

Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Monthly Report – August 2025

Freshwater Fisheries: Regional Operations

1. Stock Assessment

Monitoring and Assessment – The following work was done in support of assessing the health and quality of fish populations or stocks in Maryland:

- West I Region conducted multiple coldwater surveys at long term monitoring sites throughout Garrett County.
- West I Region conducted annual seining efforts on Deep Creek Lake in order to assess gamefish and panfish recruitment and contribute to a long-term young-of-year largemouth bass mercury study.
- Eastern Region completed coldwater surveys of Nesbitt Run and Gramies Run. Low numbers of young-of-year trout were collected from Nesbitt Run and zero young-of-year were collected from Gramies Run.
- Eastern Region, Central Region and the Invasive Fishes Program completed their annual survey for flathead catfish using hoop nets in Conowingo Reservoir and the lower Susquehanna River. Larger flathead catfish were rarely encountered in both locations, but several large blue catfish were collected from the Susquehanna River below Conowingo Dam. Otoliths were collected from those individuals to determine age.
- West II Region completed multiple trout surveys in Frederick County (Big Hunting Creek, Little Hunting Creek, Owens Creek, Fishing Creek) and Washington County (Beaver Creek, Little Beaver Creek, Little Antietam Creek).
- West II Region finished up smallmouth bass seine survey work on the upper Potomac River. Seine Index Scores were lower than the long-term average due to high flow events in mid-May. High river flows during or shortly after spawning results in high mortality for eggs and smallmouth bass fry. Juvenile smallmouth bass were collected from the river but at low numbers.
- Southern Region continued aging otoliths from walleye, perch, and crappie from Rocky Gorge. Our enthusiastic and capable intern, Javier, has completed nearly all of the otolith processing.



Juvenile smallmouth bass collected near Taylors Landing on the upper Potomac River.

- Central Region staff have been working to finish summer index period sampling of brook and brown trout streams in the region. Staff have sampled almost 50 coldwater sites this year and collected genetic material from brook trout in 10 of these for genomic analysis.
- Central Region staff completed crappie and striped bass aging from fish collected in Liberty and Loch Raven Reservoirs. Staff analyzed otoliths and scales from over 100 fish.

2. Habitat and Water Quality

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

- Several abandoned mine related projects proposed by the Maryland Department of the Environment, Abandoned Mine Lands Division. Most of the projects were not located near fisheries resources so minimal comments were submitted. A project that proposed the closing of a mine blow-out opening required a more thorough review and a site visit due to the need for a temporary bridge across a brook trout stream. Recommendations were submitted to minimize riparian vegetation and canopy cover loss while accessing the project site.
- A proposed stream restoration project planned for an unnamed tributary to Severn Run at Najoles Road. Fishing and Boating Services did not support the project due to likely adverse impacts to aquatic habitat and the stream community. Improved stormwater management in the headwaters of the stream was recommended as an alternative to the proposed project.

Additional Work with Habitat and Water Quality

Southern Region staff checked the status of Cosca Lake and Tucker Pond. Cosca Lake is being drawn down for renovations, and Tucker is succumbing to an infestation of aquatic vegetation. These checks were triggered by a comment left by an angler who participated in the pilot QR-code Volunteer Angler Survey at Tucker Pond.

West I Region conducted annual seining efforts on Savage River Reservoir and Piney Reservoir to collect fish for University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science as part of an ongoing study looking at atmospheric mercury deposition trends. Staff also collected side scan sonar recordings from Deep Creek Lake for habitat analysis.

Eastern Region collected weekly water and algae samples for Resource Assessment Services from Fishery Management Area waterbodies to test for harmful algal blooms. No advisories have been needed this year thus far.

Southern Region staff removed vegetation from Hughesville Pond, a Fishery Management Area in Charles County, to provide better access for anglers to open water. Once a year the pond is carpeted with duckweed and other plants and physical removal is the low-cost option.

3. Stocking and Population Management

West I Region and Albert Powell Fish Hatchery staff hauled and stocked fingerling rainbow trout provided by Spring Run Trout Hatchery in West Virginia. Rainbow trout were placed in the Catch and Return, All Tackle, Trout Fishing Area on the North Branch Potomac River.

4. Outreach

Customer Service - Provided customer service information for inquiries regarding:

- West I Region- Fishing Deep Creek Lake
- West I Region- Fishing Youghiogheny River Reservoir
- West I Region- Summer trout fishing on the Savage River Reservoir
- West I Region- Trout fishing the Savage River Tailwater
- West I Region- Water level conditions on the Youghiogheny River Reservoir
- West I Region- Fishing license information
- Southern-Identified fish on the Osprey Cam at Smallwood State Park on Mattawoman Creek.
- Southern-Shared data with Maryland State Parks queried from GIFS database. Data were for species caught by the Tidal Bass Surveys over the past 20 years on Mattawoman Creek to compare with species gathered by the Osprey at Smallwood State Park for a simple comparative study.

Additional Outreach Events

Southern Region staff provided locally caught blue catfish for the Becoming an Outdoor Woman, a Merkle staff event, and the Fishing and Boating Services staff meeting at Wye Island.

Central Region staff attended a Junior Ranger program at Clopper Lake. Staff conducted seining demonstrations and helped Junior Rangers with fish, crayfish, and amphibian identification. Maryland Park Service organized the event and representatives from Freshwater Fisheries, Natural Resources Police, and Maryland Forest Service were in attendance.



Central region staff conducting seining demonstrations and species identification practice.

The Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Division's [Fishing Maryland Lakes and Ponds App](#) had 1,400 unique views in August. On average, 50 anglers are using the app every day.

5. Angler Access

West I Region continues to conduct maintenance tasks at the Fishery Management Areas located throughout Garrett and Allegany County.

6. Fish Health

West I Region conducted a site visit to Deep Creek Lake for a reported possible fish kill. Upon arrival staff observed young-of-year yellow perch with dead specimens being isolated to the backs of coves where water temperatures were 82-84 degrees Fahrenheit.

It is suspected that the temperature spike in the shallow, eutrophic coves caused a dip in dissolved oxygen that affected the coolwater yellow perch.

Freshwater Fisheries: Statewide Operations

1. Invasive Fishes Program

Invasive Fishes Program staff, along with Eastern Regional staff, continued work on a project in support of a graduate student at Salisbury University in a portion of the tidal, freshwater Choptank River. The project aims to determine if targeted removals of large blue catfish can alter and depress size structure of populations. The sampling will continue through November.

Invasive Fishes Program staff have begun the tidal catfish monitoring surveys. The Patuxent, Choptank, and Chester rivers were surveyed in late July-August. Staff will be completing these surveys in September with the Sassafra River. These surveys aim to determine the structure and relative abundance of catfish populations in surveyed rivers. Additionally, a pilot program was initiated to hire commercial harvesters as chase boats to assist with fish collection. Watermen are paid for the day, plus they are allowed to keep and sell their catch of the day. This pilot program promotes harvest and supports commercial markets at a time when many watermen have moved to a more lucrative species, and improves data collections for the department. To date, over 6,250 pounds of invasive blue catfish were removed during surveys. We would like to thank all the freshwater fisheries staff who came out to help us on these surveys, enjoy some photos!



Stunned catfish during low frequency electrofishing surveys on the Patuxent River.



Invasives Fishes Program staff netting catfish and Statewide Operations staff measuring a blue catfish during electrofishing survey of Chester River.



Action shot of a catfish landing on Choptank River and catfish being transferred to a commercial harvester's boat.

To support increased harvest of invasive catfishes, Invasive Fishes Program staff, along with freshwater fisheries marketing and web staff, created and posted content for National Catfish month. Staff also attended the Maryland State Fair in support of the Department's Fishing and Boating Services' booth. Staff engaged the public and spread invasive fish awareness by answering questions about invasive fishes and encouraging participation in harvest initiatives. To reinforce beneficial use of harvested blue catfish, there will be a blue catfish filet demonstration and talk, Jimmy's Seafood blue catfish cooking demo, and the first annual Battle of the Bay Blue Catfish Chowdown eating contest scheduled for September 5th.

2. Coldwater Fisheries Program

Coldwater fisheries surveys continued throughout August. Cooler temperatures provided the opportunity to complete surveys that were previously suspended to avoid thermal stress. All remaining brook trout annual network stations were completed, as well as additional surveys on lower density populations. Fin clips were collected for genomic analysis at several stations.



The Coldwater Fisheries Program got help from Unicorn Hatchery staff to complete coldwater resource surveys in August.

Worked with the Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory to collect salmonid species for fish health testing in two streams that support source populations for brook trout reintroduction projects. A small number of individuals were collected using electrofishing methods and provided to laboratory staff. When available, the results will be used to determine if the source populations are pathogen free and safe for use in reintroduction projects.

Reviewed and discussed department trout stocking practices in watersheds that support wild trout populations. The review considered options for hatchery strains that will both maintain current Put-and-Take trout fishing opportunities and improve protections for wild trout populations.

3. Tidal Bass Program

Program staff attended and presented research at the 155th Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society as well as the concurrent Black Bass Symposium, which is held every 25 years. The symposium took place in San Antonio and included two days of talks focused on black bass research and management throughout the country with specific sessions for catch-and-release fishing, economics and participation, trophy bass, regulations, movement and recruitment among many others. Talks were mainly from

state and federal biologists in the southeast but had representation from locations as far as Idaho, Canada, New Hampshire, and Arizona. Additionally, there were two days of workshops including the final day's Black Bass Summit where anglers, industry professionals, and biologists worked together in brainstorming sessions to tackle current issues in black bass management. Staff presented research in collaboration with Major League Fishing on the effects of forward-facing sonar on catch rates and the size of fish caught. This included eight tournaments across the southeast, along with our very own Potomac River. Results found variation in the catch rates using the technology depending on the day and fishery, and little or no difference in the size of fish caught using the technology.

At the end of August, the Tidal Bass Program staff and Eastern, Central, and Southern regions met for the annual Tidal Bass Caucus to discuss sampling for the fall Tidal Bass Survey. Fisheries selected for this year's survey are the Potomac, Middle, Gunpowder, Bush, Chester, and Choptank rivers as well as the upper Bay. Among other discussion items were the summer tournament monitoring, fish health standardization work with the United States Geological Survey, and the addition of a tournament report in 2026 and revision of the Tidal Bass Fisheries Management Plan.

Starting in June, Tidal Bass Program staff with the support of regional staff launched a black bass tournament monitoring program to evaluate the methods tournaments were using for fish care and their compliance with tournament permits. At the end of August, with still a month left to go in the permit requirement window, we reached the goal of attending 40 tournaments spread proportionally throughout the state. These data will be compiled and analyzed to determine future steps in working with tournament directors to best communicate where they can improve their fish care during the tournament weigh-in process.

4. Fish Passage Program

Staff are working with partners at the United States Geological Survey to develop strategies that could improve passage of migratory fish at Conowingo Dam while also deterring the passage of invasive fishes. The first step is to test various technologies in a laboratory setting and then release a Request for Proposals to solicit bids to scale this approach. Eden Mill Eel Ladder construction dates are set for late September. We hope there is time to tweak and operate the ladder this fall before ramping up operations next spring. Dates have been scheduled to sample for Chesapeake Logperch prior to work being done to remove the "Girl Scout Dam" on Conowingo Creek in Cecil County. Fish Passage Program staff used a drone to help monitor blue catfish removal in the Choptank River. These data will be analyzed to determine the value of drone technology in creating an index to monitor population size of blue catfish.