

Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – August 2026

Freshwater Fisheries: Regional Operations

1. Stock Assessment

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

- Southern Region staff completed a biodiversity inventory of the fish community on Mattawoman Creek, and the Patuxent River. The purpose of the survey was to determine the overall contribution of non-native fauna, particularly goldfish, *Carassius auratus*, relative to native fish species. As expected, the most abundant fish species sampled from Mattawoman Creek was goldfish, outnumbering native-minnow, herring, or sunfish species. Samples in the Patuxent River were dominated by minnows, silversides, topminnows, and pumpkinseed sunfish.

Catch per Hour			
Mattawoman/Potomac		Patuxent	
Goldfish	51.4	Eastern Banded Killifish	233.6
yellow perch	50.7	Eastern Silvery Minnow	186.1
Bluegill	31.7	Inland Silverside	181.6
White Perch	30.3	Pumpkinseed	139.8
Pumpkinseed	25.3	Mummichog	119.7
Eastern Banded Killifish	25	Atlantic Menhaden	104.8
American Eel	25	Bluegill	49.9
Largemouth Bass	19.6	Blue Catfish	42.9
Alosa spp	17.1	yellow perch	37.4
Common Carp	13.6	American Eel	36.5

Table of Catch per Hour (CPUE) of 10 most common species collected in the Mattawoman Creek and Patuxent River.

- Southern Region staff completed aging otolith bones from black crappie surveyed in St. Mary's Lake spring 2026. Otoliths were viewed whole, immersed in oil,

and photographed using digital microscopy techniques. These data will be used to understand age structure for the population and measure growth rates.

- West II staff concluded coldwater surveys on Big Hunting Creek, Little Hunting Creek, and Owens Creek.
- West II staff began night surveys for catfish in the Upper Potomac River.
- West II staff conducted exploratory and annual surveys to recover juvenile brown trout that were stocked by staff in Ballenger Creek in Frederick County and Beaver Creek in Washington County, during late February. Adipose fins were clipped to identify stocked trout vs. wild trout. So far, clipped- trout have been observed in both stocking sites.



Ballenger Creek brown trout (non clipped) collected by staff during survey.

- Central Region staff are working to complete their summer index period sampling of trout streams in the region. Staff completed almost 20 surveys in August.
- The Liberty Reservoir and the Gunpowder Tailwater creel surveys continue to yield interesting results. Anglers on Liberty Reservoir have been consistently catching striped bass throughout the summer months.

2. Habitat and Water Quality

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

- Southern Region staff reviewed the Town of North Beach’s comprehensive plan 10-year update.
- Regional crews and the Coldwater Fisheries Program reviewed the joint permit application for the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP). The requested permit would allow alterations to wetlands and waterways along the project’s right-of-way corridor. If permitted, the project would result in construction of a 68 mile transmission line with a 150 foot deforested corridor that spans from Frederick County to Baltimore County. The corridor would cross numerous streams along the route, including at least nine streams that support documented

brook trout or brown trout populations and many tributaries to those trout streams. The department expressed concerns to the Maryland Department of Environment, which is the permitting agency, about the potential loss of 150 feet of trees and vegetation where the transmission lines cross trout streams. The loss of riparian vegetation may lead to warmer stream temperatures and many of these streams are already at the upper thermal tolerance threshold for trout. Additional comments from the department included requests for thorough erosion and sediment control practices, maintaining stream crossings, and the minimization of tree removal along the corridor to the maximum extent possible.

- West Region I staff reviewed and commented on a power line project that would take place in the town of Kitzmiller. Potomac Edison will be upgrading components and replacing the existing structures with new equipment.
- West Region 1 staff reviewed proposals and attended a meeting to discuss potential salvage harvests within the region's managed forests. Recent years of insect infestation which caused significant defoliation and multiplied by years of drought has led to significant die off of multiple tree species.
- Dredging repairs were completed at Cosca Lake, Prince George's County. Southern Region staff was contacted to check water quality and plan for restocking with fish. Dissolved oxygen was measured at 0.2 milligrams per liter, the lowest reading noted by biologists in our collective memory. Decomposing vegetation likely caused the low oxygen and the lake's foul odor; therefore, more time is needed for conditions to improve before stocking.

North Branch Potomac River Stream Cleanup - Staff participated in a stream cleanup event sponsored by Trout Unlimited. Participants included Trout Unlimited and Fishing and Boating Services staff, local guides, and volunteers, including Curtis Fleming from the Fly Rod Chronicles TV show. A crew floated the river in inflatable rafts removing in-stream trash while another crew patrolled the shoreline and picked up trash at fishing access points and Fishery Management Area boat ramps. Items removed included discarded bikes, a motorcycle, numerous tires, general litter, and illegally dumped household trash. Thanks to everyone who helped make North Branch Potomac River a better place to fish.



Trash removed from the North Branch Potomac River during Trout Unlimited sponsored cleanup event.

3. Stocking and Population Management

- West Region 1 staff continues to assist Bear Creek Hatchery with daily operations when available.
- West II Region staff have continued mowing and general upkeep of West II Fishery Management Area ponds throughout the month.
- Eastern Region staff stocked 1,500, three to five inch largemouth bass that were raised at Joseph Manning Hatchery in Cedarville State Forest. Bass were stocked into the tidal Choptank River from the town of Greensboro and downstream to the town of Denton.



Largemouth bass stocked in the tidal Choptank River.

4. Angler Access

- West I Region staff recently made repairs to the intake structure and the Evitts Creek Fishery Management Area located in Allegany County. A recent storm event had washed out multiple sections of the supply line feeding the pond resulting in no flow entering the three ponds. Staff were able to acquire materials and restore flow.
- Eastern Region staff replaced the 20 year-old decking of the bulkhead section of stream below Unicorn Lake. It is an extremely popular year-round fishing location.



Eastern Regional staff replacing the 20 year-old decking of the bulkheaded section of stream below Unicorn Lake.

Freshwater Fisheries: Statewide Operations

1. Invasive Fishes Program

Staff completed sampling on the Patuxent, Potomac, and Sassafras rivers as part of the Tidal Catfish Monitoring Survey. The survey uses low-frequency electrofishing to monitor populations of catfishes in tidal, freshwater rivers of Maryland. Catfishes are sensitive to low-frequency electrical current and electrofishing is a popular method employed by researchers to sample the fishes. Because fish often surface across a large area and remain at the surface for a short time, additional boats called chase boats are used to collect fish. The department began the Commercial Electrofishing Chase Boat Pilot Program to hire commercial harvesters to serve as chase boats. To date, the department has sampled 43 sites and removed over 11,000 pounds of invasive blue catfish during the survey. Sampling on the Nanticoke River will occur during September 2026.



Biologists and commercial harvesters use low frequency electrofishing to collect and measure invasive blue catfish on the Potomac River, 2026.

Staff collaborated with the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS) to collect fin clip samples of invasive blue and flathead catfish from the Potomac River. Fin clips from blue catfish were collected and sent to researchers at Georgia Gwinnett College to better determine the source of invasive catfish in four Georgia rivers. Similarly, flathead catfish fin clips were collected and sent to researchers at the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada, to determine the genomic

population structure and origin of flathead catfish across their native and introduced ranges.

Winners of the Reel in the Blues Bonanza, a blue catfish charter giveaway program sponsored by the department, began booking and taking their free trips. To date, nearly 20 of the 100 winners have completed their catfishing trips. Winners and charter captains are harvesting invasive blue catfish, enjoying time outdoors with friends and family, and stocking their freezers. This work was made possible through funding via the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



A family of happy anglers with blue catfish, croaker, and a white perch after a free day of fishing through the MD DNR Reel in the Blues Bonanza Chartered Fishing Trip giveaway.

2. Coldwater Fisheries Program

Coldwater fish surveys continued throughout August. Over 12 electrofishing surveys were conducted, most of which were multi-pass depletion surveys for population estimates. Additionally, the Coldwater Fisheries Program supported regional crews on coldwater surveys throughout the state.



Brook trout collected during coldwater surveys in August 2026.

Coldwater Fisheries Program and Bear Creek Hatchery staff met to plan for the upcoming brook trout propagation project. A small number of brook trout will be captured in the fall for egg collection and hatchery propagation. The captured fish will be returned to the source stream unharmed after egg collection, while the eggs will be brought to Bear Creek Isolation Hatchery. The goal will be to raise brook trout to fingerling size and release them to coldwater streams that do not currently support any salmonid populations. The meeting included discussions that refined collection methods and fertilization methods, described sample collection for fish health analysis, finalized plans for isolation hatchery preparation, and reviewed fish rearing procedures.

Staff attended the August meeting of the Central Maryland Fly Fishing Council. An update on Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee activities was provided. Additionally, staff participated in a discussion about Prettyboy Reservoir coldwater storage management and coordination with the City of Baltimore to maintain the coldwater fishery in the Gunpowder Falls tailwater.

Fish passage projects continued in Bear Pen Run in the Savage River watershed and Winebrenner Run in the Georges Creek watershed. Both streams support brook trout populations. The projects involve removing culverts at stream crossings and replacing them with bridges that will improve fish passage and the flood resilience of the road infrastructure. The projects are expected to be completed in September.



Partial completion of the Winebrenner Run fish passage project. The culverts have been removed and bridge construction has started.

3. Tidal Bass Program

Program and regional staff met to plan for the upcoming fall Tidal Bass Survey. Staff aligned on field work logistics and equipment needs for the 2026 Tidal Bass Survey across seven major river systems, standardizing fish health index scoring, operating procedures and invasive snakehead sample collections for McDaniel College research. Systems to be sampled for this year's survey include the Potomac, Bush, Middle, Gunpowder, Patuxent rivers and the upper Chesapeake Bay and Marshyhope Creek. Sampling will begin once temperatures cool in late September or early October. Additionally, staff identified projects that could be funded using the black bass conservation fund and presented to the Black Bass Advisory Committee.

Program staff and West I region staff met with the Maryland Park Service and bass tournament directors to discuss upgrades to Deep Creek Lake State Park's weigh-in facility for upcoming seasons. Plans for maintenance and lighting updates were made as well as providing infrastructure and equipment that would aid in fish care during months with hot weather and high tournament activity.

Staff coauthored a presentation on fish mortality associated with an increase in the use of live-imaging sonar, especially in deep water seasonal fisheries. This research will be presented at the National American Fisheries Society meeting in Columbus, Ohio at the end of August.

4. Fish Passage Program

Staff had their first kickoff meeting with FISHBIO, Constellation Energy, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The company FISHBIO has been contracted to develop a system to

reduce or eliminate invasive species passage at Conowingo Dam, while improving passage for target species.

5. Organized Freshwater Fishing

Go Fish Maryland supported youth outdoor education by providing resources for two major events. Educational materials and giveaways, including Water and Boating Safety coloring books, stickers, and copies of the 2026 Fishing and Crabbing Guide, were supplied for the Maryland Park Service's annual Junior Ranger Family Festival at Seneca Creek State Park. Additionally, in response to a request from Cubmaster Rick Albee, Go Fish Maryland dropped off materials in advance for Cub Scout Pack 1070's youth fishing event at Culler Lake in Baker Park on August 22, supplying scouts and their families with 2026 Fishing and Crabbing Guides, Fish Identification booklets, keychains, and stickers.

Freshwater fisheries regional and statewide operations staff assisted Aquatic Resource Educator, Chelsea Kenworthy, with the Learn to Fly Fish event held at the Severna Park Branch Library on August 22. This introductory, open-flow program invited families and youth ages 8 to 15 in order to kick-start their fly fishing journey and explore basic angling skills. Participants rotated through interactive learning stations, including basic fly casting instruction, knot tying, an instructional resource table with guides on local fly clubs and tackle shops, and a “Make Your Own Macroinvertebrate” craft station. Attendees also received free giveaways, including fish carabiners and mini first-aid kits.



Family Fly-Fishing Day at the Severna Park Branch Library.