

## **Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – February 2025**

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Stock Assessment**

**Creel Surveys** – Western Region I staff conducted creel surveys on Deep Creek Lake and Piney Reservoir to gather angling data for the ice fishing season in 2025. Access to the lake was limited due to less-than-ideal ice conditions. The creel survey was called off after several days of attempting to interview due to generally unsafe ice conditions and a lack of angling pressure. The creel survey is planned to continue during the winter of 2025-26 as ice conditions allow.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Habitat and Water Quality**

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

- Three stone revetments to be constructed along the shoreline of Deep Creek Lake. Comments were provided for time-of-year restrictions, minimal disturbance, material use, enhancing fish habitat, and proper monitoring by personnel through the construction process.
- Reviewed a coal mine application for an expansion of the Casselman Deep Mine located in Grantsville, MD.
- An application for a renovation of the wastewater treatment plant located in Grantsville, Maryland. Comments provided were for time of year restrictions, equipment and material storage, sediment and erosion control, water diversion and pump around, casting concrete recommendations, and site reclamation at the completion of the project.
- A house to be installed in the floodplain of the Youghiogheny River. Comments provided were for equipment and material storage, sediment and erosion control, and to stabilize disturbed soil.
- A temporary bridge to be installed for a timber harvest in Savage River State Forest. Comments provided were for limiting space for equipment and material storage, unnecessary disturbance, sediment and erosion control, and site reclamation at the completion of the project.

**Deep Creek** - Western Region I staff attended a meeting to discuss the progress toward goals outlined in the Deep Creek Lake Watershed Management Plan.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Stocking and Population Management**

Eastern Region staff stocked preseason trout in Cecil, Queen Anne's, Caroline, Wicomico and Worcester counties this month. Anglers were eagerly awaiting their arrival.

West II and Central Region staff collected brood walleye from the Potomac River for production at the Joseph Manning Hatchery. Fingerlings produced at the hatchery will be stocked to supplement populations in the Potomac River, Savage River Reservoir, Liberty Reservoir, Rocky Gorge Reservoir, Triadelphia Reservoir, and the Susquehanna River.

Regional management and hatchery staff stocked more than 33,000 rainbow, golden rainbow, and brown trout into 29 Put and Take Trout Fishing Areas prior to the regular stocking season. These early stockings provided winter fishing opportunities for ice fishing enthusiasts. Many hardy anglers were looking forward to getting the 2025 season underway.

**Fee Fishing Lake Permits:** Currently there are two approved facilities and two in the review process. Full listing to date: [Fee Fishing Lakes](#)

**Fish Supplier Permits:** Currently there are 12 approved suppliers. Full listing to date: [Approved Fish Suppliers PDF](#).

**Pond Stocking Permits:** Five issued and one in the review process.

## Freshwater Fisheries - Outreach

**Customer Service** - Provided customer service information for inquiries regarding:

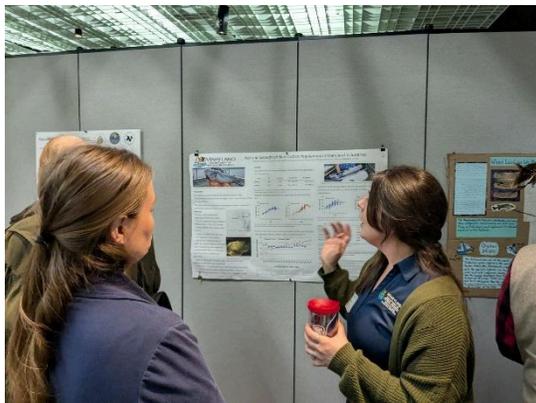
- Ice fishing Garrett County lakes
- Trout stocking/fishing inquiries
- Fishing Rodeos

Staff attended a Wildlife R3 (Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation) virtual meeting to better understand current efforts in other Maryland DNR agencies.

**Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF)** – The RBFF State Marketing Workshop was held in Baltimore and Letha Grimes along with Teresa Rodriguez of DC Department of Energy and Environment gave a presentation, “Women on the Water”, programs that Maryland and the District of Columbia provide to get more women involved in fishing and boating.

## Freshwater Fisheries - Invasive Fishes Program

Attended PAXCON on February 6 and presented an age and growth study on blue catfish in the Patuxent and Potomac rivers. Staff also gave a presentation at the conference on Maryland’s invasive fishes.



Created social media content for the department's social media pages, in honor of National Invasive Species Awareness week, February 24 to 28. Posts were shared on the fisheries pages.

The department introduced two new pilot programs to the public to reduce the biomass of blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay. The first pilot program will allow fishing charter captains to commercially sell excess blue catfish caught by clients. The program removes crew size limits during hook-and-line commercial trips that target blue catfish and allows charter and commercial trips to occur simultaneously. The second pilot program allows trotlines for catching finfish to be placed south of the William Preston Lane Jr Memorial Bridge (Bay Bridge). A small number of commercial harvesters will be allowed to use finfish trotlines in the mainstem Chesapeake Bay, south of the bridge. Staff will use this experimental program to examine bycatch, user conflicts, and any other issues that come up before proposing changes to statewide regulations that would allow more widespread use of trotlines for blue catfish.

Staff was interviewed by WBOC and other press about recently introduced pilot programs to increase harvests and removals of invasive blue catfish from Chesapeake Bay.

Solicited bids for charter bowfishing and hook-and-line captains targeting invasive fishes, primarily blue catfish, to assist the department by recording their catches and harvests in logbooks for the duration of the 2025 fishing season. Logbook data will be used to explore removals of invasive fishes through these sectors of the fishery.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Coldwater Program**

Attended the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society (SDAFS) annual meeting and the SDAFS Trout Committee Annual Meeting in Asheville, North Carolina. Meeting outcomes included progress towards planning the upcoming East Coast Trout Management and Culture Workshop in 2027, coordinating a brook trout subcommittee to develop an update for the Managing Southern Appalachian Brook Trout: A Position Statement publication (2005), and finalizing details for a Trout Committee student scholarship award. Maryland will be represented on the subcommittees for all three outcomes.

Discussed grant proposals for two stream crossing projects in the Savage River watershed with non-governmental organizations. The projects will improve fish passage by replacing a perched culvert with a bridge in Big Run and replacing a deteriorating bridge over Savage River with a new single span bridge. Letters of support were submitted to Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture in pursuit of grant funding for the projects. Coordination and collaboration will continue to see these projects to successful completion.

Following discussions with researchers from University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, developed plans and budgetary needs to pursue a brook trout genomics project. This effort will further characterize brook trout patches, improve

efforts to expand brook trout occupancy through translocation efforts, develop a native brook trout propagation program in the coldwater hatchery system, and potentially identify local adaptations that may make some brook trout patches more resilient to adverse water quality conditions. The plans and budgetary needs will be submitted in a grant proposal to the National Science Foundation. Internal planning will proceed towards the identification of a location for brook trout propagation that will meet both water quality and biosecurity needs. Regardless of grant award success, coordination efforts will continue with University of Maryland researchers to expand the genetic inventory for brook trout and apply the information through management actions.

Finalized scope of work and memorandum of understanding documents for an Environmental Protection Agency grant. The project involves collaboration with the Environmental Review Program and Maryland Department of the Environment to improve aquatic resource screening and project review. Fishing and Boating Services will identify streams that may support coldwater fisheries resources but have not been previously surveyed or have not been surveyed recently. Data will be collected in these streams to determine coldwater fisheries occupancy.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Tidal Bass Program**

In collaboration with freshwater fisheries staff, a public input survey was created to gather more detailed information on the use and perception of forward facing sonar by Maryland anglers. Forward facing sonar or live sonar is a technology that helps anglers locate and track fish in real-time by showing detailed underwater images of fish and structures in the direction they're moving or casting. As this technology becomes more affordable it has increased in use and prevalence among anglers. Survey respondents were asked if they used the technology, how they used it, what species they targeted using it, and their opinion on its effectiveness and competitive advantage. In total, 1,550 respondents completed the survey and the results will be summarized to better understand this rapidly developing technology.

Attended the annual meeting of the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society in Asheville, North Carolina. Staff participated in a human dimensions workshop focused on working with the public and conducting public facing research including creel surveys and angler opinion surveys. Research on the fish health index created using data from the tidal bass survey was presented at the meeting. The fish health index summarized the results of three years of visual stressor data collected from fish in the tidal Potomac River and upper Chesapeake Bay. This work demonstrated the ability to directly compare fish condition across sites and years quantitatively. Additionally, staff attended multiple talks focusing on relevant research and management related to black bass throughout the southeast.

### **Freshwater Fisheries – Fish Passage**

- Work is going well at the Cypress Branch Dam removal project (see attached picture taken March 3, 2025).
- Harford County has secured a contractor for the Eden Mill eel ladder project that should begin shortly.

- Plans are on hold with the Daniels Dam Feasibility Study given the uncertainty with federal NOAA grants. Staff are opening fish ladders now in preparation for the upcoming spring migrations.



*Cypress Branch Dam*

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Other**

Western Region I staff attended the final Regional Teams meeting at the newly acquired Savage River Lodge. In addition to the meeting, a number of attendees assisted with some maintenance work at the property.

Eastern Region staff assisted with the winter trawl survey in the upper Chesapeake Bay. The long-term dataset from this survey may prove invaluable in demonstrating the impact of blue catfish on resident fish species.

Eastern Region staff has been busy completing maintenance and repair to the regional electrofishing boat fleet. Eastern, Central, and Southern region boats have been completed.

Staff presented to the Chesapeake Bay Program's Management Board to lobby for continued representation of brook trout as a Bay Program Outcome and established workgroup. The presentation was well received with jurisdictions from MD, VA, and NY supporting the recommendation. DE, DC, EPA abstained, while PA did not support the recommendation. Follow up discussions will occur to discuss beyond 2025 brook trout outcome language in the new bay agreement.

The division welcomed our new creel clerk/fisheries technician who started 10/26. Hunter Hoffman will be conducting creel surveys on the Potomac River in Washington County as well as the lower Savage River Tailwater from March through the end of October. He will be reporting to West II regional staff and assisting with other regional sampling efforts and hatchery operations as needed.