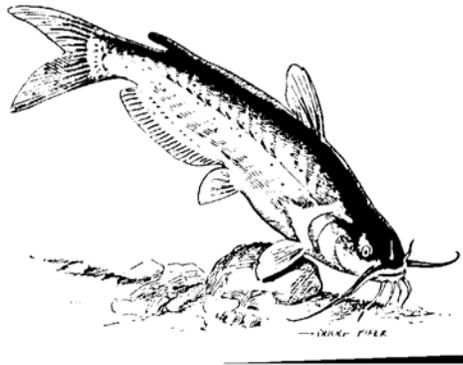


SUMMARY OF HARVEST ESTIMATES AND LICENSE SALES FOR  
INDIANA'S INLAND RIVER COMMERCIAL FISHERIES, 2006

Fish Management Report

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Inland commercial sales for 2006 were 346 licenses and 1,282 net tags.
- Reported total inland harvest for 2006 was 94,218 pounds up from the recent record low of 85,925 pounds in 2005. Fluctuations in the total harvest from year to year are due to a number of variables. The greatest influence appears to be major water level fluctuations. Spring, summer, and fall 2005 were extremely hot and dry.
- Inland catfish harvest for 2006 was 72,324 pounds (37,995 pounds channel catfish, 26,996 pounds flathead catfish, 7,333 pounds blue catfish). Catfish harvest comprised 77% of the total catch.
- The estimated monetary value of the 2006 inland commercial harvest was \$264,701.

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# SUMMARY OF HARVEST ESTIMATES AND LICENSE SALES FOR INDIANA'S INLAND RIVER COMMERCIAL FISHERIES, 2006

## Fish Management Report

### INTRODUCTION

Persons using nets to catch fish from Indiana's rivers are regulated and licensed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). Since 1977, fishers using nets on inland rivers have been required to report the species and weight of fish harvested. Although limited in several ways, the harvest reports submitted by commercial fishermen provide an index for evaluation of the river resource.

The objective of this report is to identify major patterns in the inland river net fishery by examining harvest information and license sales data. This report covers the 2006 reported harvest. Earlier reports (Glander 1984, 1987; Stefanavage 1990, 1999, 2001, 2007; Stefanavage and Kowalik 2007; Blackwell 1991, 1993; Carnahan 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1997; Stiras 1998) summarize the 1977 to 2005 harvest estimates and license sales.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Commercial fishing is currently limited to 923 miles of the Wabash, Ohio, Patoka, and White Rivers, including the East and West Forks of the White (Figure 1). A 200-mile segment of the Wabash River forms the boundary between Indiana and Illinois.

Fishers are limited to a maximum of four hoop nets in the Wabash upriver of the Indiana/Illinois boundary section and in the Patoka, White, East Fork White, and West Fork White Rivers. Seines and an unlimited number of hoop nets may be used by a fisher in the Wabash River boundary section. See Appendix 1 for the current inland commercial fishing regulations.



Figure 1. River reaches where commercial fishing is legal (indicated by heavy lines).

## METHODS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE HARVEST ESTIMATES

Licensed net fishermen are required to submit monthly harvest reports indicating the species and weight of fish harvested. Greater communication with the licensees and improved data handling, storage, and analysis capabilities have increased the overall accuracy of the harvest information since 1983; however, all harvest estimates are based on unverified reports. The actual harvest is assumed to be higher than the estimates due to noncompliance with the reporting system, inaccurate reports, and illegal net fishing.

Licensees who are delinquent in submitting their harvest reports are mailed reminder notices. This is done to increase compliance with the mandatory harvest reporting system. Delinquent notices are generally issued in May, September, and at the end of the year. May and September notices simply state the months for which harvest reports are delinquent and request that the fishers submit the reports. January notices are worded more sternly. Licensees are warned that they will not be sold a license for the new year until delinquent reports are received.

Before 1984, harvest estimates were broken down by the licensee's county of residence and not by the river from which they harvested fish. Five counties contain or adjoin more than one river where net fishing is currently legal (Figure 1); therefore, it was not possible to determine the harvest from each river. Since 1984, commercial fishermen were required to report the river from which they harvested fish. This enabled harvest estimates to be broken down by river.

Starting in 1988, harvest was analyzed by catch per unit effort (CPUE) defined as the pounds of fish harvested per overnight hoop net set. This was determined per river by dividing the particular river's total harvest by the total number of overnight hoop net sets. Most commercial licensees do not complete the monthly harvest report's effort segment correctly; therefore, all effort and CPUE results were analyzed with extreme caution.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### License and Net Tag Sales

Inland net tag and license sales declined significantly in 1985 due to the issuance of a fish consumption advisory affecting rivers open to commercial fishing (Figure 1). Sales slightly increased after that advisory was rescinded in early 1989, but overall have shown a general decreasing trend since the mid 1980's. Since 2000, annual license sales have hovered between 317 and 354. During 2006, 346 licenses and 1,282 net tags were sold.

Historically, sales of inland commercial fishing licenses have been concentrated in counties where a relatively large population has access to a substantial river resource (Glander 1984). Dubois, Fountain, Gibson, Knox, Pike, Posey, and Vermillion counties have generally had the most licensed commercial fishermen (Table 1).

The portion of licensees submitting all of their monthly harvest reports on time as required was 60% for 2006 with 86% of the licensees eventually submitting all required reports (Table 2). Most harvest reports submitted in response to the final delinquent notice indicated that no fishing activity occurred during the months in question. This information is suspect since reports submitted for fishing activity seven or eight months after the deadline are likely inaccurate. Final delinquent notices are an effective method of increasing compliance with the mandatory reporting provision of the administrative rule; however, they produce little information which directly adds to the harvest estimates.

#### Trends in the Estimated Inland Harvest

Due to the factors which limit the accuracy of the harvest estimates, emphasis should not be placed on the numerical estimates themselves; rather, trends in the estimated harvest should be identified and analyzed. By looking at trends, which are less biased than the estimates, the harvest information provided by inland commercial fishermen can be useful.

Reported total harvest for 2006 was 94,218 pounds (Table 3). The relationship between net tag sales and total estimated harvest was generally not linearly positive (Figure 2). The largest harvests have not occurred in the years when the most tags were sold. For instance, the 1993 harvest was 92,103 pounds less than the 1985 harvest with only 21 more net tags sold. Many factors other than the number of net tags sold influence the total estimated harvest.

Fluctuations in the total harvest from year to year are due to a number of variables. The greatest influence appears to be major water level fluctuations. During high water events, fishermen lose nets, cannot find nets, or are prevented from checking or setting nets. During severe droughts, fishermen just do not catch many fish as the fish appear to stay in deep water. Other factors influencing harvest are consumption advisories, hoop net theft, and fish theft. The low overall 2005 harvest can be attributed to severe drought and excessively high water temperature during that spring, summer, and fall.

Catfish (channel, flathead, and blue) harvest was 72,324 pounds during 2006. Catfish

continued to be harvested from inland waters at rates much greater than the long term average (Figure 3). Since 1995, combined catfish harvest has ranged from 77% to 85% of total catch, while less valuable species such as carp, buffalo, and suckers continue to be less sought after. Catfish comprised 77% of the total harvest during 2006.

Channel catfish (37,995 pounds) continued to be the most abundant catfish species harvested followed by flathead catfish (26,996 pounds) and then blue catfish (7,333 pounds), (Figure 4). Channel catfish was also the most abundant species harvested overall and comprised 40% of the total poundage harvested. Flathead catfish ranked second at 27% while blue catfish comprised 8% of the total. Catfish relative abundance by river during 2006 ranged from 51% for the Patoka River to 94% for the West Fork White River (Figure 5).

Total effort (number of overnight hoop net sets) had been on a decreasing trend overall. The highest effort occurred in 1992 with 71,632 overnight hoop net sets. The lowest effort was 34,448 sets in 2005. The 2006 effort was 36,091 overnight hoop net sets, a slight increase from 2005 (Appendix 2).

Retail values used to determine monetary estimates were \$3.00/pound for catfish and \$2.18/pound for other fish. The estimated monetary value of the 2006 harvest was \$264,701 compared to \$318,661 for 2004 and \$245,167 for 2005.

#### Distribution of Harvest by Inland River

Harvest estimates per river did not necessarily correspond to the miles of river open to commercial fishing. This can be easily explained by the difference in river size. For example, the lower Wabash River near Vincennes has an average annual flow of 13,730 cubic feet per second (CFS) and may reach a width of one mile. In contrast, the Patoka River at Winslow has an annual average flow of 590 CFS and is only approximately 100 feet wide.

The Wabash River accounted for approximately half of the total inland harvest for 2006 (Table 4). Harvest from the Patoka River comprised 9% of the total compared to 16% for the Main Stem White, 13% for the West Fork, and 14% for the East Fork White River.

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Date: March 26, 2008

Approved by:

  
Brian M. Schoenung, Fisheries Supervisor

Date: August 6, 2008

Table 1. Number of inland commercial fishermen by county, Avg. 1984 to 2006, 2004, 2005, and 2006.

County	Avg. 1984 to 2006	Number of Fishermen		
		2004	2005	2006
Daviess	12	11	17	15
Dubois	35	28	24	26
Fountain	28	20	23	23
Gibson	61	58	53	48
Greene	22	13	14	14
Knox	47	42	39	37
Martin	5	8	6	5
Parke	12	11	8	10
Pike	51	54	54	51
Posey	33	29	27	31
Sullivan	12	9	6	7
Tippecanoe	4	1	5	3
Vermillion	35	24	21	29
Vigo	26	17	15	14
Warren	8	6	7	4
Other	25	13	19	29
<b>TOTALS</b>	415	344	338	346

Table 2. Number of inland commercial fishing licenses sold, number of licensees submitting all required

monthly harvest reports on time, and responses to final delinquent notice, 1979 to 2006.

Year	Licenses Sold	Number Submitting All Reports On Time	Percent	Number Responding To Final Notice	Total % Sending In All Reports
1979	470	261	56	84	73
1980	534	340	64	88	80
1981	530	329	62	116	84
1982	579	*	*	*	*
1983	607	387	64	138	86
1984	604	425	70	109	88
1985	475	364	77	73	92
1986	447	303	68	93	89
1987	469	273	58	157	92
1988	449	263	59	158	94
1989	492	237	48	201	89
1990	481	231	48	181	86
1991	464	271	58	153	91
1992	490	250	51	162	84
1993	454	261	57	149	90
1994	445	302	68	108	92
1995	423	149	35	236	91
1996	421	274	65	97	88
1997	411	284	69	95	92
1998	400	84	21	221	76
1999	342	230	67	46	81
2000	370	188	51	118	83
2001	349	203	58	67	77
2002	317	181	57	107	91
2003	354	207	58	103	88
2004	344	189	55	112	88
2005	338	*	*	*	*
2006	346	208	60	89	86
Avg 1979 to 2006	443	257	58	125	87

\* delinquent notice information unavailable.

Table 3. Inland commercial fishing licenses sales, net tag sales, and total estimated harvest, Avg. 1977 to 2006.

Year	Number of Licenses Sold	Number of Tags Sold	Estimated Total Harvest (pounds)
1977	544	1,689	194,419
1978	451	1,551	210,145
1979	470	1,603	198,719
1980	534	1,788	234,048
1981	530	1,894	228,402
1982	579	2,012	*
1983	607	2,106	210,515
1984	604	2,072	197,355
1985	475	1,658	201,889
1986	447	1,657	162,217
1987	469	1,740	142,404
1988	449	1,682	128,271
1989	492	1,839	185,123
1990	481	1,847	169,249
1991	464	1,784	117,382
1992	490	1,745	121,201
1993	454	1,631	109,786
1994	445	1,588	94,509
1995	423	1,624	102,613
1996	421	1,595	103,225
1997	411	1,588	104,657
1998	400	1,513	102,774
1999	342	1,329	99,417
2000	370	1,387	92,144
2001	349	1,254	75,978
2002	317	1,183	109,536
2003	354	1,365	113,737
2004	344	1,322	112,248
2005	338	1,290	85,925
2006	346	1,282	94,218
Avg. 1977-2006	447	1,621	141,452

\* 1982 harvest estimate unavailable.

Table 4. Distribution of 1987 to 2006 inland commercial harvest (pounds) and commercial fishing resource (miles of river) by river segment. Numbers in parenthesis are percent of the total.

River Segment	Resource (Miles)*	Avg. 1987-2006	2004	2005	2006
Wabash	310.0 (59.9)	58,802 (51.9)	47,078 (41.9)	44,497 (51.8)	45,062 (47.8)
Patoka	86.0 (15.2)	7,660 (6.8)	8,744 (7.8)	5,087 (5.9)	8,079 (8.6)
White-Main Stem	49.5 (8.8)	19,872 (17.6)	30,680 (27.3)	15,087 (17.6)	15,266 (16.2)
White-East Fork	34.5 (6.1)	12,006 (10.6)	13,494 (12.0)	6,953 (8.1)	12,508 (13.3)
White-West Fork	85.0 (15.0)	14,878 (13.1)	12,252 (10.9)	14,301 (16.6)	13,303 (14.1)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>113,219</b>	<b>112,248</b>	<b>85,925</b>	<b>94,218</b>

\*From Hoggatt, 1975

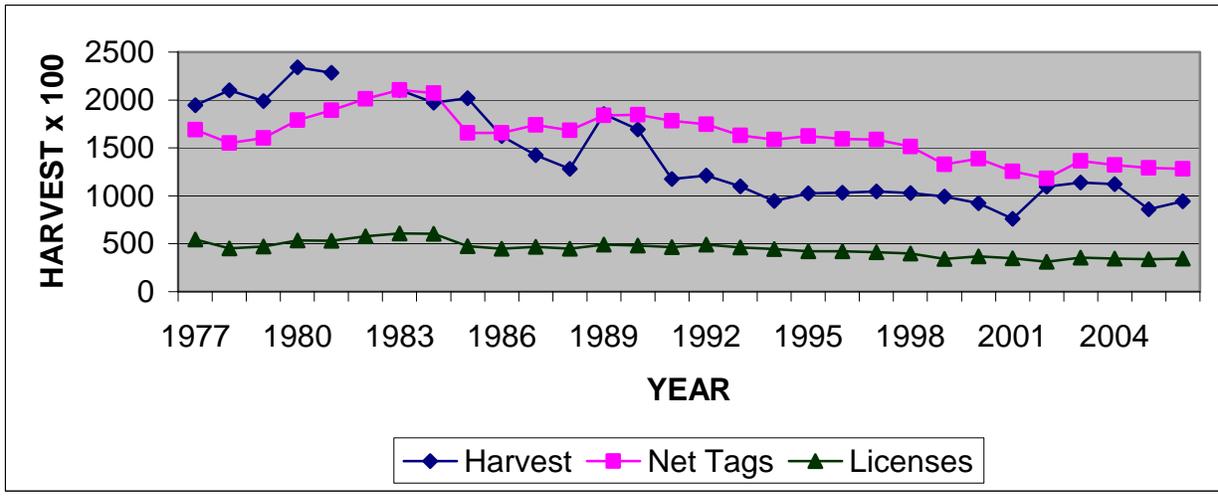


Figure 2. Estimated total harvest (pounds x 100), number of nets sold, and number of licenses sold, 1977 to 2006.

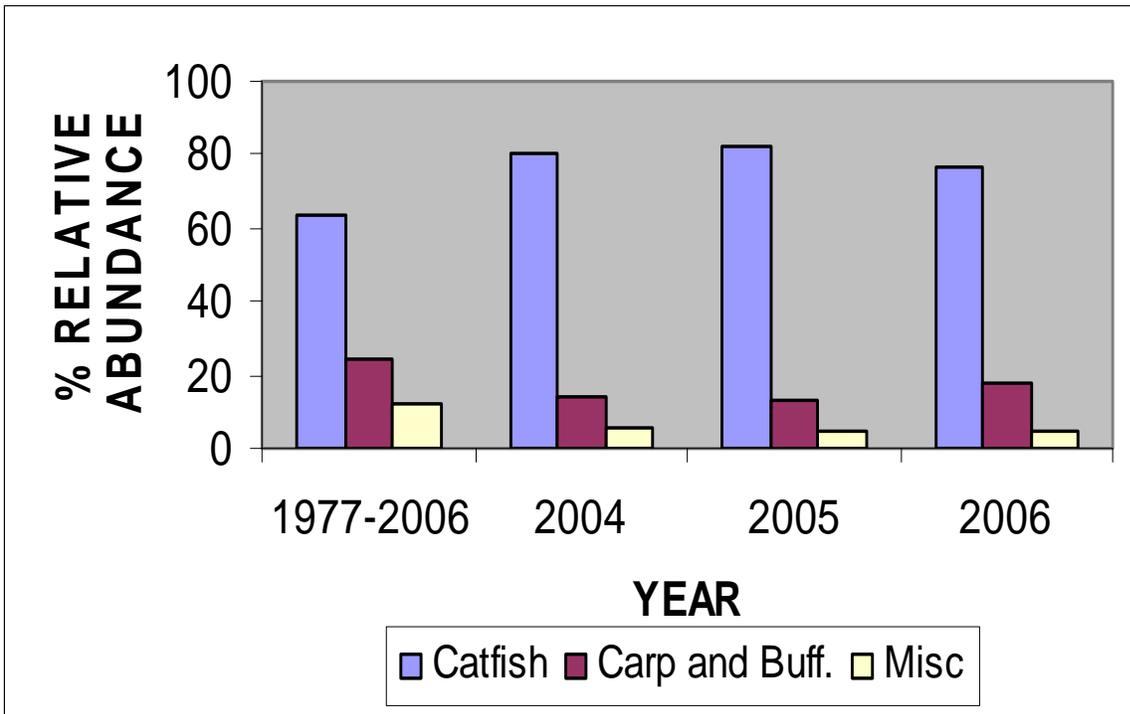


Figure 3. Relative abundance (percent of the total weight harvested) of catfish, carp, buffalo, and other commercially valuable fish in the inland commercial harvest, Avg. 1977 to 2006, 2004, 2005, and 2006.

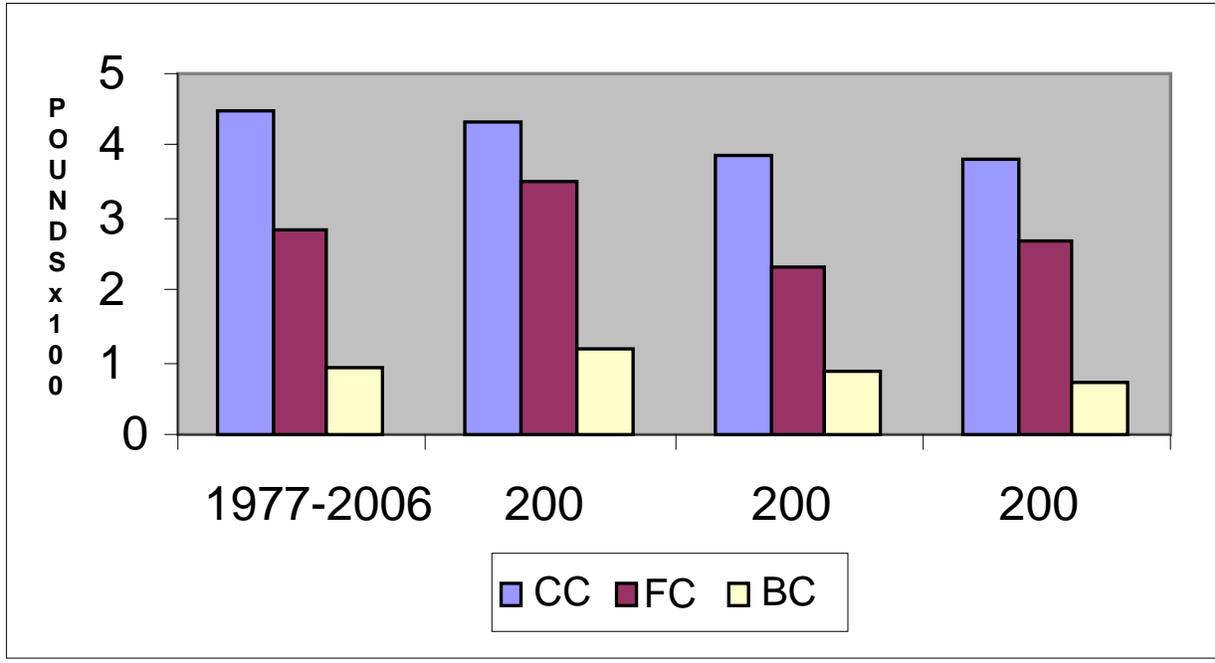


Figure 4. Estimated harvest (pounds x 1000) of channel, flathead, and blue catfish in the inland commercial fishery, Avg. 1977 to 2006, 2004, 2005, and 2006.

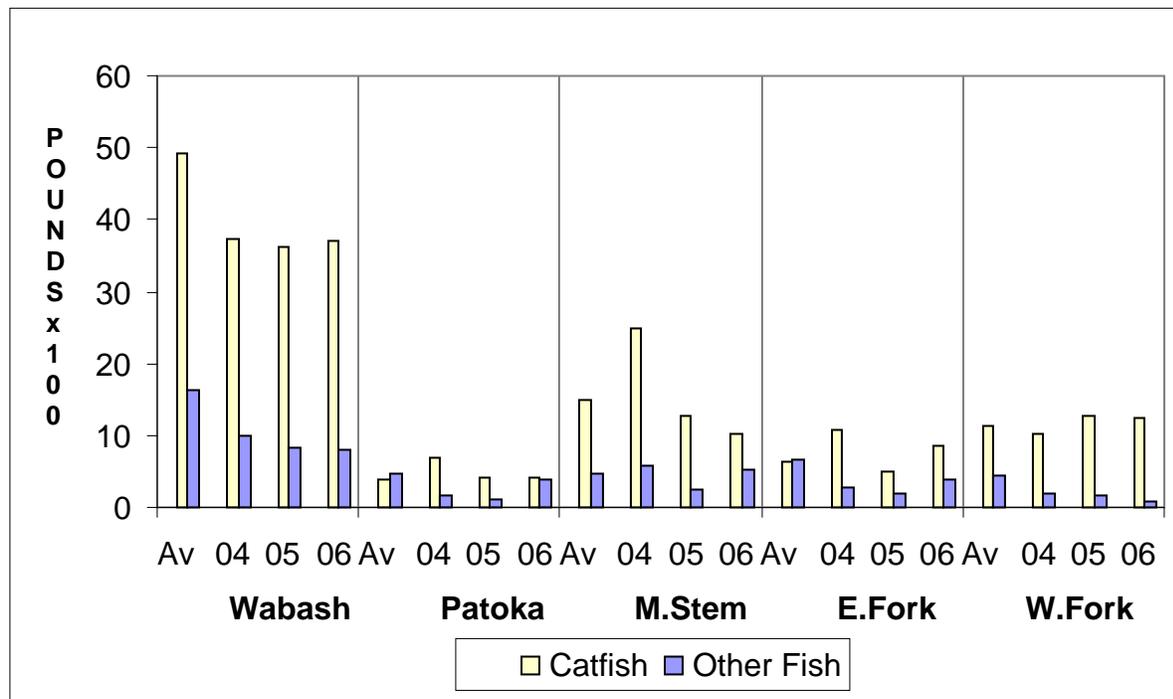


Figure 5. Estimated weight (pounds x 1000) of fish harvested by licensed inland commercial fishermen from the Wabash, Patoka, and White Rivers, Avg. 1984 to 2006, 2004, 2005, and 2006.

Appendix 1. Inland commercial fishing regulations (3/26/08).

Rule 8. Commercial Fishing

312 IAC 9-8-1 Applicability

Authority: IC 14-22-2-6; IC 14-22-13

Affected: IC 14-22

Sec. 1. This rule applies to a person who is issued a commercial fishing license by the department. (*Natural Resources Commission; 312 IAC 9-8-1; filed May 12, 1997, 10:00 a.m.: 20 IR 2721; readopted filed Jul 28, 2003, 12:00 p.m.: 27 IR 286*)

312 IAC 9-8-2 Commercial fishing except on the Ohio River; general provisions

Authority: IC 14-10-2-4; IC 14-22-2-6; IC 14-22-13

Affected: IC 14-22-14-23

Sec. 2. (a) This section applies to commercial fishing on:

- (1) waters of this state;
- (2) boundary waters; or
- (3) waters containing state-owned fish;

other than the Ohio River.

(b) No person may take or sell fish except under this section and 312 IAC 9-10. A person may take fish with the aid of illumination of:

- (1) a spotlight;
- (2) a searchlight; or
- (3) an artificial light;

where lawfully engaged in commercial fishing.

(c) A person subject to this section must not possess trout or salmon.

(d) A person must not possess or sell any of the following taken from the waters described in subsection (a):

- (1) Chubs.
- (2) Northern pike.
- (3) Chain pickerel.
- (4) Muskellunge.
- (5) Tiger muskellunge.
- (6) White bass.
- (7) Yellow bass.
- (8) Striped bass.
- (9) Hybrid striped bass.
- (10) Walleye.
- (11) Sauger.
- (12) Saugeye.
- (13) Smallmouth bass.
- (14) Largemouth bass.
- (15) Spotted bass.
- (16) Bluegill.
- (17) Redear sunfish.
- (18) Rock bass.
- (19) Crappie.
- (20) American eel.
- (21) Paddlefish.
- (22) Lake sturgeon.
- (23) Lake herring.
- (24) Blue catfish less than ten (10) inches long.
- (25) Channel catfish less than ten (10) inches long.
- (26) Flathead catfish less than ten (10) inches long.
- (27) Lake whitefish less than eighteen (18) inches long.
- (28) Yellow perch.

**(29) Shovelnose sturgeon taken on June 1 through September 30. Shovelnose sturgeon taken from October 1 through May 31 must be at least twenty-five (25) inches in fork length.**

A person who possesses or sells a fish described in this subsection must comply with 312 IAC 9-10-2.

(e) This subsection governs the reporting of fish catches as follows:

(1) A license holder, other than a license holder on Lake Michigan, shall keep accurate daily records on a departmental form of the following:

- (A) The pounds and species of fish caught.
- (B) The number of pieces of each type of gear fished by date.
- (C) The county fished.

The license holder shall submit the completed form to the division by the fifteenth day of each month for the preceding month whether the license holder fished or not. The license holder shall allow on-board and dockside inspections of the gear and catch at any time by the director or the director's representative.

(2) A license holder on Lake Michigan must comply with the reporting requirements of IC 14-22-14-23 and section 3(g) of this rule.

*(Natural Resources Commission; 312 IAC 9-8-2; filed May 12, 1997, 10:00 a.m.: 20 IR 2721; filed May 28, 1998, 5:14 p.m.: 21 IR 3724; readopted filed Jul 28, 2003, 12:00 p.m.: 27 IR 286; filed Feb 27, 2007, 2:25 p.m.: 20070328-IR-312060262FRA)*

#### 312 IAC 9-8-4 Commercial fishing on the Wabash River boundary waters

Authority: IC 14-22-2-6; IC 14-22-13

Affected: IC 14-22

Sec. 4. (a) This section applies to commercial fishing conducted on the Wabash River boundary waters between Indiana and Illinois and is supplemental to section 2 of this rule.

(b) A license holder under this section may use a dip-net, hoop-net, fyke-net, basket-net, basket-trap, or trap-net made of twine or cords, with or without wings or leads. It is unlawful to use wings or leads constructed of any twine or cord smaller than size 9 (forty-two thousandths (0.042) inches) diameter. It is unlawful to use a net more than two hundred (200) feet long, including wings and leads. It is unlawful to use a net having stretch mesh less than two (2) inches. It is unlawful to use a net seine which obstructs more than one-half (½) of the width of the river.

(c) A license holder may use a seine. It is unlawful to use a seine which exceeds two hundred (200) feet long. It is unlawful to use a seine having stretch mesh less than five (5) inches. It is unlawful to use a seine which obstructs more than one-half (½) of the width of the river.

(d) Each piece of fishing gear in use must be tended not less frequently than once every forty-eight (48) hours. Fish taken by the gear must be removed. Each item of gear must be removed from the waters fished immediately upon the completion of fishing. *(Natural Resources Commission; 312 IAC 9-8-4; filed May 12, 1997, 10:00 a.m.: 20 IR 2725; filed May 28, 1998, 5:14 p.m.: 21 IR 3727; readopted filed Jul 28, 2003, 12:00 p.m.: 27 IR 286)*

#### 312 IAC 9-8-5 Commercial fishing on inland rivers

Authority: IC 14-22-2-6; IC 14-22-13

Affected: IC 14-22

Sec. 5. (a) This section applies to commercial fishing on inland rivers of Indiana and is supplemental to section 2 of this rule.

(b) It is unlawful to conduct commercial fishing on inland waters containing state-owned fish or waters of this state, except for the following rivers:

- (1) The Wabash River downstream from the city limits of Lafayette to where the river forms the boundary between Indiana and Illinois.
- (2) The White River downstream from the junction of its east and west forks to where the White River joins the Wabash River.
- (3) The west fork of the White River downstream from its junction with the Eel River in Greene County to the junction of the east and west forks of the White River.
- (4) The east fork of the White River downstream from its junction with the Lost River in Martin County to the junction of the east and west forks of the White River.
- (5) The Patoka River three hundred (300) yards downstream of the dam below the State Road 164 bridge in the city of Jasper to where the Patoka River joins the Wabash River.

(c) A license holder under this section may use hoop-nets or trap-nets made of twine or cord. It is unlawful to use more than four (4) hoop-nets or trap-nets. It is unlawful to use a net having a diameter, width, or height of more than six (6) feet. It is unlawful to use a net having stretch mesh less than two (2) inches.

(d) Each piece of fishing gear in use must be tended not less frequently than once every forty-eight (48) hours. Fish taken by the gear must be removed. Each item of gear must be removed from the waters fished immediately upon the completion of fishing. *(Natural Resources Commission; 312 IAC 9-8-5; filed May 12, 1997, 10:00 a.m.: 20 IR 2725; filed May 28, 1998, 5:14 p.m.: 21 IR 3727; readopted filed Jul 28, 2003, 12:00 p.m.: 27 IR 286)*

Appendix 2. Estimated weight (pounds) and CPUE of fish harvested from Indiana's inland commercial fishery, 2006.

Species	REPORTED HARVEST (POUNDS)					Species Total
	Wabash	Patoka	White Main Stem	White East Fork	White West Fork	
Channel Catfish	21,728	2,747	4,674	3,316	5,530	37,995
Flathead Catfish	11,005	1,100	4,577	4,222	6,092	26,996
Blue Catfish	4,359	292	825	1,013	844	7,333
Carp	362	550	15	448	83	1,458
Buffalo	6,555	2,561	4,524	1,729	459	15,828
Suckers	325	209	590	303	143	1,570
Drum	554	620	61	1,477	152	2,864
Shovelnose sturgeon	166					166
Other Fish	8					8
Totals	45,062	8,079	15,266	12,508	13,303	94,218
Effort (no. nets)	15,828	2,590	7,970	5,371	4,332	36,091
CPUE (lbs./net)	2.85	3.12	1.92	2.33	3.07	2.61
CATCH PER UNIT EFFORT (CPUE)						
Channel Catfish	1.37	1.06	0.59	0.62	1.28	1.05
Flathead Catfish	0.75	0.29	0.47	1.33	2.16	0.79
Blue Catfish	0.30	0.08	0.08	0.32	0.30	0.21
Carp	0.02	0.15	0.00	0.14	0.03	0.04
Buffalo	0.45	0.69	0.46	0.55	0.16	0.46
Suckers	0.02	0.06	0.06	0.10	0.05	0.05
Drum	0.04	0.17	0.01	0.47	0.05	0.08
Other Fish	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00