

## 10. LAKE MEAD

History - Lake Mead was impounded in 1935 following the completion of Boulder Dam. Prior to the dam, the Colorado river had carp, channel catfish and four endemic nongame fish. In 1954, threadfin shad were introduced and the largemouth bass fishery flourished. In 1969, the largemouth fishing was waning and the management was changed to a two-stage reservoir with warmwater fish stocked in the shallow shoreline zones and coldwater fish stocked into the deep coldwater zones. A total of seven trout species and one warmwater species (stripers) were introduced. By 1974, reproduction of the striped bass was documented and the trout fishery began to wane. In 1983, trout stocking was discontinued for a seven-year period while the striped bass reigned supreme. In 1999, two new species, smallmouth bass and blue Tilapia, were documented in the lake and, more recently, gizzard shad, a forage fish, was discovered in 2007.

Pertinent Information - Lake Mead has a maximum depth of 465 feet and covers 150,000 surface acres over its 110-mile length. Game fish include largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, channel catfish, black bullhead catfish, bluegill sunfish, green sunfish, black crappie, striped bass, rainbow trout and walleye. Catch rates for 2009 were 3.7 fish per angler and 0.9 fish per hour. Stripers averaged 15.8 inches and rainbow trout 10 inches. Approximately 83% of the catch was made up of stripers and 8.7% were rainbow trout, with largemouth bass, channel catfish, bluegill and black crappie making up the other 8.3% of the catch. Netting surveys in 2008 showed that smallmouth bass numbers increased and largemouth bass numbers decreased slightly. Shad numbers also are up. Peak catch rates are usually June and July and again in October and November. The most productive months to harvest largemouth bass are June, July and October; to harvest bluegill are May and June; to harvest black crappie January, November and April; to harvest channel catfish June, July and October; to harvest rainbow trout are December, January, February, and March; and to harvest stripers are July, October and November, although stripers are captured year around. Fish can be harvested any time of the day or night if the angler is well equipped, knowledgeable and versatile. During the cold months of November through March, striped bass can be taken during the day with bait (threadfin shad captured with cast net) and at night with top water plugs such as the AC plug fished with a slow retrieve. Additionally, bait can be fished under a clear bubble with or without a slip sinker. Largemouth bass can be patterned in both shallow and deep water with artificial lures fished early morning or evenings. Black crappie can be taken in the Overton Arm at night with live bait such as shiners and/or jigs. Fish against rock walls and in brushy areas. Trout can be taken in the immediate vicinity of their stocking with conventional gear such as worms, Power Bait or lures. Channel catfish occasionally hit spinners, but are usually captured while fishing on the bottom utilizing fresh fish parts, liver, prawns or prepared catfish bait fished on a sliding sinker with a treble hook.

Shad are the best bait for stripers, but are, at times, hard to find. Prepared bait and anchovies are good replacements as well as lures such as Sassy Shad and KastMasters. Numerous top water gear works during fish "boils". Check with the local sporting goods dealer. They will be more than happy to sell the latest "hot" top water lure. Stripers are fished in two ways: at depth (up to 120 feet) with prepared bait or spoons and hunting boils (surface activity generated by stripers actively feeding on shad), then fishing the boil with top water plugs. Chumming is allowed on Lake Mead with anything except

game fish parts. One of the favorite chums is anchovies and corn. Fish over the chum for at least an hour then move to a different spot. At times, anchoring along a steep drop off and chumming on a set pattern will do the trick. Striped bass on the hunt move in schools and will clean up an area quickly, then move on.

Fishing at night is a slow relaxing way to spend an evening. Bait up, chum up, "bell" up and have a seat. You could catch anything from a catfish to a striper to a leatherneck turtle. Striped bass up to 43 pounds have been taken utilizing this method, however, the normal size is 2 to 3 pounds and these make excellent table fare.

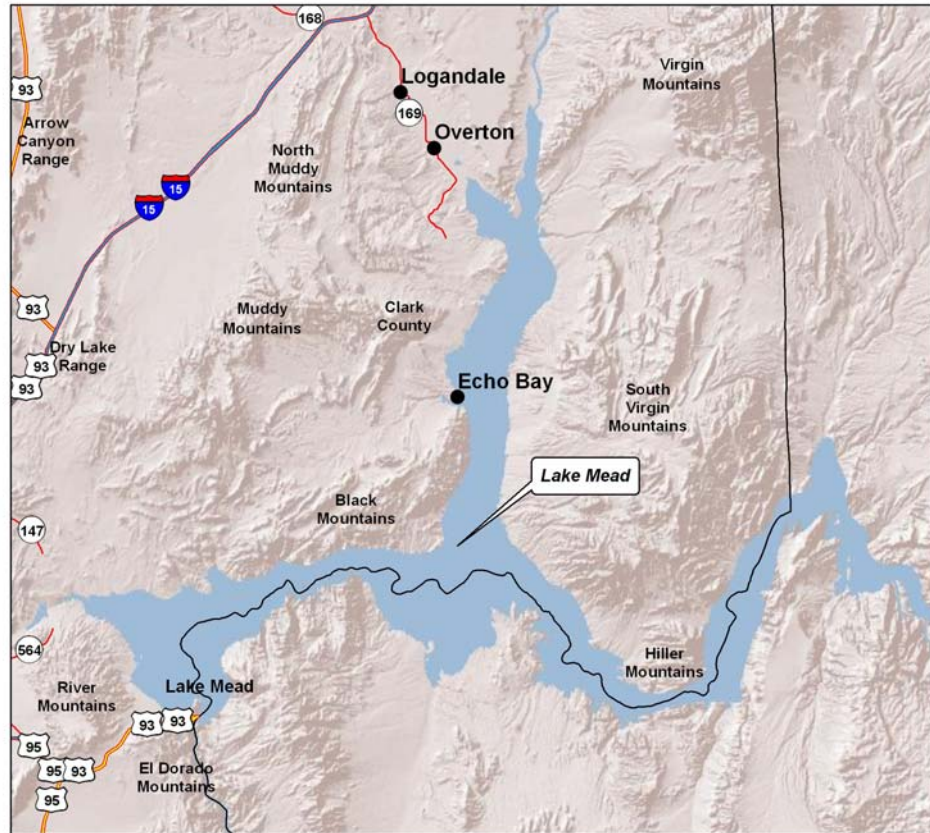
While fishing in the back of coves during the spring and summer, look for weedbeds. Holes in the beds and a clean bottom often indicate nesting Tilapia. Try fishing with corn, peas, prepared meats such as hot dogs and/or sour mash or corn meal. Tilapia can weigh as much as 5 pounds and are excellent to eat.

Camping - Camping via boat is allowed lake wide, while shore camping is becoming restricted. Established mobile type campgrounds are becoming the commonplace around the lake. Drive-to type campgrounds are found at every launch ramp except South Cove, Hemenway and Government Wash. Amenities include showers, water, tables and grills. Areas with full hookups include the Trailer Village, and Echo Bay Marina. Floating restrooms can be found around the lake. Seven were installed in 2001. Things to Consider - Summer temperatures at times reach 110°F, so carry water and leave a note as to your destination and expected time of return. The lake can, at times, get very rough, so listen to the weather forecast before boating for any distance, especially in a small craft.

Stocking - Approximately 51,000, ten-inch rainbow trout are to be stocked at Boulder Harbor, Crawdad Cove, and Hemenway Point during the winter months, January to March and November to December.

Regulations - Season is open year round, any hour of the day or night, except in areas as posted. Limit is 5 trout, 6 black bass, 25 catfish and 15 crappie. New regulations as of 2008: No limit on striped bass less than 20 inches total length. Daily and possession limit on striped bass 20 inches total length or longer is 20 fish. No limit restriction on other game fish. **New change in regulations as of 2010:** A cast net having a radius not exceeding 4-feet from horn to leadline can be used to take fish authorized for use as bait.

Biologist Forecast for 2010 - Fishing should be average to good for stripers due to adequate shad abundance. Stripers will continue to dominate the harvest and should average about 16 inches and up to 2 pounds. Last year, April through June and October were good for striper fishing. Additionally, Las Vegas Bay had the most reported harvest for striped bass followed by Boulder Basin and Overton. Largemouth bass fishing was best in June and July in the Boulder Basin and fair in Overton and Las Vegas Bay areas. Channel catfish were mostly harvested from Las Vegas Bay followed by Boulder Basin and Overton. During the winter, rainbow stocked trout fishing should be good in Boulder Harbor and Crawdad Cove and fair at Hemenway. Overall, harvest rates continue to be some of the highest ever seen, particularly for smaller striped bass. While the lake is at its lowest level since the 1960s, boat launching is available at Hemenway, Boulder Harbor, Callville, and Echo Bay. Most shore angling access areas are still available, but conditions and access points will continue to change as lake levels drop this summer.



No warranty is made by the Nevada Department of Wildlife as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.

**Boating Regulations** - General boating regulations. Watch for posted or prohibited areas and be mindful of newly created, shallow hazards as the water level changes.

**Access** - Take Highway (515, 93, 95) east out of Las Vegas for 24 miles to the town of Boulder. Lake Mead is just north and east of the town. Follow the signs. A paved road runs along the west side of the lake.