

Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – June 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 attempted to survey a pond located on a new parcel of land that will be annexed to Sandy Point State Park. The 10 acre pond is located at the tip of Hackett's Point. The density of submerged aquatic vegetation and high salinities made sampling attempts ineffective, but staff did confirm the presence of bluegill and largemouth bass.
- Southern Region surveyed a pond located at Camp Accomplish, a summer camp run by Melwood for kids with disabilities. They were interested in the current status of the fish populations in the pond, and if anything should be stocked to enhance their campers' angling experiences. The data showed healthy stocks of both largemouth bass and bluegill, and it was only recommended that the camp control the weeds to enhance fishing and the bass' ability to prey on bluegill.
- Eastern Region staff completed the annual survey of black bass populations within Conowingo Reservoir. Smallmouth bass in all size ranges were abundant along with some impressive largemouth bass. Conowingo Reservoir continues to support robust black bass fisheries and excellent fishing.





Annual Black Bass survey of Conowingo Reservoir.

- West I Region staff, with assistance from other Fishing and Boating Services' staff, conducted multiple sampling efforts throughout the region. The following sampling efforts were conducted with data analysis to be completed:
 - North Branch Potomac River Catch-and-Return Trout Fishing Area from Blue Hole to Bloomington for a general trout population assessment.
 - North Branch Potomac River Catch-and-Return Trout Fishing Area from Westernport to Black Oak for a population assessment along with a long-term tagging study for growth rate data collection.
 - Youghiogheny River Catch-and-Return Trout Fishing Area for a general population assessment.
 - Broadford Lake black bass assessment.
- Central Region staff completed nineteen coldwater fisheries surveys on streams in Baltimore, Carroll, and Harford counties.
- Central Region staff completed a panfish survey on Lake Needwood in Montgomery County.



A beautiful brown trout collected while sampling the Catch-and-Return Area on the Youghiogheny River (left) and the North Branch Potomac River (right).

2. Habitat and Water Quality

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

- Eastern Region staff continues to advocate for the wild brown trout resource in Basin Run in Cecil County, and support Maryland Department of Environment’s ongoing regulatory efforts to stop pollution from entering Basin Run. Basin Run is classified as Use Class III (coldwater) stream.
- West I Region staff commented on several culvert replacement projects within Garrett County. Comments were provided for time-of-year restrictions with projects taking place on Use Class III streams. Best management practices for erosion control and pump arounds were also recommended along with site restoration at the completion of the projects.
- West I Region staff commented on a bridge installation project that will be completed on Koontz Run in Allegany County, a Use Class III stream. Comments were provided for strict adherence to time-of-year restrictions, best management practices for erosion control, pump around stream diversion to work in the dry, along with precautions and safeguards to prevent water contact with curing concrete. Site restoration was recommended at the completion of the project.
- West I Region staff commented on a solar array installation project to be completed in Oakland, Maryland. Comments were provided for sediment and erosion control and equipment access and usage concerns for soil compaction. Staff recommended that work be completed in phases to prevent large scale soil exposure.
- West I Region staff commented on a sewer line project taking place in the

floodplain of Evitts Creek in Allegany County. Comments were provided to encourage best management practices for erosion control and ensure precautions and safeguards be taken to prevent water contact with curing concrete. Site restoration was recommended at the completion of the project.

- West I Region staff attended a Land Reclamation Committee meeting to do field review for phase II bond releases. Five sites were reviewed for vegetation approval of which only two were approved with the remaining three left to be reviewed again in the fall of 2026.
- Central Region staff commented on a stormwater management outfall stabilization project in Baltimore County.
- Central Region staff commented on a Route 1 bridge project in Harford County and a culvert repair project in Harford County.

3. Stocking and Population Management

- Southern Region staff stocked 15,000 largemouth bass fingerlings in Piscataway Creek to make room at the Joseph Manning Hatchery for intensive indoor culture.



Largemouth Bass stocking in Piscataway Creek.

- West I Region staff continues to assist Bear Creek Hatchery staff with daily hatchery operations as needed.
- Staff collected golden shiner and green sunfish from two area ponds to replenish brood stocks held at Joseph Manning Hatchery. The green sunfish males reproduce with female bluegill to create hybrid sunfish. The hardy and aggressive progeny are used in youth fishing rodeos around the state.

4. Outreach

Additional Outreach Events

- West I Region staff attended the Accident Elementary Parent-Teacher Organization youth fishing event held at Accident Pond.
- Southern Region staff provided a filet demonstration at a Youth Fishing League event held at Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary. Youth Fishing League provides free events with all the fishing gear needed and teaches sustainable fishing practices to kids. The event had about 75 youth and parents in attendance.

5. Angler Access

- Eastern Regional staff cleaned up storm damage at Wye Mills Fishery Management Area. Tree tops and branches littered the grounds after strong thunderstorms rolled through the area.

Freshwater Fisheries: Statewide Operations

1. Invasive Fishes Program

Staff, with USFWS Maryland Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (MD FWCO), completed tagging Northern snakehead (Chesapeake Channa) as part of a cooperative study that examines harvest rates and movement of the fish in portions of the upper Chesapeake Bay. From spring 2025 through May 2026, over 450 snakeheads were tagged in tributaries of the upper Bay including the Bush, Elk, Gunpowder, Sassafras, and Susquehanna rivers. Fish were tagged with either a blue, high-reward tag worth \$200 or yellow, low-reward tags worth \$10. Anglers must harvest fish and report tags to MD FWCO by phone at 1-800-448-8322. Anglers may report tagged fish through December 2026 for awards.

Invasive Fishes Program staff, with Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Division (FFHD) Eastern Region biologists and graduate students at Salisbury University, completed the final electrofishing sampling effort for a project on the Choptank River for invasive blue catfish. The project aimed to determine if targeted, electrofishing removals of large individuals can alter population structure of the invasive fish. Data will be analyzed and reported in fall or winter 2026.

Staff worked with Chesapeake Bay Program and United States Geological Survey Eastern Ecological Science Center staff to organize an Invasive Catfish Workgroup meeting aimed to share information and facilitate collaborative projects amongst researchers examining ecological impacts of invasive blue and flathead catfishes in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Invasive Fishes Program and Statewide Operations staff, with help from FFHD Southern Region and MD FWCO biologists, surveyed sites in the tidal, freshwater Patuxent River using low-frequency electrofishing. A drone operator was contracted to gather aerial videography and imagery of the sampling to test the efficacy of using aerial imagery to quantify fish density at sites.

The application period for commercial watermen crews to participate in the Commercial Electrofishing Chase Boat Pilot Program closed in late-June 2026. Staff are currently reviewing applications and will notify successful applicants in the coming weeks. At least eight crews of commercial harvesters will be chosen to participate in 2026, with surveys tentatively scheduled for the Nanticoke, Patuxent, Potomac, and Sassafras rivers. The pilot allows crews of commercial harvesters to serve as chase boats (additional vessels used to collect fish) during electrofishing surveys. Collected fish are measured by the department for research purposes and pilot participants are authorized to keep, for sale or other purposes, all invasive catfishes collected. The project supports departmental efforts to establish a fishery-independent survey of invasive catfishes in tidal, freshwater habitats and supports commercial industry during summer when blue catfish harvest is low.

The department debuted the Reel in the Blues Bonanza, a promotion that offers free, chartered fishing trips for the public to harvest invasive blue catfish from Maryland waters. The program aims to engage recreational anglers in the harvest of blue catfish. The department will provide up to 100 chartered fishing trips to giveaway winners from late-July through October 2026. To enter, members of the public age-18 and older, must complete an online form from June 24–July 13, 2026. Winners will be randomly selected and notified by July 15, 2026 and must confirm their participation by July 22, 2026. Winners are responsible for contacting and scheduling trips with participating charter guides and travel to the locations of the trips.

2. Coldwater Fisheries Program



Brook trout collected during coldwater fisheries surveys in June 2026. Multiple size classes were observed during a survey that documented a new population of brook trout in the Casselman River watershed (Left). Multiple size classes, including young-of-year, were collected for a population in the Gunpowder Falls watershed (Right).

Coldwater fisheries surveys were conducted at 17 stations to collect data for long-term monitoring, update records for brook trout patches that haven't been surveyed within the last five years, and assess the coldwater potential for several streams that have not been previously surveyed. Adipose fin clips were collected from several of the surveyed brook trout patches for use in a genomics analysis. Previously undocumented brook trout populations were observed in two of the streams that were surveyed for coldwater potential. Both streams are located in the Casselman River drainage and are currently designated as Use Class I, warmwater streams. The data will be submitted to the Maryland Department of the Environment for review and a possible regulatory change that provides thermal protection.



Electrofishing for brook trout in streams selected for reintroduction projects (Left). Young-of-year, age-1 and adult brook trout collected from a stream that has been targeted for brook trout reintroduction since 2024 (Right).

Surveys were conducted in three streams that were selected for brook trout reintroduction projects. The criteria used for selecting the streams included stream temperatures that are

suitable to support brook trout populations year-round, in-stream habitat that supports all brook trout life history stages, and no existing salmonid populations. The reintroduction projects started in 2024 with the translocation of 100 brook trout and continued in 2025 with the translocation of additional 50 brook trout. Electrofishing surveys conducted in 2025 documented progress by confirming the continued occupancy of translocated individuals and by observing young-of-year. The observation of young-of-year suggested that translocated fish were successfully spawning in the reintroduction stream. The 2026 surveys continued to document progress, with translocated, age-1, and young-of-year fish all observed in the three reintroduction streams. The presence of age-1 fish suggested that the young-of-year observed in 2025 survived for a full year, while the presence of young-of-year suggested a second successful spawn. The collected data will be used to determine if additional translocations are needed.

Progress continued towards several fish passage improvement projects in coldwater streams. Construction has started for a culvert replacement project in Bear Pen Run (Savage River watershed) and a barrier removal project in Sand Spring Run (Georges Creek watershed). The Bear Pen Run culvert will be replaced with a bridge that allows aquatic organism passage. Additionally, a bridge structure that allows fish passage was purchased for a culvert removal project in Big Run (Savage River watershed). All three projects will be completed this summer, along with two additional blockage removal projects in Poplar Lick Run (Savage River watershed) and Winebrenner Run (Georges Creek watershed).

Attended the Chesapeake Bay Trust's annual Pooled Monitoring Meeting. The meeting provides a forum for researchers and regulatory agencies to discuss trust fund supported projects that attempt to address questions about water quality and aquatic habitat restoration methods. Examples of research projects that may influence coldwater resource management include investigations of best management practices on stream conditions at a watershed scale, long-term effects of best management practices on stream channel stability, and stormwater temperature reductions in bioretention media.

Attended the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture Steering Committee quarterly meeting. Agenda items included considerations for increasing joint venture operations funding to potentially hire additional staff, to use range-wide brook trout data in a barrier investigation for an assessment of population density in the eastern United States.

3. Tidal Bass Program

Staff worked with Southern and Eastern regions to stock 28,000 fingerling largemouth bass in tidal rivers. At the beginning of June, 15,000 fish were dispersed into areas of Piscataway Creek with the highest density of submerged aquatic vegetation. Eastern Region stocked a surplus of 1,000 fish into the Chester River and both Marshyhope Creek and the Choptank River received 6,000 fish. Fish for Marshyhope Creek were dispersed by boat into areas of high quality habitat. Fish stocked in the Choptank River were stocked at several boat ramps from the town of Denton and upriver.

Staff participated in the most recent meeting of Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency's Bird and Fish Conflict Working Group. This group is made up of avian and fishery biologists from across the country and works to find ways to reduce conflict between piscivorous birds and aquaculture and free-swimming fish. Discussion focused on creating a survey for natural resource management agencies to identify needs of fisheries and bird program managers to aid in the creation of a white paper document to inform managers on best practices for management of conflict. Additionally, there was a large focus on the proposed bills in congress on the management of Double Crested Cormorants. These bills have the potential to change the management strategies and processes available to state agencies and tribes including the potential for flyway level management objectives of the species.

Staff attended four black bass tournaments in June including supporting both days of the Paralyzed Veterans of America tournament at Smallwood State Park. Anglers fishing in this tournament are restricted to the boat during the weigh in and staff promoted fish care by providing an aerated livewell on site allowing anglers to immediately transfer fish to the livewell after the weigh in process. Staff will continue to monitor tournaments throughout the summer hot weather season.



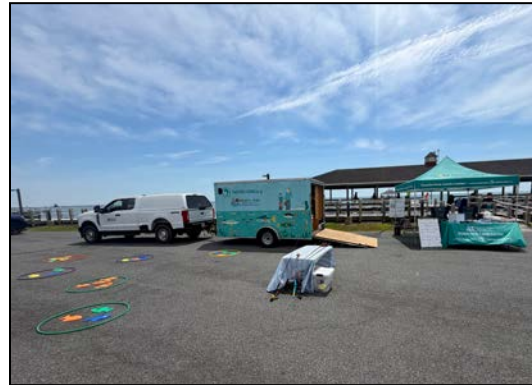
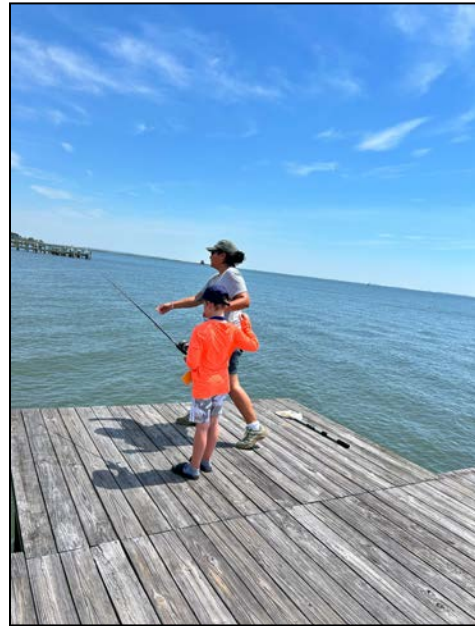
Top Left: Fingerlings from Joseph Manning Hatchery. Top Right: Submerged aquatic vegetation beds into which largemouth bass were stocked. Bottom: A Paralyzed Veterans of America angler holds his fish before sending them to the aerated livewell.

4. Organized Freshwater Fishing

Staff kicked off our first free fishing day of the year on June 6 at the Go Fish, Worcester! event held at Public Landing Wharf in Snow Hill. Go Fish Maryland partnered with Maryland Coastal Bays for the Salt Marsh Program, specifically the "Engage Your Salt Marsh" series. These community outreach events highlight the importance of salt marsh ecosystems and the critical need for their restoration. The ultimate goal is to build community trust, gain support, and create widespread awareness about salt marshes within the Coastal Bays.

The event saw approximately 40 participants in attendance. Out of these, 12 individuals utilized the loaner rods provided by the Department's Mobile Fishing Trailer. Multiple participants took advantage of the practice casting station, which featured hula hoops and fake fish to help new anglers hone their skills. In addition to fishing, attendees engaged in

a fishing bingo game using fish identification guides and utilized the department's fishing coloring books at the art station. The program also included educational components, such as a presentation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding local fish species and their ecological connection to marshes. Despite the warm weather, the event was successful, with tanks and viewing jars available for closer inspection of local wildlife. A variety of species were successfully caught and identified during the morning, including a spot and multiple blue crabs!



Go Fish Maryland participated in a fishing event at Public Landing in Snow Hill.

The annual Reel Invasion Tournament took place at the Aquatic Resources Education Center in Anacostia Park on June 7. This free public fishing derby was organized through a partnership between the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the DC Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) to encourage the harvest of invasive species like blue catfish and northern snakehead. Go Fish Maryland provided support to the Invasive Fishes Program, assisting participants with learning how to fish. Throughout the day, attendees engaged in activities such as making fish prints, touring the Aquatic

Resource Education Center, and watching filleting demonstrations for invasive fish. Plenty of blue catfish were caught and weighed in during the tournament, and the event concluded with every participant receiving a prize or raffle item!



*Top Left: Blue catfish fillet demonstration. Top Right: Prize table.
Bottom: Announcing prize winners!*

On June 12, Go Fish Maryland hosted a youth fishing event at the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Marina for the Department of the US Navy in Annapolis. The MWR organization provides essential events, food, and services for active and retired military members and their families. As part of this initiative, these military families were invited to spend a day fishing along the Severn River, utilizing loaner gear provided by the Mobile Fishing Trailer. The event was a success, with 17 participants joining to enjoy the afternoon and engage in outdoor recreation.

The Invasive Fishes Program hosted the "Snakes on the Dundee V" northern snakehead tournament at Gunpowder Falls State Park on June 13. This annual fishing derby, held at the Dundee Creek Marina, was a collaborative effort involving the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the

Gunpowder Riverkeeper. The event aimed to encourage the harvest of invasive species while providing community outreach and education.

Go Fish Maryland supported the initiative by providing the mobile fishing trailer for anglers looking to try fishing for the first time. Casting demonstrations were provided by freshwater fisheries staff, alongside filleting demonstrations for northern snakehead and blue catfish conducted by Branson Williams. Captain Bill Bates from Southern Maryland Bowfishing provided multiple sessions on bowfishing techniques and demonstrations. Participants also engaged in making fish prints throughout the day and enjoyed free samples of northern snakehead cooked on-site by the Maryland Park Service. Multiple snakeheads were successfully caught and removed from the Gunpowder River. Tournament winners received prizes such as coolers, fishing rods, and new catfish control hats. Raffle prizes were also awarded to participants, concluding a successful day of invasive species management and community engagement.



Snakes on the Dundee V at Gunpowder Falls State Park.

With the help of the Western II Region Office, Go Fish Maryland hosted a youth bass event at Sharpsburg Pond on June 20. This event was to conclude a month-long fishing

incentive program, where youth could fish for tagged bass in the pond. Participants that caught tagged bass and reported it to the Department of Natural Resources were entered into a raffle for a grand prize of a behind-the-scenes tour at the National Aquarium in Baltimore! Runner-up participants received fishing tackle boxes and fishing rods. A variety of internal department staff volunteered their time to support the event, including staff from the The Maryland Forest Service, Fishing and Boating Permits Team, and the Invasive Fishes Program. Another event was to be held at Woodsboro Pond on June 27 but was cancelled due to inclement weather. Instead, we extended the program through Labor Day so local youth can have the whole summer to continue fishing in Woodsboro Pond and report tagged bass. Stay tuned for the announcement of that winner!

Seventeen kids participated in the event at Sharpsburg Pond. Two tagged largemouth bass were caught at the event, in addition to a rainbow trout, a smallmouth bass, and some bluegill. A local Bait and Tackle Shop, Williamsport Hardware and Tackle, provided free bait and had a viewing tank for a variety of bait species. Anna Twigg, the Western Region's Community Forestry Coordinator, provided a table with information on forestry and its connection to our watersheds. Every youth participant left with a prize!



Our first Youth Bass Bash at Sharpsburg Pond!



Our grand prize winner at Sharpsburg Pond!

The Watershed and Climate Services (WCS) Unit and Freshwater Fisheries staff teamed up to host this year's first Women on the Water at Seneca Creek State Park on June 25. Approximately 15 participants joined the Department for a beautiful three-hour evening session dedicated to fishing and kayaking. The event was supported by a diverse team of eight staff members, including help from the USFWS and Seneca Creek State Park Rangers.

The program offered participants several hands-on activities including:

- Shore Fishing: Anglers were taught essential skills such as understanding fishing regulations, rigging their own rods, and mastering casting basics.
- Guided Paddling: Participants learned to kayak using a fleet of single and tandem boats, receiving instruction on safety signals and waterway navigation.
- Kayak Fishing: This specialized track allowed participants to combine their skills, utilizing "fishing ready" sit-on-top kayaks equipped with rod holders.

Resources for the event were provided by the Mobile Fishing Trailer, which supplied all necessary tackle and gear, while WCS provided kayaking materials like life vests, dry bags, and whistles. Educational materials, including the Maryland 2026 Crabbing and Fishing Guides and information on boating safety courses, were distributed to help participants continue their outdoor recreation journey!



Views from Paddling in Clopper Lake during the Women on the Water event.

Two participants in the 2026 Put and Take Creel Survey were randomly selected to win a Yeti Roadie 24 hardside cooler. The department received 9,601 responses to the online survey. The information garnered from the survey will be used to evaluate the Put and Take trout stocking program, stocking allocations and locations, and future trout production needs. Once analyzed and compiled, the results and conclusions will be made publically available. Thanks to all of the anglers that participated.



Congratulations to the Put and Take Creel Survey prize winners: Lawrence Leinaar (left) and Walter West (right).