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DNR FISHERIES SERVICE INLAND FISHERIES DIVISION MONTHLY REPORT MARCH 2011

Impoundment Studies

- Eastern Regional Staff placed 25 fish habitat structures into Unicorn and Wye Mills Lakes. The structures are constructed from recycled Christmas trees gathered by the Kent County Public Works Department and concrete blocks. Most are placed in areas accessible to shoreline anglers.
- Eastern Region manager Rick Schaefer attended a meeting to discuss past, present and future management of Salisbury public ponds. Nutrient and aquatic weed management were the main topics of discussion.

Atlantic Sturgeon

- The Maryland Sturgeon Reward Program recovered eight Atlantic sturgeon during the month of March. Since 1996, Maryland watermen have voluntarily reported their live catches of sturgeon to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Maryland Fishery Resources Office. A \$50.00 reward is offered for each live sturgeon (<6 feet long total length) turned into the program. A \$250.00 reward is offered for any live Atlantic sturgeon measuring more than 6 feet long. These new captures will be added to the Atlantic sturgeon captive brood population with hopes that they will grow to become mature ripe adults. Currently the Maryland Atlantic sturgeon captive brood stock comprises 50 wild sturgeon with individuals weighing as much as 90 pounds. See link below for reporting information.
<http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/recreational/2007-08SturgRewardletterandmethods.pdf>
- Restoration and Enhancement staff transferred 18 adult and sub-adult wild Atlantic sturgeon from the University of MD Aquaculture and Restoration Ecology Laboratory (AREL) in Cambridge to Manning Hatchery and GenOn's Chalk Point Generating Station. In July, the male sturgeon will be injected with a hormone to induce spermiation and females will be laparoscoped to determine the maturity of any oocytes present.

American and Hickory Shad

- Restoration and Enhancement staff began the annual American and hickory shad adult recapture survey on the Patuxent and Choptank Rivers. This study serves to enumerate the impacts of stocking hatchery origin shad in targeted tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay.

Trout

- Unicorn and Manning Hatchery completed stocking rainbow trout held at each facility through the winter. These trout were transferred to Unicorn and Manning early last fall for feeding and growth to stocking season. The trout for Eastern and Southern Region for the rest of the spring trout season will come from Albert Powell Trout Hatchery. The 2011 spring trout stocking schedule and daily updates can be accessed through the link below:

http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/stocking/spring_stock.asp

- Restoration & Enhancement staff met with representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) at Jennings Randolph Lake to discuss the potential to construct and operate a trout culture facility below the dam. Previous cooperative culture at Jennings Randolph consisted of a floating net pen system that was placed in the stilling basin. This culture facility was suspended in 2007 due to the presence of whirling disease in the North Branch of the Potomac River. That year, the disease was confirmed at two other facilities in Garrett County. Trout production was suspended at all infected facilities resulting in reduced trout production and stocking statewide. A hydroelectric power company recently applied for a permit to build a power generation system at Jennings Randolph Lake. As mitigation for impacts on natural resources, the company has agreed to provide 3,000 gallons/minute to Fisheries Service that could be used to culture trout. This is part of a larger mitigation program that will be required under the terms of their permit. The North Branch continues to test positive for whirling disease at sites below the dam. Tests in 2009 found the whirling disease parasite at one site above the lake and at the mouth of Sand Run with the North Branch. Samples using sentinel trout were attempted in the lake, but water temperature fluctuation killed the fry trout in the cages before testing was completed. The power company will draw water from the lake and this supply will be provided to Fisheries Service. An enclosed, biosecure fish culture facility that includes ultraviolet sanitizers could potentially be constructed to raise trout in a pathogen free water source. Any trout produced will have to pass health certification testing before they can be stocked in open waters. This new facility could contribute considerably to restore trout production capabilities in western Maryland.
- ACOE would like to continue their cooperative relationship with Fisheries Service trout culture operations. They are also understandably concerned about the constantly increasing competition for lake resources such as water supply, flood control, lake recreation, white water recreation, aquatic resources, energy projects, and fish culture operations. Fisheries Service staff will provide a conceptual design of the proposed culture facility and ACOE will evaluate the potential of the project. The concept plan will address issues such as needs for utilities, access/roads, staffing hours, building foot print, security, signage, discharge, fencing, public tours, and building design. If ACOE agrees to proceed, funding sources for development, construction and operation will need to be identified.
- Rainbow trout were stocked in the Eastern Region into Big Elk Creek (3000), Rising Sun Pond (500), Beaverdam Creek (700), Shad Landing (450), Principio Creek (1000) and Howards Pond (750). These trout are used to diversify and improve spring angling on the Eastern Shore. Trout stocked in these areas should not affect the native species that inhabit each ecosystem, since they are usually harvested quickly by anglers.
- The staffs of Western Region I, II Albert Powell and Bear Creek were quite busy stocking adult trout in the region's popular Put and Take, Delayed Harvest, and Youth Fishing Areas. Volunteers and the Maryland Conservation Corps provided much appreciated help. Western I also stocked about 1,000 combined rainbow and cutthroat trout fingerlings from the Bear Creek recirculating aquaculture system (RAS) into the North Branch Potomac River C&R Areas. All these fish were marked with a fin clip, and staff will collect a sample this fall and test for the incidence of whirling disease.
- Central Region staff posted closure signs and stocked streams and ponds with trout throughout the Central Region as part of the annual spring trout stocking program. Approximately 37,000 Rainbow Trout from Unicorn, Cedarville and Albert Powell Hatcheries and 4,500 Brown Trout from Cushwas were stocked into waters of Prince Georges, Montgomery, Howard, Carroll, Baltimore and Harford Counties.
- Central Region Manager Mark Staley surveyed fishing pressure and angler satisfaction on the Patapsco River on opening day, Saturday March 26. An Anglers Log report was submitted with some photos.

Approximately 80 anglers and 60 cars were counted in the Avalon section of the Patapsco between 0700-0800hr. Forty-five cars were parked at the Marriottsville Road parking lots on the Patapsco at 0830hr and 21 cars along Piney Run at Marriottsville Road #2. Overall, anglers were pleased with the put and take trout program and complimentary about the job Fisheries does.

- On March 16, Central Region biologists conducted a swim-up Brook Trout fry count in the Left and Right Forks of Jabez Branch. Approximately 305 meters on the Left Fork and 400 meters on the Right Fork were observed. Four Brook Trout fry were found in the Left Fork and 25 fry were observed in the Right Fork. This was only the second time in the last six years fry were found in the Left Fork and the first time since 2008. The Brook Trout fry were small but were off the bottom and actively swimming.
- Central Region's Mark Staley and Mark Bowermaster, Western Region I's Alan Klotz and Jody Johnson, Western Region II's Josh Henesy and Planning's Karen Knotts and Susan Rivers traveled to Western Maryland to assist Brook Trout Specialist Matt Sell with the collection of 15 adult Brook Trout to radio tag on the Upper Savage River. Multiple stations were chosen for sampling. After three stations were electrofished with no Brook Trout observed, it was determined that flow and water temperatures were not in their favor. Sampling will be done at another time with hopefully more successful results.
- Western Region II collected a sample of rainbow trout reared by the Potomac Valley Fly Fishermen at the Montevue Spring and sent them to the Lamar Fish Health Lab for testing. Trout from this facility are scheduled to be stocked in the Big Hunting Creek catch-and-return, fly-fishing-only area and the Catoctin Creek Delayed Harvest Area.

Walleye

- Manning Hatchery spawned walleye brood captured from the Potomac River and Rocky Gorge Reservoir. Maryland previously relied on walleye eggs from Pennsylvania, but these were deemed unsuitable since water temperatures in this region warmed too quickly for timely stockings. Spawning Maryland sourced walleye allows culturist to get a 3 to 4 week jump on spawning before the water warms up.
- Western Region II conducted an electrofishing survey of the Potomac River walleye fishery on March 21 in the vicinity of Dam 4 and Taylors Landing to determine the size distribution and to collect brood for the Manning Hatchery. The majority of the walleye population is between 18 and 25 inches in length. Many of the larger fish are from the extraordinarily large yearclass produced in 2001 and are approaching the end of their lifespan. A fair yearclass was produced in 2010 and these walleye are averaging around 13 inches. To supplement natural reproduction and maintain the high quality walleye fishery that fishermen have come to enjoy, stocking will resume this spring. Walleye collected this spring will be spawned at Manning Hatchery and the resulting offspring will be returned to this section of the Potomac. Walleye have not been stocked in the middle Potomac since 2000.

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Tidal Black Bass

- Largemouth bass were surveyed from a sanctuary in Chicamuxen Creek and a site further upstream. Largemouth bass were more abundant further upstream. Males and females from both sites had ripe eggs and/or sperm.
- Six largemouth bass nest boxes were sunk in a cove near Martinak State Park. These boxes should help provide habitat for nest building males. Additional boxes will be distributed in April.

Yellow Perch

- Manning Hatchery staff in cooperation with USFWS Ecological Services Chesapeake Bay Field Office (Principle Investigator Fred Pinkney) completed trials investigating effects of elevated salinity on

spawning habitats and spawning success of yellow perch. These studies have been prompted over concerns of excessive road salt applications and the resulting effect upon freshwater species spawning activities. The studies are on-going and results should be reported at a future date.

Intersex Study in Potomac River Watershed

- Western Region II staff collected grab water samples from four sites on the Potomac mainstem as well as one site in lower Conococheague Creek and the Monocacy River to determine the estrogenicity of the samples. Staff will continue to collect samples monthly through September in hopes of identifying geographic and seasonal variations. Male smallmouth bass in the two Potomac tributaries have shown vitellogenin concentrations in the bloodstream while male bass from the mainstem have not. This may suggest that bass in the tributaries may be continuously exposed to estrogenic contaminants while intersex in mainstem bass is primarily induced at the early developmental life stages.

Outreach

- Manning Hatchery staff provided 1480 hybrid sunfish to Lewistown Hatchery for use in fishing rodeos throughout the region.
- Restoration and Enhancement staff provided 3 Atlantic sturgeon for display at the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Center in Virginia Beach, VA.
- Central Region Manager Mark Staley attended and manned the Fisheries booth at the National Capital Chapter of Trout Unlimited Angling Show on Saturday March 12 at Georgetown Prep School in Bethesda and provided information concerning inland fisheries management in Maryland. The felt sole wader ban was a hot topic among those present. Many variations on the themes of “I just bought new felts last year”, “How can I retrofit my felts?”, “What about the other user groups that transfer boats, dogs, floatplanes, etc. between different water bodies?” were asked.

Land Acquisition

- Western Region I manager Alan Klotz met with Adventure Sports Institute of Garrett College Director Mike Logsdon and SHA Committee member Carl Rebele at a site near Pinto, MD for a potential land acquisition for boating/angler access. They identified an ideal location and Mr. Rebele will approach the landowner and CSX railroad to discuss possible public access.
- Western Region I manager Alan Klotz provided input on the acquisition of the 113.47 acre Owings property on the west side of Savage River Road opposite the Broadwater Chapel. It is adjacent to the Bear Pen Wildland of Savage River State Forest. The upper Savage River and Bear Pen Run are within the property’s drainage area. This watershed is Maryland’s only large watershed with an intact, connected Brook trout population. The purchase of this property is consistent with fisheries management plan strategies designed to conserve and protect critical Brook trout habitat in this watershed.

Environmental Review

- Western Region I manager Alan Klotz met with Garrett County’s Mikal Ann Zimmerman, Program Assistant - Community Resource & Economic Development Natural Gas Drilling Education, Crellin Elementary School Principal Dana McCauley, and Steve Sherrard, Garrett County Department of Health regarding a water quality monitoring program in the Snowy Creek watershed in response to an active Marcellus Shale drilling site just over the border in WV. The group was able to tour the active drilling site to see how the drilling wastes were captured and transported out of state for treatment.
- Western Region I manager Alan Klotz attended a stakeholders meeting regarding water allocations from Deep Creek Lake. There are several competing stakeholders for water usage from Deep Creek Lake

including the hydro-electric company, adjoining property owners, recreational users, whitewater boating, and the Yough River trout fishery. Amendments to the water appropriations permit will be considered, including allowing the June upper rule band lake level to extend into the month of July. A proposal to reduce the continuous tailrace flow was objected to by Fisheries due to its importance as year-round trout habitat.

- Western Region I manager Alan Klotz provided fisheries information to the Forestry Service regarding a management plan for the Black Hawk Hunting Club. This property includes Black Hawk Run, a naturally reproducing Brook trout stream in the Middle Fork watershed. Middle Fork and its tributaries are managed under the Zero Creel Limit Brook Trout Fishing Area, and watershed protection practices are needed to maintain this valuable resource.

Large Woody Debris

- Central Region Manager Mark Staley and Director of Regional Operations Charlie Gougeon attended an evening stakeholder meeting at the Gwynnbrook Natural Resource Police office to review DNR's policies and guidelines for the removal of Large Woody Debris (LWD) from waters within DNR properties. DNR was represented by NRP, Park Service, and Inland Fisheries. Members of the angling and boating stakeholder groups were also present. Field Operations director Charlie Gougeon explained the steps that Fisheries is currently taking to develop outreach materials regarding LWD and its benefits to aquatic ecosystems. The Gunpowder Falls tailwater is at the center of this issue due to the angler concerns about past cutting of instream LWD.
- Central Region Manager Mark Staley and biologist Mark Bowermaster participated in a field review of proposed Large Woody Debris (LWD) removal on the Gunpowder Falls tailwater. State parks staff, angling and boating stakeholders were also in attendance. The group walked from Masemore Road downstream to Big Falls Road along the Gunpowder assessing the need to cut portions of LWD jams. Five major jams were identified and a plan of action was developed for each one after each group of stakeholders and staff had input.

Angler Access

- Brett Coakley completed an access database for all tidal and non-tidal fishing and boating access areas on the Chesapeake Bay's Eastern Shore. The database will ultimately be linked to Google Maps so anglers can access all needed information in one place.
- Western Region II manager John Mullican met with a landowner with stream frontage in the put-and-take area of Beaver Creek in Washington County to hear his complaints regarding fishermen behavior. The landowner had posted the property preventing access after fishermen damaged stream-side trees, parked in his driveway, and routinely walked through the yard. After discussing possible ways to address the issue, Fisheries erected the standard "private property" signs and signs guiding fishermen to remain in or on the edge of the stream when moving through the property. Fishermen were once again given access and no problems were reported following the opening day of trout season.

Fishing Tournaments

- Central Region staff electrofished Piney Run Reservoir on March 14th in an attempt to collect a total of 25 sunfish, crappie, yellow perch and channel catfish in aggregate to tag for the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association's 29th Annual \$20,000 Early Bird Fishing Tournament held on March 26. Cold water temperatures made fish collection difficult although the biologists were able to collect and tag 25 bluegill sunfish, pumpkinseed sunfish and black crappie in aggregate for the tournament. No yellow perch or channel catfish were observed. Some nice 2-4 pound largemouth bass and stocked rainbow trout were

observed during the survey. Lake surface water temperature was 44° F.

Staff Development

- Western Region II manager John Mullican attended the 2011 Pesticide Safety Conference as an annual requirement to maintain a public agency applicators license.
- Many members of the Inland staff attended the Bleiker Training teleconference call. The Bleiker training deals with citizen participation activities and informed consent on issues between the public and Fisheries. As a continuing education opportunity, a teleconference is offered each month on topics covered in the training that many staff members attended in the past. Staff attend the topic teleconferences when the monthly discussion addresses a critical problem or need to better communicate to the public.

Invasive Species

- Western Region II staff conducted didymo checks at Fishing Creek, Hunting Creek, and Beaver Creek. Didymo was not observed at any of the streams.
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources received kudos from the Whirling Disease Foundation (now a part of Trout Unlimited) executive director Dave Kumlein on the recently enacted felt wader ban. In his comments, Kumlein wrote, "*As the author of the Trout Unlimited policy regarding eliminating felt soles and adopting clean angling practices, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Maryland DNR for the forward thinking policy being implemented regarding the use of felt soles and the practice of clean angling. When I wrote the felt sole, clean angling policy for TU which we announced back in 2008, amongst the goals was to shift the angler behavior paradigm regarding practicing clean angling and to get them thinking about the threat of aquatic invasive species. At that time, it was apparent that many anglers believed AIS were the problem of boaters who were dealing with Zebra mussels and milfoil. I don't think many anglers thought much about their potential role as vectors for AIS or the threat they presented to their fishing. While there's good science behind eliminating felt, doing so clearly won't solve the AIS problem. Yet, this action WILL help reduce the risk, and to me, it seems that risk reduction and risk management is what this whole thing is all about. Save for bans on the activities i.e. no boating/no fishing, which would be impossible to implement and would be totally opposed by everyone, me included, these felt actions and outreach are things we can do that WILL help. Kudos to Maryland DNR! You're doing this the right way!*"