

Deep Creek Lake 2019 Fishery Monitoring Report

The Freshwater Fisheries Program, Western Region, District 1 is responsible for managing the fisheries in Garrett and Allegany Counties. District I staff includes Alan Klotz - Regional Manager; Jody Johnson – District Biologist, and Kenneth Wampler – Fisheries Biologist. Our main responsibility is to maximize fishing opportunities in western Maryland by providing public access to waterbodies, applying the best fishery science to optimize the fish populations, improving water quality and preventing water pollution, and to provide diverse fishing opportunities for anglers.

Western Region staff manage several large lakes and reservoirs including Deep Creek Lake. With a surface area of 3,900 acres, Deep Creek Lake is the largest impoundment entirely within Maryland. Deep Creek Lake provides diverse fishing opportunities for popular game and panfish species in a mountain setting making it a destination fishery for Maryland residents and visiting anglers from other states. A total of eighteen fish species were identified in Deep Creek Lake during the 2018-2019 surveys. Largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and walleye are the most popular gamefish. During the winter, Deep Creek Lake becomes the most popular ice fishing destination in Maryland where anglers target walleye, large yellow perch/panfish and trophy northern pike.



Fisheries Biologist Kenny Wampler and a trophy walleye he caught in Deep Creek Lake.

Deep Creek Lake is a very popular walleye fishery within the Mid-Atlantic region. The 2019 spring adult walleye survey showed a high catch rate of 184 fish per hour of electrofishing effort. A large portion of this population falls in the 16 to 18 inch range and there is also potential for trophy class fish greater than twenty inches. A record year class was documented during the fall 2019 young of year walleye sample with a catch rate of 248 fish per hour.

Largemouth and smallmouth bass are very popular gamefish in Deep Creek Lake. The catch of largemouth bass during the 2019 electrofishing effort was below average with a catch rate of ten fish per hour due to a lack of stock size fish (8 – 12); larger size classes were still well represented, substantiated by tournament angler catch rates of largemouth bass that are among the highest in the state. The future for Deep Creek Lake's largemouth bass

population looks promising as reproductive success based on seining indices was considered good.

Smallmouth bass continue to thrive in Deep Creek Lake. The 2019 electrofishing survey documented above average abundance with a catch rate of 89 bass per hour. Smallmouth bass reproductive success was also considered to be good in 2019.

Yellow perch are a highly sought after fish for Deep Creek Lake anglers. The 2019 sample showed a catch rate of 66 adult fish per hour of electrofishing effort. This population is characterized by a large number of perch in the 10 to 12 inch range with yellow perch greater than 14 inches being collected during electrofishing sampling. Juvenile yellow perch were noted to be abundant during seining efforts.

Bluegill and pumpkinseed showed below average numbers in 2019. While these numbers were down slightly, this population still supports quality sized fish in the nine to 10 inch size class which should continue to interest anglers. Seining surveys during the 2019 summer season to assess reproduction showed juvenile sunfish were very abundant throughout the lake.

Chain pickerel numbers were down slightly during the 2019 survey but were still considered abundant. A large portion of the adult chain pickerel population was in the 14 to 20 inch size range with a few very large specimens collected up to 27 inches in total length. Chain pickerel are found throughout Deep Creek Lake and are frequently encountered by anglers targeting other species.

Deep Creek Lake remains one of Maryland's premier fisheries and vacation destinations. The diverse fishery and year round fishing opportunities attract resident and visiting anglers alike.



Fisheries Biologist Jason Cessna with a jumbo yellow perch from Deep Creek Lake.



A 27 inch Deep Creek Lake chain pickerel collected during the 2019 electrofishing survey.