

MD DNR INLAND FISHERIES MONTHLY REPORT APRIL 2011

State Record Muskellunge

- Western Region II staff verified a new State Record muskellunge in the Potomac River. Hoping to catch a few walleye, twelve year old Kenny Files was fishing the flooded waters of the upper Potomac near Dam 4 with his father when Kenny hooked up with the big fish. Kenny and his dad had trouble finding a certified scale, so the fish was kept on ice for several days before it was weighed. Even so, the 45" fish with a whopping 24" girth officially weighed 31.75 pounds. This eclipsed the old record muskellunge caught in 2004 that weighed in at 28 lbs, 0.25 oz.

Trout

- Central Region Inland Fisheries staff conducted a Brown Trout fry count in the Good Hope tributary to Paint Branch on April 7. Eleven fry were counted just downstream of where staff observed a redd in November. No other fry were observed within the tributary. On the same day, staff also conducted a fry count in the Patuxent River above Mullinix Mill Road within an established electrofishing station. Stream flow was elevated slightly and no fry were observed. Later, Director of Field Operations, Charlie Gougeon observed two advanced Brown Trout fry just above the Mullinix Mill Road bridge on April 27.
- Central Region staff identified one active brown trout fry in the Gunpowder Falls tailwater at York Road on April 18. The tailwater flow was high and not optimal for observing swim-up fry.
- Central Region Manager Mark Staley and Director of Regional Operations Charlie Gougeon met with members of Trout Unlimited, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission staff, and DNR Power Plant Review staff to discuss hydroelectric operations at Brighton Dam. The hydroelectric generation schedule at Brighton has become much more active and intensive in the past year. Potential changes in the current operating plan were discussed. The potential impacts to the aquatic ecosystem caused by wide fluctuations in flow have become a source of concern for Inland Fisheries and Trout Unlimited. The Power Plant Review staff will be acting as a liaison between fisheries stakeholders and the hydroelectric operators.
- Western Region I staff conducted emergent brook trout fry surveys within Savage River Watershed streams. It appears that reproductive success was marginal to poor in most streams. High stream flows throughout the emergence period may have affected fry survival.
- Western Region II biologist John Mullican provided on-site resource and fish management information at the Beaver Creek Catch-and-Return (C&R) Area to National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) students taking a stream morphology class taught by expert Dave Rosgen. The restoration projects in the C&R Area were used as examples demonstrating the many successful structures as well as pointing out where improvements could have been made. Students were told about the benefits of the projects and how habitat alteration has improved trout populations.

Spring Trout Stocking

- Central Region staff continued to assist hatchery personnel from Albert Powell and Unicorn Hatcheries with the stocking of Rainbow Trout for the spring trout season. Approximately 30,000 Rainbow Trout were stocked into Central Region ponds, lakes and streams in April.
- Staff stocked trout in the Eastern Region to diversify and improve spring angling on the Eastern Shore. Rainbow trout were stocked into Big Elk Creek (2400), Rising Sun Pond (245), Principio Creek (475) and Howard's Pond (340). Trout stocked in these areas should not affect the native species that inhabit each ecosystem, since they are usually harvested quickly by anglers.
- Western Region and Bear Creek staffs 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. The Freshwater Institute donated several hundred rainbow trout that were stocked into the North Branch Potomac River C&R Areas. Staff also stocked about 23,000 rainbow fingerlings into the North Branch Potomac River Zero Creel Trout Fishing Area.
- Western Region II sent a sample of trout from the Montevue Spring in Frederick to Lamar for disease testing prior to stocking. The Potomac Valley Fly Fishermen rear trout at the spring each year. With a clean bill of health, a total of 550 adult rainbow trout were stocked into Hunting Creek in Cunningham Falls State Park to supplement the existing trout population.
- A total of 8,135 adult rainbow trout were stocked into Frederick County put-and-take areas in Western Region II.
- Western Region II received one hundred thirty rainbow trout up to 2 lbs from the Freshwater Institute in Shepherdstown WV and stocked them into the Catoclin Creek Delayed Harvest Area in Myersville.
- Western Region II treated Woodsboro Pond with AquaShade to curb the growth of nuisance filamentous algae and narrow-leaf pondweed. This community pond provides put-and-take fishing for stocked trout each spring and is used by the Boy Scouts each spring to teach scouts how to fish.
- Southern Region completed stocking rainbow trout for the spring put-and-take trout fishery. Most fish ranged from 8 – 12 inches in length, although several larger fish were released. In all, roughly 18,000 fish were stocked in the Southern Region for the winter/spring 2011 season.

Data Management

- Biologist Todd Heerd updated the Central Region public fishing access locations on Google Maps. There are currently 73 pond, lake and stream access locations for the Central Region.

Fish Rescue and Removal

- Central Region Manager Mark Staley met with Carroll County Bureau of Resource Management staff and contractors onsite in Eldersburg to develop a plan for fish removal and relocation from a stormwater management pond in the

Quail Meadow neighborhood in Eldersburg. The pond will undergo retrofitting of structures later this year. The fish removal and relocation is needed to preserve the fish established in the pond.

- Later in April, Central Region biologists Mark Staley and Todd Heerd and Director of Regional Operations, Charlie Gougeon successfully accessed the Quail Meadow pond with the electrofishing boat thanks to a recycled concrete path installed by the contractors who will be retrofitting the pond. Largemouth Bass, Bluegill Sunfish, White Perch, Black Crappie, one Channel Catfish and one Common Carp (mirror variant) were removed from the pond and transferred by Carroll County Bureau of Resource Management staff to Arthur Ridge stormwater management pond near Eldersburg. The “event “ was witnessed, photographed and videotaped by numerous neighbors of Quail Meadow and Carroll County Government, much to their delight.
- Western Region II recovered over 600 pounds of trapped carp and channel catfish from a stormwater management pond in the Deerbought subdivision near Walkersville and returned them to the Monocacy River following the recent floods. What could be more fun than chasing 20 lb carp in a foot of muddy water with backpack electrofishing gear? Carrying 100 lb tubs of muddy, splashing fish up hill to the tank truck!
- Western Region II received assistance from the Western Region I, staff to remove a number of carp and catfish from the C&O Canal in Washington County and return them to the Potomac River. Efforts were hampered by heavy rainfall the night before that raised the level of water in the canal making collection more difficult. The fish had been stranded in the canal by recent flooding.

Black Bass

- Inland Fisheries staff members John Mullican and Susan Rivers attended the Association of Mid-Atlantic Aquatic Biologists (AMAAB) conference at Cacapon State Park and participated in a round table discussion of the smallmouth bass fish health issues in the Potomac and Susquehanna watersheds. Although the issues affecting the watersheds are different, there are overlying issues related to nutrient input that are universal. Intersex, high parasite loads, and lesions caused by bacteria infections are common to both watersheds. Most were in agreement that reducing nutrient inputs would have a significant benefit to water quality, thereby reducing a number of stressors affecting fish populations. Studies of these smallmouth populations will continue and the roundtable participants will continue to share valuable information to attempt to address problems in these watersheds.

Environmental Review and Planning

- Central Region Manager Mark Staley attended a meeting with the Howard County Planning Department staff and other DNR representatives in Ellicott City to discuss Howard Counties’ Comprehensive Plan update and Green Infrastructure components.
- Western Region Manager Alan Klotz provided comments to the Environmental Review Unit or Resource Agencies regarding the following:

- Attended the Scientific Certification Systems audits of Potomac/Garrett and Savage River State Forests. The audits are conducted by an independent service in order to certify wood products coming from High Conservation Value managed forests in Maryland.
- Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Mining Program regarding an emergency abandoned mine repair. A small mine collapse occurred in the Georges Creek watershed, and a small tributary stream was affected. Staff recommended a stable streambed with ample fish and aquatic macroinvertebrate habitat down to the confluence with Georges Creek be established in the affected areas. Also, staff recommended riparian plantings to ensure long-term streambank stability.
- The quarterly meeting of the Deep Creek Lake (DCL) Workgroup was held at the Discovery Center. Guest speakers included Steve Sherrard of the Garrett County Health Department who spoke the counties efforts for monitoring bacteria levels in the lake, Richard Ortt of MD DNR Resource Assessment Service (RAS) presented the findings of the DCL Sediment Study; Sherm Garrison of MD DNR presented the findings of the 2010 water quality conditions in DCL as well as the 2011 monitoring plan; Darlene Wells of the MD Geological Service presented on the Sediment Chemistry Mapping of DCL; Carolyn Matthews, DCL Manager gave an overview of lake management activities; and Alan Klotz spoke on recent fish population surveys in DCL.

Environmental Education

- Western Region I staff conducted the Aquatics portion of the Allegany County Envirothon held at Rocky Gap State Park. Students were tested on their knowledge of fish anatomy, fish identification, benthic macroinvertebrates, and estuaries. The Allegany High School team took top honors. Staff also provided Envirothon training to students in Garrett County high schools.

Tidal Black Bass

- Eastern Regional and Unicorn Hatchery staff collected 204 largemouth bass from the Sassafras River, Northeast River, Susquehanna River and Susquehanna Flats for use as broodstock. Collections were more difficult this year due to the weather conditions. The principal use of the young largemouth bass will be to stock the tidal-freshwater portion of the Choptank River, where the bass population has been in a state of decline. Tidal largemouth bass fisheries are one of the most popular and economically important fisheries in the state.
- Southern Region biologists, with Tidal Bass Manager Joe Love, continued their work monitoring largemouth bass abundance in Chicamuxin Creek to determine fish use of the sanctuary area.
- With the start of the 2011 black bass tournament season, Southern Region biologists and Tidal Bass Manager Joe Love have continued their work attending tournaments to monitor conditions and interact with anglers.
- A bass tournament organized by Maryland Bass Federation Nation (MBFN) and in cooperation with MDDNR was announced for May 21st and will have its

- anglers participate in stocking larval largemouth bass to key areas of the Choptank River, areas that promote their survivorship and growth.
- Staff sampled Largemouth bass in a sanctuary on the Potomac River and their numbers were compared with a reference area. Several spawning adults were observed in the sanctuary. Additional work will be conducted throughout summer to determine the benefits of the sanctuary; this is the second year of such work.

Walleye

- Eastern Regional Staff stocked 20,000 walleye fry to enhance the Susquehanna River walleye fishery. The Susquehanna offers good habitat and abundant forage, which should allow for quick growth and survival.
- Western Region I staff conducted the annual walleye survey in Deep Creek Lake. Walleye continue to be an abundant fish species in DCL, with a catch per unit effort (CPUE) of 210 walleye per hour of electrofishing was obtained. Despite the nasty weather, anglers did rather well during the annual Garrett Basser's Open Walleye Tournament with 34 boats weighing in 135 fish from 15 – 20 inches.
- Western Region II stocked approximately 600,000 walleye fry hatched at the Manning Hatchery into the upper Potomac at Cumberland and Spring Gap to supplement natural reproduction. The fry were produced from brood walleye collected from the Potomac River further downstream in Washington County. Excessive flooding this spring is expected to reduce survival of the stocked fry as well as fry produced by natural reproduction.

Fish Health

- Western Region II staff continues to collect Potomac River and tributary grab water samples each month to assess seasonal variability in estrogenicity. This data may shed more light on when and how intersex is induced in smallmouth bass.
- Fish Health Specialist Susan Rivers met with Restoration and Enhancement and Anadromous director Brian Richardson and Oxford Lab pathologist Joe Marcino to discuss fish health training needs for Inland Fisheries staff. Joe is a certified pathologist with American Fisheries Society and offered to provide fish health training to interested staff at the January Fisheries Retreat at New Germany. Plans were developed for two levels of training opportunities: one general one-day class for any interested staff at four locations across the state; the second will be an in-depth class for two employees to cover fish health issues in hatcheries and field operations. The four one-day classes were scheduled by Brian for early August. This training will help staff protect fisheries resources and will give them the tools to respond to health problems more effectively.
- Fish Health Specialist Susan Rivers responded to an inquiry from Frederick County Trout in the Classroom (TIC) coordinator Charles Dinkel regarding trout mortalities at Monocacy Middle School. Investigation found that the biofilter was replaced just before the students went on spring break for 10-days. During the break, water quality was not closely monitored and ammonia and nitrates built up in the water. The new filter lacked the biofilm necessary to remove wastes. This was complicated by lights being turned off during break. In dark conditions, the

bacteria that break down ammonia and nitrates don't work well, so these contaminants built up. The mortalities were due to damage to the gills. The school coordinator Janet Lashley found some dead fish when she returned to school. Students are carefully monitoring water quality and have cut back on fish food until the fish improve and mortalities decrease. Mortalities tapered off after these measures were adopted. The TIC is a teaching experience sponsored in Frederick County by the Federation of Fly Fishers and teaches youth about environmental issues and aquaculture.

Land acquisitions

- Western Region I Manager Alan Klotz provided Fisheries Service input for the following potential land acquisitions:
 - The 33-acre Thayer Property. This property shares a common boundary along the west side of Mount Nebo WMA and has road frontage on Oakland Sang Run Road. The property also adjoins the Youghiogheny River, which has been designated as a wild and scenic river. Acquiring this property will provide potential opportunities for public access to the river and ensure continued protection of riparian habitat and reduce threats to water quality from development pressures in the area. Acquisition will also contribute to continued habitat value and rural scenery along the highway. The property can provide additional hunting and fishing opportunities.
- Western Region II biologists Mark Toms and John Mullican met with John Brasky from Land Planning and Acquisition with DNR at the Foltz property on Antietam Creek to evaluate the benefit of a public access easement. Mr. Foltz generously provides a camping area for paddlers using the Antietam Creek water trail. Fisheries is interested in the possibility of improving fishermen access. However, access through the property to the creek is currently via a long, unimproved access road which would require expensive modifications and continual maintenance. After hours security of the area is also an issue. Fisheries will continue to consider this property, but with a shortage of funding statewide, action on this parcel will not occur in the near future.

Staff Efficiency

- Eastern Region technician Jerry Stivers completed maintenance on several Regional boats to make sure they were in optimal condition to begin the sampling season.

Invasive species

- Western Region I staff continued to maintain Didymo wash stations throughout Garrett and Allegany Counties. They added three additional wader wash stations on the Savage River Tailwater.
- Southern Region biologists began searching for blue catfish in the Potomac River. This year, biologists are sampling these fish to determine diet, relative abundance, and other parameters.

- Southern Region Manager, Mary Groves, gave a Powerpoint Presentation on Blue Catfish to the Fisheries Management team which meets weekly in Annapolis. The presentation summarized a presentation given to the Goal Implementation Team at Williamsburg, VA in March and included data collected by MDDNR, the Va. Dept. of Game and Inland Fish, the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences and the Virginia Commonwealth University. These agencies are working together to compile data that will be used in a cohesive regional management plan for blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay drainage.
- Inland Fisheries Division has implemented a program to kill northern snakehead and thereby help protect the largemouth bass population; three anglers who submit information on the catch and kill to the anglers log will win prizes

Fish Hatchery Production

- Biologists from the Southern Region have been busy collecting fishes for broodstock to be used at Manning Hatchery. Species collected include largemouth bass, striped bass, and bluegill sunfish.

Impoundments

- Southern Region biologists stocked Rocky Gorge and Triadelphia Reservoirs with striped bass fry to improve fishing opportunities. There were 200,000 striped bass fry placed in each reservoir on April 22, and 90,000 in Triadelphia on April 29.
- Southern Region biologists collected several smallmouth bass adults for brood and stocked them into the Triadelphia grow-out pond where they are expected to spawn. The grow-out pond was prepared ahead of time by stocking a load of fathead minnows which will offer a good food source for the juvenile smallmouth bass. The juveniles will be stocked back into Triadelphia once they are large enough to avoid predation in the reservoir.

Outreach

- Western Region II biologist Mark Toms attended “Nature Fest” held at the new Catoctin Creek Park in Frederick County and displayed informational posters showcasing our work in Fisheries Service and our involvement with local fishing resources. Fisheries is working with the Frederick County Parks and Recreation Department to establish a delayed harvest trout fishing area for Catoctin Creek within the park. Such a fishing opportunity would be an asset to the county and provide valuable outdoor recreation.