

Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – January 2024

Freshwater Fisheries - Stock Assessment

Electrofishing Equipment – Virtually met with a Smith-Root representative to discuss the new Apex generators that Smith-Root is now using and the differences between them and the older generators that we still use. The representative also gave us some tips on how to electrofish more efficiently in fluctuating conductivities and/or higher salinities.

Freshwater Fisheries - Habitat and Water Quality

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

- A stone revetment to be constructed on the shoreline of Deep Creek Lake. Comments were provided for time of year restrictions, minimal disturbance during construction, and on site material storage and usage.
- Two slope stabilization projects to take place in Garrett and Allegany County along I68 and MD36. Comments were provided for Best Management Practices (BMPs) for sediment and erosion control, minimal disturbance, material storage areas, site restoration at the completion of the project, and to not alter water quality to protect trout resources.
- Two geotechnical boring pits along Ballinger Creek in Frederick, MD. Ballinger Creek is a Use III stream. Comments were provided for strict sediment and erosion control measures and restoration of disturbed areas following construction.
- A bridge repair project on an unnamed tributary to Bennett Creek. Both are Use I streams. Comments were made to ensure adherence to Use I closure period, and no instream work during construction via pump around practices.
- A drainage improvement project to take place in Allegany County along I68 near M.V. Smith Road. Comments were provided for BMPs for sediment and erosion control, minimal disturbance, material storage areas and site restoration at the completion of the project.
- Two Project Open Space properties in Garrett County.
- Proposed repairs to a pond riser and outfall structure in the Cattail Creek drainage. Cattail Creek does not currently support coldwater resources but is designated as a Use III, coldwater stream. Removal of the pond was advised to reduce thermal impacts to Cattail Creek. However, best management practices were also submitted in the event that the landowner did not want to remove the pond. These practices included retrofitting the pond with a bottom release structure, planting native trees and vegetation around and downstream of the pond for additional shade, and limiting the size of the pond to reduce solar heating.
- Eastern Regional staff continues to participate in the environmental review process for several projects including a major project which will create a new exit off I-95 in Cecil County. Impacted resources include high quality streams (Tier II), coldwater streams (Use III) and non-tidal wetlands which are home to several rare, threatened, and/or endangered species.

Arrowhead Cove Dredging Project - Visited the Arrowhead Cove dredging project to

see how the process worked and assess progress. At the time of the visit, the crew was on schedule and the project has since been completed.

Pest Management - Attended the 2024 Pest Management Conference held at Frederick Community College, required for recertification of the pesticide applicator permit. The applicators permit and annual recertification are required for staff to use herbicides to control aquatic vegetation.

Freshwater Fisheries - Stocking and Population Management

Trout - Stocked southern region ponds with rainbow trout that have been putting on the feedbag at Joseph Manning Hatchery since early fall 2023. Fish were able to be stocked in early January due to the mild winter weather.

Fish Stocking Permits - Two Fee Fishing Lake Permits issued in January: Fish-in-Barrel (Harford County) and Cool's Pond (Washington County).

Four Fish Suppliers have been approved: Fish Wagon, I F Anderson, Keo Fish Farms, SOLitude Lake Management; more information is available on the [Approved Fish Suppliers PDF](#)

Freshwater Fisheries - Outreach

Customer Service - Provided customer service information for inquiries regarding:


- Information for the new walleye regulation that went into effect for Deep Creek Lake.
- Provided data to agency staff regarding longnose gar observed in fish surveys from past years.
- Beaver Creek recovery efforts following summer 2023 fish kill. Staff transplanted mature wild brown trout from lower river reaches into the area impacted by the fish kill prior to spawning and reduced the creel of brown trout in Beaver Creek to zero.
- Rationale for removing and adding water bodies to the list of Put and Take Trout Fishing Areas. The division continuously evaluates and adjusts stocking locations to provide the best angling experience and conditions.
- The presence of cutbow (rainbow x cutthroat trout hybrid) in the North Branch Potomac River tailwater; the division does not produce or stock cutbows in Maryland.
- Timing and locations to target walleye on the nontidal Potomac River.

New Walleye Regulation - Signs for the new Deep Creek Lake walleye regulation that went into effect on January 22, 2024 were placed at angler access areas around the lake. Laminated handouts were delivered to local bait suppliers and high traffic convenience stores to display to inform the public of the new regulation.

Staff worked to develop a boat ruler to hand out to anglers throughout the spring to make them aware of the new Deep Creek Lake walleye regulation and provide a convenient way to measure their catch for compliance

Attention Anglers

A new protected slot limit regulation is in effect for walleye in Deep Creek Lake



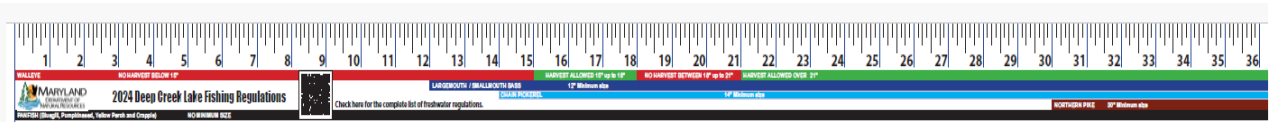
Illustrated by Duane Haas

0"	15"	18"	21"+
NO HARVEST BELOW 15"	HARVEST Allowed 15" up to 18"	NO HARVEST 18" up to 21"	HARVEST Allowed Over 21"

Closed season from March 1 through April 15, 5 fish daily creel, 10 fish possession limit.

Maryland Department of the Environment

Scan for Troutwater Science, State & Local



Big Hunting Creek - Participated in a new Big Hunting Creek workgroup established by members from the Potomac Valley Fly Fishers (PVFF). Staff from Cunningham Falls State Park and the US Geological Survey, Leetown Science Center also participated. Each group discussed ongoing monitoring projects in the stream and future collaborative efforts to maintain and protect that coldwater aquatic community.

Beaver Creek - Provided a presentation on the 2023 Beaver Creek fish kill to members of the Seneca Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU). Seneca Valley TU is one of several local fly fishing groups that had concerns about the fish kill and steps that can be taken to prevent a similar event from occurring.

Data Request - The online data request form had four data requests. Data from Geographic Inland Fisheries System database (GIFS) was provided to an angler for two eastern shore ponds and to a Kansas researcher looking for longear sunfish data. The other two requests were fulfilled by the trout database manager.

Freshwater Fisheries - Angler Access

Staff reviewed the Angler Access Map for missing or incorrect information. Provided a list of corrections and additional site information to improve the data available to the public.

Eastern Regional staff regularly monitor Smithville Lake’s water control and drawdown pipe replacement project (photos below). The project has been going smoothly, but some work has been delayed because of high water. The in-stream work for the project should be completed before the time-of-year restriction goes into effect on March 1.



Freshwater Fisheries - Invasive Fishes Program

Attended and presented a Maryland update at the Chesapeake Bay Program Invasive Catfish Workgroup winter 2024 meeting. State successes in terms of blue and flathead catfish science and policy were discussed, as well as future projects and data needs. Partners from federal, regional, and state management agencies, educational institutions, and commercial and recreational fishing sectors comprise the workgroup, which aims to manage invasive blue and flathead catfish in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Met with stakeholders from the recreational and commercial sectors, as well as other state agencies to discuss upcoming collaborative projects that aim to increase public awareness of blue catfish and other invasive fishes, which threaten the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Staff met with the office of Senator Ben Cardin to discuss blue catfish funding needs in the short- and long-term. Senator Cardin and his staff are working diligently to fund essential work to combat invasive blue catfish in Maryland waters.

Staff discussed future research projects with researchers at the United States Geological Survey Eastern Ecological Science Center. The researchers plan to assist with modeling work to better inform managers of the effects of blue catfish in tributaries of Chesapeake Bay.

Met with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to discuss collaborative efforts to increase public awareness of blue catfish and increase commercial and recreational removals of the invasive fish.

Freshwater Fisheries - Coldwater Program

Organized and convened the January meeting of the Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee. The committee discussed current brook trout regulations, stocking practices in streams that support wild trout populations, and opportunities to work with local governments to minimize development in sensitive watersheds. Action items included a review of brook trout population data in low density streams where harvest is currently permitted. Discussions on these topics will continue at the April meeting.

Submitted 2023 temperature and biological data for five streams that support coldwater resources to the Maryland Department of the Environment. The streams meet Use Class III coldwater criteria but are currently designated as Use I, warmwater or Use IV, recreational trout water. A re-designation to Use Class III will provide additional thermal protection for the streams.

Met with staff from the West Virginia Division of Wildlife (DNR) to discuss brook trout propagation methods. West Virginia DNR has developed a propagation program that uses wild brook trout as brood stock for hatchery raised juveniles. The wild brook trout are returned to source streams unharmed and the juveniles are stocked to unoccupied streams with the intention of establishing new populations. The stocked brook trout maintain genetic strains that are native to West Virginia. The department discussed these methods and toured the hatchery facility to determine if a similar program could be developed in Maryland.

Compiled temperature data collected in Jabez Branch and submitted to a member of the public in fulfillment of a data request.

Identified treatment priorities for acid impaired streams in Garrett County and Allegany County. The streams were prioritized based on available temperature and biological data and the potential for coldwater resource colonization after treatment. The prioritized list will be submitted to the Maryland Department of the Environment, Abandoned Mine Lands Division for on-going planning efforts.

Freshwater Fisheries - Tidal Bass Program

Began working with Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and District Department of Energy and Environment on the cooperative largemouth bass monitoring project in Potomac River. The project monitors abundance of the species whose fishery extends throughout tidal freshwater of Potomac River, which is managed by the three jurisdictions.

Staff submitted final revisions for a manuscript to be published in Ecological Modeling, A GIS-based approach for managing catch-and-release fisheries.

Met with members of the Black Bass Advisory Committee to discuss permitting reef placement at Wades Bay (Potomac River). Staff will work with these members to address permitting concerns raised by NOAA.

Freshwater Fisheries - Other

Eastern Region staff continues to work on Freshwater Fisheries' fleet of electrofishing boats, completing needed maintenance and to ensure they are safe.

Attended two meetings with the department's GIS specialist to review the draft version of the new GIFS map and provided information to make improvements. The map will allow querying of information spatially from the GIFS database and will allow the information in GIFS to be more available to agency staff and eventually for public queries.