

TWRA BITE

**Bass
Information
From Tournament
Entries**



2008

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Fisheries Management Division
Ellington Agricultural Center
P. O. Box 40747
Nashville, TN 37204



B.I.T.E.

**BASS INFORMATION from
TOURNAMENT ENTRIES**

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

**FISHERIES MANAGEMENT DIVISION
TENNESSEE WILDLIFE RESOURCES
AGENCY
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

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INTRODUCTION

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) initiated the Bass Information from Tournament Entries (B.I.T.E.) program in 1989 as a cooperative effort between the agency and Tennessee's organized black bass fishing clubs and organizations. Completing its twentieth year, the objective of the program has been to establish a closer working relationship with bass clubs and tournament organizations through the mutual exchange of black bass tournament data. The B.I.T.E. program summarizes catch data already being collected by participating clubs on reservoir bass populations. These data will supplement T.W.R.A.'s reservoir fishery database, while providing bass clubs with a statewide summary of tournament results for their interest and possible use in tournament site selection.

Based on TWRA creel survey results, black bass fishing is one of Tennessee's important recreational resources with approximately 36 percent of fishing effort statewide geared toward black bass. These bass anglers produced an estimated 2.5 million angler hours of effort in pursuit of black bass in 2007 (2008 data not available at time of printing).

Economically, fishing generated over \$600 million in total expenditures by anglers in Tennessee during 2006 (U.S. Dept. of Interior 2007). Total trip expenditures by bass anglers on reservoirs in Tennessee were estimated at over \$12 million during 2007 (TWRA Creel Survey 2008). These expenditures included items such as fuel, food, bait, and lodging, but excluded boat and vehicle costs.

Through 2008, 6,197 tournament reports have been summarized. More than 159 clubs or tournament organizations participated through the first twenty years of the program. Bass anglers have spent over 1.88 million hours collecting data for this program and contributed data from 351,499 black bass weighing 675,606 pounds.

We especially want to thank the clubs and organizations that voluntarily return report cards or submit tournament data via the on-line system following their events. Over 60% of the reports received in 2008 came in via the on-line system.

SUMMARY OF 2008 BASS TOURNAMENT RESULTS

- A total of 120 tournament reports were submitted on 19 waterbodies (Table 1). This is a 20% decrease compared to 151 reports received on 25 reservoirs in 2007, and a continued decline in submitted reports for the past seven year.
- Watts Bar, Cheatham, and Kentucky Lake had the most tournaments reported, followed by Ft. Loudoun/Tellico, Cherokee and Chickamauga.
- There were 4,861 anglers fishing 40,664 hours that weighed-in 6,247 bass during 2008 (Table 1). Based on a 10-hour angler-day, an average of 1.54 bass per angler was weighed in for each tournament.
- The average tournament had 41 anglers catching 52 bass weighing 130 pounds. This is a slight decrease to an average of 59 bass and 132 pounds per tournament in 2007.
- The overall success rate (anglers or teams weighing in at least one bass) was 67%, up seven percent from last year.
- Average weight of bass ranged from 1.41 pounds at Center Hill to 3.19 pounds at Watts Bar. Overall, the average weight was 2.46 pounds, up from last year's 2.22 pounds. Bass per angler-day was highest at Wheeler Lake (Alabama), and lowest at Melton Hill. Pounds per angler-day, an important measure for tournaments, were highest at Beech Lake, whereas Melton Hill was lowest.
- For waterbodies that 1st Place weight data was received, Kentucky Lake was highest at 18.57 pounds.
- A total of 230 bass, weighing five pounds or more, were reported caught during 2008 (up from 149 in 2007), with an overall catch rate of one 5-pound bass or larger for every 177 hours (or nearly 18 angler-days) of fishing, a decrease from last year's average of 357 hours. Watts Bar led all reservoirs in the catch of bass five pounds and larger with 111 fish, followed by Kentucky Lake with 59.
- The largest bass reported was a 9.38 pound largemouth taken from Gibson County Lake in April reported by UTM Bass Team. A total of 12 bass seven pounds and larger were

reported in 2008 (Table 2) with most (66%) being caught in March and April. Ten bass seven pounds or larger were reported in 2007.

- Thirteen clubs or organizations submitted tournament reports during 2008 (Table 3). Nine clubs or organizations (69%) submitted five or more, and six submitted 10 or more reports. The average number of reports received per club or organization was approximately nine. Higher numbers of reports allow better estimates of fishing conditions, and not just a good or bad day's fishing by one or two clubs. Club representatives should remember that each tournament report is important to the program.
- Approximately 98% of all bass caught were released. Limits of bass were weighed by approximately 25% of all anglers or teams, up from seventeen percent reported last year.
- The seasonal distribution of tournament fishing effort, including night tournaments, is presented in Figure 1. Most tournaments were held during March through June. Night tournaments accounted for approximately 17% of tournaments and occurred May through August.
- Tournament fishing success for bass per angler-day decreased to 2004 levels, while pounds per angler-day increased to the highest since 1997 (Figure 2). Average weight increased to the highest since the program began. The hours (effort) required to catch a bass 5 pounds or larger during the year was 177, which is nearly a fifty percent decrease from 2007, and the lowest since 1997.
- Waterbodies with at least 5 or more tournaments reported were ranked by averaging five "fishing quality indicators" (Table 4). Percent successful anglers (those with one or more fish) ranged from approximately 53% at Watts Bar to 83% at Kentucky Lake. Average weight of bass caught ranged from 1.86 pounds at Cheatham to 3.19 at Watts Bar. The average weight for these reservoirs was 2.50 pounds. Catch rates expressed as bass per angler-day ranged from 0.90 at Watts Bar reservoir to 2.20 at Kentucky Lake. Catch rate as pounds per angler-day ranged from 2.88 at Watts Bar to 6.08 at Kentucky Lake. The average was 3.87 pounds per angler-day. Anglers at Chickamauga expended the least amount of time required to catch a bass 5-pounds or larger at 102 hours.

- Overall, using the relative ranking system, the top 2 waterbodies in 2008 were Kentucky Lake and Chickamauga, with Cheatham, Watts Bar, and Ft. Loudoun/Tellico rounding out the top 5. Kentucky Lake scored well for 1st place rank for percent success, along with the bass and pounds caught per day, while Chickamauga received 2nd place rank for percent success and pounds per angler-day with a 1st place rank for the least amount of effort to catch a bass 5 pounds or larger. Cheatham ranked in the top 3 in three categories, with Watts Bar having the strongest showing for larger bass. Kentucky Lake kept the top overall rank from last year, with Chickamauga moving up from sixth. Remember, the intent of this ranking system was not to rank the "best" or "worst" reservoirs, but to characterize the bass fishery, and provide club members with a reference guide for possible use in tournament site selection. These rankings are relative in nature and sensitive to fluctuations in bass abundance and size structure. Varying environmental conditions and angling pressure from year to year also affect the rankings.
- The graphs in the Appendix provide anglers with a historical record of reservoir tournament statistics from the B.I.T.E. program since 1989. Please note that graphs were not restricted to reservoirs with five or more tournaments. Data points for some years were represented by only one tournament, and data are completely absent in some years. Reservoirs for which four years or less of consecutive data were reported are not included. Readers should be aware that the scales on the vertical graph axes vary in range, which must be considered when comparing reservoir trends.

The B.I.T.E. program exists only because of the time and effort participating clubs or tournament organizations have provided to contribute bass tournament data to TWRA (Table 3). We thank all those who voluntarily submitted tournament data. With your continued support, and the additional support of other bass clubs across the state, the program can be successful in yielding important information about Tennessee's reservoir black bass resources. This report will be made available on TWRA's Internet site at <http://www.state.tn.us/twra/fish/bite/bite.html>

Table 1. Waterbody summary of reported tournament data to the 2008 B.I.T.E. program.

Waterbody	Reports Received	Number of Anglers	Bass Weighed-In	Bass Weigh	Bass > 5LB	Total Hours	Percent Success	Bass Per A-Day*	Pounds Per A-Day*	Average Weight	Avg. 1st Place	Avg. Big Bass Wt.	Hours Per Bass>5lbs.
Barkley Lake	2	53	81	178.36	0	461	77	1.76	3.87	2.20	5.36	4.05	-
Beech Lake	2	33	75	178.33	10	264	82	2.84	6.75	2.38		7.36	26
Center Hill	1	14	10	14.06	0	112	29	0.89	1.26	1.41		2.52	-
Cheatham	28	825	1394	2589.51	22	7558	74	1.84	3.43	1.86	10.29	5.10	344
Cherokee	5	315	358	917.55	3	2806	71	1.28	3.27	2.56	16.90	4.61	935
Chickamauga	5	61	74	180.43	4	406	79	1.82	4.44	2.44		4.76	102
Douglas	3	160	291	499.91	5	1341	82	2.17	3.73	1.72	14.45	3.69	268
Ft. Loudoun/Tellico	6	282	322	734.12	10	2290	72	1.41	3.21	2.28	18.05	4.26	229
Gibson Co. Lake	1	13	10	20.19	1	104	54	0.96	1.94	2.02		9.38	104
Kentucky Lake	19	913	1923	5324.95	59	8759	83	2.20	6.08	2.77	18.57	5.60	148
Melton Hill	1	12	4	6.30	0	84	25	0.48	0.75	1.58		2.08	-
Norris	1	115	140	325.06	0	978	72	1.43	3.33	2.32		4.69	-
Old Hickory	3	46	75	169.17	1	378	78	1.98	4.48	2.26	10.70	5.65	378
Percy Priest	4	89	99	204.97	3	726	52	1.36	2.82	2.07	11.52	5.45	242
Tellico	1	14	25	40.94	0	105	100	2.38	3.90	1.64	10.45	3.41	-
Tombigbee	1	16	11	17.63	0	144	25	0.76	1.22	1.60		2.75	-
Watts Bar	35	1870	1245	3976.35	111	13806	53	0.90	2.88	3.19	12.97	5.95	124
Wheeler Lake	1	13	74	117.40	1	208	100	3.56	5.64	1.59	15.32	5.10	208
Wilson	1	17	36	64.33	0	136	82	2.65	4.73	1.79	8.81	4.24	-
Totals	120	4861	6247	15559.56	230	40664							
Avg. for all Tournaments		41	52	130			67.04	1.54	3.83	2.49		4.77	177

*Angler-day based on a 10 hour fish day

Table 2. Bass 7 pounds and larger reported* from 2008 tournaments.

<u>Weight (lbs)</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Waterbody</u>	<u>Club/Organization</u>
9.38	04/06/08	Gibson Co. Lake	UT Martin Bass Team
8.65	03/15/08	Cheatham	Cheatham County Bass Club
8.08	04/06/08	Beech Lake	Central Tennessee Bass Club
7.56	05/18/08	Cheatham	Cumberland Bass Anglers
7.46	10/04/2008	Douglas	Bass Anglers Invitational Trail
7.45	03/22/2008	Kentucky Lake	Tennessee River Trail
7.38	03/29/08	Watts Bar	Caney Creek Bass Club
7.31	04/19/2008	Kentucky Lake	Tennessee River Trail
7.31	03/09/08	Watts Bar	Bass Anglers Invitational Trail
7.30	04/13/2008	Old Hickory	Stones River Bass Anglers
7.25	02/23/2008	Kentucky Lake	Tennessee River Trail
7.05	06/07/08	Cheatham	Cheatham County Bass Club

*Reported as big bass for each tournament

Table 3. Clubs/Organizations contributing to the 2008 B.I.T.E. report.

<u>Club/Organization</u>	<u>Club Representative</u>	<u>Number of Tournaments</u>
Bass Anglers Invitational Trail	Bud DeFoe	8
Caney Creek Bass Club	Kent Bowman	12
Central Tennessee Bass Club	Miles Tudor	10
Cheatham County Bass Club	Mike Stubbs	18
Cumberland Bass Anglers	Michael Crowell	10
Madison County Bass Anglers	Pat English	4
Mayfield Dairy Bass Club	Chris Kelly	5
Middle Creek Bass Anglers	David Slack	30
Stones River Bass Anglers	Daniel Perrien	4
Tennessee Christian Bass Anglers	Allen Jackson	1
Tennessee River Trail	Tommy Henley	11
UT Martin Bass Team	Michael Keatts	6
Wildcat Bassmasters	Jon Lawson	1

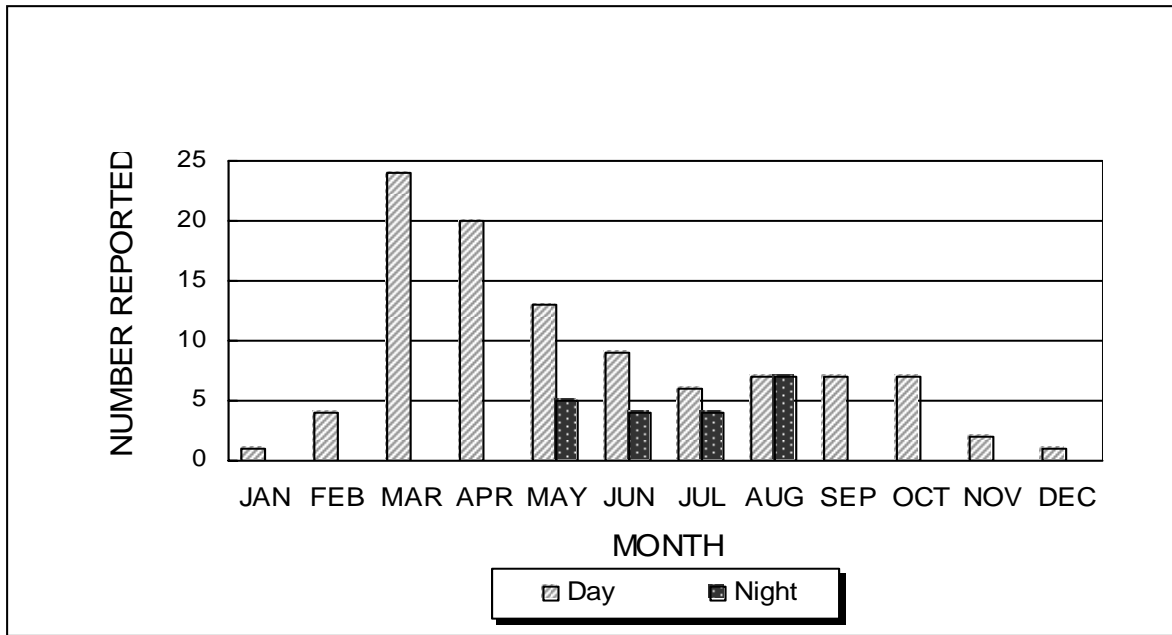


Figure 1. Seasonal Distribution of 2008 Reported Tournaments

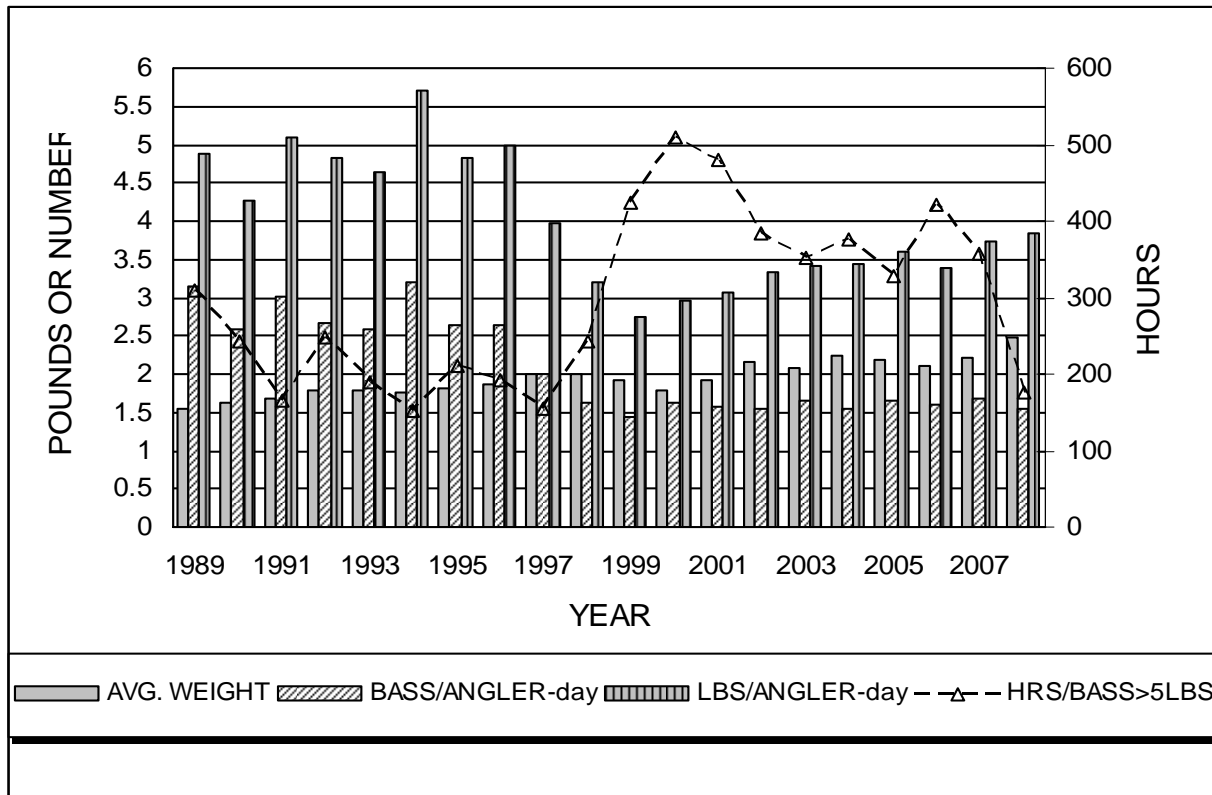


Figure 2. Fishing Success for Reported Tournaments (1989 - 2008).

Table 4. Relative ranking for reservoirs with 5 or more reported tournaments in the 2008 B.I.T.E. program.

RANK	PERCENT SUCCESS	AVERAGE WEIGHT (LBS.)	BASS PER 10-HOUR DAY	POUNDS PER 10-HOUR DAY	HOURS PER BASS=>5LB.	OVERALL RANK
1	KENTUCKY LAKE 83.13	WATTS BAR 3.19	KENTUCKY LAKE 2.20	KENTUCKY LAKE 6.08	CHICKAMAUGA 102	#1 KENTUCKY LAKE
2	CHICKAMAUGA 78.69	KENTUCKY LAKE 2.77	CHEATHAM 1.84	CHICKAMAUGA 4.44	WATTS BAR 124	#2 CHICKAMAUGA
3	CHEATHAM 73.56	CHEROKEE 2.56	CHICKAMAUGA 1.82	CHEATHAM 3.43	KENTUCKY LAKE 148	#3 CHEATHAM
4	Ft. LOUDOUN/TELLICO 71.98	CHICKAMAUGA 2.44	Ft. LOUDOUN/TELLICO 1.41	CHEROKEE 3.27	Ft. LOUDOUN/TELLICO 229	#4 WATTS BAR
5	CHEROKEE 70.79	Ft. LOUDOUN/TELLICO 2.28	CHEROKEE 1.28	Ft. LOUDOUN/TELLICO 3.21	CHEATHAM 344	#5 Ft. LOUDOUN/TELLICO
6	WATTS BAR 53.26	CHEATHAM 1.86	WATTS BAR 0.90	WATTS BAR 2.88	CHEROKEE 935	#6 CHEROKEE

Reducing Bass Mortality during Tournaments

In an effort to reduce bass mortality during tournaments, delayed mortality after release, and to reduce the risk of a Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV) outbreak, information and recommendations on handling and holding bass are provided below. In addition, TWRA and the Tennessee Bass Federation produced a publication entitled, “Keeping Your Tournament-Caught Bass Alive”. It is intended to help tournament anglers and organizers increase survival of tournament caught bass. For a copy, visit www.tnwildlife.org, or call 615-781-6575. Bass Angler Sportsmen Society (B.A.S.S.) has a more detailed publication titled, “Keeping Bass Alive: A Guidebook for Anglers and Tournament Organizers”. This publication provides an overview of bass physiology and helps tournament anglers and organizers maximize the survival of bass caught and released at bass tournaments. To request a copy, call 1-877-227-7872, or email: conservation@bassmaster.com.

The following suggestions reflect research by southeastern fisheries management agencies into the practice of handling fish during tournament events and the stress caused by holding fish in live wells.

- 1.** Fill your live well immediately upon arrival at your first fishing location (Open water areas with good water quality). Turn on aerator systems to begin building oxygen levels in the live well. Run aerators/recirculating pump continuously when you have fish in the live well. If the aerator must run on a timer, run as often as possible as oxygen depletion occurs quickly when the pump is off. Make sure aeration system provides proper aeration while boat is moving or on a trailer. If you don't have a recirculating system, add on. (Live well capacities vary, but allow at least one gallon of water per one pound of fish)
- 2.** Try not to play the fish to total exhaustion and land them by hand, if possible or use knotless nylon or rubber nets. Grasp bass by the lower jaw and hold them vertically, supporting large fish with a wet hand under the belly. Do not allow fish to touch boat or carpet and rub off protective slime. Remove hooks quickly with as little tissue damage as possible with needlenose pliers or hemostats. When attempts fail, or the hook has penetrated through the throat or gill arch, use cutting pliers to cut the point and barb off of the hook. The hook can then be backed out causing less tissue damage. Try not to hold the fish out of the water longer than you can hold your breath. This includes fish in bags headed for weigh-in. If the fish has become exhausted, hold it gently in the water until it becomes acclimated, moving it slowly back and forth to help it regain and maintain its equilibrium. Keep fish in rear live wells, evenly distributed between compartments. Fish in forward live wells are more likely to be injured from bouncing on rough water. Remove

dead fish from live well immediately to prevent further mortality.

3. Add 1 cup of non-iodized salt (rock salt, sea salt, etc.) to 15 gallons of live well water (1/3 cup per five gallons) to maintain electrolyte balance and reduce the effects of shock and stress. Commercially available live well additives that are FDA approved can also be used as directed. Don't over salt if using both. Pre-measure salt and additive into zip-lock bags for use when you exchange water in the live wells (see #5).

4. Monitor lake surface and livewell water temperatures and add small amounts of non-chlorinated ice to keep live well temperatures 5 to 10 degrees cooler than surface temperature. **(Do not reduce livewell water temperature more than 10 degrees below the lake surface temperature to avoid thermal shock when the fish are leased back to the lake)** If lake water temperatures are above 75 degrees, recirculate cooler, aerated live well water rather than pumping in warmer lake water. Block ice is preferred, because it melts slower and it can be made economically by freezing water-filled half-gallon plastic jugs. Use hot water or a chlorine remover in making the ice jugs to reduce the possible release of toxic chlorine when the ice is used. A one gallon block of ice will lower the temperature of 30 gallons of water approximately 10 degrees for about three hours. At water temperatures above 80 degrees, and during the months of July and August, consideration should be given to reducing tournament times or postponing tournaments until cooler water temperatures. Holding tournaments at night during the summer does not make much difference in reducing bass mortality, since water temperatures do not change that much over a 24-hour period. There are companies that are attempting to develop a livewell chiller, and if successful, may help with water temperature issues.

5. Constantly monitor the fish for signs of stress and drain half the live well water every three hours to remove toxic waste products (carbon dioxide and ammonia). Refill with fresh water and add half the amounts of ice, salt and/or a commercial live well additive (as directed) each time.

6. Install an oxygen delivery system, which delivers oxygen directly into live wells from a pressurized tank through air-stones or hose. The system must have a regulator or pressure valve and the tank must be securely mounted. The system is better than simple aeration (air is only 21% oxygen) and solves oxygen demand problems. Although less need for water

temperature adjustments is usually required, flushing with freshwater every 3 hours is still essential.

7. To reduce the chance of a Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV) outbreak, it's suggested that cleaning the live wells with a solution of ¼ cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water for at least 5 minutes, then thoroughly rinsing will kill the virus in live wells. Handling bass as little as possible during hot weather, never moving fish or water between waterbodies, and never releasing live bait are strongly recommended. Cleaning boats and trailers between fishing trips is also suggested. When not fishing competitively, always release fish immediately to minimize stress and mortality associated with holding fish in a live well for extended periods of time. This is particularly important during hot months when water temperatures exceed 80°F. If fish are to be harvested they should put on ice immediately and not held in live wells.

Preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species

Anglers and boaters can also play an important role in preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species (ANS), such as Asian carp, zebra mussels, blueback herring, Eurasian water milfoil, and hydrilla. These are some of the 55 ANS that have been identified in Tennessee that can be transferred in bilge or livewell water, in bait buckets, on the boat/motor, and on trailer bunks or frames. Please do your part to prevent the spread of these invaders by inspecting, cleaning and draining your boat before you leave the lake, don't dump minnows or bait into the lake, and never transplant fish from one body of water to another. For further information about preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species, visit www.ProtectYourWaters.net.

Literature Cited

- Black, W.P. 2008. Tennessee Reservoir Creel Survey 2007 Results. Fisheries Report No. 08-07. Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. Nashville.
- Tennessee Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. 2007. Tennessee Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan. Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. Nashville.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2007. 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation: Tennessee. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Washington D.C.

PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING BLACK BASS TOURNAMENT RESULTS TO TWRA VIA THE ON-LINE REPORTING SYSTEM

Log on to: http://www.state.tn.us/twra/fish/bite/Online_Reporting_Proc.html

Please complete all requested information as best as possible for any black bass tournaments your club or tournament organization has held. (Note that you can use the “tab” button to move to the next entry). Be sure to include contact information, including an E-mail address so we can contact you if we have any questions regarding the data, and to send you the end-of-the-year report when it’s completed. For those that still prefer to use the post-paid data report cards, they will continue to be sent to you.

If possible, enter your results weekly or monthly while the information is fresh on your mind. This will also provide current data to a preliminary report which will be available at a link at the web site above.

If this timing is not possible, you can submit your reports whenever or at the end of your fishing season, preferably by December 1st.

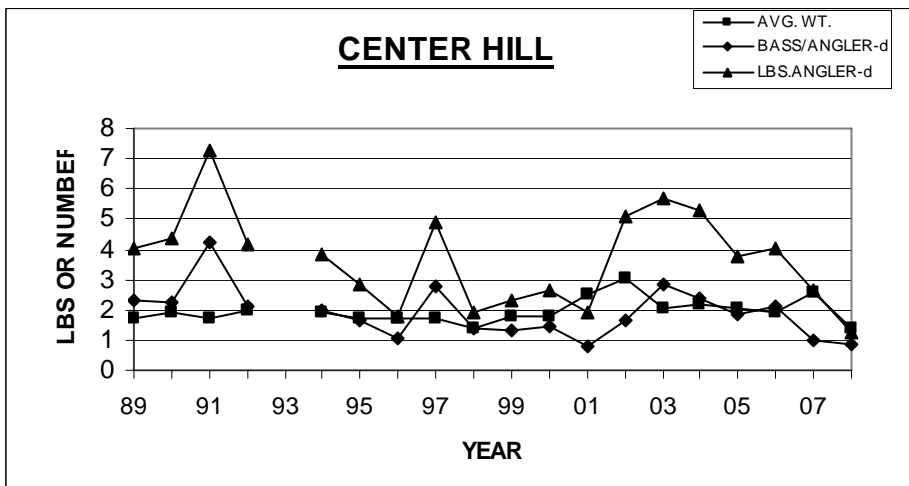
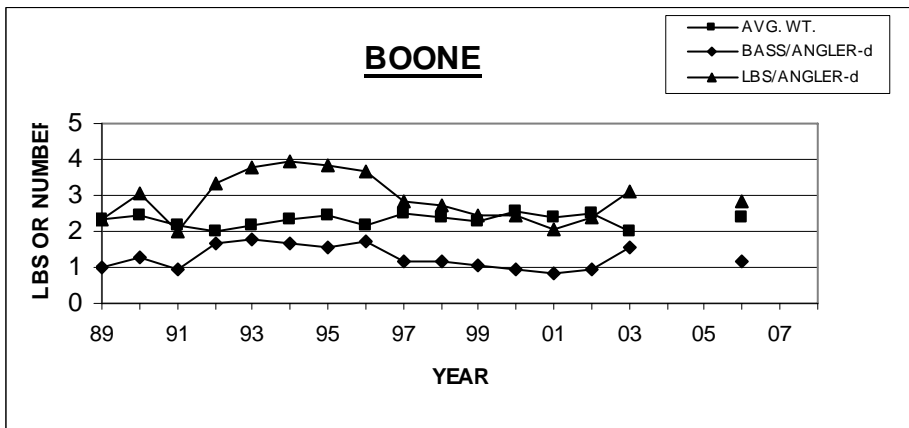
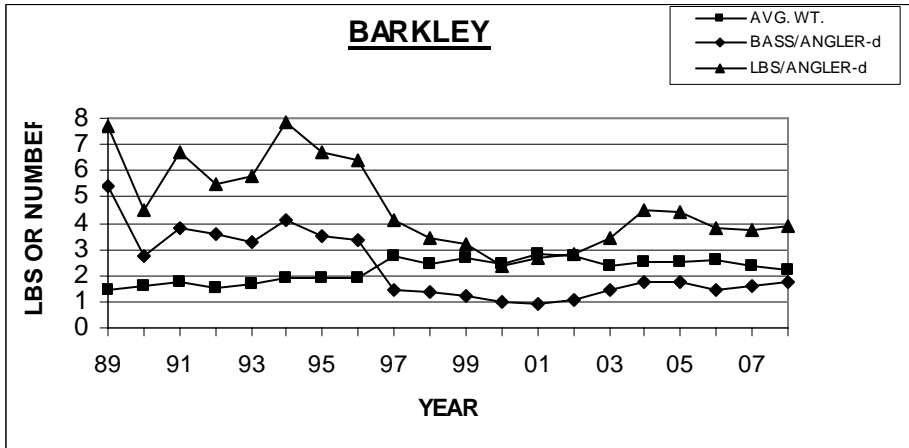
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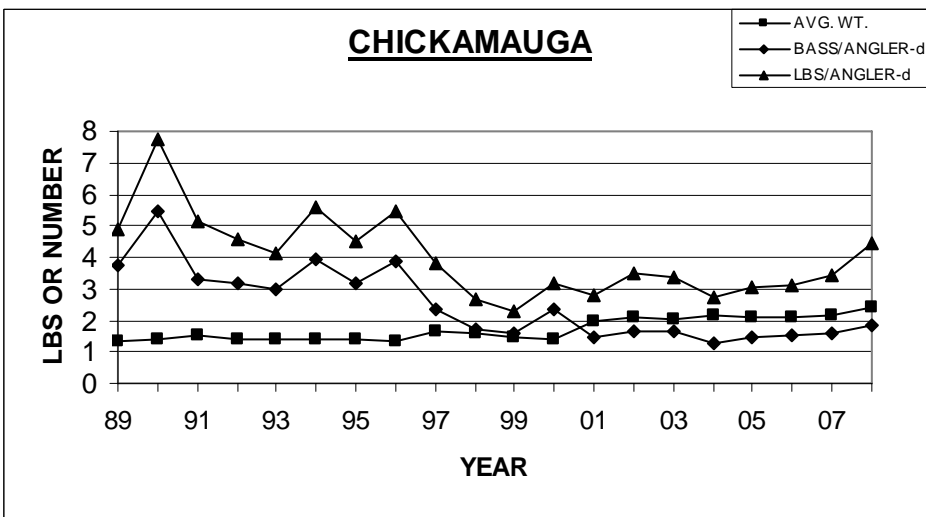
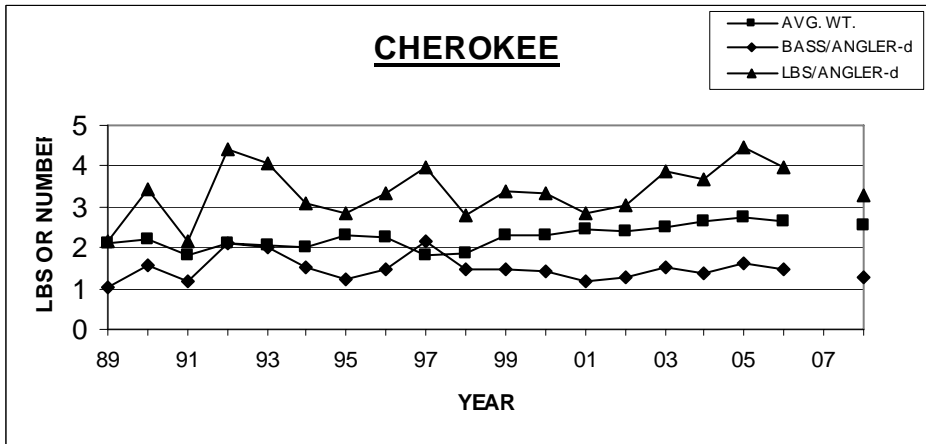
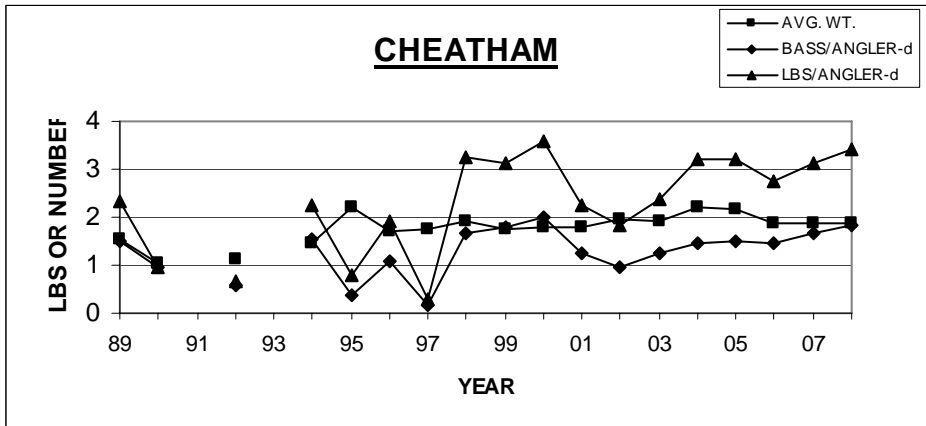
- Fill in the data for your first report and click the “**Submit**” button at the bottom of the page. After you click “Submit” you will see “Thank You”, click “Continue” to finish. Note: Click “Continue” only if you have no more tournament data to submit, otherwise see the next step.
- Click the “**Back**” button of your browser and it will take you back to the data you just entered.
- Change the information in the appropriate fields such as “Reservoir/Lake” name, “Date” and the catch statistics, leaving other information such as your club/organization name and address the same. (Note that you can either double-click or highlight the data to be changed, and the new data you type will overwrite it).
- Click the “**Submit**” button again to send the new data. Repeat as often as necessary to get all your tournament results submitted.

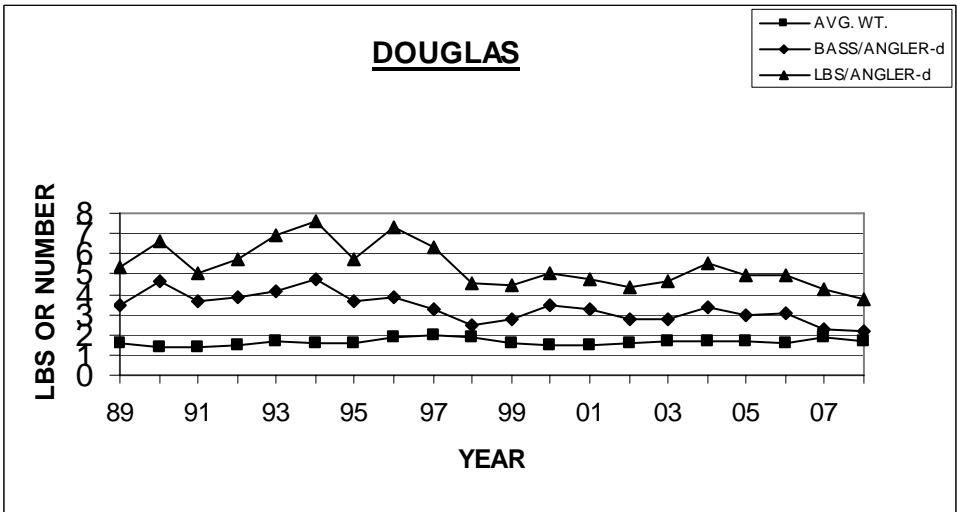
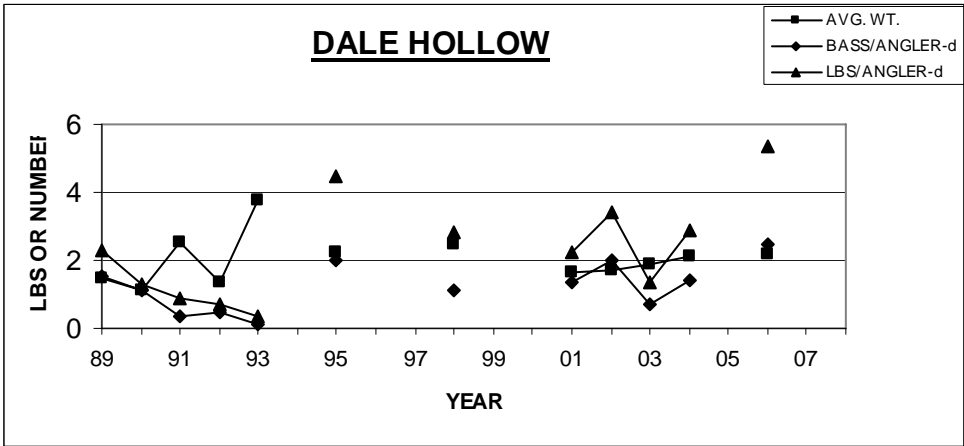
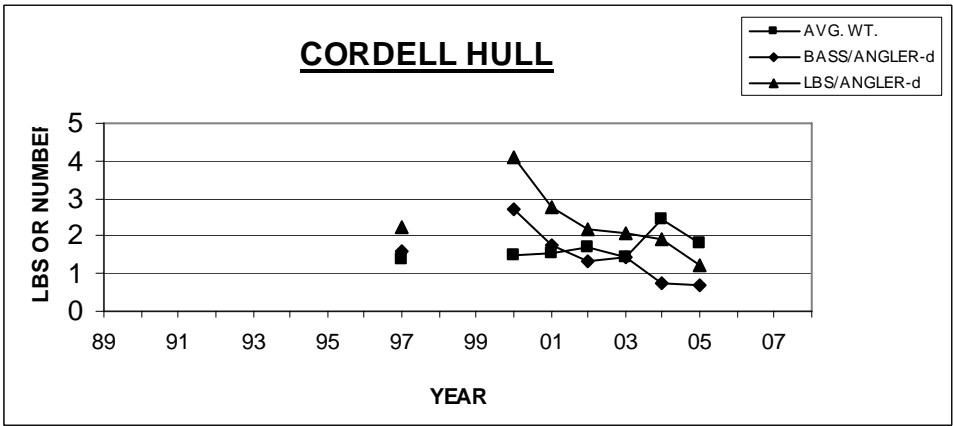
If you are a tournament angler, urge your Tournament Director to submit your clubs tournament results.

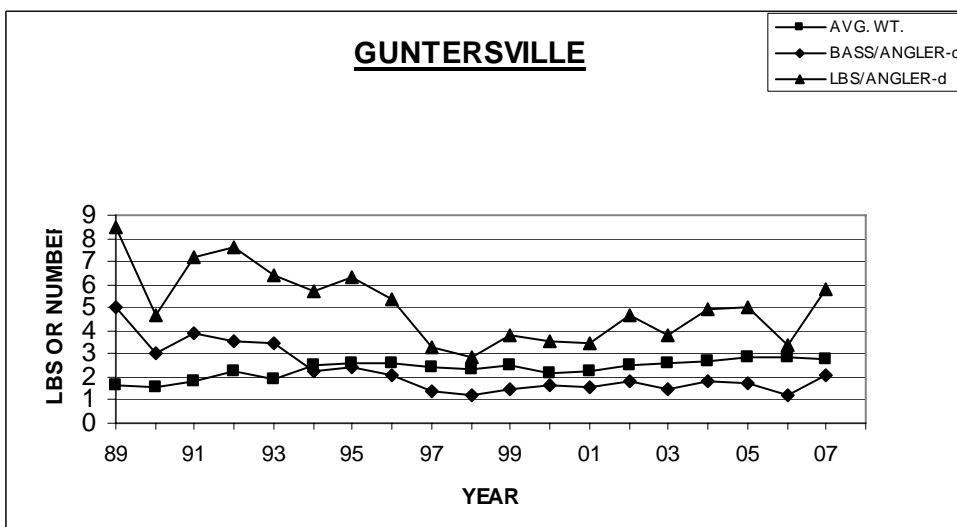
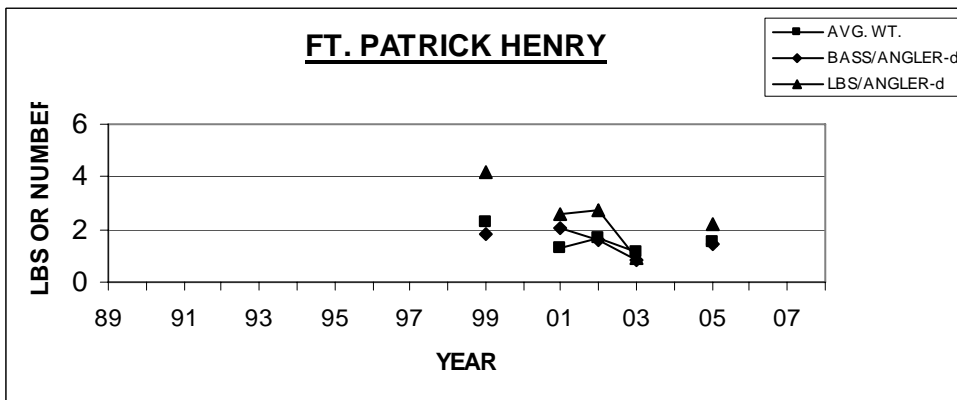
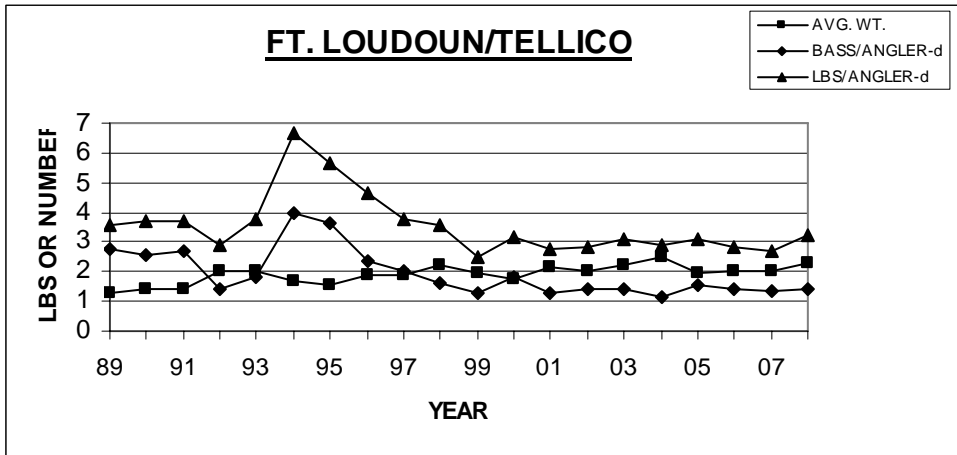
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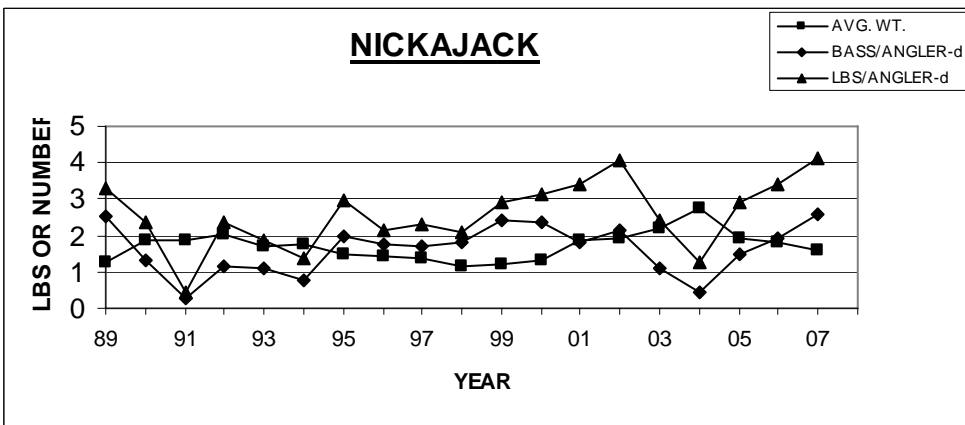
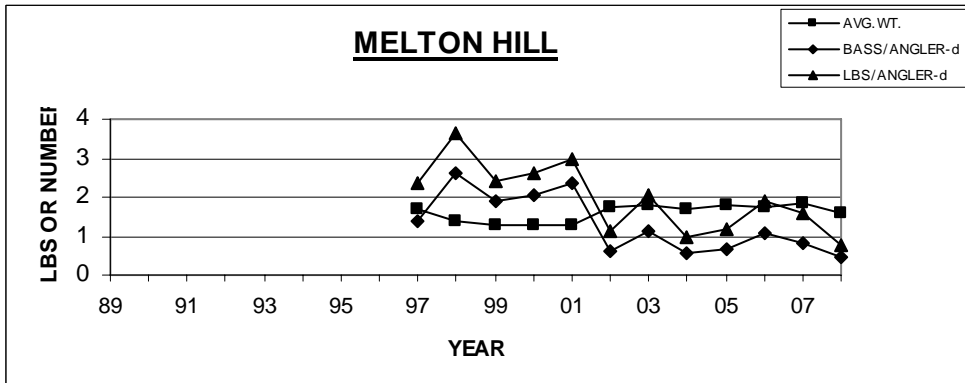
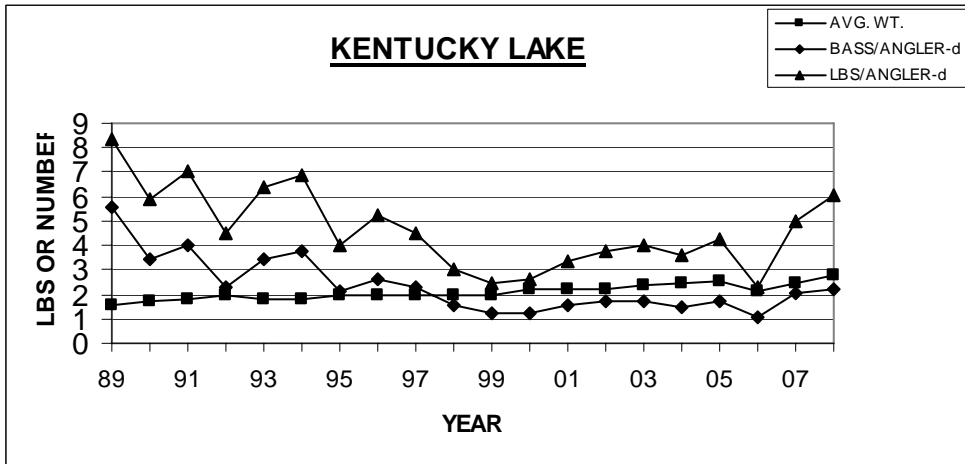
APPENDIX

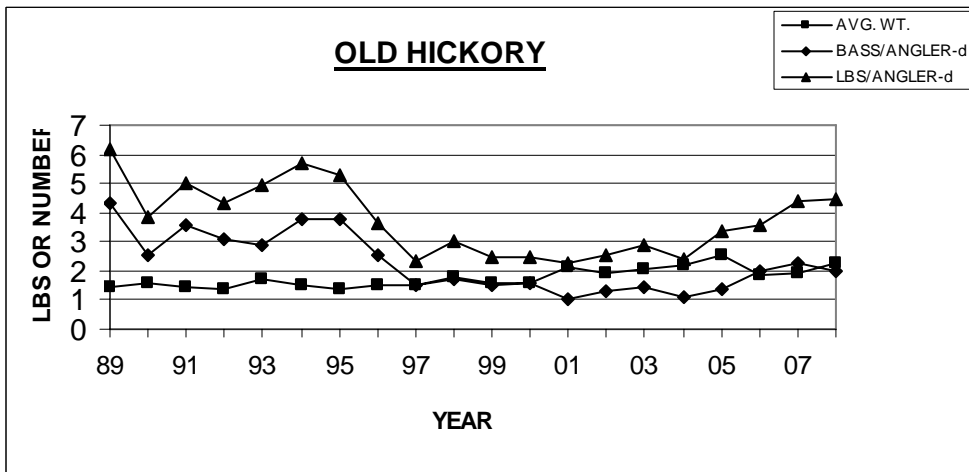
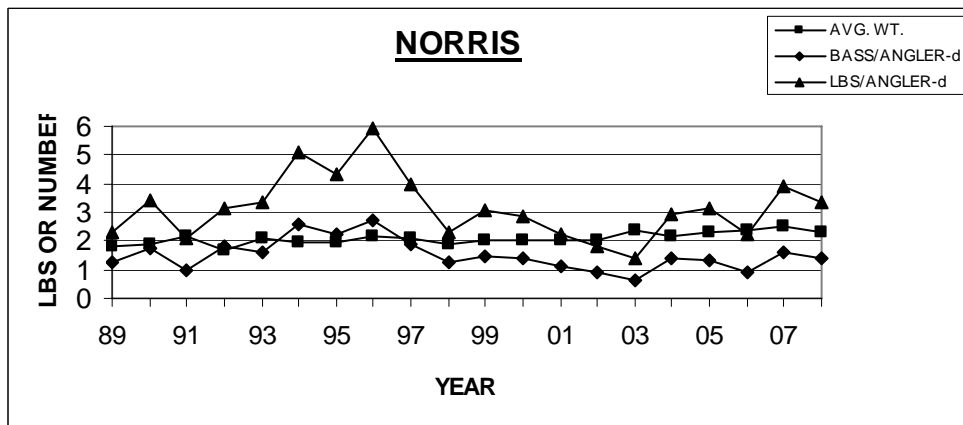
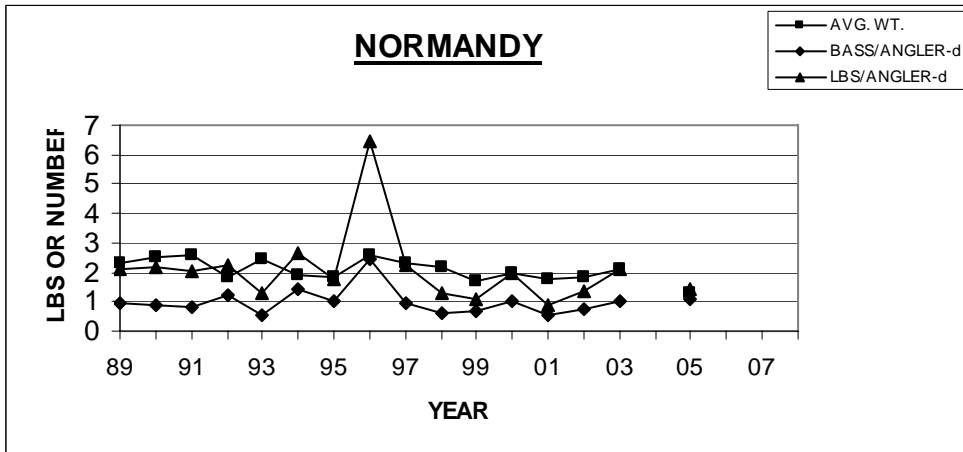


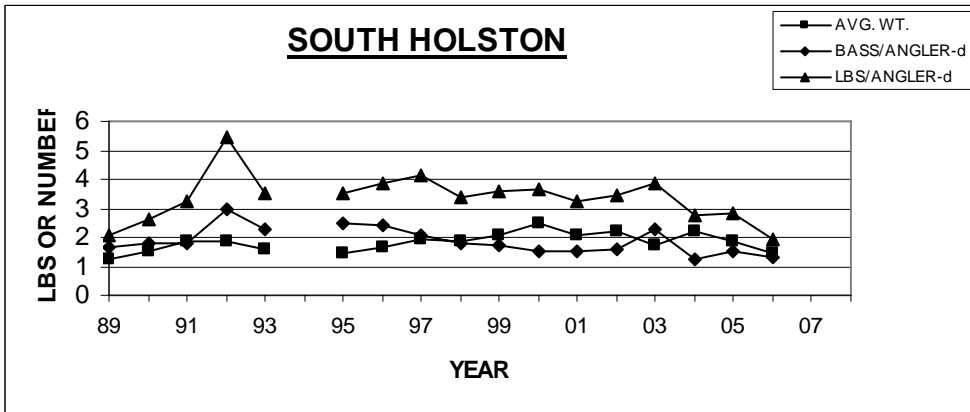
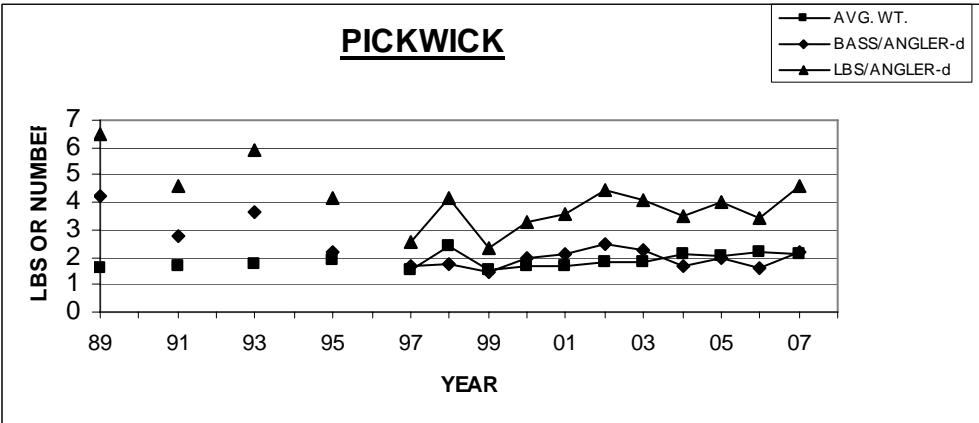
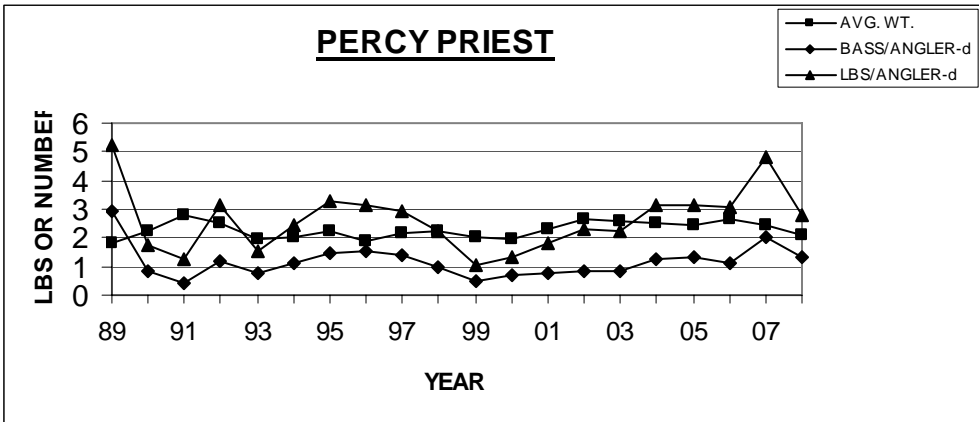


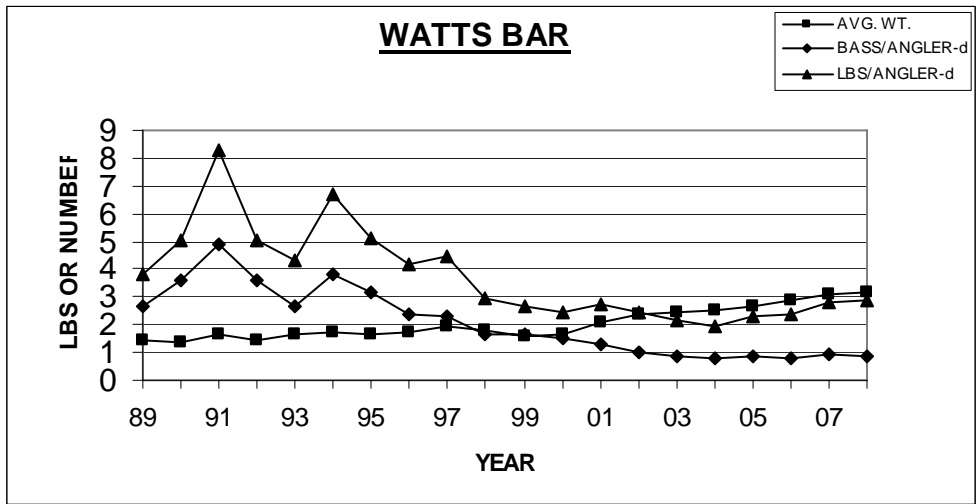
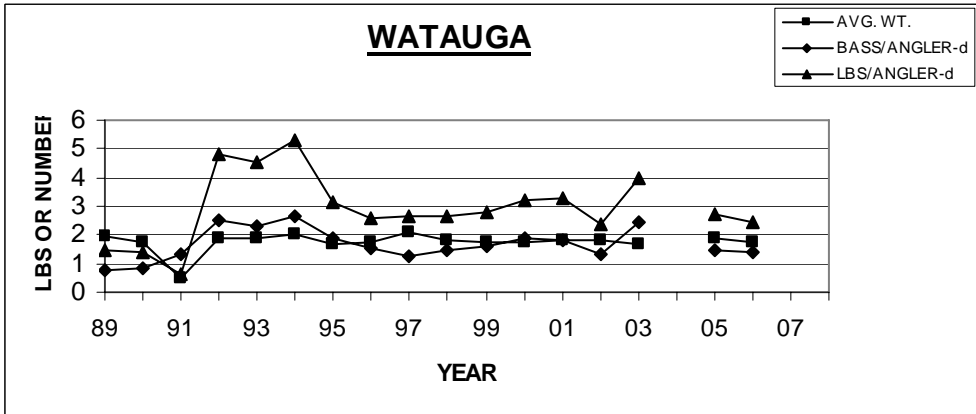
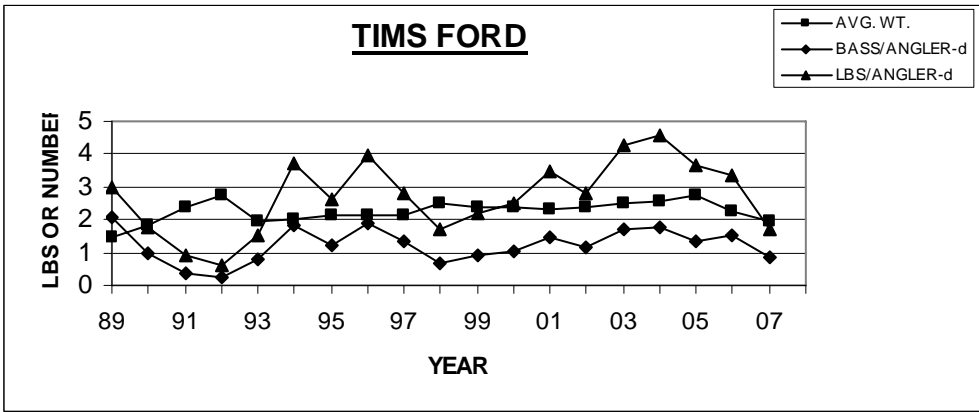














Don't Forget To Take A Kid Fishing. They Are Our Future Anglers and Stewards of Tennessee's Resources!