

## Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – March 2017

### Stock Assessment

**Potomac River Muskellunge** – Freshwater Fisheries initiated a muskellunge radio telemetry study on the upper Potomac River. Fourteen adult muskellunge, ranging in size from 32” - 44.5”, were collected using boat electrofishing in the Williamsport section of the river and surgically implanted with radio transmitter tags. The fish were then released back into the river. These fish will be tracked throughout the year to learn more about their movement patterns, key habitat areas that they utilize, and survival/mortality. Freshwater Fisheries staff asks that anglers please report any muskellunge that they catch that have been marked with a yellow plastic dart tag along their dorsal fin. The tag will have a 4-digit number and a phone number (301-898-5443). Anglers can call that number to report the tag number, date and location the fish was caught, and any additional information they may collect (length, weight). Anglers are asked to leave the tag in the fish so that further reports from future catches can be called in.



*(L to R) Measuring muskellunge; surgically implanting radio transmitter tag in adult muskellunge*

**Potomac River Walleye** - Collected brood stock-size walleye from the upper Potomac River below Dam 4. Fifteen female and 25 male walleye were collected using boat electrofishing and transferred to Manning Hatchery in southern Maryland. These fish will be spawned, then returned to the Potomac River. The resulting fingerling walleye will be used to stock sections of the upper Potomac and multiple impoundments throughout the state. Monitoring has shown that supplemental stocking of fingerling walleye in the upper Potomac River contributes greatly to the fishery

### Fish Health

Collected thirty adult white perch from the Potomac River drainage for MD DNR to test for parasites.

### Outreach

**Upper Gunpowder River Angler Survey** - Freshwater Fisheries staff is conducting an upper Gunpowder River angler survey at Gunpowder Road in Baltimore County. The

survey is intended to determine time of effort, what fishing gear anglers are using, what species of fish they are targeting, what species they caught if they were successful and if they kept any of the fish they caught. Each day is split into two survey periods of six hours each. For the first 12 survey periods in March, only one angler was observed entering the Gunpowder River to fish. The angler entered the river in the last 40 minutes of the survey period on a Sunday and did not return by the end of the survey period at 7:15 p.m. – therefore, an interview could not be conducted. The angler survey will continue through April and May with 12 survey periods over three week days and three weekend days in April and four week days including Memorial Day and two weekend days in May.

## **Stocking and Population Management**

**Trout Stocking** - Freshwater Fisheries staff assisted Hatchery personnel with the stocking of rainbow/golden trout and brown trout throughout the state in special management areas and lakes, ponds, rivers and streams for spring trout season opening day angling.

**Sign Posting** - Posted trout season closure signs along ponds, streams and rivers with a period 1 or 2 closure in preparation for the spring trout stocking season. Orange signs stating the lower Gunpowder was not stocked for opening day of trout season were also posted due to no spillover from Loch Raven Reservoir which is necessary for sufficient stream flow to support trout stocking.

## **Angler Access**

**Delayed Harvest Trout Area Possibility** - Met with Central Region Wildlife staff to discuss the viability of establishing a new Delayed Harvest Trout Management area on the South Branch Patapsco River at Hugg Thomas Wildlife Management Area. Stocking access and issues with potential angler/hunter conflicts with spring turkey season and fall deer season were discussed during the meeting.

## **Invasive Species**

Website for C&O Canal, *Stop the Snakehead* derby was created and advertised via Facebook and Angler's Log ( <http://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/snakehead-derby.aspx>).

Presented information for upper Chesapeake Bay anglers on why some non-native species are considered invasive at a meeting in Chestertown, Maryland.

Compiled and provided resource and life history information on the invasiveness of blue catfish and flathead catfish in response to a constituent's questions.

Provided information to the Wall Street Journal regarding northern snakehead fisheries in Maryland.

**Blue Catfish** - Biologists used high-frequency electrofishing in shallow water to collect blue catfish within several tidal creeks of the Potomac River. Many of the fish were collected during a brief, warm spell when water temperatures were relatively high. Many of the blue catfish collected from the upper portions of Mattawoman Creek were actively feeding on mature yellow perch and fish eggs were identified in the stomach contents of several fish. Other food items collected included crayfish, clupeid (herring family) species, and unidentified catfishes.

Biologists used high-frequency electrofishing to sample Nanjemoy Creek (Charles County) for blue catfish. Individuals up to approximately 18 lbs. were collected. A member of the Maryland Conservation Corps assisted with fish collection on one sampling occasion, where he learned some fish identification, how electrofishing works, and several of the job duties of a fisheries biologist. A total of 88 northern snakehead were also collected during this survey.

### **Brook Trout Program**

Worked with regional staff, Maryland Biological Stream Survey (MBSS) staff, Susquehanna State Park Conservation Corp and the United States Geological Survey (USGS), for the upper Gunpowder River brook trout radio tagging project. Over the course of two days of electrofishing, eight brook trout from the mainstem upper Gunpowder River were tagged and will be tracked for the next year. In addition, 41 brook trout were collected during the two day survey and all were tagged on both cheeks with Visual Implant Elastomer (VIE) tags to initiate a long term (3+ years) movement and life history project that will also include tributary populations. Additional sampling and monitoring efforts will be done in the next few months. (Baltimore County)



*Brook trout with VIE tag*

Gave a presentation to the Seneca Valley Trout Unlimited Chapter on the status of brook trout in Maryland and the role and history of the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture nationally. (Montgomery County)

Met with Garrett County Soil Conservation Service staff to discuss a project on a tributary to Poplar Lick in the Savage River watershed. The tributary has some sediment transport problems due to livestock in the headwaters. We are working with Soil Conservation staff to identify low cost/no cost solutions for the landowner, who is very willing to fix the issue. A site visit with the landowner was also conducted and progress is being made. A local Trout Unlimited chapter (Nemacolin) is going to partner with us to submit a proposal to the national Trout Unlimited “Embrace a Stream” grant program seeking funding to pay for the restoration. (Garrett County)

Distributed fliers to all Allegany and Garrett County schools to announce the *2nd Annual Youth Trout Fishing clinic* at Big Run State Park. This year's event will be held on June 3 and we are anticipating another full house! Young anglers will be given the chance to learn how to cast, tie knots, identify aquatic insects, and remove hooks. (Garrett County)

Placed discarded Christmas trees in Broadford Lake in Oakland, Maryland for fish habitat. (Garrett County)

Met with United States Geological Survey (USGS) Water Science Division researchers to discuss possible collaboration on a water budget project planned in the upper Savage River for 2017. Staff also spoke with USGS Wellsboro office staff on the possibility of cooperating with Freshwater Fisheries on the brook trout road salt research project. (Garrett County)

Participated on the quarterly Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture steering committee call. Relevant agenda items included update on progress of work efforts for the Chesapeake Bay Brook Trout Outcome and discussions for developing the next two year work plan. (Statewide)

Continued work for the Chesapeake Bay Program Brook Trout Outcome two year work plan. Effort was focused on Key Actions 1, 2 and 6 of the plan and we will continue working on these actions for the next several months. (Statewide)

### **Tidal Bass Program**

Discussed status of tidal largemouth bass fisheries at the Maryland Bass Nation's President's meeting.

Finalized plans and identified candidate to hire for a creel clerk position aimed at valuing tidal bass fisheries for recreational anglers in the State.

Marked hundreds of largemouth bass caught by anglers for a catch-and-release study on Potomac River.

Co-organized directors' webinar meeting for upper Bay black bass tournaments to discuss status of fisheries, permitting, and infrastructure improvements to weigh-in sites.

In response to concerns by a member of Black Bass Advisory Subcommittee, staff developed outreach materials to illustrate how to use mesh bag systems effectively in support of bass conservation. This outreach adds to existing infrastructure at Anchor Marina for black bass tournaments.

Finalized plans to survey Gunpowder and Middle Rivers for zebra mussel and plankton in consideration of future stocking success of that system.

Attended the American Bass Anglers Ram Open Series tournament on the Potomac River at Smallwood State Park, Marbury, MD and assisted with release boat operations to ensure fish are handled in a manner to increase survivorship upon release. Additionally, the tournament provided biologists the opportunity to tag black bass as part of the multi-year tagging project on the Potomac River. The project is in its third year and aims to estimate population size and catch-and-release mortality for black bass in the Potomac River.