

Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Monthly Report – November 2025

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:

- Smallmouth bass surveys have been underway on the upper Potomac River. Multiple river sections are sampled every fall by boat electrofishing to collect data on the smallmouth bass, walleye, and muskellunge populations. Several year-classes were well represented with large adults being especially well represented. Catch rates for smallmouth bass >14 inches have been above average at many of these stations with several fish in the 18-20 inch size range.
- West I Region staff conducted trout redd surveys on the North Branch Potomac River within the Catch and Release - All Tackle regulation area. Staff successfully observed multiple spawning sites throughout the management area and collected environmental data on the following: number of redds per site, min/max depth, flow velocity, substrate type, and redd size. The data will be provided to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers to enhance fall and winter flows when feasible.



Brown trout redds on the North Branch Potomac River tailwater.

- Staff completed Tidal Bass sampling on the Potomac River with 54 sites completed from above the Woodrow Wilson Bridge down to Nanjemoy Creek. The top two sites with the highest catches were in Mattawoman Creek with 31 and 33 bass. An unusual catch from the Potomac survey was a grass carp (photo);

also, a young largemouth was collected with a small northern snakehead (Chesapeake Channa) down its throat (photo).



Unusual catch from the Potomac - a grass carp!



A young largemouth was collected with a small snakehead down its throat!

- Southern Region completed a survey of Lake Artemesia, an impoundment of about 38 acres inside the beltway not far from College Park. First detected in 2021, northern snakeheads were collected at each site in the fall survey with a total of 19. Largemouth bass were numerous (129) with a Proportional Size Distribution (PSD) of 16 percent, indicating a less than desirable proportion of quality size fish in the population.
- Southern Region completed a survey of Triadelphia Lake late in the season. This survey netted more juvenile smallmouth and largemouth than expected indicating a good future for those species. Larger fish were notably absent, but cold water temperatures may have affected the results.

2. Habitat and Water Quality

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

- West I Region staff commented on multiple applications for stone revetments to be constructed on the shoreline of Deep Creek Lake. Comments were provided for work restrictions, equipment access, material usage, along with monitoring and inspection during the construction process.
- West I Region staff commented on multiple applications for utility replacement to be completed by Columbia Gas of Maryland in LaVale, Maryland. Comments were provided for equipment access, land disturbance, and site restoration at the completion of the project.
- West II Region staff commented on a culvert repair project on an unnamed tributary in the Black Rock Creek stream network. This unnamed tributary and adjoining streams are designated as Use Class III water bodies that support a sensitive brown trout population in Washington County. Comments were made to avoid pH spikes from grout curing, sediment and erosion control, and time of year restrictions to protect spawning trout.
- Central Region staff participated in a field visit and conference call regarding the violation of permit conditions for one of the Scientific Collection Permits that were reviewed and issued this year.

Additional Work with Habitat and Water Quality

- West I Region staff completed collecting and replacing HOBO temperature loggers at long term coldwater monitoring sites in Garrett County.
- About 170 minimum and maximum depth records were uploaded to GIFS database from the Tidal Bass survey of 2024. Those records did not get included with the usual habitat data due to a missing formula on the Numbers datasheet on tablets we use to collect data. The added data will improve analysis of habitat conditions going forward.

3. Stocking and Population Management

- Freshwater Fisheries staff assisted members of Potomac Valley Fly Fishers (PVFF) with trout stocking at the Catoctin Creek Nature Center in Frederick County. PVFF has helped rear hatchery rainbow trout at their small spring fed holding facility in Frederick. Members feed and care for the fish through the summer. Club members stocked roughly 300 rainbow trout in the delayed harvest section of the stream.

4. Angler Access

- West I Region staff continues to monitor and maintain Fishery Management Areas.
- Southern Region met with Charles County Parks and Recreation at Gilbert Run Park to discuss fish habitat plans for Wheatley Lake. The lake is planned to be drained in the next year and Southern Region staff will work with the county to develop a fish habitat plan that will benefit the fishery for anglers to enjoy for years to come.

Freshwater Fisheries: Statewide Operations

1. Invasive Fishes Program

The Invasive Fishes Program and USFWS Maryland Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office have concluded tagging northern snakeheads in the upper Chesapeake Bay for 2025. Anglers who harvest and report tagged fish will receive a monetary reward (yellow tags, \$10; blue tags, \$200). For 2025, just under 200 fish were tagged in the upper Chesapeake Bay, Bush, Sassafras, and Gunpowder rivers. Both Eastern and Central regions of Freshwater Fisheries assisted with tagging while conducting annual tidal bass surveys. The cooperative project will continue in spring 2026 and aims to incentivize harvest of invasive fish and estimate exploitation by anglers.

Invasive Fishes Program staff examined nearly 200 citizen submitted entries to the [Maryland Invasive Species Tracker online tool](#) to report sightings of invasive fishes and other organisms. Duplicate and erroneous entries were deleted from the database. Reported species included blue and flathead catfish and northern snakehead, but also freshwater drum, rusty crayfish, and spotted lanternfly. Confirmed and vetted entries for aquatic invasive species will be shared with USGS to populate their [Non-indigenous Aquatic Species online maps and information](#).

Invasive Fishes Program staff completed entering all tidal catfish monitoring data for the summer of 2025 in GIFS (Geographic Inland Fisheries Survey System). Data will be analyzed in coming weeks.

Invasive Fishes Program staff served as a guest lecturer for an interdisciplinary Chesapeake Semester class at Washington College. The discussion focused on blue catfish biology, ecology, and management in Maryland. Staff was also interviewed by a Penn State Student to discuss blue catfish, their impact on the ecosystem and the strategies being implemented to combat invasive fishes in Maryland.

The Invasive Fishes Program added a permanent employee to the team. Lena Sawyers worked with the team as a contractual employee for some time and has now been converted to a permanent employee. She brings a knowledge of eDNA sampling, invasive fish sampling, outreach experience, and more to the team, as well as a steadfast work ethic and exuberance.

2. Coldwater Fisheries Program

Staff made continued progress towards the development of a wild brook trout propagation program. Field observations for redd construction and spawning behaviors were conducted early in the month to prepare for the collection of brook trout eggs. After these behaviors were observed, field activities were coordinated with Coldwater Hatcheries staff to ensure a seamless transition from field collection to hatchery isolation facilities. A small number of female and male brook trout were captured and field stripped to collect eggs and milt. A total of 186 eggs were collected and fertilized in the field. Adult brook trout were returned to their source stream unharmed while the eggs were taken to an isolation hatchery in the coldwater hatchery system.



Brook trout egg collection for a hatchery propagation project.

Staff attended a site visit with department leadership to discuss flood damage from the May 2025 high flow events in Allegany County and the restoration work that has been conducted throughout the county. Fishing and Boating Services expressed concerns about the loss of stream habitat, impacts to coldwater fisheries resources, and the consequences for downstream infrastructure and water quality during and after future high flow events.



Observed impacts to coldwater streams at various locations throughout Allegany County

Staff collected and reviewed over 40 applications for the Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee. A new term for the committee will begin in 2026. Fishing and Boating Services will work with the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission to review the applications and select twelve members for the next four-year term.

Staff compiled and reviewed the annual report for Maryland's Sport Fish Restoration grant. The Sport Fish Restoration grant is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is the largest grant that supports coldwater fisheries management and the management of other freshwater fisheries. The report will go through several rounds of review before submission to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the end of the year. Management of freshwater fisheries is supported by the Sport Fish Restoration grant and the sale of fishing licenses and stamps.

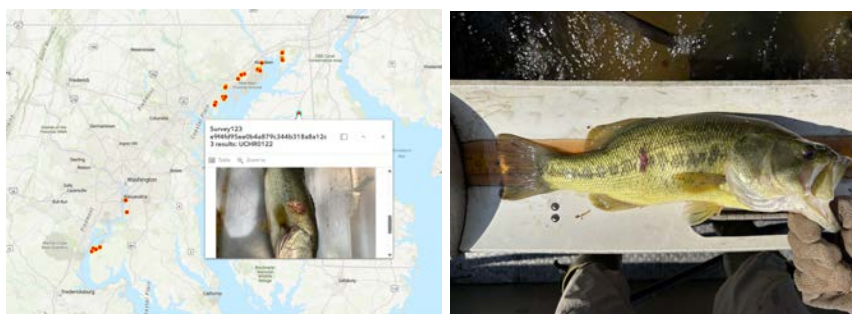
3. Tidal Bass Program

Tidal Bass staff along with Eastern Region staff stocked several hundred holdover bass to our tidal fisheries in November. In total, 1,500 fish were stocked. Staff released 1,000 young bass (5 to 9 inches) to the Marshyhope and Tuckahoe creeks. Staff stocked the remaining 500 fish to the Patapsco River.



Stocking of holdover bass

The Tidal Bass Survey was completed at the beginning of November with a total of 179 sites sampled across seven different tidal fisheries. One new component this year was the logging of fish health classifications and a corresponding picture for each fish identified using Survey123. These data were shared with USGS for future use in standardizing fish health classifications.



Left: Logging fish health classifications for Tidal Bass survey. Right: Measuring tidal bass for Tidal Bass survey 2025.

4. Fish Passage Program

Testing of the Eden Mill eel ladder is now complete. The ladder didn't pass any eels, but this was not unexpected given the late start due to delays in construction. A few issues were identified that will be addressed for next spring when the ladder is reopened. Staff are working with the department's outreach and communication team to produce some educational posters/displays for the eel ladder.

Staff continue to coordinate on the Daniels Dam feasibility study. Staff met to discuss the progress of the feasibility study with American Rivers, the contractor who is doing the work, and staff from Baltimore County and Howard County.

Staff met with Maryland Department of Environment to improve coordination in contacting dam owners with outreach regarding potential dam removal and/or fish passage funding opportunities.

5. Organized Freshwater Fishing

Staff provided the First Catch Mobile Fishing trailer for the second session of the afterschool fishing club program with Edgewood Middle School. With the help of Lena Sawyers from the Invasive Fishes Program, participants learned how to rig their own rods and practiced their casting skills in Otter Point Creek off of the Bush River. Fourteen students and four teachers were in attendance - more than the previous session! All four teachers had little to no experience fishing prior to the club and were eager to learn about the hobby that their students love so much!

It was an overcast fall day at Lost Lake in Patapsco Valley State Park, where freshwater fisheries staff provided a booth and fishing gear for the Veterans Day Adaptive fishing event on November 9. Staff partnered with the Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park, a local nonprofit organization committed to having adaptive events throughout the year in order to support accessibility for all visitors. Around eight participants borrowed fishing rods and multiple park visitors stopped by our booth to talk. Participants were treated to snacks and pizza after a chilly day of fishing!

Freshwater Fisheries staff attended the Maryland Water Monitoring Council in Baltimore on Thursday November 20. It was a great opportunity to network and learn about current research being done on our fresh and saltwater systems.