

Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – June 2020

Stock Assessment

Savage River Tailwater - The federal aid annual report for the Savage River Tailwater trout population survey was completed. The river has two trophy trout management areas -- one area is restricted to fly fishing only while the other area allows the use of spinning gear using single hook artificial lures. Both management areas support a high density wild brown trout population with lesser numbers of brook trout and a few rainbow trout. Reproduction for both brook trout and brown trout was considered “moderate” in 2019.

Trout Fry Surveys - Conducted trout fry surveys in the North Branch Potomac River from Westernport downstream to Black Oak. Despite documenting multiple redds and spawning brown trout in this section of the river in fall 2019, no fry were observed. Efforts will be made again later in the year as fishing guides report observing rainbow trout spawning activity during late summer.

Electrofishing Surveys, Baltimore County - Conducted qualitative electrofishing surveys in the left and right forks of Jabez Branch (Anne Arundel County); First Mine Branch and an unnamed tributary; an unnamed tributary to Gunpowder Falls tailwater; and Baisman Run (Baltimore County). No trout were found in either fork of Jabez Branch. Brook trout and brown trout are present in all the streams surveyed in Baltimore County. Brook trout recruitment appeared to be better than brown trout in all county streams except First Mine Branch.

Electrofishing Surveys, Cecil County - Completed electrofishing surveys of Granite Run and two unnamed streams in Cecil County that had not been previously surveyed. The streams were identified and selected for study given the physical condition of the stream and the composition of its watershed. Staff suspect that these streams currently support or could support coldwater resources even though they are not currently classified as such by Maryland Department of the Environment. Results of all three surveys were excellent. Both adult and juvenile brown trout were collected from all three streams, indicating good water quality. Digital temperature loggers were deployed in each stream prior to June 1 to record summer stream temperatures. The data from both will be submitted to Maryland Department of the Environment for possible stream reclassification to Use Class III (nontidal coldwater).



Brown trout from an unnamed stream in Cecil County, young-of-year (right) and adult (left).

Conowingo Reservoir - Completed an electrofishing survey of Conowingo Reservoir. This survey is conducted annually in June, and focuses on assessing smallmouth and largemouth bass populations. Preliminary results suggest that smallmouth bass remain abundant and should continue to produce good fishing this year and beyond. Catch rates for adult smallmouth were similar to previous years. Young smallmouth bass which were likely spawned last year, were frequently collected in the survey indicating good reproductive success and overwinter survival. Largemouth bass were collected, but in fewer numbers. All smaller size classes of largemouth bass were scarce, indicating poor reproduction or high mortality the last few years. Although this survey is focused on black bass, staff kept a sharp eye out for northern snakehead, which were recently introduced above Conowingo Dam. None were collected by Maryland staff; however several were collected and removed by Pennsylvania Fish and Boat staff this month while completing similar work upstream.



Length frequency of black bass collected at Conowingo Reservoir.



Smallmouth bass collected at the Conowingo Reservoir during the June electrofishing survey.

Habitat and Water Quality

Environmental review - Provided aquatic resource information for the following environmental review projects:

- A native freshwater mussel reintroduction project in Town Creek by the department's Wildlife and Heritage Service. The freshwater fisheries program fully supports the project to help restore aquatic biota diversity in the watershed.
- Responded to a Joint Project Application for outfall work on an unnamed tributary to North Branch Patapsco River.
- Conducted a site visit to Fourth Mine Branch to assess a stream restoration permit modification.
- Provided comments on ditch clearing at Rt. 94/Cattail Creek.
- Commented on fish passage at Rt. 32, Rosemary Lane tributary.
- Provided comments on I-270/I-495 mitigation sites.
- Commented on Eccleston project on Jones Falls.
- Commented on Castanea project on Dipping Pond Run.
- Coordinated with Maryland Department of the Environment on Central Region stream reclassification requests and provided necessary data
- Provided comments on a stormwater management facility in the Little Beaver Creek watershed with recommendations to modify design to improve the cooling of stormwater.

- Recommended protective measures for a culvert replacement on High Run, a coldwater stream in Frederick County.
- A bridge repair project on Beaver Creek in Washington County. Comments focused on protecting water quality and fishing access/conditions. Beaver Creek supports both wild brown trout and a popular put-and-take fishery.

North Keys Park - Investigated concerns from the Patuxent Riverkeeper and community activists about contaminants in the pond at North Keys Park (Prince George's County). The property is owned by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and is bordered by a dump location for coal fly ash. Direct impacts to the pond were not confirmed.

Land Stewardship Committee

- Staff worked with Program Open Space and Wildlife and Heritage Service staff towards the purchase of a 39-acre property along 1,500 feet of the Youghiogheny River near Millers Run. The initial offer was turned down, however Program Open Space will revisit the potential acquisition.
- Provided aquatic resource information and angler recreation comments for a potential acquisition of 230.5 acres along Wills Creek in Allegany County. The freshwater fisheries program fully supports the acquisition, as it will provide for public access to the Wills Creek put-and-take trout fishing area and provides for long-term water quality protection in the upper Potomac River watershed.
- Provided aquatic resource information and angler recreation comments for a potential acquisition of 260 acres along the Upper North Branch Potomac River near Kitzmiller in Garrett County. The freshwater fisheries program fully supports the acquisition as it will provide for public access to the North Branch Potomac River put and take trout fishing area and provide for long term water quality protection in the Upper North Branch Potomac River watershed.
- Staff worked with Program Open Space and Maryland Forest Service staff on a potential acquisition along the Upper Savage River.

State Lake Fund Projects - Staff continue to stay up to date on the Deep Creek Lake reef ball habitat project. This project has gained popularity and has spearheaded a statewide push for similar projects throughout waterbodies in the state. With State Lake Fund money still being provided for the next fiscal year, Western Region was contacted about a new proposal idea to provide habitat to more lakes in the state. With this new proposal idea, the Rocky Gap State Park manager was contacted and given the scope of the project to see if they wanted to participate. They were more than willing to jump on board to enhance the fishery in Lake Habeeb.

Future Habitat Projects - Western Region continues to do literature searches for new habitat ideas for future projects for lakes in the region. New habitat structures similar to what Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's habitat crew constructs are being considered for future project ideas.

Youghiogheny River Temperature Enhancement - Temperature loggers were deployed at thirteen sites in the Youghiogheny River from Swallow Falls to Sang Run to monitor the coldwater releases from the Deep Creek Lake Hydroelectric Station. Through a cooperative

agreement with the Brookfield Power Company, Maryland Department of the Environment, and the department, the coldwater releases are made during the critical summertime period. This partnership has resulted in a high quality catch-and-return trout fishery in the Youghiogheny River between Hoyes and Sang Run.



A trophy rainbow trout recently caught in the Youghiogheny River catch-and-return area by Don Cosden. Photo by A. Klotz

North Branch Potomac River Temperature Monitoring - Temperature loggers were placed at five locations in the river downstream of Laurel Run near Bloomington to the lower boundary of the zero creel limit trout fishing area at Pinto. These temperature data will be used to help monitor trout management efforts in the river.

Central Region Temperature Monitoring - Deployed temperature loggers in the following areas in Central Region to record stream temperatures during the June 1 through Aug. 31 summer index period:

- An unnamed tributary to Deer Creek at Route 24 (Harford County)
- First Mine Branch
- An unnamed tributary to First Mine Branch
- Silver Run
- Walker Run
- An unnamed tributary to Walker Run above an in-line pond and at the outfall below the pond
- Springhouse Run (Baltimore County)
- An unnamed tributary to Gunpowder River at Blackrock Road
- East Branch Patapsco River
- An unnamed tributary to Big Pipe Creek
- Above and below the Manchester Pond outfall in the Ferrier Road tributary (Carroll County)
- Good Hope tributary to Paint Branch (Montgomery County)

- Hay Meadow Branch
- An unnamed tributary to South Branch Patapsco River at Morgan Woodbine Road (Howard County)
- The left and right forks of Jabez Branch (Anne Arundel County)

Stocking and Population Management

Trout - The Youghiogheny River catch-and-return trout fishing area was stocked with 10,000 rainbow trout juveniles (19/pound) from the Mettiki Hatchery on May 28. The management area received another 15,000 rainbow trout juveniles (42/pound) from Albert Powell Hatchery on June 17.

The North Branch Potomac River zero creel limit trout fishing area was stocked with 15,000 rainbow trout juveniles (43/pound) from Albert Powell Hatchery on June 8.

Tiger Muskie - Approximately 5,000 tiger muskie juveniles were stocked in Rocky Gorge and Triadelphia reservoirs (Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties), two properties owned by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission and managed in cooperation with the department. Fish were raised at Manning Hatchery (Charles County). The fish grow quickly and will provide a unique opportunity for central Maryland recreational anglers in coming years.



Tiger muskie juvenile ready to be stocked.

Pond Stocking Permits - Many inquiries were received and five stocking permits were issued for June.

Outreach

Customer Service - Provided information for inquiries regarding:

- Status of sunfish populations in Lake Habeeb, Savage Reservoir, Deep Creek Lake, and nontidal Potomac River.

- Fishing conditions in the Youghiogheny River catch-and-return trout fishing area.
- Fishing conditions in the North Branch Potomac River zero creel limit trout fishing area.
- Overabundance of duckweed in a private pond, and advice to the owner on how to control it.
- Status of the channel catfish population in Herrington Manor Lake.
- Wild brown trout fishing opportunities in the Little Youghiogheny River.
- Bass fishing conditions in Deep Creek Lake.
- A small fish kill of bluegill in a private pond. Based on the pond conditions and the weather, it was determined that an algae bloom was most likely the cause of the fish kill.
- Angler concerns that application of Bti (*Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp. *israelensis*) in the Potomac River to control black flies was impacting non target macroinvertebrates. Bti is a naturally occurring soil bacterium that has been demonstrated to be non-toxic to humans, mammals, birds, fish, and most invertebrates. Many cases from recently hatched insects were observed as well as healthy aquatic insects; no mortality of nontarget species was identified. Maryland Department of Agriculture staff monitored the results following the application of Bti and also reported that only the target species of black fly was impacted.
- Fish identification for several angler catches reported on the department's Anglers Log.

Provided information regarding Free Fishing Days in Maryland to the Republican Newspaper. The article highlighted the most popular fishing destinations for panfish, bass, and trout in western Maryland.

Participated in a video conference with members of the Youghiogheny Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Western Region I Manager gave an update on Freshwater Fisheries Program management activities and spring trout stocking.

Western Region staff provided the Discovery Center at Deep Creek State Park with a new batch of fish for their aquarium to show some of the fish that inhabit Deep Creek Lake. Discovery Center staff were pleased with the variety of fish provided and they reported the fish have adapted well to their new home. Species included largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, bluegill, pumpkinseed, brown bullhead, and yellow perch.

Staff provided reports to the department's Anglers Log and the Weekly Fishing Report to encourage folks to enjoy fishing while practicing safe social distancing. Fishing in Broadford Lake, the Youghiogheny River catch and return trout fishing area, Bear Creek, and Deep Creek Lake were highlighted with nice catches.



Western Region staff provides fishing tips to the angling public so they can catch fish like this 26.5 inch, 7 pound 11 ounce walleye from Deep Creek Lake. Photo by K. Wampler.

Conducted a Hay Meadow Branch site visit with the landowner, Maryland Forest Service, and Trout Unlimited concerning a potential buffer planting.

Discussed providing technical assistance to Baltimore City Recreation and Parks for the upcoming draining of Patterson Park Lake.

Responded to constituents about lack of enforcement on Gunpowder catch and return, musky stocking and fishing, northern snakeheads in the Patapsco River and Little Seneca Lake, and access issues at Gunpowder Falls.

Angler Access

Fishery Management Area Maintenance - Staff spent several days at the North Branch Potomac River fishery management areas (FMA) conducting land and boat launch maintenance. The Gary Yoder FMA at Black Oak, McCoolle, and Evitts Creek ponds were mowed and cleared of trash to make these areas presentable for anglers and recreational boaters. Staff also checked the intake pipe at Evitts Creek ponds due to a call from a fisherman using the area. The ponds were reported to be low and possibly not getting water - staff checked and ensured there was water entering the ponds, but it was at a low flow. Staff will be checking for blockages in the pipe soon to ensure ample water supply to the ponds.

Contacted Natural Resource Police about continued evidence of drug usage found on the managed FMAs. Natural Resource Police were asked to increase patrols on FMAs where drug paraphernalia was found and a newly constructed fire pit being found in the parking lot of the McCoolle FMA. They agreed to increase patrols to protect the areas as well as the anglers and boaters using the river.

Western Region staff traveled to all of the special managed fisheries in their region to keep up with regulation signs. After field work permissions were granted, staff checked all signs so that

proper information was provided to anglers using these areas. Regulation signs are routinely checked to replace signs that are deteriorating from weathering and squirrels. Squirrels have a fascination with these signs and chew them to pieces in a rather short time.

Invasive Species

Prepared pre-proposal for the Aquatic Nuisance Species Program.

Catfish - Staff is nearing a completed Catfish Fishery Management Plan.

Biologists continued work examining stomachs of invasive blue catfish from the tidal, freshwater Patuxent River (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, and Prince George's counties).

Alabama Bass - Staff began developing a risk assessment and outreach regarding Alabama bass, a potentially invasive species introduced in North Carolina and Virginia.

Brook Trout Program

Initiated annual statewide brook trout population monitoring, and collection of samples (genetic and population density) for the brook trout population criteria assessment.

Participated on a conference call with Trout Unlimited and U.S. Geological Survey Leetown Science Center staff to discuss brook trout genetic issues as part of a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) proposal submission.

Completed a draft Brook Trout Patch Resiliency Population Rating Criteria Assessment document. This will be a manuscript describing the rationale, methods, results, and application of the new brook trout patch rating system. This is an integral part of the revamping of the current brook trout fisheries management plan into a new statewide brook trout conservation plan. Work included developing individual descriptions for each current Level 1 patch, developing a comprehensive table that contains needed information for all patches, and continuing spatial analysis on habitat conditions in the patch.

Participated in American Fisheries Society online fisheries presentations, performed literature searches, and participated in the UMCES - Appalachian Laboratory seminar series and staff discussions.

Tidal Bass Program

Worked with other units and the public at several meetings to discuss options for allowing access to Days Cove pond by bass boaters. Current speed limits in Days Cove pond prevent boaters from attaining a planing speed, which creates a stranding concern for boaters.

Delivered 5,000 largemouth bass to Wheelabrator Technologies, Inc. These fish will be raised and stocked to Gunpowder River and surrounding waters.

Currently working on a spatially explicit demographic model for examining how habitat management and fishery management decisions influence conservation of largemouth bass populations.

Fielded calls from three anglers who reported tagged largemouth bass from the tidal Potomac River. The fish were tagged several years ago and each fish were at large for a different number of days - 1,085; 1,177; and 1,521. Two of the three had been previously caught and released by anglers. Certificates and letters were sent to the lucky anglers to provide information on their fish and to thank them for reporting.