

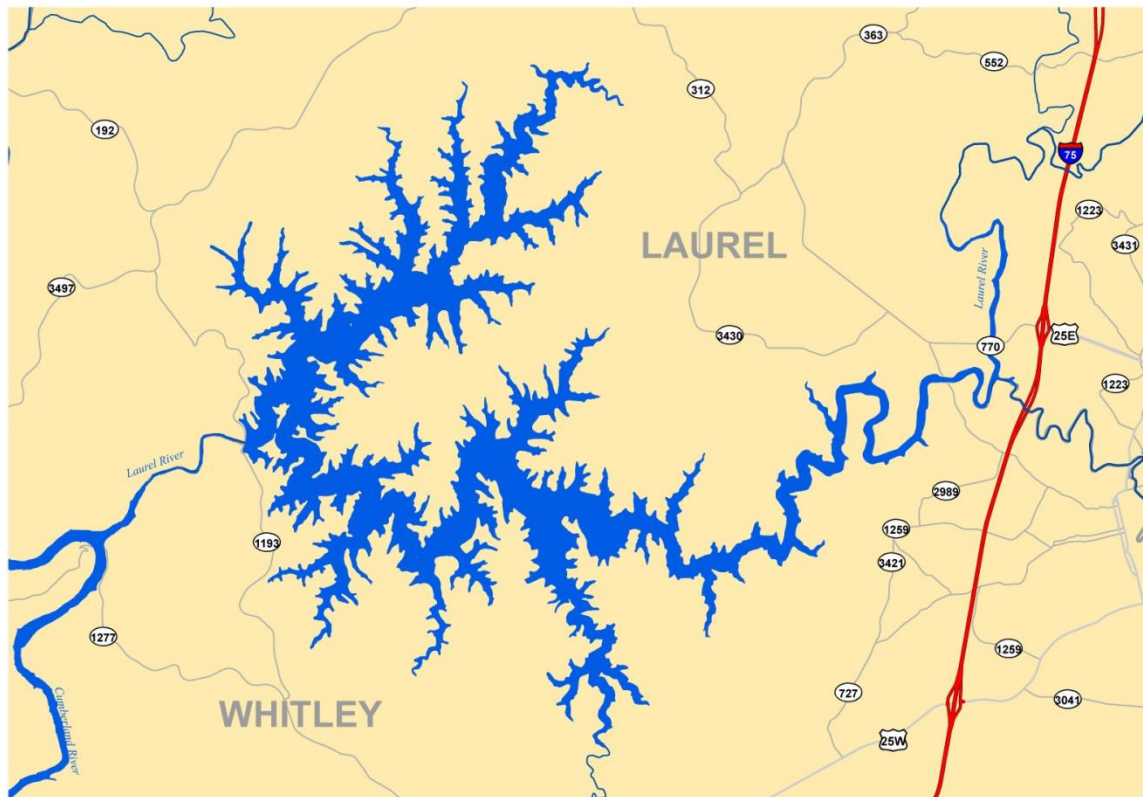
## Laurel River Lake Bass Assessment 2018

Laurel River Lake is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers mainstem reservoir located on the Laurel River in Laurel and Whitley counties in southeastern Kentucky. This 5,600-acre lake (average recreational pool, 1012 ft elevation) was impounded in 1974 with the completion of Laurel Dam (located at Laurel River mile 2.8). This deep, clear reservoir lies within the Daniel Boone National Forest and is a popular fishing and boating destination for numerous visitors each year. The majority of the lake is considered infertile (oligotrophic), however, the upper Laurel River arm is highly fertile (eutrophic).

Laurel River Lake contains three black bass species: largemouth, spotted, and smallmouth bass. According to the creel survey in 2018, largemouth bass comprise about 61% of the black bass catch in the lake. Although largemouth bass can be found throughout the lake, they are most concentrated in the fertile upper Laurel River Arm.

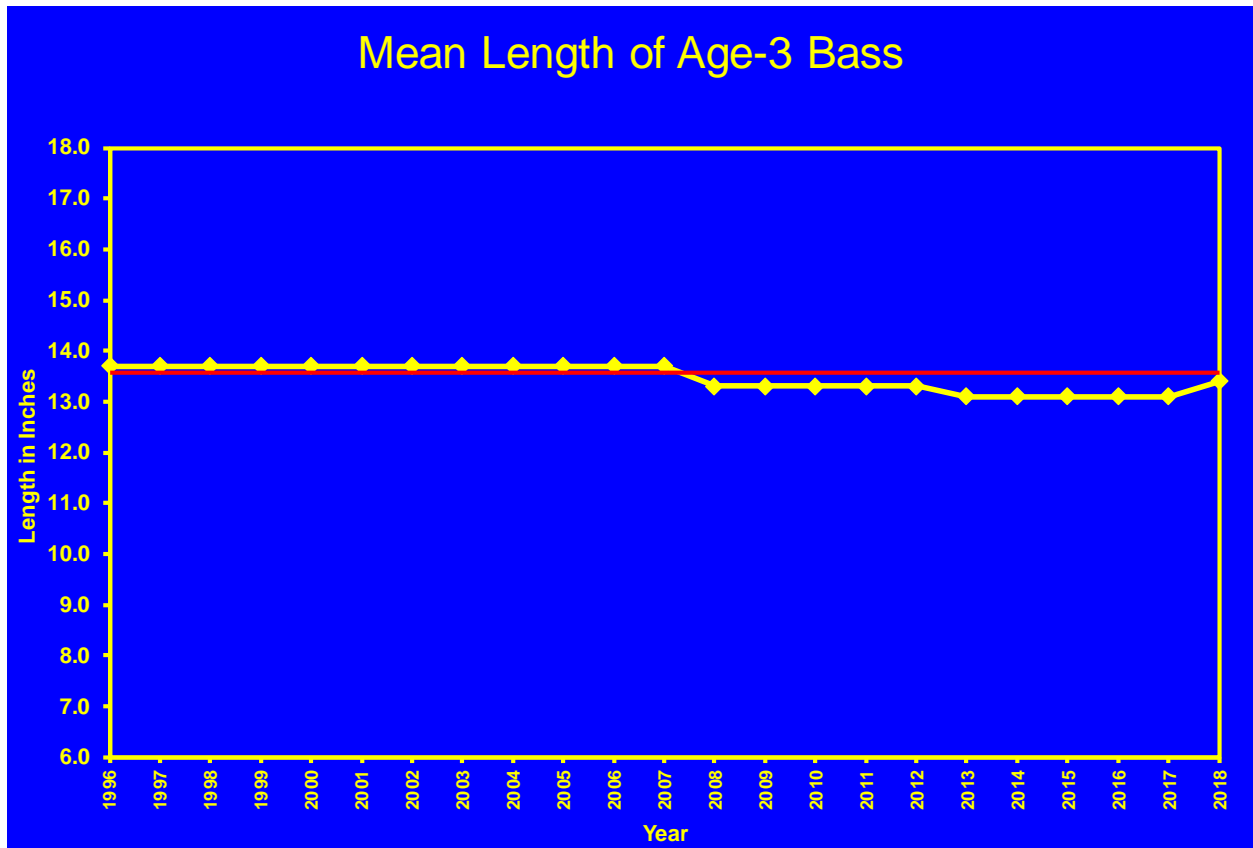
Please see the [Sportfish Assessments](#) page for an explanation of how the assessment works and for a list of other lakes with largemouth bass assessments.

Please note the minimum size limit for largemouth bass on this lake is 15.0 inches.



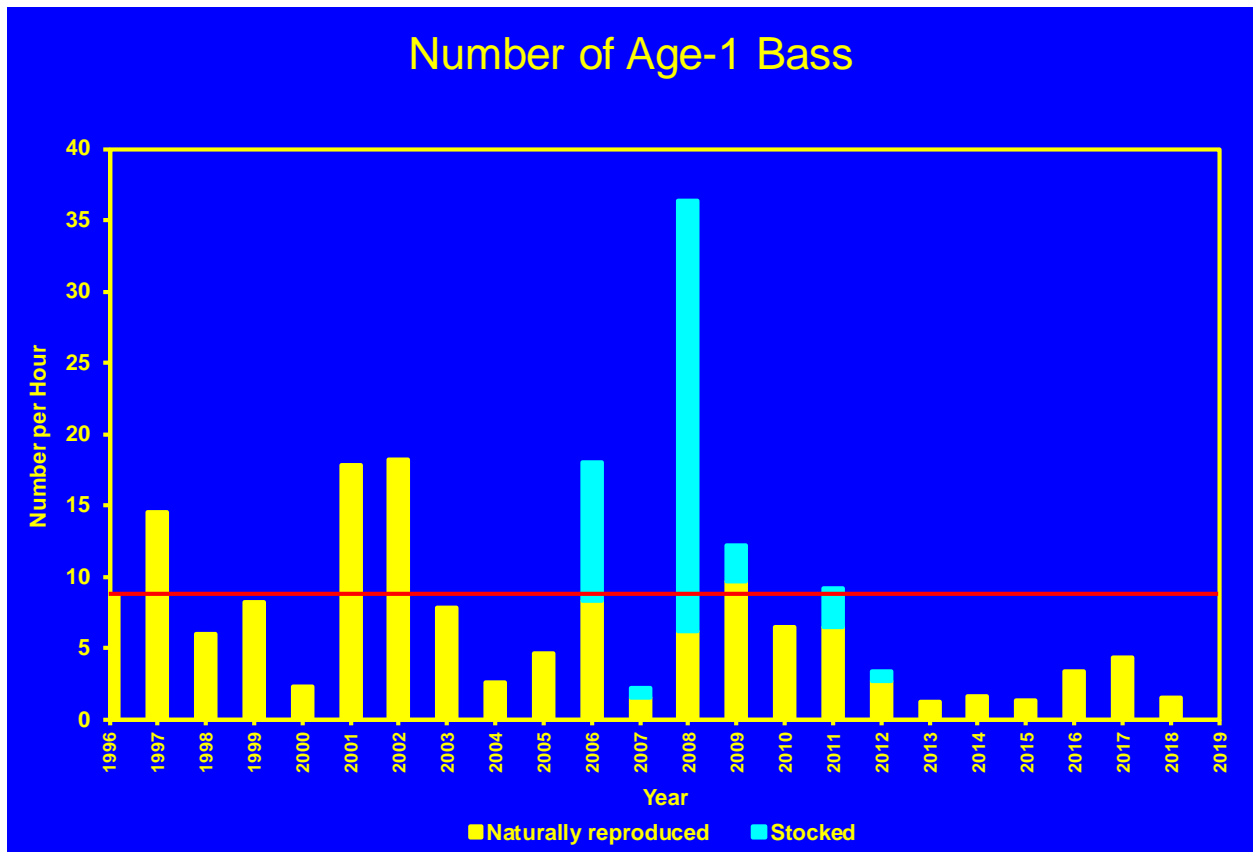
## Parameter 1 – Length at age-3 (growth rate)

At Laurel River Lake, the length of an age-3 largemouth bass averaged 13.5 inches (represented by the red line). When compared to other lakes of this size, this is considered to be excellent growth for largemouth bass. Growth rates improved in 2018, and although mean lengths of largemouth bass aged in 2008 and 2013 were lower than average, the observed growth rates were still excellent. Growth rates will be evaluated every 5 years to monitor any changes in growth.



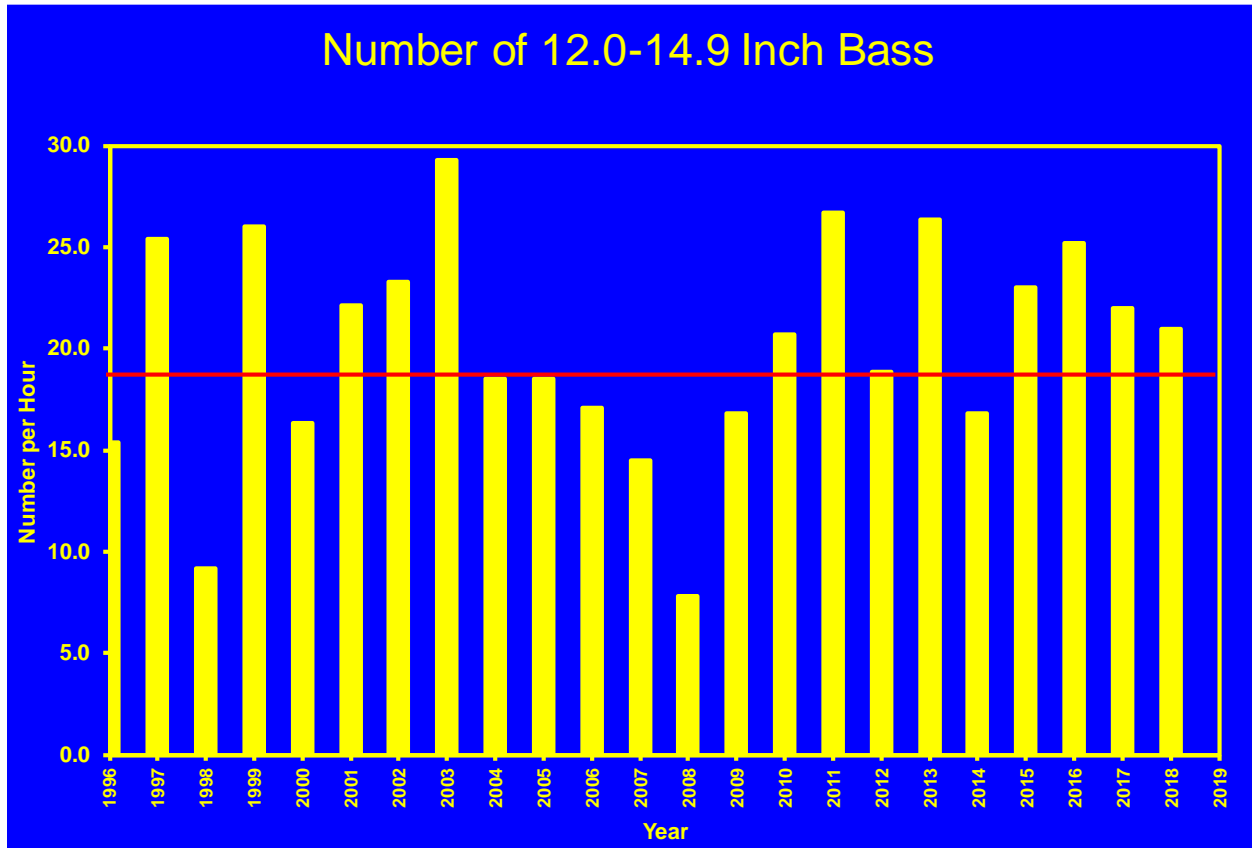
## Parameter 2 – Numbers of age-1 bass (how good the spawn was)

KDFWR looks at the spring electrofishing catch rates of age-1 largemouth bass to assess the success of the spawn that occurred in the prior year. For example, the age-1 catch rate in 2016 would represent the 2015 year-class. This is an important parameter because the number of bass produced represents how good the fishing will be once these fish grow large enough for anglers to catch. At Laurel River Lake, age-1 largemouth bass catch rates have fluctuated widely and have averaged 8.7 fish per hour of electrofishing. When compared to other lakes of this size, the average catch rate of age-1 bass at Laurel River Lake is considered to be relatively low. Supplemental stockings of young largemouth bass occurred in the fall from 2005-2008 and 2010-2012 to bolster weak year classes. The fall stockings in 2005 and 2007 were effective, as stocked fish (indicated by the aqua-colored bars) were numerous in the spring 2006 and 2008 samples and contributed to the higher than average catches in those years.



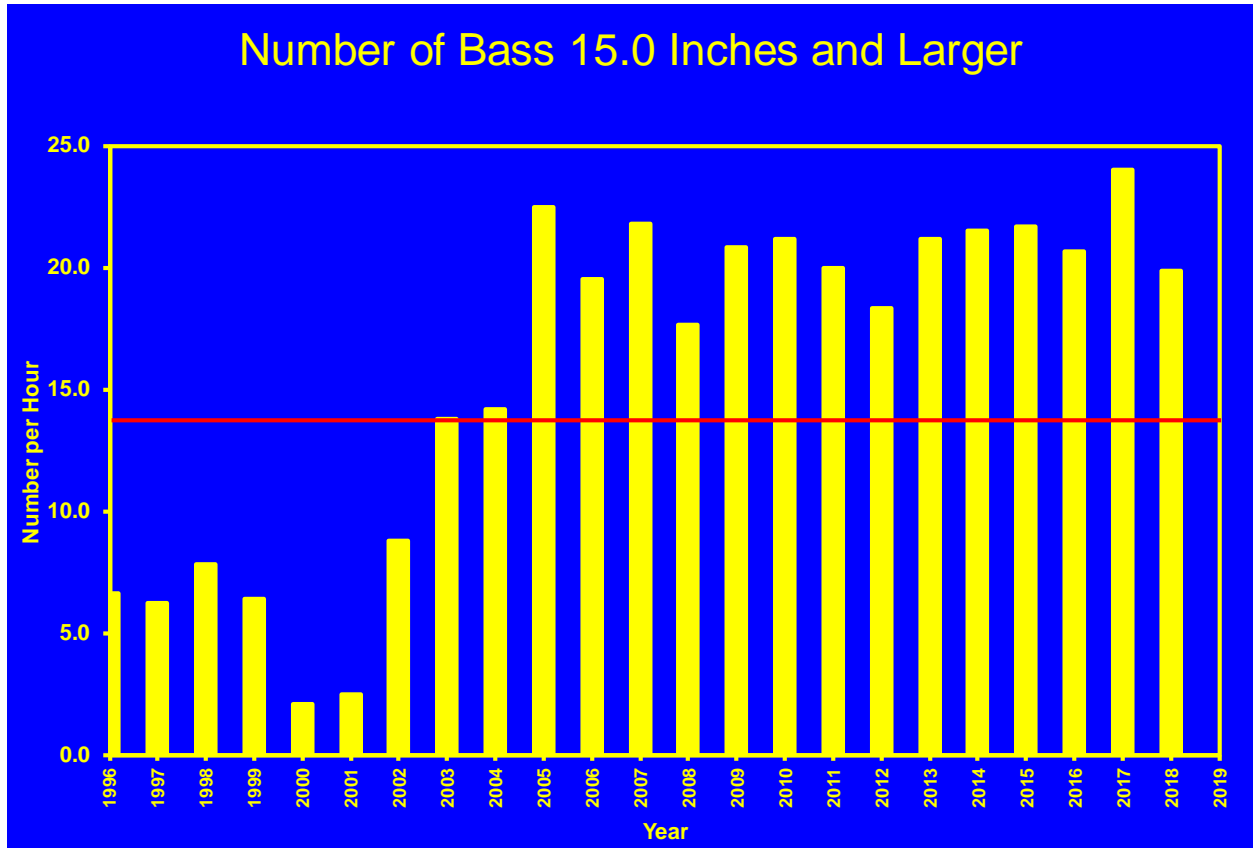
### Parameter 3 – Numbers of 12.0-14.9 inch bass

The electrofishing catch rate of 12.0-14.9 inch largemouth bass has averaged 18.7 fish/hour over the years at Laurel River Lake, which is considered fair for lakes of its size. Although catch rates were low in 2008, catch rates of 12.0-14.9 inch largemouth bass have been above the historic average the last several years.



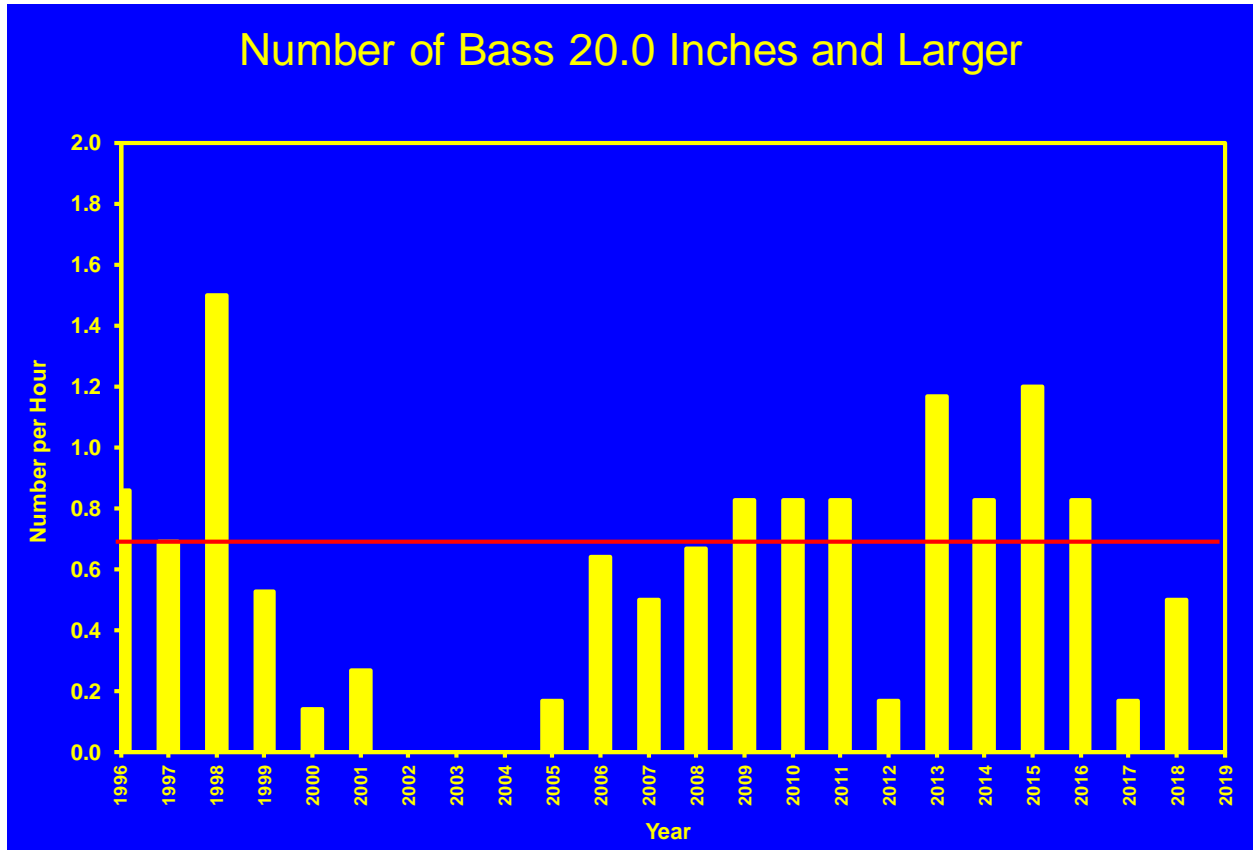
## Parameter 4 – Numbers of 15.0 inch and larger bass

The catch rate of 15.0 inch and larger largemouth bass at Laurel River Lake has averaged 13.7 fish/hour of electrofishing and has been consistent for the last 14 years. This trend bodes well for the future, as anglers should be able to enjoy good fishing for quality largemouth for the next several years.



## Parameter 5 – Numbers of 20.0 inch and larger bass

The electrofishing catch of 20.0 inch and larger largemouth bass has averaged about 0.7 fish/hour for Laurel River Lake since 1990. The catch rate of these larger fish bottomed out in the early 2000's but has improved in recent years.



## Overall – Total Assessment Score (All five parameters added together)

Overall, the largemouth bass fishery at Laurel River Lake has averaged a fair rating (12.3) over the past 26 years. Since 2005, the rating has improved slightly, largely due to the increased catch of harvestable size fish (parameters 4 and 5) and the excellent growth rates observed in the bass population. This trend bodes well for the future of the largemouth bass fishery on Laurel River Lake.

