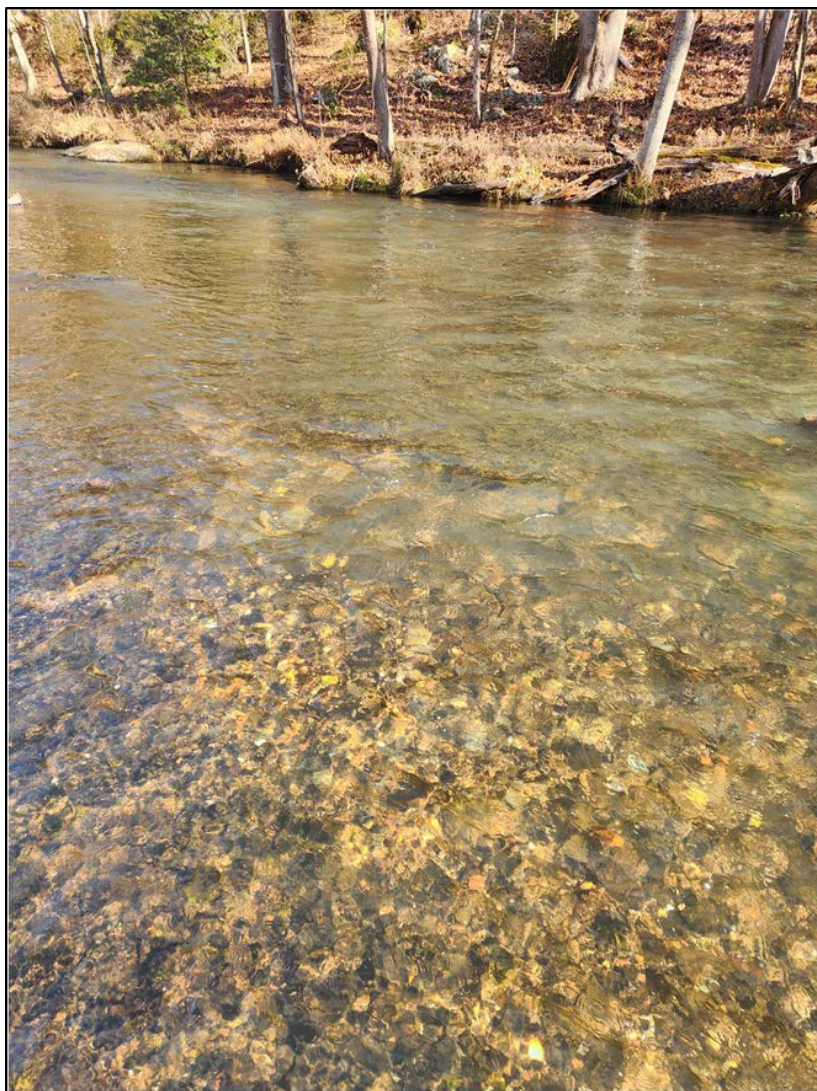


## Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – November 2023

### Freshwater Fisheries - Stock Assessment

**Deep Creek Lake Creel Survey** - Completed the data collection and entered all data for the Deep Creek Lake Creel Study. A total of 67 shifts were worked throughout the study and 414 interviews were conducted. Data analysis and reporting will be completed during the coming months.

**Brown Trout Redd Search** - Conducted a brown trout redd search on the Gunpowder tailwater at Masemore Road and Bunker Hill Road stream crossings. Over 30 brown trout redds were observed in about a quarter mile of stream. Even after a hot, dry summer, staff observations indicate yet another successful brown trout recruitment year in one of the state's premier trout fisheries.



*Large Gunpowder Tailwater brown trout redd.*

**Eastern Region Impoundment Surveys** - Completed the last of fall impoundment surveys to assess black bass populations. Leonard's Mill Pond in Wicomico County was the final survey to be completed. A springtime fish kill of resident gizzard shad was a concern of anglers and pond side residents. The survey showed that the largemouth bass population is robust and healthy, as are various sunfish species. There are still gizzard shad present in the lake; it appears there were no negative effects from the fish kill. The survey also yielded several large chain pickerel, which any angler would love to tangle with. Special thanks to the shad and herring project personnel who assisted us with the survey.



*L to R - Chain pickerel; largemouth bass*

## **Freshwater Fisheries - Habitat and Water Quality**

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

- Repair plans for a bridge that crosses Poplar Lick Run in the Savage River State Forest. The bridge, which was damaged by a cement truck in May of 2023, is the only access for a private inholding in the state forest. Comments were submitted to communicate that no instream work should be conducted during the Use Class III coldwater stream closure period (October 1 through April 30). It was recommended that instream project activities should be scheduled after the closure period and best management practices for sediment and erosion control and riparian buffer disturbance should be used. Comments were also submitted to suggest that stamped repair design plans with load limits should be secured from an engineer prior to any project activities.
- A project at the Town of Oakland Mountain Fresh Pavilion for an addition to be added to the pavilion. Comments were provided for minimal floodplain disturbance.
- For three Columbia Gas projects to take place in Allegany County, Maryland. Comments were submitted for best management practices for sediment and erosion control, minimal disturbance, material storage areas, and site restoration at the completion of the project.
- An application submitted by the Town of Westernport for upgrades to the town water main and hydrant system. Comments were submitted for best management practices for sediment and erosion control, minimal disturbance, material storage



- areas, and site restoration at the completion of the project.
- A time-of-year waiver request from the State Highway Administration for a project to take place on MD 42 in Friendsville, Maryland. Input was provided for trout resources in the area and that Fisheries staff was not in favor of granting a waiver. Time of year closure periods for instream work exist to protect trout spawning activities, egg incubation, and emerging fry.
  - For three stone revetments to be constructed on the shoreline of Deep Creek Lake. Comments were provided for time of year restrictions, providing habitat, minimal disturbance during construction, and onsite material usage.
  - On four Project Open Space potential property acquisitions.

**Myrtle Grove Lake** - Completed a survey of Myrtle Grove Lake and noted the extensive patch of lotus and hydrilla covering a larger portion of the surface than in the past. In addition to extensive vegetation, low conductivity of the water (60 uS/cm) was also a factor in reducing electrofishing efficiency. Notwithstanding, a decent sample was collected and the most impressive fish were some 10 inch black crappie and several colorful warmouth.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Stocking and Population Management**

**Trout** - 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 for the past several years. 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.



*Members from the Potomac Valley Fly Fishers helping stock Catoctin Creek*

**Lower Gunpowder River** - Staff have received multiple calls from concerned constituents regarding no trespassing signs posted next to the stream on the Lower Gunpowder River put-and-take trout management area. Roughly, 2,500 feet of stream along Notchcliff Road that has been historically stocked will no longer be accessible to

anglers. During the spring trout stocking season, staff will not be stocking fish in this area. This will not change the number of trout stocked in the Lower Gunpowder River.

**Fish Stocking Permits** - A total of eight stocking permits were approved in November, all but one was through the Fish Wagon.

### **Freshwater Fisheries – Fish Health**

Collected Northern Snakehead for toxicology analysis by Maryland Department of Environment.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Outreach**

**Customer Service** - Provided information for inquiries regarding:

- Fishing license information
- Fishing Deep Creek Lake
- Deep Creek Lake boat launch information
- Quarry Lake in Pikesville.

**Adaptive Fishing Program** – Provided the Mobile Fish Trailer for the Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park Adaptive Fishing Program for individuals with mobility challenges. The event was held at Lost Lake within the park and provided ample areas for wheelchairs. The 22 anglers were divided into a morning or afternoon fishing session which allowed more “hands-on” with volunteers. Although the lake was stocked with trout, only a few were caught, but a fun day was had by all.

**Career Day** – Kenny Wampler visited Garrett College for their seminar class where he talked to the new students about his path to becoming a Fisheries Biologist and then talked about his job duties throughout a given year.

**Beaver Creek Fish Kill** - Provided a presentation on the 2023 Beaver Creek fish kill to the Antietam Creek Fly Anglers and Potomac Valley Fly Fishers. Both groups were interested in an update on the event that took place in August 2023 along a section of Beaver Creek in Washington County. Both brown and rainbow trout were severely impacted by a runoff event for an approximate 1.6 mile section of stream. Members from both clubs asked good questions and were interested in helping prevent a similar event from occurring in the future.

**Electrofishing Demonstration** - Conducted an electrofishing demonstration for an Environmental Science class from Stevenson University (pictured below). Central Region staff have conducted multiple electrofishing demonstrations for Stevenson University students over the past few years.



**Fish Training** – Collected fish for the Natural Resources Police training class held at the Maryland State Police Training Facility in Sykesville, MD and provided support for Dr. Joe Love who was teaching the class. The training session included both live fish and preserved specimens for learning to identify the common species of fish in Maryland.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Angler Access**

Regional staff continues to perform routine checks and maintenance at the McCoole, Black Oak and Evitts Creek Fishery Management Areas.

A post-construction meeting with the department’s Engineering and Construction Unit and the contractor First Fruits for the access road/parking rehabilitation project at the McCoole and Gary Yoder Boat Launch areas. Had a final post construction inspection/walk through for the final approval of the projects. The improvements to the angler access areas are remarkable and will provide anglers with a better way to access the North Branch of the Potomac River.

A planning meeting was held at Smithville Lake with representatives from the Department of General Services, Department of Natural Resources, and the contractor in preparation for the valve and drain pipe replacement. Mobilization by the contractor is ongoing and work should start after the thanksgiving holiday.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Invasive Fishes Program**

Met with agency partners and stakeholders from Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Caroline County Public Schools, Fishbrain fishing app, United States Geological Survey Eastern Ecological Science

Center, and commercial catfish processors to discuss invasive blue catfish management objectives, goals, and current and future goals.

Met with biologists at United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Maryland Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, to discuss current and future projects pertaining to the management and research of northern snakehead in Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Attended the second annual Madness on the Marshyhope Blue Catfish tournament held at the Town of Federalsburg marina. Over 50 anglers participated in the event, which encouraged the harvest of blue catfish, an invasive fish that poses risks to economically and ecologically valuable species of Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Just under 200 fish, weighing 436.2 pounds were removed from the Marshyhope Creek/Nanticoke River system. Partners and sponsors for the tournament included the Town of Federalsburg, Caroline County Public Schools, Coastal Conservation Association of Maryland (CCA), Caroline County Recreation and Parks, VFW POST 5246 Federalsburg MD, WIN Transport, Federalsburg Lions Club, Pep-up, Bee's Energy, Maryland Department of the Environment, and the Department's Fishing and Boating Services.

Supplied invasive fish specimens to Direct Dimensions, Inc. The company plans to create 3D printed models of invasive blue catfish, flathead catfish, and northern snakehead. Models will be used for educational purposes.

Staff included invasive species messaging, in addition to fish identification training, at a training event for the recruiting class of Maryland Natural Resources Police candidates.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Coldwater Program**

Attended the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture Annual Meeting at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Discussion topics included efforts to characterize the current range of brook trout, prioritization of habitat enhancement and improvement projects, and development of a general organizational strategy to more effectively meet Joint Venture goals and initiatives.

Provided a presentation about the Beaver Creek fish kill event to the Potomac Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited. The presentation outlined the event and the actions the department is taking to expedite recovery of the fishery. Trout Unlimited members voiced their concerns about the fish kill, requested additional information, and asked for thoughts on how they can support recovery efforts.

Participated in the Coldwater Stream Habitat Forum organized by the U.S. Geological Survey, Massachusetts Division of Fish and Wildlife, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The goal of the forum was to create a network of organizations that are working to improve our understanding of coldwater stream habitat at the regional level and apply that knowledge towards coldwater habitat protection. The forum discussed challenges for coldwater stream conservation, methods applied for coldwater habitat protection, and information and tools that are needed to improve these efforts. In addition to expanding communication within the broader community, the forum also intends to establish smaller regional networks to enhance coldwater habitat protection efforts.

Worked with Trout Unlimited's Western Maryland Initiative to break ground for a project that will install almost one mile of livestock exclusion fence in the Casselman River watershed. The project will reduce sedimentation by preventing livestock from accessing approximately 1,500 feet of Crab Run. The project was made possible with funding from the Youghiogheny Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program. The department identified the resource concern through population and temperature monitoring efforts in Crab Run and then identified a willing landowner whose cooperation made the project possible. Project partners also include the Maryland Forest Service, who offered technical assistance to develop a planting plan that will guide a forest buffer planting scheduled for next spring. Once established, riparian buffers at the site will aid in reducing water temperatures within the thermally impacted stream reach.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Tidal Bass Program**

Staff completed the second in a series of at least three videos aimed at fishing and conservation of black bass in Maryland. The videos were created in partnership between the department and Black Bass Advisory Committee and are narrated by professional bass angler and 2023 Bass Hall of Fame inductee, Mike Iaconelli. Videos will be released for the general public in spring 2024.

Staff conducted a presentation of fish and fisheries for candidates of Natural Resources Police. Among the topics, staff discussed the issues with illegal harvest and enforcing size and creel limits. Staff are currently working together to create new signage for public access spots aimed at informing the general public on the need to purchase fishing licenses and learn fishing regulations prior to fishing.

The department is seeking a new tidal bass program manager and the announcement was widely circulated to Black Bass Advisory Committee members, stakeholders at large, university job boards, and email list for the southern division of the American Fisheries Society. It is expected that the department will hire a Tidal Bass Program Manager in winter 2023/24.

Staff completed uploading datasheets from the 2023 Tidal Bass Survey. The final step prior to uploading was to accurately measure the site-lengths in meters using Google Earth Pro and the GPS tracks saved from the boat depth finder/GPS.

### **Freshwater Fisheries - Other**

Demonstrated low-frequency boat electrofishing for blue catfish for the Secretary of Department of Agriculture and the Secretary of Department of Natural Resources. The demonstration, held on the Patuxent River, showed the scope of the blue catfish problem using an effective gear type. After electrofishing and capturing several large catfish, the group was treated to a Southern Region catfish fry that showcased the potential to expand the commercial market for consumption.