

Maryland
Meeting of the Black Bass Advisory Subcommittee
Chair Dennis Fleming
January 11, 2017

Introduction:

Hello my name is Capt. George Martin

I am a USCG License Captain with a 50ton Masters Rating

I am a Maryland License Guide

I am a PRFC License Charter Captain

I am the Owner of GMCO Maps & Charts and GMCO Guide Service

I am a trained and working Captain for TowBoat US

I also am a tournament and avid recreation angler

As well as a certified instructor for the Virginia Boater Safety course.

I was born in Washington DC, grew up in Prince Georges Co MD

And now live in Northern Virginia, I have lived near the Potomac River all my life (60yrs)

As a young man I remember that you knew you were near the river because you could smell it.
Not a pleasant experience

Then we had the introduction of hydrilla and everyone said that one day you would be able to walk from Maryland to Virginia on the stuff and it would choke the river.

Then we had the invasion of the Northern Snakehead that's another subject altogether.

I am not telling you this to impress you, but to let you know that I have a great deal of concern for the Potomac River and this fishery. It has an major effect on everything that I do.

I spend between 75 - 100 days a year on this river. Over the years I have observed many changes to the river both good and bad.

With all the discussion over the decline of the Bass fishery over recent years I have several observations

Unlike most of the discussions concerning tournament fishing I have been concern with other factors, environmental, natural cycles, changing conditions and commercial fishing.

As we all most agree the Largemouth Bass Fishery has gone through many cycles over the years.

Some man made others, Mother Nature had a heavy hand in it.

But one area I have not seen any or very little discussion on is the commercial fishing and its effect on the fishery.

By no means do I think we should stop these operations, but I believe we need to amend some of the regulation regarding their practices.

The one that concerns me the most is the practice of Haul Seining in the spring during the months that the Largemouth Bass spawn. The follow are suggested changes with this practice.

Suggested Changes to the Haul Seining Regulations:

The follow changes I believe are needed to protect the Largemouth Bass spawn, from the Pre-spawn bass in this area, bass that maybe spawning at this time and to the post spawn bass that are recovering from the spawn. As well as the beds themselves and the fry from earlier spawns. I believe that even if the bass are release during this operation that the trauma that they go through will cause them to die or destroy their ability for a successful spawn. Not to mention the destruction of the beds and the fry that will get caught up in the netting operation.

It is not my wishes to stop the practice of haul seining, but to allow the haul seining operation to go basically unregulated is having a devastating effect on the environment and the Largemouth bass fishery in this region.

The following changes would be in effect during the period of March 15 thru June 15.
(This time has been deemed an important period to protect the Largemouth Bass spawn by MDNR)

1. No Haul Seining operation can be performed in waters less than 5ft in depth at MLLW (Mean Lower Low Water - Low Tide) per NOAA
2. No Hail Seining operation can be performed when Submerge Aquatic Vegetation is present.
3. Before a haul seining operation can be performed Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources needs to be contacted and informed to the area that is to be fished (24 hours in advance)
4. Max length of Haul Sein nets cannot exceed 1000 yards in length and only one vessel can be used to deploy- pull the net.
5. To stop the practice of HERDING (when an additional vessel is used to herd or scare fish in the open end or side of the haul sein during the deployment on the sein.

In conversations with Mr. John Odenkirk (Fisheries Biologist for the Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries) it widely believed that most of the Largemouth bass on the Tidal Potomac River spawn in waters 5 ft. or less . That is why we would obviously want to protect this area.

It is also obvious that the Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources believes that this time period (March 15th-June15th) is important to the spawn as to institute special creel limit during this time

These are also the same changes that I am presenting to Virginia's Fin Fisheries Committee for their review. I believe if both Maryland and Virginia can adopt the same rules and regulations it would be easier for the commercial waterman to follow.

As a TowBoat US Capt., Guide, tournament fisherman, and avid recreational angler and doing research for our GMCO Charts I have witnessed numerous time over the last several years when haul seining operation that not only destroyed SAV but had a devastating effect on the Largemouth Bass Fishery. Weeks leading up to the haul seining operations I had clients and myself catching(and releasing) 25-35 bass in these areas, after the operations catches where down to 5-6 fish per trip in these areas where haul seining took place. Only change in that time period was the presence and aftermath of the haul seining operation.

I will be happy to answer any question that you have at this time.

Submitted By:

Capt. George Martin
GMCO Maps & Charts
GMCO Guide Service
Cell 540-273-1831
gmcomaps@comcast.net