



Project Update: Lake Norman F1 Largemouth Bass Stocking and Evaluation

December 2020



Largemouth bass illustration by Duane Raver

Since 2001, a major shift has occurred in the black bass fishery at Lake Norman. Alabama Bass were introduced into the reservoir prior to 2001 and their numbers rapidly increased before leveling around 2010. Largemouth Bass, which were the only black bass species present in the reservoir until 2001, have declined in abundance over the same period of time.

Many Lake Norman anglers have expressed concerns about the decline in the Largemouth Bass population. One potential strategy to augment the Largemouth Bass population in the reservoir is to stock F1 Largemouth Bass, which are a cross between a pure strain Northern Largemouth Bass and a pure strain Florida Largemouth Bass. These hybrid Largemouth Bass have been shown to grow faster and to potentially larger sizes than their pure strain counterparts.

In cooperation with local anglers, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission biologists stocked 2,000 F1 Largemouth Bass in Lake Norman during late October 2020 (Figure 1). This initial effort will evaluate short term survival and growth of stocked F1 Largemouth Bass. Over the next several years, additional stockings are anticipated as well as additional surveys to monitor the results of the stocking program.

Project Objectives:

- Augment the Largemouth Bass fishery at Lake Norman by stocking F1 Largemouth Bass.
- Work in cooperation with local anglers to stock F1 Largemouth Bass; as well as participate in local tournaments to collect data.
- Complete electrofishing surveys to determine any changes to the Largemouth Bass fishery



Figure 1. District 6 Fisheries Biologist Casey Grieshaber stocks F1 Largemouth Bass in Lake Norman.



Wildlife Commission staff move F1 Largemouth Bass from hatchery truck to stocking boat.



Coded wire tagging set up at McKinney Lake State Fish Hatchery



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Completed:

- 2,000 F1 Largemouth Bass were purchased through donations from local anglers.
- All fish were tagged with a coded wire tag in order to determine, in the future, which fish are of stocked origin (Figure 2). These tags will be detected during surveys using a coded wire tag detector (Figure 3).
- A subsample of fish were weighed and measured to determine an estimated size at time of stocking. On average, fish were 7.8 inches in length and weighed 0.23 pounds.
- A tissue sample was collected from the subsample of fish. These samples will be processed to ensure genetics are that of F1 Largemouth Bass.
- Fish were stocked at four locations in the lake, approximately 500 fish per site (Figure 4). These sites were selected based on appropriate habitat, past survey results, and stocking logistics.

What's Next:

- Stock fingerling F1 Largemouth Bass in Spring 2021 and Spring 2022.
- Complete electrofishing surveys at the four stocking locations in Spring 2021 and continue with additional surveys in the following years.

For more information, contact:

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Figure 2. Coded wire tag in relation to penny. Coded wire tags were inserted into the left cheek of every fish.



Figure 3. Coded wire tag detector

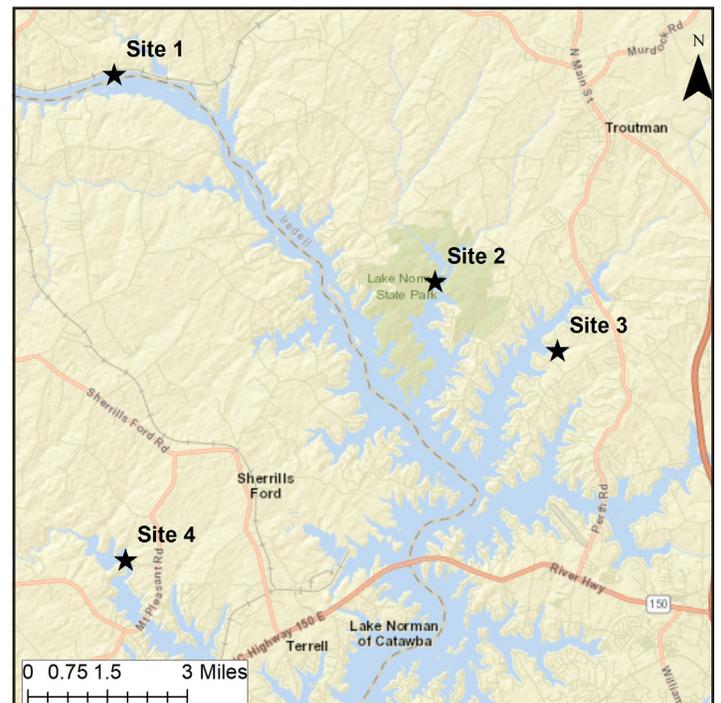


Figure 4. Map showing four stocking locations in Lake Norman, North Carolina

