

Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – February 2019

Stock Assessment

State Forest Management Plans - Western I Region Manager prepared the Fisheries Resources section for the Savage River State Forest and the Potomac Garrett State Forest ten year management plans. The Savage River State Forest contains more than 100 miles of brook trout streams, a 350 acre reservoir that supports diverse warmwater and coldwater fisheries, a recreational put-and-take trout fishing area and a premier wild trout tailwater fishery. The Potomac Garrett State Forest also supports several native brook trout streams, a popular delayed harvest trout fishing area, and two put-and-take trout fishing streams. The aquatic resources in both of these forests are well protected and provide diverse recreational fishing opportunities for Maryland's citizens and visitors.



A happy angler with a brook trout from the Potomac Garrett State Forest.

Smallmouth Bass Stocking Program - Staff hosted a meeting for upper Potomac River fishing guides, riverkeepers and outfitters to present plans for a new supplemental smallmouth bass stocking program. Recent poor smallmouth bass juvenile recruitment in sections of the river has prompted the department to develop a plan to improve year-class strength. Adult smallmouth bass broodstock will be collected later this spring and moved to a state hatchery for spawning. Once spawned the brood smallmouth bass will be returned to the area of collection. The resulting hatchery produced juveniles will be stocked into the river with future monitoring planned to examine their survival, growth, and contribution to the fishery. A web page is being developed to inform constituents of progress throughout the duration of the project and solicit angler input.

Habitat and Water Quality

Environmental Review - Provided aquatic resource information for environmental review projects including:

- A proposed timber harvest in Savage River State Forest within the Bear Creek watershed. The proposal included a thinning of two small patches of planted conifers, mostly white pine with a small component of red pine that have received significant weather damage in the recent months. Inspection of the site showed the parcels were well outside any water-influenced zones of the forest and best management practices will be followed to avoid any sediment into Bear Creek.
- Two abandoned mine lands projects in the Georges Creek watershed. The first project will collect a small amount of acid mine drainage runoff into an acid mine drainage system and release neutral pH, net alkaline water into Georges Creek. The second project involved providing a potable water supply to residents in the Georges Creek area due to poor groundwater that had been impacted by acid mine drainage. Both projects were supported.
- The Rt. 219 Expansion Project's stream and wetland mitigation plan on Meadow Run within the Casselman River watershed. The proposed stream restoration approach consists of daylighting the culverted section of Meadow Run and reestablishes a stable stream channel that is connected to its floodplain. A mix of palustrine forested and emergent wetlands will be created within the restored floodplain/stream valley. This mitigation approach should improve fish and wildlife populations at the project location.
- Reviewed and provided comments for the Forest Service's Recreational Trail Grant Snaggy Mountain ORV Trail Rehabilitation project. The trail crosses several streams within the Youghiogheny River watershed including Herrington Creek, Murley Run, Bull Glade Run and unnamed tributaries. The current degraded condition of the ORV trail allows for sediment inputs into these streams. The plan will provide for stabilization and correcting the drainage of the trail bed. Correcting these existing problems will reduce erosion and sedimentation into adjoining streams thereby improving water quality in the Youghiogheny River watershed.
- The replacement of two failing culverts that convey the headwaters of Piney Run in Potomac Garrett State Forest. Few, if any, fish are found in the project area due to prior mining activity. Erosion control measures were recommended to protect downstream reaches.
- The construction of a 100 foot retaining wall on Deep Creek Lake. Boulder clusters for each 50 feet of retaining wall are required to mitigate the loss of shoreline fish habitat, stumps, and woody debris. No work within the lake is to be conducted from March 1 through June 15 to protect spawning fish.
- A utility line crossing under the North Branch Potomac River. Adherence to a March 1 through June 15 closure period for instream work was recommended to protect spring spawning fish species including smallmouth bass.

Western Region Land Stewardship Committee - Provided comments for a potential 25 acre land acquisition in the Puzzley Run Watershed. Although the property does not contain any

blueline streams, this parcel is within the Puzzley Run watershed. Puzzley Run is a high quality coldwater stream supporting a reproducing brook trout population. The Freshwater Fisheries Program fully supports this acquisition. One of the major goals in the 2006 Maryland Department of Natural Resources Brook Trout Fishery Management Plan is to increase public ownership of lands within watersheds supporting brook trout populations to ensure long-term water quality and habitat protection.

North Fork Crabtree Creek Riparian Zone Restoration Project - Trout Unlimited and Western I Regional Manager met with private property owner along the North Fork Crabtree Creek to discuss a riparian restoration project. Staff presented the Trout Unlimited Embrace A Stream Hoyes Run Project which showed how livestock exclusion fencing along a stream can improve water quality and fish habitat. The landowner expressed interest in participating with a Trout Unlimited Embrace A Stream project on his property. Subsequently the landowner met with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Trout Unlimited personnel to prepare a restoration plan. Trout Unlimited will be the project leader with Freshwater Fisheries personnel providing in-kind support.

Super Fund Cleanup - Attended a meeting in Brandywine (Prince George's County) about the progress of a Super Fund cleanup of the chemical trichlorethylene leaked during the 1970s at a storage facility owned by the Joint Base Andrews. The final stages of cleanup have begun and water testing of area wells indicate concentrations greatly reduced since 2007.

Stocking and Population Management

Trout - Southern Region staff and volunteers from the Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC) assisted Manning Hatchery (Charles County) with seining rainbow trout out of rearing ponds. The fish were stocked into 15 local lakes and ponds as part of Maryland's put-and-take trout fishing program. MCC volunteers were especially instrumental in last minute changes requiring the stocking of Lake Needwood (Montgomery County), Savage Mill (Howard County), and Stansbury Pond (Baltimore County) in the Central Region.



Maryland Conservation Corps assist with stocking trout in to Hutchins Pond

Outreach

Customer Service Requests - Requests were received regarding: brook trout fishing opportunities; wild brown trout in the Upper Savage River watershed; Deep Creek Lake ice conditions; local citizen interest in restarting the Georges Creek Watershed Association; trout stocking locations; chain pickerel fishing opportunities in Broadford Lake; melanistic pigmentation on largemouth bass and walleye and muskie fishing conditions on the non-tidal Potomac.

Fish Anatomy - Presented a fish anatomy lesson to Crellin Elementary School's third grade class. The students were able to gain *hands-on* experience by assisting with dissecting a rainbow trout and learning to identify the external and internal anatomy of the fish. The class also participates in the "Trout in the Classroom" program, and learned why it is important to know about fish anatomy in order to detect and diagnose fish diseases.



Crellin Elementary School's 3rd grade class participating in a fish anatomy lesson.

Green Infrastructure - Provided a presentation to Cecil County's Green Infrastructure Steering Committee entitled "Freshwater Fisheries of Cecil County – Ecological, Social and Economic Benefits". The purpose of the presentation was to inform the committee of the various aquatic resources within the county in need of conservation and protection through the green infrastructure and planning process.

Invasive Species

Snakehead - A snakehead derby is scheduled for June at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park. Staff met with the department's outreach coordinator to better promote the event to the Latino population.

Invasive Fishes Workgroup - Developed an Invasive Fishes Workgroup that will: 1) refine objectives for invasive fish management; 2) identify data streams and gaps; 3) develop plans to prioritize and populate data gaps; and 4) manage outreach to encourage harvest.

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge - Worked with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to survey Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in an ongoing study to assess impacts of invasive species. During this work, staff worked with Office of Communications to develop informational videos that will be released later this year.

Blue Catfish - Staff collected data from watermen and provided information to senior management in an effort to develop international markets for blue catfish and encourage their harvest from growing populations in the Chesapeake Bay.

Angler Access

A meeting with state, county, and local agencies was held to discuss a potential angler/boating access project on the Youghiogheny River in the town of Crellin. The potential access property is located at the Rt. 39 Bridge in Crellin and is currently owned by Garrett County. The bridge is scheduled to be replaced starting this year. The Transportation and Water Access statute that resulted from HB 797 in 2013 triggers a planning evaluation between State Highway Administration, Department of Natural Resources and local governments regarding potential public water access whenever a project crosses or is adjacent to a waterway. All the involved agencies agreed that this is a great opportunity. The State Highway Administration can construct a small parking lot and a graded soft launch to the river as long as a government entity would take over maintenance of the site upon completion. This property will provide recreational fishing and boating opportunities to float the river 4.3 miles downstream to the Rt. 88 Bridge (Herrington Manor Road). The department stocks trout at both the Rt. 39 Bridge and the Rt. 88 Bridge as part of the Youghiogheny River put-and-take trout fishing area.

Brook Trout Program

Preparations for the upcoming national East Coast Trout meeting being hosted by the Brook Trout Program at Frostburg State University are continuing. Meeting registration is now online and live, and the first abstracts from presenters are being submitted.

Began work on an eDNA grant funding proposal (State Wildlife Grant Program) for developing a research project on the utility of using eDNA as a sampling/monitoring methodology for brook trout presence in the future.

Continued discussions with relevant parties for several potential restoration projects in the Upper Savage River watershed, including dam removal to repopulate an extirpated stream stretch, habitat improvements to reconnect the mouths of several tributaries to the mainstream, and habitat improvements in the Sand Spring run watershed.

Tidal Bass Program

Wrote an article for [Fish & Hunt Maryland](#) to promote tidal bass fishing, charter boat guides and tournaments; article was submitted along with pictures in an effort to promote fishing to a nationwide audience.

Delivered creel card boxes to Smallwood State Park and Gunpowder State Park; as part of this project, anglers are encouraged to quickly summarize details of their fishing trip to further aid the department in ensuring fishery management is tailored to its anglers.

While working with fish health experts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Cooperative Oxford Laboratory, staff developed a Health Assessment Index that may be implemented during fall surveys to better monitor the health of black bass surveyed by biologists.

Met with the Potomac River Largemouth Bass Technical Committee to discuss specific methods aimed toward interjurisdictional, collaborative management of the fishery on Potomac River.

Sent the department's annual welcome letter to 100 black bass tournament directors. This letter not only enthusiastically welcomed the upcoming fishing year, but provided links to the [2018 Tournament Director Report](#) and supplemental information for a scheduled director webinar in April and upcoming regulation proposals and ideas.

Other

Outdoor Show - Staff from both regional and statewide operations manned the booth at the Great American Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, PA. Had numerous positive interactions with anglers on a variety of freshwater fishing topics including black bass and trout fishing.

Geographical Inland Fisheries Survey System (GIFS) - Requests for data from seven organizations, including government agencies, private groups and universities, were submitted through the online Freshwater Fisheries Data Request Form. Six of the requests were for information on trout and one for Potomac River seining surveys.