

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

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

Fall survey data from Rocky Gorge and Annapolis Reservoir were analyzed to calculate PSD and CPUE values for several species collected. (PSD = proportional size distribution; for largemouth bass it is the number of bass 12 inches and longer divided by the number of bass that are eight inches and longer)(CPUE<sub>60</sub> = catch per hour of electrofishing).

- The mean PSD for largemouth in Rocky Gorge dropped to 34, down from 62 in fall 2022. The most notable change was a 76 percent increase in CPUE<sub>60</sub> for fish 200-299 mm, (59.7 last year up from 20.3 in 2022).
- Analysis for Annapolis Reservoir indicated PSD for largemouth was 58 but the sample size was very small with only 15 fish of stock size and greater collected (CPUE<sub>60</sub> 20.4). This reservoir had not been surveyed since 1997 but PSD at that time was 33 in summer.

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

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

- A small dam embankment failure in the Oregon Branch watershed. The impoundment has water quality implications for a population of brown trout that is located downstream. Fishing and Boating Services advised that the best outcome for aquatic resources would be decommission the impoundment and stabilize the dam structures to avoid further sediment mobilization. Restoration of the impoundment would likely elevate temperatures in the stream by discharging warmer pond water. Maryland Department of the Environment, Dam Safety Division will work with the owners of the pond to correct the embankment failure and to determine how to proceed with restoration or decommission.
- A stone revetment 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.
- Two Project Open Space properties in Allegany County.
- Discharge of water from a proposed salmon aquaculture facility in Cecil County.
- Staff also provided comments on several proposed time of year waivers for ongoing projects and several planned infrastructure projects to Environmental Review.
- A proposal to replace a bridge with a box culvert on Little Antietam Creek, Washington County. Little Antietam has one of the states only few wild rainbow trout fisheries at the site location and downstream, as well as a robust brook trout population upstream. Staff recommended replacing it with similar existing bridge infrastructure or going with a bottomless culvert to prevent damage to the stream bottom or disruption of groundwater influences on the stream that help maintain cold temperatures.

- Reviewed the Town of Leonardtown Comprehensive Plan and are preparing comments to address fish habitat goals for the area.
- Culvert replacement on Aspen Run, Carroll County. Aspen Run has a robust brown trout population. Comments were made to avoid time of year restrictions during the spawning period and to ensure culverts are depressed into the stream bottom to allow fish passage.
- Continued coordination for the Key Bridge rebuild, Nice Bridge Mitigation, and Amtrak.

**Side Scan Sonar** - Staff reviewed side scan sonar recordings from Deep Creek Lake to compare submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) coverage and fish occupancy from sampling stations that were covered during last year's sampling season. The data will be used to determine what thresholds exist, if any, for SAV density and fish habitat.



*Side scan recording showing healthy SAV along the lower edge of the recording.*

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

Staff toured Garrett and Allegany Counties to check on the conditions of potential pre-season trout stocking locations. Due to extended and extreme cold temperatures, most streams and all of the impoundments in the region are ice covered.

West I Regional staff assisted Bear Creek Hatchery with ice removal during recent extreme cold events. Crews have been working around the clock with the recent frigid temperatures removing ice from different parts of the Bear Creek Hatchery facility.



*Bear Creek Hatchery staff working night shift clearing ice from the supply dam with temperatures well below zero.*

**Myrtle Grove Lake** - Assessed Myrtle Grove Lake after learning that a construction project required the water be lowered to install a new water control structure. The water level and surface area was down about half the normal levels. Photos were taken and oxygen measured to document the situation. Plans are to reduce but not eliminate the number of trout scheduled for stocking this area.

**Fee Fishing Lake Permits:** Permits are renewed every calendar year. There are currently two approved facilities and one in the review process. Here is the full listing to date: [Fee Fishing Lakes](#)

**Fish Supplier Permits:** Permits are renewed every calendar year. There are currently six approved suppliers and one in the review process. Here is the full listing to date: [Approved Fish Suppliers PDF](#).

**Pond Stocking Permits:** None

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Outreach**

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

- Ice fishing in Western Maryland Impoundments

Central Region Manager Mark Staley presented the annual State of the Gunpowder River talk to 40 members of Maryland Chapter Trout Unlimited in Hunt Valley.

Central and Western II Region staff are currently developing a freshwater fishing application for anglers. This GIS app will display survey and species population summary data for popular sportfish for individual impoundments across the entire state of Maryland. The app will distill thousands of data points across multiple years into summary data that anglers can use to understand the characteristics of the many fisheries available to them.

Staff provided data for a Public Information Act request from the tidal bass, impoundment, and coldwater datasets for 2023 and 2024.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Angler Access**

**Fishery Management Areas (FMAs)** - Eastern Region staff completed various maintenance projects at FMAs and public fishing areas. The informational signboard was replaced at Johnsons Pond boat ramp in Salisbury. Staff are diligently completing maintenance on regional electrofishing boats for the upcoming sampling season.



*New information signboard at Johnson Pond*

### **Freshwater Fisheries – Fish Health**

Staff reviewed the Wild Freshwater Fish Health Database and made a few minor suggestions.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Invasive Fishes Program**

Staff attended the Chesapeake Bay Boat Show partnered with the Coastal Conservation Association Maryland (CCA MD). CCA MD hosted the “kids corner” in partnership with Fishing and Boating Services and Maryland Department of Agriculture. Gyo-taku (Japanese fish printing), lure decorating, and coloring were some of the available activities for children. Invasive Fishes Program staff also performed a fillet demonstration to show anglers how to process blue catfish.



*Kid's corner at the boat show*

Staff met with the Marketing Strategist of Fishing and Boating Services to discuss better outreach and social media engagement options with anglers, specifically for aquatic invasive species.

The Invasive Catfish Advisory Committee, a committee that acts under the direction of the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission and the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission, met to discuss issues relating to the management of blue catfish. The group was informed of upcoming department-led pilot projects to increase commercial harvest of blue catfish in Maryland waters.

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

Staff organized and convened the January meeting of the Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee. Agenda topics included updates on nontidal fee adjustment legislation, the North Branch Potomac River existing use determination, a summary of the department's 2024 coldwater projects, a continuation of the discussion about a new transmission line route proposed in central Maryland, and a presentation about fisheries management practices across state boundaries. Action items included continued communication between the membership regarding the proposed transmission lines and a data request for a list of impacted coldwater fisheries resources compiled by the department.

Staff met with the City of Frostburg to discuss their plans to identify new well locations for an additional public water supply. Fishing and Boating Services was interested in the locations and the practicality of reducing reliance on existing public water supplies. The city currently draws water from springs in the Upper Savage River headwaters, which could provide additional cold spring water for downstream trout resources if public water usage of the springs is reduced. Due to treatment expenses and supply availability, the

city preferred to maintain the current withdrawal levels from the springs, but would continue to communicate and consider alternatives if practical.

Staff met with researchers from the University of Maryland System to discuss coldwater fisheries resources research needs and to find opportunities for collaboration. Potential research efforts could include the expansion of genetic analysis of brook trout to further characterize populations. Application of the results would be used to improve translocation efforts and identify genetic rescue opportunities. Additional ideas included further development of eDNA techniques and research on salmonid physiological requirements and stressors in urbanized watersheds with elevated stream temperatures.

Staff worked with Maryland Department of the Environment to submit coldwater resource data for 2024 Tier II sampling and for the 2026 integrated report. Fishing and Boating Services routinely works with the Maryland Department of Environment to provide current resource data for consideration in determining water quality protection. A package with coldwater resource data that may have implications for use class designations in approximately 20 streams is currently in development and will be submitted to Maryland Department of the Environment in the upcoming weeks.

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

Staff completed queries of the 2024 Tidal Bass Survey data, and after some QA/QC repairs of a few records, submitted the file to the Tidal Bass Program Manager. The survey measured 1,387 largemouth in the fall from seven river systems. Also measured were 70 Chesapeake channa and only four smallmouth bass.

The Black Bass Advisory Committee held a quarterly meeting on January 13th. Agenda items included promotion of the Black Bass Conservation Fund, volunteer tournament monitoring, and updates from the department going into 2025. Moving forward, the Tidal Bass Program will work to put together a video highlighting the conservation fund for social media to increase awareness and help stakeholders better understand how the fund improves black bass conservation in the state. Additionally, the Tidal Bass Program will look to attend more tournaments this year to monitor compliance with tournament permit requirements to better understand where to focus efforts on compliance.

Program staff met with members of Maryland Bass Nation to discuss a reef project in Wades Bay on the Potomac River. This project was initially proposed by Maryland Bass Nation in 2021 to restore habitat in previously popular sections of the river. The proposal in its current form requires several stipulations from NOAA as well as the USACE and needs to have an internal review by other DNR sectors before moving forward.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Fish Passage Program**

- Chesapeake Bay Program Fish Passage Workgroup Coordination and Updates:
  - Prepare and finalize comments for Beyond 2025 Bay Program Assessment

- Fish ladders/Dam Removal:
  - Construction has begun on the Cypress Branch Dam Removal.
  - DNR and American Rivers selected Interfluve as the winning bid for the Daniels Dam Feasibility Study. We are currently finalizing the subcontractor team and duties to be carried out by Interfluve with work expected to begin in February.
  - Staff continue to coordinate with Harford County and US Fish and Wildlife Service for construction of an eel ladder at Eden Mill on Deer Creek. A pre-bid meeting was held and a contractor is expected to be announced in February



*Access road being constructed for the Cypress Branch Dam Removal.*



*Aerial view of Cypress Branch Dam, impoundment, and access road.*



*Aerial view of Cypress Branch Dam*