinguishing characteristics. It can be darker in appearance than the pallid, has the presence of small embedded belly scales, and the inner barbels in front of the mouth are longer, almost approaching the length of the outer barbels. Although it is not a listed species, there is no open fishing season for this species.

### Gulf Sturgeon

The gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*) is a federal and state listed threatened species ranging from Tampa Bay to the Mississippi River. In southeastern Louisiana the fish can be found in the Lake Pontchartrain drainage basin. The species is anadromous, meaning it spawns in freshwater streams, but spends most of its life cycle in salt or brackish water.

### Paddlefish

Paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*), or spoonbill catfish is a very unique North American freshwater fish. It has several primitive fish characteristics, including a skeleton made of cartilage. This species can only be legally fished by baited hook and line. The possession limit is two and size limit must be smaller than 30 inches measured from fork length

to lower jaw. Any fish caught larger than the 30 inch limit must be returned to the water immediately.

### Tagged Fish

Beginning in 2008, biologists with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Research and Development Center and the Bonnet Carré Spillway have been tagging sturgeon and paddlefish to better understand habitat requirements and population recruitment. The tagged fish have a marked orange spaghetti tag beside the fin along the back of the fish. If you catch a tagged fish, please help us by:

- Recording information such as location, length and weight of fish, and location caught;
- Releasing the fish back into the water where caught;
- Contacting our office at 1-800-522-6937 ext. 3397, 985-764-7484, or stopping by the spillway project office at 16302 River Road, Norco, LA.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated and will help us learn valuable information about these fish species

### Invasive Species

Several species of aquatic organisms have been introduced into North American waters. Several species of introduced plants, clams and fish can be found within ponds and lakes of the Bonnet Carré Spillway. These organisms reproduce and grow very rapidly and take over space that would otherwise be occupied by native species. If you encounter any of these species, please assist us by keeping them from spreading to other parts of the state.

Two of the more common species of invasive aquatic plants in the spillway are water hyacinth and species of Salvinia. These plants grow on top of the water and keep oxygen levels in the water lower. These plants are easily transported to other waterways and grow and reproduce rapidly.

There are several species of Asian carp that have been introduced into the waters of the spillway. These species include the silver carp, bighead carp, grass carp and common carp. These fish species feed on plants and microorganisms in the water. They grow to a rather large size and are good at avoiding capture.



## Fishing Regulations

Visitors fishing, crawfishing, crabbing, and shrimping at the Bonnet Carré Spillway are expected to follow the rules and regulations set forth by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.



There is no set season to crawfish in the spillway, but in most years crawfish are available for harvest during the spring (February-June). There is no size limit and the possession limit per person is 150 pounds per day. A state recreational gear license for up to 35 of the coated wire funnel traps is required. Any amount over 35 traps would require a state commercial gear license.

There is no set season to harvest crabs in the spillway, but the summer and fall months are usually the best times. There is no recreational size limit and daily limit is 12 dozen per person per day. A state recreational basic fishing and saltwater license in addition to a state recreational crab trap gear license is required to use crab traps, with a limit of 10 traps per licensed fisherman.

Any person using crawfish nets, crab nets or crab lines for the purpose of taking crawfish or crabs for recreational purposes shall not be required to purchase or possess a basic state recreational fishing license or be required to purchase a state gear license. However, persons using crawfish nets, crab nets or crab lines on Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Wildlife Management Areas or refuges must possess a state basic and saltwater recreational fishing license or a Wild Louisiana Stamp.



[www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil)



### Lake Pontchartrain

Fishing in Lake Pontchartrain can be accessed by the St. Charles Parish Recreation Area boat launch, the parish boat launch at the Lower Guide levee underneath Interstate 10, or the public fishing area at the end of the Lower Guide levee. Common species in Lake Pontchartrain include speckled trout, redfish, Atlantic croaker, sheepshead, ladyfish, needlefish, and striped mullet.

### Lower Borrow Canal

This large water body was constructed in the 1930's as the spillway was cleared of vegetation and clay deposits were used to build the guide levees. In addition to providing habitat for freshwater species such as crappie, bluegill, and largemouth bass, saltwater species such as speckled trout, sheepshead and redfish are also occasionally caught.



### Pleasure Beach at St. Charles Parish Recreation Area

This area was reshaped in the spring of 2007 as sand deposits were removed to repair haul roads in the spillway. Approximately 500 Florida strain largemouth bass were stocked in this area in the spring of 2007.

### Lake Jacob

This 8-acre lake was created in 2002 and is named after Kirt Jacob, the former maintenance leader at the spillway. It was stocked with 40 hybrid striped bass and bluegill in 2004 and in the spring of 2005, we added 300 Florida strain largemouth bass. Several hundred additional Florida strain largemouth bass were added in the spring of 2007 and nearly 1,000 channel catfish were stocked in October 2007.



## Popular Fishing Sites



### Creek Lake

This 23-acre lake was constructed as clay deposits were removed to rebuild a part of the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System in Jefferson Parish. The southern half of this lake was stocked with channel catfish in October 2007. The northern half of this lake was stocked with bluegill in the fall of 2008 and Florida strain largemouth bass in the spring of 2009.

### L-shaped Pond

This 8-acre lake was constructed in 2003. It was stocked with 85 hybrid striped bass and bluegill in 2004 and 200 Florida strain largemouth bass in the spring of 2005.

### Duhé Lake

This lake is currently under construction as clay deposits are being removed to rebuild part of the hurricane and storm damage reduction system in Orleans Parish. This lake was stocked with bluegill in the fall of 2007.



### Dog-training Ponds

These ponds are slated for reconstruction as sand deposits from previous spillway openings will be removed. We anticipate stocking the ponds with bluegill.

### Paddlefish Lake

This almost 8-acre lake was constructed in the 1990s. In addition to the 120 hybrid striped bass and bluegill that were stocked in 2004, the 50 Florida strain largemouth bass stocked in the spring of 2005, and the 400 channel catfish in October 2007, the proximity of this lake to the Mississippi River overflow provides habitat for blue catfish, buffalo, and the lake's namesake paddlefish, or spoonbill catfish.

### Crappie Lake

This almost 4-acre lake was constructed in the 1990s. Sixty hybrid striped bass were stocked in 2004 and the proximity of this lake to the Mississippi River overflow provides habitat for crappie, catfish, and buffalo.



### Fremin Ponds

These ponds provide excellent habitat for catfish and crappie.

### Three Oak Lake

This 4-acre lake was constructed in the 1990s. In addition to the 60 hybrid striped bass and bluegill that were stocked in 2004, the 400 channel catfish stocked in October 2007, the proximity of this lake to the Mississippi River overflow provides habitat for catfish, crappie, and buffalo.

### Circle Lake

This lake is currently being constructed as clay deposits are being removed to rebuild the Jefferson Parish Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction levee. This lake was stocked with bluegill in the fall of 2007.



### Keyhole Lake

This area has been a favored fishing area for crappie.

### Oasis Pond

This pond was stocked with bluegill in the fall of 2006 and was stocked with bass in the spring of 2007. A stocking of 300 channel catfish was done in October 2007.

### Hyacinth Lake and Pille's Hole

These areas have been favored fishing areas for crappie.

### Island lake, Gator Hole and Wacko Lake

This is a series of three borrow pits constructed just before, during and immediately after the 2005 hurricanes. Wacko Lake was stocked with 84 hybrid stripers, bluegill and 375 Florida strain largemouth bass in 2004 and 2005. The other two were stocked with bluegill in the fall of 2006 and bass in the spring of 2007. They were all stocked with channel catfish in October 2007.



### Forty-acre Lake

Although this is only a 16-acre lake, it was constructed in the 1980s and has been a favored fishing area for many years. It was stocked with 200 hybrid striped bass and bluegill in 2004 and 400 Florida strain largemouth bass in the spring of 2005.



### Cypress Stump Pond

This area, though only a couple of acres in size, provides favorable habitat for crappie and largemouth bass.

### Upper Borrow Canal

This large water body was constructed in the 1930s when the spillway was cleared of vegetation and clay deposits were used to build the guide levees. In addition to providing habitat for freshwater species such as crappie, bluegill, and largemouth bass, saltwater species such as speckled trout, sheepshead and redfish are also occasionally caught.

### Mississippi River/Forebay area

Commercial fish species are caught in the Mississippi River and during spring overflow from the river into the forebay area; crappie and bass can be fished from the many ponds in this area.



The Bonnet Carré Spillway is a vital element of the comprehensive plan for flood damage reduction in the Lower Mississippi Valley. The southernmost floodway in the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project (MR&T), Bonnet Carré Spillway protects New Orleans and other downstream communities during major floods from the Mississippi River.

The Bonnet Carré spillway was constructed in 1929 and is a 7,623-acre floodway nestled between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain in St. Charles Parish, Louisiana.

Recently, the Bonnet Carré Spillway has been used as a source of clay material for levee rebuilding following the devastating Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The clay excavation

areas, known as borrow pits, are as deep as 25 feet and provide ideal areas for game fish habitat. By collaborating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Natchitoches Fish Hatchery, we are able to stock the borrow pits with Bluegill, Largemouth Bass, Channel Catfish and Hybrid Striped Bass.

The Bonnet Carré Spillway offers areas for both freshwater

and saltwater fishing, and at times anglers are able to catch sunfish, bass, speckled trout and redfish from the same area. The Spillway also offers areas to catch blue crabs, shrimp, and crawfish. Check Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries regulations for licenses, methods of take and size or possession limits.



## Driving Directions to the Bonnet Carré Spillway

### From Baton Rouge:

Take the second LaPlace exit off Interstate 10 east. Take a right at the bottom of the ramp and follow U.S. Highway 51 south to U.S. Highway 61 (Airline Highway). Take a left on Airline Highway and go approximately 4 miles until you see the signs for the Bonnet Carré Spillway.

### From New Orleans:

Take Interstate 10 west toward Baton Rouge. Take the Interstate 310 exit, and go about 2 miles and then take the Norco exit onto U.S. Highway 61 (Airline Highway). Go west toward Norco until you see signs for the Bonnet Carré Spillway.