

Freshwater Fisheries Monthly Report – October 2016

Stock Assessment

Potomac River Fall Survey - The annual fall electrofishing survey has started for the upper Potomac River. Twelve stations from Edwards Ferry to Paw Paw are sampled each year by boat electrofishing to monitor the population and condition of smallmouth bass and other gamefish species (walleye, muskellunge) in the river. Preliminary results match the overall river trend of improving smallmouth bass numbers as you move upstream. The 2016 average catch rates for stock smallmouth bass (>7 inches) for sections of the Potomac River are listed below

- Lower (Edwards Ferry to Brunswick) – 33 smallmouth bass per hour
- Middle (Harpers Ferry to Dam #5) – 68 smallmouth bass per hour
- Upper (McCoys Ferry to Paw Paw) – 118 smallmouth bass per hour

Several walleye were collected in the survey, primarily in the middle and upper sections. The largest walleye collected so far was just over 29 inches.

Although not targeted specifically during the fall surveys, several adult muskie, including one over 44”, and young-of-year muskie were collected. Potomac River sampling will be completed in early November.



Trophy muskellunge collected by electrofishing from the nontidal Potomac River

Impoundment Surveys - Two impoundments in Washington County, Big Pool in the C&O Canal National Park and Greenbrier Lake in Greenbrier State Park, were sampled by boat electrofishing to assess gamefish stock conditions. Catch rates in Big Pool for stock size largemouth bass (>8 inches) were 40 fish/hr. While not present in large numbers, the largemouth bass in Big Pool were in good condition, with the largest fish measuring 19 inches. Catch rates for stock size largemouth bass in Greenbrier Lake were

170 fish/hr. The majority of these were 8-12 inches in length, with very few fish larger than 13 inches. Thick aquatic vegetation in Greenbrier Lake makes both shore and boat fishing access difficult.



Largemouth bass collected from Big Pool in the C&O Canal National Park

Brook Trout Population Monitoring - Conducted 75-meter multiple pass electrofishing surveys at two established sites in Walker Run and Silver Run, two tributaries to the upper Gunpowder River within the brook trout radio telemetry study site. Nine adult brook trout and 25 young-of-the-year (YOY) were collected in the 75-meter Walker Run site (14 lbs/acre adults, 536 YOY/mile). Twenty-five adult brook trout and 39 YOY were collected in the Silver Run site (27 lbs/acre adults, 837 YOY/mile). No radio tagged adults were found at either site.

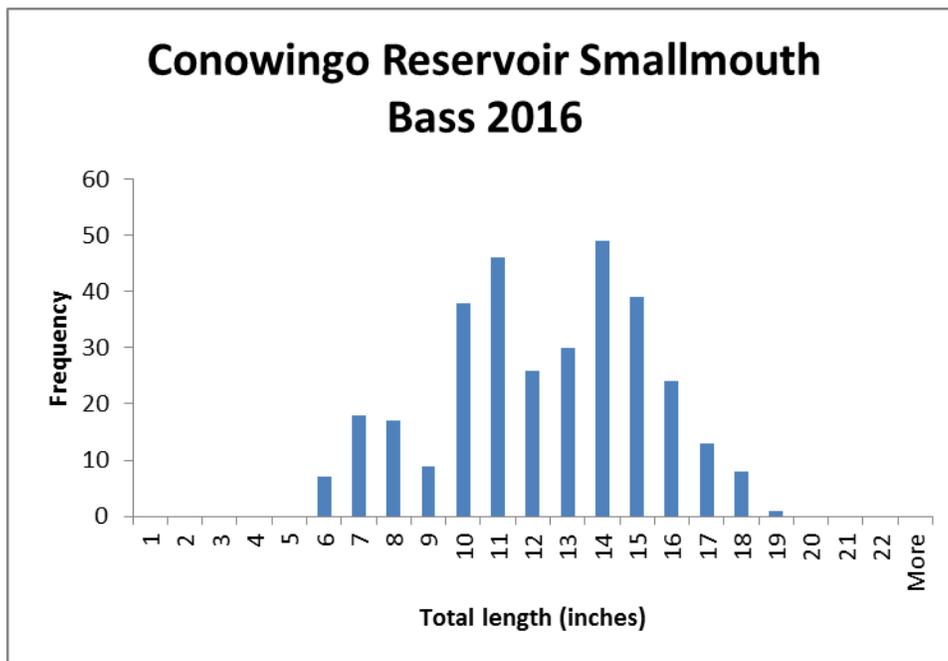
Tagged Brook Trout - Continued the radio telemetry search for radio tagged brook trout in the upper Gunpowder River above Prettyboy Reservoir. All brook trout signals known to be in the Gunpowder were located as well as the one signal in Muddy Creek. Staff conducted an electrofishing search at each location where signals were found. One pool was too deep to electrofish to confirm whether the signal was from a live trout since most signals had not moved during the past two months of the study period. No live trout were found with the electrofisher and all signals appeared to be from deceased fish as a result of predation, angling or natural causes.

Liberty Reservoir - Conducted electrofishing surveys on Liberty Reservoir. Fifteen random sites around the entire perimeter of Liberty Reservoir were surveyed over three nights. The proportional stock density (PSD) for largemouth bass stock size and larger was 41 and the catch per unit effort (CPUE) of stock size and larger largemouth bass was 77 fish/hr. The largest largemouth bass collected was 19.2 inches and 3.9 pounds. The bluegill sunfish fishery looked very good with many quality size fish and a PSD of 46. Sampling was difficult at some sites due to abundant aquatic vegetation including Hydrilla and Naiad. Eighteen species of fish were collected or observed including smallmouth bass up to 17.5 inches and 2.4 pounds, yellow perch, white and black

crappie, channel catfish, white perch and for the first time in Liberty Reservoir, a chain pickerel was collected confirming angler reports. No striped bass or walleye were observed.

Piney Run Reservoir - A single night electrofishing survey was conducted on Piney Run Reservoir. Seven random sites were surveyed resulting in a largemouth bass PSD of 59 and a CPUE of 94 \geq stock size/hour despite difficulty surveying some sites due to abundant aquatic vegetation including Hydrilla, wild celery and lily pads. The bluegill PSD was 28. The largest largemouth bass collected was 19.5 inches and 4.3 pounds.

Conowingo Reservoir - Eastern and Central Region Freshwater Fisheries Staff completed a black bass and walleye assessment of Maryland's portion of Conowingo Reservoir. The assessment consisted of sampling 10 randomly selected sections of shoreline with a boat mounted electrofishing unit. All sampling was conducted after dark. A total of 325 smallmouth bass, 88 largemouth bass, nine walleye and seven small flathead catfish (removed) were collected. The data suggests that Conowingo Reservoir may currently be the best smallmouth bass fishery in the State. The number and size of smallmouth bass collected were truly impressive; smallmouth between 15"-18" were very common in most samples. The largest smallmouth bass collected was 18.9 inches and 3.4 pounds and the largest largemouth bass was 15.8 inches and 2.6 pounds. All bass collected were in excellent condition. Lower than expected numbers of walleye were collected; however the week of warm water temperatures just prior to the survey may have affected their catchability.



Length frequency of Conowingo Reservoir smallmouth bass collected by electrofishing during October, 2016.



Biologist measuring Conowingo Reservoir smallmouth bass.

Outreach

Envirothon – Provided aquatic training for four high schools in Allegany County for students competing in the Envirothon competition in spring 2017. Staff also submitted the aquatic study guide for the National Envirothon which Maryland will be hosting in July of 2017.

Becoming an Outdoor Woman Workshop – Provided instruction for the “Let’s go Fishing” class which teaches basic fishing techniques, fish handling, filleting and cleaning, and several methods of cooking their catch. This class is one of 39 classes offered during the weekend event. Participants were able to sample northern snakehead and blue catfish during the annual game feed evening program. Thanks to Southern Region staff for collecting the fish for the program.

Stocking and Population Management

Rainbow Trout - Assisted with the fall stocking of approximately 27,200 adult rainbow trout in 58 areas across the state for the fall trout season. Please see the MD DNR Trout Stocking website for additional information.

<http://dnr.maryland.gov/Fisheries/Pages/trout/stocking.aspx>

Rodeo Stocking - Stocked 200 rainbow trout raised by Albert Powell Hatchery to the Indian Head Naval Base for their annual youth fishing rodeo.

Largemouth Bass - Stocked 500 largemouth bass (8-12 inch) that averaged 2 to the pound into the tidal Gunpowder River for put-and-grow to enhance the black bass fishery in that area.

Fingerling largemouth bass (N= 1175) produced by Manning Hatchery were stocked into the tidal Patuxent River. These fish, roughly 4 to 6 inches on average, will bolster natural reproduction to the river and contribute to a small but popular recreational fishery.

Brook Trout Program

Presented information on statewide and western Maryland region brook trout status to the Men's Conference at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Cumberland (Allegany County). Over 100 outdoorsmen attended the event and a lively, informative, and entertaining discussion was held.

Met with students from Hood College to discuss fisheries management as a career choice and to discuss brook trout management in the Savage River watershed. Topics ranged from what classes to choose from to the varied research and management work conducted by Fishing and Boating Services staff.

Conducted a phone interview with Allan Ellis for airing on the Outdoorsman Radio Show. Topics discussed were focused on brook trout and northern pike and covered conservation, management, and angling tips and techniques.

Worked with Western Region I staff to initiate fall northern pike surveys on Deep Creek Lake. This work is being conducted in order to better understand the population dynamics and life history of the northern pike fishery in Deep Creek Lake.

Tidal Bass Program

Sampled 31 tidal black bass sites. The locations sampled included the Upper Chesapeake Bay, Swan Creek, Gunpowder River, Dundee Creek, Saltpeter Creek, and the Bush River including Otter Point Creek, Church Creek and James Run. Catch rates averaged 14 bass per hour throughout the course of the entire survey. Largemouth bass ranged in size from 116mm - 526mm (4.5" - 21") and the largest fish weighed in at 5.75 pounds. Good numbers of striped bass up to 25" were also observed at multiple sites in the Gunpowder River and Dundee Creek.



Followed up on reports of largemouth bass in Bear Creek in Dundalk and angler interest in what we would find by attempting to electrofish in Lynch Cove next to Stansbury Park

and Lynch Cove Park. Unfortunately, conductivity and salinity were too high to electrofish and likely too high for black bass survival.

Completed tidal bass assessments of the Wicomico and Pocomoke Rivers. Good numbers of bass of all sizes were collected from each system, but some truly large bass (>5 pounds) were collected from the Wicomico. Black crappie were particularly abundant in the Pocomoke River this year. Either river would be a great place to fish for largemouth bass or panfish.

Other

Western Region constructed a new portable tank with the ability to circulate water and oxygen. The tank will be used for light load fish stocking and serve as a holding tank for tournaments.