

Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – January 2023

Freshwater Fisheries - Habitat and Water Quality

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

- Four revetments to be constructed on the shoreline of Deep Creek Lake. Comments were provided for time-of-year restrictions, minimal disturbance, and on-site material usage for revetment construction along with monitoring being conducted by Deep Creek Lake Natural Resource Management Area personnel to ensure proper installation.
- An application was submitted by Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Mining division for the refurbishment of a passive acid mine drainage (AMD) treatment system for Laurel Run (Crellin, Maryland). Comments were provided for best management practices (BMPs) for water diversions and pumping along with proper sediment control measures and stabilizing disturbed soil.
- Attended an environmental review on the Northern Central Railway (NCR) trail in Gunpowder Falls State Park. Multiple bridges are in need of repair and staff addressed the impacts that construction may have on angler access and fish habitat.
- Attended a post construction stream restoration site walk in the Upper Gunpowder watershed in Carroll County. Staff from multiple department units and staff from the US Fish and Wildlife Service were in attendance.
- A project submitted by Maryland Department of Transportation for the resurfacing and pipe replacements on MD 495 in Grantsville Maryland. Given the complexity of the project along with several sensitive aquatic organisms within the project area, comments were provided for the following:
 - Proper planning to avoid time of year restrictions as it is unlikely a waiver will be granted. If these cannot be avoided, proper restrictions be enforced appropriately to each waterway.
 - Minimal disturbance and preventing unnecessary disturbances to protect wetland and riparian areas.
 - BMPs for diversions and pumping.
 - Taking advantage of low flow or dewatered conditions to prevent added resource impacts associated with diversions and pumping.
 - Excavated materials being kept outside of the floodplain, if materials are stored on-site, stored materials shall be no more than what can be replaced and stabilized within one work day.
 - Safeguards for casting headwalls and endwalls to prevent water contact with curing concrete to prevent possible pH spikes.
 - Site reclamation to represent pre-construction conditions.

A suspension pedestrian bridge over Little Antietam Creek in Washington County.

- A DNR project to remove Frank Bentz Pond Dam on Big Hunting Creek in Frederick County. Big Hunting Creek is a Use Class III stream (nontidal, coldwater) that supports a naturally reproducing brown trout population. Freshwater Fisheries strongly supports the removal of the dam to remove the

upstream blockage to improve fish passage and reduce downstream temperature impacts. The current structure is badly deteriorated.

- An application for a road crossing project on an unnamed tributary to Cone Branch in Frederick County.
- A roadside stabilization project on Little Hunting Creek in Frederick County. Little Hunting Creek is a Use Class III stream that currently supports a high quality wild brook and brown trout population. Vegetative erosion control was recommended with any necessary structural control conducted in a manner to maintain hydrologic conditions and streambank habitat.
- A Frederick County Department of Public Works project to conduct bridge maintenance for a bridge spanning Big Hunting Creek, a Use III coldwater stream. The project will stabilize abutments impacted by erosion. Comments were made to protect the stream from pH spikes that could be associated with water contact with curing cement.

Side Scan Sonar - Western Region I staff, along with Field Operations Manager John Mullican, held a meeting to work through the process of habitat analysis using side scan sonar in freshwater impoundments. Staff has been working together to assemble standard operating procedures (SOPs) for data collection in the field, processing data with ReefMaster 2.0 software, and exporting to field offices for analysis.

I-95 Belvidere Road Exit Review - Continue to work with the department's Environmental Review Program and other agencies to provide comments on the construction of a new exit off I-95 at Belvidere Road in Cecil County. The proposed location is unique- the area is rich with non-tidal forested wetlands which support RTE species as well as several high-quality streams which are classified as Use III (coldwater) and designated as Tier II. Using recent input from meetings with department and MDE staff, the design-build engineers are now designing stormwater facilities which should help to minimize thermal impacts during the construction phase. This potentially is a big win for the aquatic resources found on site and downstream of the work area.

Freshwater Fisheries - Stocking and Population Management

Saugeye - Acquired information and assembled a proposal to stock saugeye in Piney Reservoir in Garrett County to help control panfish populations and provide additional angling opportunities. Currently this small impoundment is stocked with striped bass and hybrid striped bass in order to accomplish those goals; however, we believe saugeye will be better suited to achieve this objective.

Trout - Assisted Manning Hatchery staff with seining trout from multiple ponds and loaded fish onto trucks for distribution at area ponds. The trout were especially nice and positive comments were received from anglers.



Harvesting trout from Manning hatchery ponds



Net full of trout, Manning hatchery ponds

Freshwater Fisheries - Outreach

Customer Service - Provided customer service information for inquiries regarding:

- Ice fishing Deep Creek Lake.
- Reporting walleye tags for fish caught on Deep Creek Lake.
- Fielded numerous calls from put and take anglers and stocking volunteers.

- Potomac River fishing conditions and opportunities for winter walleye fishing.

Deep Creek Lake Ice Check - Performed several “ice checks” on Deep Creek Lake with anticipation of initiating the “hard water” portion of a new creel survey to be conducted on Deep Creek Lake during 2023. Given current ice conditions and unstable weather, this portion of the survey will be postponed until winter 2023-24.

Freshwater Fisheries – Fish Health

Black Blotchy Disease - Responded to a data request from Salisbury University for all data where black blotchy disease was noted on fish. The dark blotches are common on tidal water largemouth bass and the disease has been described as a virus. Data were collected on black blotchy disease in 2022 for all tidal bass surveys and this set of data was shared with the University for their research.



Largemouth bass with black blotchy disease

Freshwater Fisheries - Angler Access

Fishery Management Areas (FMA) - Perform routine checks and maintenance at the numerous FMAs statewide. Staff recently removed a fallen tree at the Black Oak FMA.

Hughesville Pond FMA - Placed ten posts along the edge of the parking lot at Hughesville Pond FMA to discourage vehicles from driving beyond the parking area. All

work was performed with common hand tools and Southern Region staff muscle power. The posts used were repurposed utility poles that should last for many years.



Installing posts at Hughesville Pond FMA

Urieville Lake Reopening - As a final step in the reopening process, a new signboard was constructed and installed at Urieville Lake. The signboard contains information on fishing regulations and invasive species.



New signboard installed at Urieville Lake

Freshwater Fisheries - Invasive Species

New Contractual Position - Completed seasonal hiring paperwork for an Invasive Species Technician. This job was posted on January 24 and the application period will end on February 8. Here is the [link](#) to the application page.

Blue Catfish - Blue catfish otolith processing and aging continues with the light at the end of the tunnel finally coming into view. Barring any unforeseen issues pulling time away from this process, the aging portion should be completed by the next monthly report. Although fish aging isn't exactly the most exciting aspect of data analysis, the data collected on the Patuxent blue catfish population will provide a good indication of whether the Patuxent can support a large population of blue catfish similar to the Potomac River. The Patuxent does not have the forage base like the Potomac River so their impact on commercially and ecologically important aquatic species could be more damaging than some other rivers.

Invasive Catfish - Provided data and information to managers in Maine on the methods used in Maryland to reduce the number and impact of invasive catfish in tidal fresh waters. In recent years, white catfish have been introduced in some of the tidal reaches of the coast. The area most affected is along the southeast portion of Maine often referred to as 'down east' and includes the tidewater region north of New Hampshire and south of Acadia. White catfish are not native to Maine and there is a legitimate concern that native fish and other aquatic animals will be negatively impacted. Although white catfish are less prolific and not quite as aggressive as the invasive catfish introduced into Maryland's tidal fresh waters (blue and flathead catfish), and they do not reach anywhere near the sizes that the larger catfish do, some ecologically important small fishes in Maine are already under a great deal of stress and can't afford a new predator.

Invasive Species Action Plan - Generated an action plan for collaborative invasive fish work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2023.

Freshwater Fisheries - Coldwater Program

Held the January meeting of the Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee. Agenda items included updates for Maryland Department of the Environment's coldwater protection efforts, recent Fishing and Boating Services activities, and potential outreach opportunities. The committee also considered agenda topics that may be discussed during 2023 meetings. The next Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee meeting will be held in April 2023.

Summarized Maryland's brook trout management activities since 2005 for a Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society Trout Committee survey. The compiled information included brook trout monitoring efforts, genetic data collection, and habitat enhancement projects. The information will be used to update the committee's position statement for the management of brook trout in the southern Appalachian Mountains.

Attended site visits to an impoundment in the headwaters of Moores Run (Georges Creek watershed) and to Poplar Lick Run (Savage River watershed) to discuss projects that

would improve habitat and passage for brook trout populations. At the impoundment in the headwaters of Moores Run, an existing dam and impacts to a downstream brook trout population were discussed with land managers and the department's Engineering and Construction staff. Options for improving water quality for the brook trout population while achieving management objectives for the impoundment were considered. At Poplar Lick Run, meeting participants observed a deteriorating ford that acts as a barrier for fish passage. Plans to replace the ford and lower the grade to improve fish passage were discussed.

Worked with an interdepartmental team to identify state owned lands for designation as Irreplaceable Natural Areas. This land designation was established in 2022 to preserve Maryland's native biodiversity and protect natural areas that are considered to be irreplaceable. Protection for brook trout resources was considered as part of the designation process because they are generally an indicator of a pristine, native coldwater habitat. Fishing and Boating Services recommended over 500 stream segments on 16 department properties for designation. If fully implemented, land within the 100 foot buffer of the streams will receive additional protection.

Freshwater Fisheries - Tidal Bass Program

Black Bass Advisory Committee – Advisory meeting was held January 9. The committee discussed progress toward a Freshwater Bass Conservation Fund, agency-led redistribution of bass following tournaments, and progress toward new bass conservation video media.

Tournament Website - Staff launched a new tournament reporting website that helps correct data collection issues and better tailors to reporting from catch-photo/weigh-release style tournaments.