

Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – April 2024

Freshwater Fisheries - Stock Assessment

Deep Creek Walleye Tournament - Staff collected catch data at the Garrett Bassers walleye tournament held at Deep Creek Lake. Thirty-three boats were entered into the tournament with a total of 87 walleye being brought to the scale. The average length was just over sixteen inches with a lunker weighing in at 2.91 pounds and measuring just over twenty-two inches.

Loch Raven Reservoir - Staff deployed five fyke nets in Loch Raven Reservoir targeting crappie. The nets were set on April 22 and were fished on April 23 and 24. Only seven crappie were collected but numerous white perch and brown bullhead were caught.

Freshwater Fisheries - Habitat and Water Quality

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

- A revetment to be installed on the shoreline of Deep Creek Lake. Comments were provided for minimal disturbance during construction, material usage, and time of year restrictions.
- A gas line installation to be completed by Columbia Gas of Maryland. Comments were provided for minimal disturbance, material and equipment storage areas, favorable environmental conditions during construction, and site restoration after project completion.
- Attended a meeting for the development of a new single-track trail within Garrett State Forest. Staff from the Forest Service, Park Service, Wildlife and Heritage, Fishing and Boating Services, and International Mountain Bicycling Association met on April 5 for initial discussion on the planning and development of a new trail system.
- On two Project Open Space Properties, one in Garrett County and one in Allegany County.

Fish Habitat - Placed 21 Christmas trees in Broadford Lake for their annual habitat enhancement project. Trees were collected from the Garrett County Landfill and placed near the shoreline with a goal to improve angling by attracting more fish for bank anglers.

Temperature Loggers - Staff calibrated 30 temperature loggers to be deployed this spring to monitor water temperatures during the June 1 – August 31 summer monitoring period.

Freshwater Fisheries - Stocking and Population Management

Brown Trout - Stocked sections of Antietam Creek in Washington County with 10,000 brown trout juveniles as part of the put-and-grow program. Poor habitat conditions limit natural spawning in Antietam Creek, but trout grow quickly in this highly productive stream. Stocking hatchery produced juvenile trout helps maintain this popular trout fishery.

Brood Fish Collection - Southern Region staff collected brood fish for hatchery propagation at the Joseph Manning Hatchery. Both Patuxent River striped bass and Potomac River largemouth bass were collected and delivered to the Joseph Manning Hatchery for processing. Progeny from both species will be stocked throughout the state where necessary.

Put-and-Take Trout

- Western Region I assisted Bear Creek Hatchery for multiple days with routine trout stocking efforts in Garrett and Allegany counties.
- Central Region staff stocked 14 separate locations with trout during the month of April.
- The final spring stocking of rainbow trout occurred in Severn Run in Anne Arundel County. Water levels the last few years made stocking Severn Run a bit of a challenge but early spring rains made for normal flow this year.

Fee Fishing Permit - One Fee Fishing Lake Permit issued: Spring Valley Fishing Lake (Allegany County). [Full List of Fee Fishing Lakes PDF](#)

Fish Suppliers Permits - One Fish Supplier Permit issued to LakeSource LLC (Easton, MD). We currently have 10 approved suppliers. Here is the full listing: [Approved Fish Suppliers PDF](#)

Pond Stocking Permits: 22 received, 19 approved, two pending approval, and one retracted.

Freshwater Fisheries - Outreach

Customer Service - Provided customer service information for inquiries regarding:

- The new walleye regulation that went into effect for Deep Creek Lake.
- Trout stocking and fishing information

STEAM Event – Provide an activity for the Greenbrier Elementary School STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) event. Approximately 100 students and parents participated in the event and visited multiple stations throughout the evening.



Creating a water cycle in a bag.

Envirothon - Prepared and administered the aquatics test for the Frederick County Envirothon held at Cunningham Falls State Park, Manor Area. The winning team, “Blue Herons”, from Brunswick High School will compete in the Maryland Envirothon competition in June for a chance to represent Maryland at the National Envirothon held in July. The Envirothon is an environmental competition for high school students. The students are tested on aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife and each year there is a different 5th Issue, this year it was sustainable energy.



The first place Brunswick HS “Blue Herons” along with their advisors.

Catfish Tournament - Southern region staff attended the Springtime Catfish Tournament held on the tidal Patuxent River. This is the third year for this tournament and most fish caught were blue catfish, the targeted species.

Presentation - Southern region staff provided a PowerPoint presentation on the introduction and evolution of the blue catfish population on the tidal Patuxent River for Earth Day activities at the Asbury community in Solomon’s Island in lower Calvert County.

Freshwater Fisheries – Fish Health

Upper Potomac Smallmouth - Freshwater Fisheries staff helped collect a small number of adult smallmouth bass from the Upper Potomac River for fish health testing. We are working with researchers from the US Geological Survey, Leetown Science Center on this project. Samples were taken to look for specific chemicals that may be present in wild fish. The adults were then transported to the department’s Joseph Manning Hatchery where hopefully they will spawn in indoor raceways. Similar testing will then be conducted on the resulting juvenile bass.



Blood sample being collected from Upper Potomac River smallmouth bass

Freshwater Fisheries - Angler Access

Fishery Management Areas (FMAs) - Western Region I staff continues to perform routine checks and maintenance at the McCoolle, Black Oak, and Evitts Creek FMAs. Staff have taken several steps to try and keep the FMAs cleaner and safer for area users by curtailing excessive nefarious activities that occur at these locations. Increased Natural Resource Police presence, cellular camera installation, and new signage have been effective at curbing illicit after hours activities.



New sign at Evitts Creek FMA

Lake Arbor - Southern Region staff made a site visit to Lake Arbor in Prince George's County. The lake and open area around the lake used to be a country club and golf course. The county has recently purchased the property and is currently evaluating the

possibilities for the property. Locals would like to see the lake open to public fishing. Freshwater Fisheries is working with all parties involved in trying to accommodate its plan; however, sufficient public parking and access is not currently available.

Freshwater Fisheries - Invasive Species

A 20.5-pound flathead catfish was collected while tagging largemouth bass on the tidal Potomac River. This fish was removed from the river but also indicates that the flathead population exists beyond the upper (nontidal) Potomac and Occoquan Bay. Flatheads make up the trifecta of invasive fish species that have made it to the tidal Potomac River in the last quarter century. This includes flathead catfish, blue catfish, and northern snakehead.

Freshwater Fisheries - Coldwater Program

Updated the 2020 Brook Trout Patch Assessment with data collected through 2023. The more current version of the assessment was used to identify low abundance patches that are not protected by zero creel regulations and was presented to the Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee.

Organized and convened the April meeting of the Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee. The committee continued discussion about potential changes to the current brook trout regulations and opportunities to work with local governments to minimize development in sensitive coldwater watersheds. While no motions were passed, the committee requested a web-based communications platform to continue the discussion on these issues. The department partially addressed this request by setting up a file sharing application for committee members and will investigate other options for improving communications and collaboration outside of formal meetings.

Prepared gear, water quality instruments, temperature data loggers, and data collection tablets for the upcoming field season. Property access permissions were also pursued when needed.

Initiated the 2024 field season with benthic macroinvertebrate sample collection and temperature data logger deployment. Benthic samples will be processed in the coming months. Temperature data logger deployment will continue through May and will be completed prior to the start of the summer index period (June 1).

Relocated brook trout and other fish species from the section of Wolf Den Run that will be impacted by the Shallmar Road project. The project will replace failing culverts at the Shallmar Road stream crossing with structures that improve fish passage. The relocated fish were moved upstream of the work area just prior to the start of work activities.

Participated in planning meetings with Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) to coordinate data collection on the North Branch Potomac River. Additional temperature logger deployment locations were identified on the North Branch to address any potential questions that the Maryland Department of Environment may have about the river's

thermal regime. Planning efforts with ICPRB further coordinated temperature data collection in tributaries to the North Branch and developed a trout telemetry project below Black Oak Fishery Management Area.

Freshwater Fisheries - Tidal Bass Program

Continued tagging and releasing largemouth bass as part of a cooperative effort between all management agencies in charge of monitoring largemouth bass on the tidal Potomac River. Anglers are asked to report tagged fish and staff will be checking for tagged fish at large tournaments held out of Smallwood State Park.

Black Bass Advisory Committee met on April 8. The committee discussed catch-photo-release and catch-weigh-release tournaments and notes from the BASS Conservation Director's Meeting held in Oklahoma. Minutes from the meeting were circulated and will be uploaded to the committee's website by May 1:

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/mgmt-committees/bbas-meetings.aspx>.

Staff worked to create designs that promote black bass fishing in Maryland for displays at Bass Pro Shops (Hanover, MD). Featured promotions include bass tournaments, catch-photo or weigh-release tournaments, and stocking. These will also highlight recent conservation videos created by Mike Iaconelli, the Black Bass Advisory Committee, and the department. Please visit the Tidal Bass Program webpage for videos:

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/bass/index.aspx>

Staff tagged largemouth bass from Potomac River as part of an interjurisdictional cooperative to monitor the fishery on the river. Both Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and D.C. Fisheries similarly worked to tag bass in respective areas. Anglers are encouraged to report tags using the phone number on the tag. Data are entered and stored by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. Beginning in May, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources will conduct surveys during tournaments to learn how many tagged fish had been caught on tournament days.

Staff finalized proofs for an upcoming published paper in *Ecological Modeling*, A GIS-based approach for managing catch-and-release fisheries. The paper highlights black bass work conducted by the department for 20 years in the upper Chesapeake Bay and integrates it into a spatially explicit modeling environment to learn ramifications of habitat changes on abundance for a fishery described by annually variable effort and catch-and-release mortality levels. The paper will be available in May.

At their April meetings, Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission (SFAC) and Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission (TFAC) members reviewed and commented on an idea to require haul seiners to remove largemouth bass and smallmouth bass from nets prior to staking the nets. This approach is a best management practice recommended to haul seiners. The commissioners from TFAC recommended a more practical and enforceable approach for a requirement, such as requiring nets to be staked in deeper waters. Their comments will be reviewed by the department and Black Bass Advisory Committee.