In March of 2018, fisheries biologists and hatchery production staff collected adult walleye from the New River, Staunton River, and South Holston Reservoir for the production of fingerling walleye to stock in selected lakes and rivers in Virginia. Walleye were spawned or hatched at Vic Thomas, Front Royal, King and Queen, and Buller Fish Cultural Stations, raised in ponds until they are about 1.5 inches long, when they were stocked in locations across the state. In 2018, VDGIF stocked 769,544 fingerling walleye. Overall, 2018 was a good production year but slightly below the long term annual production average for the past decade of 904,825 fingerlings statewide, see chart below. The following report offers walleye sampling results and fishing forecasts on those waters that are stocked with walleye fingerlings. Anglers who want to catch walleye should fish one of the locations in this forecast.
Chart of annual walleye/saugeye production 2008-2018 in Virginia. Saugeye (cross between a walleye and sauger) were stocked in some waters in 2013 and 2015 as indicated by the brown bars in the chart.

**Southwest Virginia**

**Upper New River**

Walleye fishing on the Upper New River from Buck Dam downstream to Allisonia will improve in 2019 from annual stocking since 2014. The 2014 and 2016 stockings were limited to Allisonia due to poor survival in hatchery ponds. The 2016 Allisonia stocking resulted in good numbers of walleye from 14 to 20 inches in fall 2018 Claytor Lake sampling. In 2015, 2017, and 2018, walleye were stocked at multiple sites from Allisonia to Fries. Walleye fishing from Fries Dam to Byllesby Reservoir improved in 2018 and should be good in 2019.

Anglers catch most walleye in the Upper New River from February to April, but walleye are also caught throughout the year. Crankbaits, jigs, and live minnows work well for catching them during the late winter and spring season. Ivanhoe, Foster Falls, and Allisonia are all good areas to fish. During spring 2018 walleye sampling downstream from Buck Dam, 7% of the walleye collected were under 14 inches, 64% were between 14 and 19 inches and 26% were between 19 and 28 inches. While anglers will have to return 19 to 28 inch walleye under the spring season size limit (explained below) they should catch plenty of walleye under 19 inches.
When you fish for walleye on the Upper New River, follow these size and creel limits:

1. **From Buck Dam downstream to Claytor Lake Dam: From February 1 through May 31:** All walleye 19 to 28 inches caught must be released unharmed. Anglers may keep 2 walleye per day less than 19 inches or over 28 inches. **From June 1 through January 31:** A 20-inch minimum length limit with a five per day creel limit is in effect.

   This regulation allows anglers to harvest a few smaller male walleyes (typically less than 19 inches) or a trophy female walleye (typically greater than 28 inches) while protecting the best spawning-size walleyes during the spring months.

2. **From Fries Dam downstream to Buck Dam:** A 20-inch minimum length limit for walleye, with a 5 per day creel limit is in effect year-round. This regulation is designed to protect the walleye population stocked in Byllesby Reservoir that runs upstream to Fries Dam.

   Biologists tagged walleyes in the Upper New River from 2008 to 2012 as part of a statewide walleye research project. A cash reward of 20 dollars will still be offered for the return of these tags with catch information. Anglers can remove the tag by cutting through the monofilament attachment with scissors or a knife. The fish can then be released or harvested (the length limits listed above apply). Return the tag and catch information to the address printed on the tag. Catch information includes: date, time, and
general location of catch, "Was the fish harvested or released?", "Were you fishing for walleyes?", and "Did you catch other walleyes on this fishing trip?"

South Holston Reservoir

South Holston should provide excellent walleye fishing in 2019. Sampling during 2018, including both electrofishing and gillnetting, documented an exceptional size structure with most walleye collected during the fall gillnetting in excess of 18 inches. Electrofishing catch rates during April 2018 were below average (1/hr) due to unusually high lake levels, however; the 2018 gillnet catch rate of 13 fish per net remained above average (12/net night).

Anglers can expect good catches during the spring spawning "run" on the South Fork Holston River. Anglers congregate near the community of Alvarado from February through April to catch walleyes on the spring spawning "run". During May and June anglers find walleyes feeding along the shorelines of the lake. The post spawn top water bite in the lower lake will yield the best walleye fishing Virginia has to offer. When walleyes move deeper during the summer months, successful anglers troll crawler harnesses on lead core line or use jigging spoons to reach the depths. Fall and winter fishing call for jigging spoons or jigs and live minnows.

Walleye growth is outstanding, so anglers should find plenty of fish larger than the minimum size of 18 inches. Most walleye exceed 10 inches in their first year and measure 15 to 18 inches in their second year. Walleye generally reach 20 inches by their third year. Walleye growth slows after age four and males seldom exceed 24 or 25 inches in length, while females may reach lengths of 30 inches or more.
Sampling catch rates for walleye in South Holston Reservoir 1999-2018. Blue columns represent spring electrofishing catch rates (fish per hour) and yellow columns represent fall gillnet catch rates (fish per net).

A summary of length at age data for walleyes in South Holston Reservoir, based on fall gillnet data from 2017. Each diamond represents an individual walleye. For example, at age 2 some walleyes are only 17 inches long and others are more than 21 inches long. Walleye are legally harvestable at 18 inches.
Hungry Mother Lake

This 108-acre lake provides anglers with a great opportunity to catch walleyes in a small lake setting. Located in Hungry Mother State Park, the lake is also a great destination for families. The walleye population is stable or slightly increasing. There are good numbers of fish up to 20 inches and just enough larger ones to cause anglers to lose some sleep this summer. Walleyes up to 28 inches in length have been landed in recent years. April, May, and June are the three best months, with night fishing generally being more productive. Most anglers use artificial lures, but live shad, minnows, and night crawlers are also very effective.
**Flannagan Reservoir**

Fishing for walleye and saugeye on Flannagan Reservoir may prove challenging in 2019. The combined catch rate for these two species in the December 2018 gill net sample was down 14% from the previous year and down 44% from 2016. This reduction in abundance can be partially attributed to the lack of stocking in 2016 as a result of poor hatchery production. The 2016 stocking cohort would have been Age-2 in the 2018 sample, but the figure below clearly shows their absence.

![Graph showing the number of walleye and saugeye collected by age in 2018.](image)

Despite the lower overall abundance, the majority of walleye and saugeye that anglers catch in 2019 will be of legally harvestable size (≥18 inches). About 81% of the walleye collected in the 2018 sample were larger than 18 inches while all of the saugeye exceeded this minimum length limit (see graph below).

![Graph showing the number of walleye and saugeye collected by 1-inch length group in 2018.](image)
South Central Virginia

Leesville Lake

The 2019 fishing season for walleye/saugeye at Leesville Lake will be good, especially when comparing to years before 2015. Fishing has historically been challenging due to sporadic stocking and poor survival of stocked walleye. This fishery has contained a limited number of primarily larger fish, but the overall numbers of walleye had been very low compared to other Virginia walleye lakes. Since 2013, Leesville Lake has been receiving consistent stockings, which has improved the numbers of walleye/saugeye collected in DGIF sampling. Saugeye were stocked in 2013 – 2015 and most are larger than the 18 inch minimum size limit. Physical differences between walleye and saugeye will not be noticeable for most anglers and habits for the two are very similar.

The bulk of the walleye/saugeye population is currently over 19 inches with a few walleye in the 5-7 pound range. Walleye/saugeye at Leesville have good growth rates and typically reach 18 inches between ages two and three. Approximately 95% of the walleye/saugeye population in the fall of 2018 was at least 18 inches in length and about 33% of the population was 22 inches or larger.

The most productive walleye/saugeye fishing is typically between Leesville Dam and mile marker 6. Night fishing in May and June, with floating or shallow running plugs cast to the shoreline, should not be overlooked. These fish often frequent water less than 2 feet deep during the dark spring and early summer hours. During daylight hours in the spring, fish the shoreline contour, targeting depths of 10-20 ft., then move deeper if those depths are unproductive. Walleye/saugeye are very light sensitive and prefer dark or
shaded habitat; consequently, these fish will frequent shallower depths if the water is shaded or stained, but will remain deeper during the day if the water is clear. Rock cliffs and steeper shorelines should be the most productive, with some coves also holding fish. As water temperatures increase in late spring and throughout the summer, fish continue moving deeper, seeking cooler water, and become most active during nighttime hours.

Leesville can be a challenge due to extreme daily water fluctuations, but anglers who spend time learning productive walleye/saugeye angling techniques for Leesville and concentrate on habitats that hold walleye, may encounter a number of these elusive fish. Leesville Lake experiences very light fishing pressure and can provide solitude for anglers looking to avoid crowds and boating traffic.
**Philpott Reservoir**

Walleye are plentiful in Philpott Reservoir, and being one of the better walleye populations in Virginia, walleye fishing will be good in 2019. Fish population surveys from 2018 showed an abundance of fish in the 15-21 inch range. A total of 230 walleye and saugeye combined were collected in 2018 with an average total length of 18 inches. Fifty-five percent of the walleyes collected in 2018 sampling efforts were 18 inches or longer. Anglers fishing Philpott for walleye reported catching good numbers of quality size fish last year. The following chart shows the sizes and numbers of walleye and saugeye biologists collected in 2018. The red bars on the chart indicate legal size (18”) fish. Walleye reach 18 inches at about 3 years of age and most male walleye grow very slowly after reaching this size. Female walleye typically grow well for another few years, with some achieving larger sizes. Analysis of growth data shows a slight decrease in the growth rates of walleye, which could be contributing to anglers catching greater numbers of fish below 18 inches.

![Length & Number of Walleye/Saugeye Collected in 2018](chart)

Walleye population abundance in Philpott Reservoir is measured using two methods: electrofishing in the spring and gillnets in the fall. The reason for using two sampling methods is that when compared to bass, walleyes are less likely to be associated with shoreline habitat during early April. Because these daytime electrofishing catch rates may not always accurately represent the walleye population, gillnets are also used. Electrofishing catch rates vary considerably from year to year, as seen in the following chart. Electrofishing catch rates for the May 2018 sample was (25/hr.) and the gillnet catch rates of 8 fish per net in was average.
Anglers, who spend time learning effective techniques for walleye and find areas that are productive, should have successful fishing trips. Top-water night fishing is very popular and productive during the alewife spawn in May and June. By late June, walleye start moving into deeper water and are caught on nightcrawler harnesses and plugs trolled in deeper water. As water temperatures increase throughout the summer, walleye continue to move deeper seeking cooler water. Anglers must fish deeper throughout the summer or fish at night to capitalize on this fishery. Catching a few walleye per outing is considered good and many anglers in 2018 reported catching more than 10 walleye per trip.
Northern Virginia

Shenandoah River

Currently Walleye can be found in the Shenandoah River from Warren Dam in Front Royal downstream beyond the Virginia / West Virginia Stateline. Although they are not as numerous in the Shenandoah as they are in other rivers they seem to be increasing in number and can reach lengths exceeding 25 inches. The main source of the population prior to the annual stocking program came from stocking 285,000 fry in 2007. In the spring 2014 VDGIF began an annual stocking program of walleye fry in the Shenandoah River to supplement the natural population and increase the number of walleye present for anglers to target. Recent sampling indicated survival of the 2014 and 2015 stockings. However, Walleye were not stocked in 2016 or 2017 due to an unfortunate lack of production in hatcheries. Anglers should see similar catch rates as the 2018 fishing season. Average size of the 79 Walleye collected in February of 2019 was approximately 21 inches. The largest was 28 inches. Most fish sampled were of legal harvest size or greater. Walleye were stocked in the spring of 2018 and future stockings are planned for the Shenandoah River which should further increase the population numbers to offer an acceptable walleye fishery. Anglers fishing for walleye on the Shenandoah River should focus their efforts in the deeper pools during the daylight hours. Walleye will move out of the deeper pools into shallow bedrock ledge areas to feed during night hours. There are typically high numbers present below Warren Dam from January through March.
Lake Brittle

Lake Brittle was traditionally one of the best places in northern Virginia to catch a walleye but in recent years, the walleye population has considerably declined. Electrofishing catch rates have dropped from 40 fish/hour in 2015 to a low of 5 fish/hour in 2018. Stocking rates of walleye have been consistent and angler harvest has been minimal during this time period indicating that the reason for the decline in the adult population is due to poor juvenile survival from 2014 through 2017. A variety of environmental issues could have contributed to the poor survival including lake drawdowns during the dam and spillway renovation project, the emergence of dense hydrilla vegetation in the lake, and prolonged high/turbid water conditions in the lake due to increased storm water runoff. Biologists are working to mitigate some of the issues leading to the poor survival and are hopeful that survival of the juvenile stocked in 2018 and beyond will help the lake rebound from the current low population. The lake still provides a suitable population of walleye and has the best bank and boat access to fish for walleye in Northern Virginia. During the 2018 electrofishing survey, 42% of walleye collected measured the harvestable size of 18 inches with a 16” average. An 18-inch minimum/5 per day limit is effect in place at Lake Brittle.

Biologists will continue tagging walleyes at Lake Brittle again in 2019 as part of an ongoing tagging study to evaluate angler catch and exploitation rates. A cash reward of $20 is offered for the return of the tag and catch information. Anglers can remove the tag by cutting through the monofilament attachment with a knife or scissors. The fish can then be released or harvested. Return the tag and catch information to the address printed on the tag. Catch information includes: date; general location of catch; “Was the fish harvested or released?”; “Were you fishing for walleyes?” and “Did you catch any other walleyes on this fishing trip?”
**Burke Lake**

Burke Lake is located in Fairfax County—a stone’s throw from Washington D.C. Anglers in pursuit of walleye can expect to find most fish in the 2 to 3 pound range, with some fish as large as 8 pounds. Spring 2018 surveys resulted in 54% of walleye being harvestable with a 17.7” average. An 18-inch minimum/5 per day limit is in place at Burke.

Burke Lake is included in an ongoing tagging study that began in 2014, to evaluate angler catch and exploitation rates. A cash reward of $20 is offered for the return of the tag and catch information. Anglers can remove the tag by cutting through the monofilament attachment with a knife or scissors. The fish can then be released or harvested. Return the tag and catch information to the address printed on the tag. Catch information includes: date; general location of catch; “Was the fish harvested or released?”; “Were you fishing for walleyes?” and “Did you catch any other walleyes on this fishing trip?”

**Lake Orange**

Anglers hoping to catch decent walleye, while fishing for multiple species, should look no further than Lake Orange. Walleye have been stocked into this northern piedmont impoundment for years and current management includes annual stockings of walleye fingerlings. Spring 2018 surveys resulted in 33% of walleye being harvestable with a 16” average. Anglers occasionally catch walleye in the 5 pound range. Most walleyes are caught during the late spring and early summer by anglers fishing Lake Orange for bass, although a few anglers do specifically fish for walleyes at this location. Anglers should also be aware that an 18-inch minimum/5 per day limit exists at Lake Orange.

Lake Orange is included in the walleye tagging study. A cash reward of $20 is offered for the return of the tag and catch information. Anglers can remove the tag by cutting through the monofilament attachment with a knife or scissors. The fish can then be released or harvested. Return the tag and catch information to the address printed on the tag. Catch information includes: date; general location of catch; “Was the fish harvested or released?”; “Were you fishing for walleyes?” and “Did you catch any other walleyes on this fishing trip?”
Little Creek Reservoir

Little Creek Reservoir is a 947-acre water supply impoundment owned by the City of Newport News located within James City County near the Town of Toano, VA. The reservoir provides a great opportunity for anglers to fish for walleye and saugeye. James City County Parks & Recreation has a great park that provides plenty of access to the reservoir. The walleye population continues to show signs of improvement with anglers catching quality fish in the 4 to 6 pound range. Little Creek Reservoir typically receives 94,700 walleye fingerlings each May, with fish stocked in a pelagic manner to allow for greater dispersal. The 97,000 saugeye fingerlings stocked in 2014 are still providing anglers some action. Angler catch rates of saugeye during 2016 and 2017 were high, but appeared to have declined in 2018. The large schools of blueback herring, that comprise the majority of the forage base, may make fishing more difficult at various times of the year.

One of the keys to fishing on Little Creek Reservoir is to concentrate on the deeper edges in and around the numerous points that line the shoreline. A trusty fish finder will allow for the detection of blueback herring schools as well as the thermocline depth during the summer months. Anglers that fish Little Creek Reservoir for the first time should be aware that the reservoir is trolling motor use only and should plan their trip accordingly. Windy days on Little Creek Reservoir have a way of eating through charged batteries. Some of the best action has come from anglers that slow troll their baits in the 17 to 20 foot depth range within the western half of the reservoir. Trolled
nightcrawlers can be a very productive pattern for anglers to try during the warmer weather months. Dedicated anglers will catch their fair share of walleyes surprisingly during the summer months if they are able to keep their baits in the walleye strike zone. Anglers jigging Silver Buddy Blade Baits can catch some quality walleye from deep water during the cold water months.

Walleye will congregate along the southern shoreline of the reservoir in their classic pre-spawn pattern from early March to early April. There are no large tributaries that flow into Little Creek Reservoir, so the walleyes will target various rock shelves in their attempt to spawn. The 2018 spring electrofishing survey yielded 126 walleye and 15 saugeye. The largest collected walleye measured 29 inches and weighed an impressive 8.75 pounds. This fish is believed to be the largest walleye ever collected/caught from Little Creek Reservoir. DGIF biologists continue to tag walleye and saugeye collected from Little Creek Reservoir as part of the state wide tagging study. Anglers that catch a reward tag can receive a $20 reward after the tag is returned to the Region 1 DGIF office with some catch information. A high proportion of the collected walleye were new fish in the 15 to 18 inch range that are representing a strong year class. Reward tags can be cut off of any under-sized fish that may measure less than the minimum size limit of 18 inches. The creel limit for walleye and saugeye is 5 fish/person/day in aggregate.
The walleye and saugeye populations within Lake Chesdin are highly dependent on DGIF stocking efforts. The creel survey conducted March through October 2018 revealed limited direct pressure toward the walleye and saugeye populations. On a positive note, numerous bass anglers reported catching walleye and saugeye while fishing the lake these last few years. Lake Chesdin has been listed as a Diversity Water on the DGIF Walleye Management Plan. The lake receives walleye stockings when there is a surplus of produced fish within the DGIF hatchery system. Conditions were favorable in 2013 and 2014 to allow for the stocking of both saugeye and walleye fingerlings. The requisition of 125,000 fingerlings was actually surpassed in 2015 when the hatchery brought 144,661 walleye fingerlings to the lake. The 2015 walleye year class should all be of legal size (18” min) with the majority of fish in the 2.5 to 3 pound range. These consecutive stocking efforts along with additional stockings conducted prior to 2013 have created a respectable fishery. Pelagic stockings of the walleye and saugeye fingerlings have been successful in spreading the fish out in this 3,100 acre impoundment. If all goes well with walleye production in 2019, Lake Chesdin should be stocked with another allotment of fish to help strengthen the population for future angling action.

The gizzard shad population within Lake Chesdin is extremely abundant with a high proportion of fish in the 5 to 8 inch range. Natural recruitment from the 2018 shad spawn was extremely successful with thousands of juvenile shad observed during the fall months. Fishing Lake Chesdin for a variety of fish species can be difficult with this surplus of available forage. Anglers should not get too discouraged if they can’t find a
productive pattern that works the first few times out on the lake. Anglers are encouraged to target these schools of shad as you never know when a walleye or saugeye will strike a properly presented lure or bait. DGIF biologists began tagging collected walleye and saugeye from Lake Chesdin in 2015 as part of the state wide tagging program. Anglers that are able to catch a walleye or saugeye should inspect the fish to see if there is a reward tag located just below the dorsal fin on the left side of fish’s body. Anglers should contact the DGIF Region 1 office to report collected reward tags if they would like to receive a $20 reward check. Spring movements have shown a large proportion of the population migrating toward the upper reaches of the lake along the old river channel. Late fall into early winter has the majority of the walleye and saugeye congregating toward the lower third of the lake as they follow the schools of shad. The minimum size limit for walleye and saugeye is 18 inches with a daily creel limit of 5 fish/person in aggregate.

For more information, contact the following offices:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Office</th>
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<tr>
<td>Leesville and Philpott Reservoirs</td>
<td>Forest Office</td>
<td>(434) 525-7522</td>
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<td>Lakes Orange, Burke &amp; Brittle</td>
<td>Fredericksburg</td>
<td>(540) 889-4169</td>
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<td>Little Creek Reservoir &amp; Chesdin</td>
<td>Charles City Office</td>
<td>(804) 829-6580</td>
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<td>Shenandoah River</td>
<td>Verona Office</td>
<td>(540) 248-9360</td>
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<td>Hungry Mother Lake</td>
<td>Marion Office</td>
<td>(276) 783-4860</td>
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