



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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# Sport Fish Restoration Research Findings

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## Community Fishing Survey



Project Duration: 2016 - 2019

Locations: Statewide

Study Number: 7050

### Large Impoundments

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# Community Fishing Survey

Like many other states, Iowa faces dwindling fishing participation and increasing urbanization. The state already experienced a 5.2% population increase in metro areas from 2010-2016, with a 21.2% increase in Dallas County (a suburban county in the Des Moines metro). Additional changes in population size and demographic composition are projected, with significant implications for the angling population and future fishery management. Iowa DNR's Community Fishing Program (CFP) was initiated in late 2016 to address the increasing disconnect between an urbanizing population and the outdoors. One objective of the CFP is to focus on recruitment, retention, and re-activation (R3) of anglers in urban areas. However, very little was known prior to this study about potential or unlicensed anglers in Iowa. To guide the program, a general population survey was conducted in Iowa's urban and suburban communities. Survey questions focused on constraints to fishing participation, description of an ideal fishing trip (a "perfect day") and fishing location, and identification of useful outreach and educational programs.

## Goals

- To characterize potential, lapsed, and current anglers living in the Community Fishing Program area, which encompasses Iowa's urban and suburban communities
- To identify management actions that can facilitate fishing participation, including reducing constraints, providing amenities and programs, and communicating more strategically with urban constituents

## Results and Conclusions

- Over 70% of urban Iowans were interested or active in fishing, including potential and unlicensed anglers. Interest was related to childhood initiation into fishing, gender, age, race, and not moving frequently as a child. Urban constituents also differed demographically from the broader licensed angler population, with diverse needs and wants.
- Active anglers differed from potential and lapsed anglers in several key ways: 1) they were more likely to want advanced skill development programs and competitive events; 2) they were less



constrained from fishing in general. Potential and lapsed anglers were more focused on intermediate and basic fishing seminars, as well as programs that welcomed partners and families.

- Childhood initiation into fishing was one of the most important factors affecting anglers' sense of a need for mentoring and interest in family-friendly programs. This finding highlighted the importance of Iowa DNR's youth and family-oriented programs and communications.
- Poor water quality and a lack of fishing opportunities were important constraints regardless of respondent characteristics. Pond renovation and river restoration efforts can help address both of these constraints, and communication of backyard fishing opportunities can help anglers find the opportunities available in the Community Fishing area.