

Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – January 2022

Freshwater Fisheries - Stock Assessment

Youghiogheny River - Compiled stock assessment information on the Youghiogheny River catch-and-release trout fishing area as part of a report on the benefits of temperature enhancement releases from Deep Creek Lake on the downstream coldwater resources. The information is part of a triennial review of the temperature enhancement releases and includes trout management information from 2019-2021.

Winter Trawl Survey - Eastern Region staff assisted the Fin Fish Program with the annual upper Chesapeake Bay winter trawl survey that targets resident species like channel catfish, striped bass, white perch, and yellow perch. The survey is also gathering data on the rapidly increasing blue catfish population. This long-term dataset will be very valuable for determining the invasive's impacts on resident upper Bay species.



River traffic while aboard the RV Chesapeake on a calm 20 degree morning. (Photo: Erik Yetter)

Freshwater Fisheries - Habitat and Water Quality

Environmental Review - Provided aquatic resource information and/or comments for:

- Two applications submitted for the installations of new bridges within Garrett State Forest. Old bridges on the Snaggy Mountain Snowmobile Trail and the 5.5 Mile Trail are in poor shape and will be replaced with new single span bridges. Comments were provided for sediment and erosion control Best Management Practices, minimal disturbance during operations, and proper site restoration after installation.
- Two Project Open Space properties including the Kessel (Dan's Mountain Wildlife Management Area) and Manidokan (Harper's Ferry) properties.
- The proposed Arrowhead Cove dredging project on Deep Creek Lake.
- An Interagency Review Team (IRT) meeting with various state and federal agencies present. Presented on the thermal impact that small impoundments have on coldwater resources across the state.
- A proposed stream restoration in the headwaters of a brook trout stream in Harford and Baltimore counties. Design needs to include stormwater management, nutrient management, and maintain cold water temperatures for trout.
- A Time of Year restriction decision for Gunpowder Falls anadromous habitat in conjunction with a failing culvert project.
- Management activities in the Middle Patuxent that may be impacted by utility work.
- Planned wetland creation and pond retrofit in a brook trout watershed in Baltimore County.

Fish Habitat - Collected approximately 70 leftover Christmas trees from Lowe's Home Improvement Center in LaVale to deploy as fish habitat in Piney Reservoir. In addition, the town of Frostburg collected approximately 25 trees as part of a citywide cleanup effort that will also be deployed in Piney Reservoir. The location of the habitat structures will be determined using popular bank-angler and ice-angler locations. The purpose of the habitat will be to improve fishing by providing cover for young-of-year and forage fishes as well as structure for adult fish in locations frequented by anglers.



Unloading Christmas trees to use for habitat.

Deep Creek Lake - Participated in a collaborative meeting with resource experts in charge of managing/monitoring the natural resources around Deep Creek Lake. Through discussions, the group is working to identify potential stressors and to find paths/collaborations to address the

stressors. In addition, the platform is beneficial to understanding all of the work being conducted on, in and around the lake and how different units can work together to accomplish management objectives.

Savage River Watershed - Western Region I and Coldwater Fisheries staff met with representatives from the City of Frostburg to discuss options for water withdrawals in the Savage River watershed. Currently, the City withdraws cold groundwater from a series of groundwater springs near the headwaters of the Savage River. Staff hope that we can temporarily modify withdrawals from the springs to monitor the effects on stream temperature as the water moves downstream. If the modifications lower downstream temperatures, staff intends to model the option(s) that could be most beneficial to the downstream coldwater resources while maintaining the City's need for water.

Temperature Loggers –Water temperature loggers were picked up from Trout Unlimited volunteers with the Upper Gunpowder Brook Trout Partnership. Volunteers recovered all 17 temperature loggers that they deployed in spring 2021. This is the sixth straight year that Trout Unlimited and the Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Division have partnered together to collect extensive water temperature data in a brook trout stronghold watershed.

Freshwater Fisheries - Stocking and Population Management

Trout Stocking - Southern Region staff checked access, water quality, and signage at put-and-take trout ponds in southern Maryland in preparation for the upcoming preseason stocking of rainbow trout. Anglers in the region, looking to quell the “winter blues”, eagerly anticipate the annual fishery. The trout stocked are raised at Manning (Charles County) and Albert Powell (Washington County) fish hatcheries.

Stocking Permits – One permit was processed in January.

Freshwater Fisheries - Outreach

Provided customer service information for inquiries regarding:

- Deep Creek Lake ice fishing information
- Upcoming workshop for the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program
- Trout stocking in Central Region
- Pond management
- Potomac River muskie fishing

Deep Creek Signage - Western Region I, with assistance from Stakeholder & Outreach staff, have developed and finalized two new informative signs. One sign is for a walleye study on Deep Creek Lake during 2022. The purpose of the sign is to educate anglers about a tagging study on the lake designed to estimate angler harvest rates of the walleye population. The second sign is a water temperature sign that provides temperature information and fishing guidelines to protect trout resources during warmer summer months.

Ice Fishing - Maryland Public Television (MPT) will be working with Western Region to film an episode highlighting ice fishing in Maryland. The episode will cover ice fishing basics, safety on the ice, and the history of ice fishing.

Gunpowder River - Presented the annual State of the Gunpowder River Tailwater talk to Maryland Chapter Trout Unlimited. This talk summarizes and highlights the results of the annual electrofishing surveys conducted on one of the most popular tailwater fisheries in the state. There were over 60 people in attendance.

Continued to work with Carroll County Public Schools to finalize a work plan for the Central Region spring intern.

Reviewed and processed six Scientific Collection Permits

Freshwater Fisheries - Angler Access

Staff performed a site visit at the McCoole Fishery Management Area to monitor operations for a horizontal directional drilling (HDD) project that will facilitate the installation of a replacement gas line under the North Branch Potomac River. An independent environmental monitor is required to be onsite at all times when drilling is taking place to identify any potential environmental issues that might arise.

Freshwater Fisheries - Invasive Species

Northern Snakehead - Currently coordinating new funding from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support a study on exploitation of northern snakehead and removals of snakehead from fish lifts at Conowingo Dam; staff finalized plans to conduct the exploitation study this year.

Fish Identification Training - Finalized plans to develop a crash course in identification and regulation of popular sport fishes and game fishes during cadet training for the Natural Resources Police; this work will focus on identification and regulation of invasive fishes, as well.

Blue Catfish - Fielded calls from anglers who reported capturing several tagged blue catfish from the tidal Patuxent River (Prince George's County). Fish were tagged from 2019 through 2021 as part of a study to determine habitat use and to estimate population size. The largest reported fish was 760 mm and caught 409 days after initial tag and release.

Freshwater Fisheries – Coldwater Fisheries Program

Organized and convened the first meeting of Maryland's Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee. The committee was established by the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission to advise on coldwater fisheries issues. Outcomes from the first meeting included the adoption of the committee operating guidelines, the development of a list of coldwater issues that will be discussed at future meetings, and support for the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail initiative.

Participated in on-going discussions about the review and permitting of dams and small ponds in coldwater watersheds with staff from the Maryland Department of the Environment and Department of Natural Resources. Guidance was provided to limit impounded waterbodies in coldwater watersheds because of the potential impacts to the thermal regime. Recommendations were also made to support practices that mitigate thermal impacts in existing ponds and new and existing stormwater management facilities.

Participated in a meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Program Brook Trout Work Group and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). The objective of the meeting was to improve communication between the work group and NFWF and to provide updates on work group and NFWF activities. Potential opportunities for collaboration were discussed.

Attended the Rising Watershed Temperatures Workshop that was planned and developed by the Chesapeake Bay Program's Science and Technology Advisory Committee. The workshop provided a forum for discussing elevated watershed temperatures, potential ecological impacts resulting from higher temperatures, implications for natural resources management, and data gaps that need to be addressed by resource managers.

Staff completed interviews for two Natural Resources Biologist IV positions; a Brook Trout Specialist and an Aquatic Ecology and Grants Specialist. A decision will be made shortly with hopes of having a person in both roles by late March.

Freshwater Fisheries - Tidal Bass Program

Black Bass Advisory Committee met on January 10 to hear presentations on the problems with smallmouth bass reproduction in non-tidal Potomac River, the launch steward program at Deep Creek Lake, and Maryland's Fly Fishing Trail.

Finalized plans to conduct a creel survey of tidal Potomac River anglers regarding their familiarity and participation in a tag-reporting project coordinated by the department, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, and the District of Columbia Department of Energy and Environment.

Began purchasing equipment to build a mobile fish recuperation and release system for the Ike Foundation, a non-profit organization founded by professional bass angler Michael Iaconelli and his wife Becky. The group aims to introduce children to fishing. The recuperation tank and release chute will help the organization better care for fish and promote fish health during and after tournaments.

Freshwater Fisheries - Other

Western Region I has completed the installation of an in-office lab space. The installation of new cabinetry and countertop will provide increased room for many activities for the upcoming sampling season, along with needed storage where lab materials can be consolidated.

Western Region I continues to work on their shop reorganization project at the Mt Nebo Work Center. Equipment is currently spread across three different buildings and this project will allow all equipment to be organized into one location.

Staff participated in the annual Small Impoundments Technical Committee meeting as part of the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society.

Geographic Inland Fisheries Survey (GIFS) - A meeting was held with GIS and database specialists to discuss the GIFS extractor map, and improvements to provide end-users with additional data types (e.g., summarized catch data).