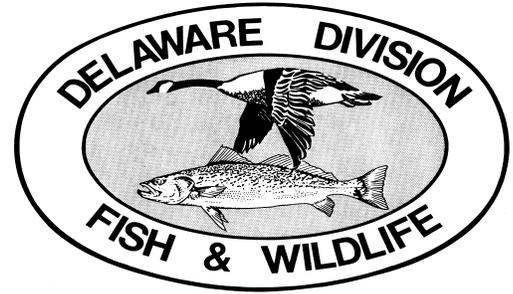


Tournament News



Fisheries Section Happenings

Spring 2010

The statewide freshwater angler mail survey forms were sent out in November with a second mailing in January to non-respondents. A total of 7,900 forms were mailed out to a sample of anglers (selected from the FIN number database). Forms were sent to **all** of those who reported that they planned to fish only in freshwater and to a **sample** of those who responded to the FIN survey that they planned to fish both salt and freshwater. Those who said salt only were not surveyed. After deleting bad addresses, the number of returns (approximately 1,900) is about 25% of the total number of forms. In other words, only 1 in 4 recipients of the survey returned it.

The low response rate is too bad because we use the resulting data to improve our ability to manage our freshwater fisheries and fishing areas most effectively. I will be publicizing the results of the survey as the data are tabulated and statewide projections made. If you are one of those that responded, thank you so much. All of the forms with questions directed to us are being forwarded to the most appropriate person for a reply.

Anglers were asked to list three fishing issues that they felt were most important in Delaware. Protecting water quality, making fish safe to eat (i.e. contaminant issues), and more fish are always common responses. However, this year, many anglers listed "promote catch and release fishing" as an issue. An immediate result of that suggestion is a plug for catch & release in the upcoming 2010 Fishing Guide. Another popular comment is always "stock more fish". Rather than respond individually to the anglers who listed stocking as a concern, I put together a flyer listing why and when we stock. It is also posted online under the *Fisheries Research Info* on the bottom right-hand section of the Fisheries webpage.

Another question asked for the first time was if the survey angler had ever checked out the Division website. Although the data haven't been summarized, just from entering hundreds of forms, I would say at least half of the anglers had not done so. If you are one of those, take a few minutes to do so. You will be surprised at how much information is available there: the *Public Pond Guide*, the *Small Ponds brochure* for young anglers, and numerous webflyers on a wide variety of fisheries research projects. We try to make our website as user friendly and informative as we can. If you have any suggestions for additions or changes, just contact me.

Cathy Martin

www.fw.delaware.gov

Telephone numbers of Interest

- For tournament reports or tag returns: Cathy Martin, 302-653-2887, ext 106. Email:

catherine.martin@state.de.us
or

- Jared Jacobini, 302-653-2887, ext 110, Email:

jared.jacobini@state.de.us

- For tournament permits: Carol Gondeck, 302-739-9913

Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Agents:

New Castle & Kent Counties:
302-739-6139

Sussex County: 302-855-1901

Report Violations: 302-739-4580

Or 1-800-523-3336

24-hour Enforcement Number for Environmental Complaints

1-800-662-8802

Operation Game Theft :

1-800-292-3030

Permit applications:

www.fw.delaware.gov/

Click on Fisheries, Go to More Info for Anglers, & click on Bass tournament/bass tag reports.

Bass Roundtable Discussion

Joe Love, Tidal Bass Manager with MD DNR, organized a bass roundtable to discuss issues relating to largemouth bass in the Chesapeake. Invited participants included MD DNR, DE Division of Fish & Wildlife, MD Bass Federation Nation, US Fish & Wildlife Service, DE Bass Federation Nation, DE Bass Federation—FLW, outdoor writers, fishing guides, and other tournament organizers. It was great to have good representation from Delaware fishing groups.

Joe gave a summary of tidal bass research in MD waters during recent years. Cathy Martin gave a presentation on 21 years of bass research on the Nanticoke River system in Delaware with a discussion of historical recruitment problems and the success of the fingerling stocking program. It was stressed, however, that stocking is just one tool and is only appropriate in certain circumstances.

Joe then presented information on tournament angling in MD's many tidal streams. Although the number of tournaments and anglers has varied over the years, the catch rate (fish per angler hour) has remained very stable. There was some discussion about the large number of dead bass in Mattawoman Creek following a couple of large tournaments there last year. Although no definitive cause was found, a possible water quality problem may have been the culprit as a number of other fish species were also observed. The stressed condition of bass following weigh-in likely contributed to the large number of bass.

There was a lot of discussion on the value of tournament reports. Both MD and DE use these data to supplement our fish monitoring information and document the value of this specialized type of angling.

A common concern is the failure of fishing

Construction Updates

The Laurel (Riverview Park) boat ramp on Broad Creek was scheduled to begin construction sometime in November with completion scheduled prior to the 2010 spring fishing season. Some weather and soil problems occurred following site clearing leading to delays, but we are still hoping to have it open by late spring. This will provide much needed access for the upper portion of Broad Creek.

Statewide parking lot improvements are being scheduled. This will involve crack repairs, pot hole patching, and drainage improvement to 16 sites. The access areas targeted include: Phillips Landing, Seaford and several pond parking lots.

Design and permit applications are continuing on the reconstruction of the Cedar Creek Boating Access site near Slaughter Beach. It is anticipated that construction will begin by late summer 2010.

tournament sponsors to file tournament reports. For 2009, 85 Delaware reports have been filed with 39 still outstanding. That means about one-third of the events are not included in the tabulated effort. Our data shows a decline in reported bass club tournament effort from a peak of over 12,000 angler hours in 2006 to 8,083 angler hours in 2009.

It was noted that although permits to hold fishing tournaments in tidal waters are currently legally required in Delaware, Maryland does not have such a law. Permits are available at no cost from the Enforcement Section of this Division. Carol Gondeck is the person to contact (302-739-9913) for your 2010 event permits or you can apply online. Pond events do not legally require a permit but we like to put them on the calendar to keep all sponsors informed of possible conflicts.

Slot Limits No More

As was mentioned in the last issue, a public hearing was held in late December to discuss the removal of slot limits in Derby and Hearn's Ponds, and Andrews Lake. Very little feedback was received from anglers about this proposal.

However, the hearing was held with a supporting documents from Blue Rock Bass, De Bass Stalkers, and Eastern Shore Bass. Bob Wallace, Conservation Director of the DE BASS Federation Nation attended the hearing and also supported the proposal. This balanced out a Hearn's Pond shoreline resident who felt removal of the slot limits would cause a decline in larger bass in that pond.

At the hearing, a short history of the slot limits and their purpose was given by the Division. A summary of why the slot limits have been ineffective was also presented. The popularity of

catch and release worked against the mechanism of the slot limits which rely on harvest of smaller fish. Therefore, abundant smaller fish were not removed to allow better growth and ultimately larger fish.

In recent years, we have found that overcrowded fish can be more easily removed by Division staff via electrofishing and then transported to a pond where fish are needed.

As a result of the Public Hearing, the Secretary has signed an order to remove the slot limit restrictions from these three ponds. As soon as legal notices are published, the three former slot ponds will be subject to the statewide 12" minimum size limit.

This does not affect the minimum 15 inch size limit and 2/day bag limit for largemouth bass from Becks Pond.

Invasive Species: Rusty Crayfish

claws are closed.

The rusty crayfish (*Orconectes rusticus*) is one of those invasive species believed to have been initially introduced by anglers using them as bait. Unfortunately, they now inhabit a number of waterways in neighboring states (MD, PA, NJ).

Since the rusty crayfish is so close, it is important that anglers identify and remove it if found. There are several characteristics to help distinguish this crayfish from natives.

- Rusty-colored spots on both sides of the body just in front of the tail are typical.
- Larger, smooth claws (with few or no wart-like bumps) in comparison to natives
- Claws are grayish-green to reddish-brown and have black bands on the tips.
- An oval gap forms when the

- Rusty crayfish live in fast moving streams or permanent pools.

Rusty crayfish reduce the types of aquatic plants, small animals and even some fish. They can feed on fish eggs, freshwater mussels, and can reduce the quality of habitat present.

What can you do? Never release live, unused bait (especially if purchased). Do not move live crayfish (or baitfish) from one body of water to another. If you think you have found a rusty crayfish, freeze it and send a photo or call the Division. Also note the exact location where found.



Photo credit: nas.er.usgs.gov



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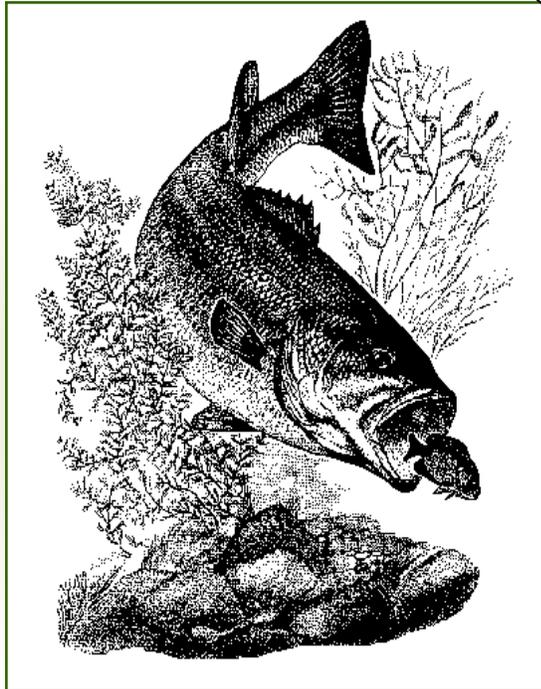
Nanticoke Tournaments over Time

A comparison of Nanticoke tournaments reports over the past 16 years shows wide variability in the number of anglers in events for which reports were received (red line in graph). Tournament angler numbers have ranged from 360 to 814 between 1994 and 2009. The number of events in the Nanticoke have ranged from 14 to 45. Much of the data are dependent on how responsible the tournament directors were at filing tournament report forms.

The green line in the graph represents cpue (catch per unit effort), in this case the number of bass caught per angler hour. This has been much more stable ((0.17 to 0.35/hour). However the general trend is up over the time period. The cpue data are multiplied by 10 to fit the scale of the graph.

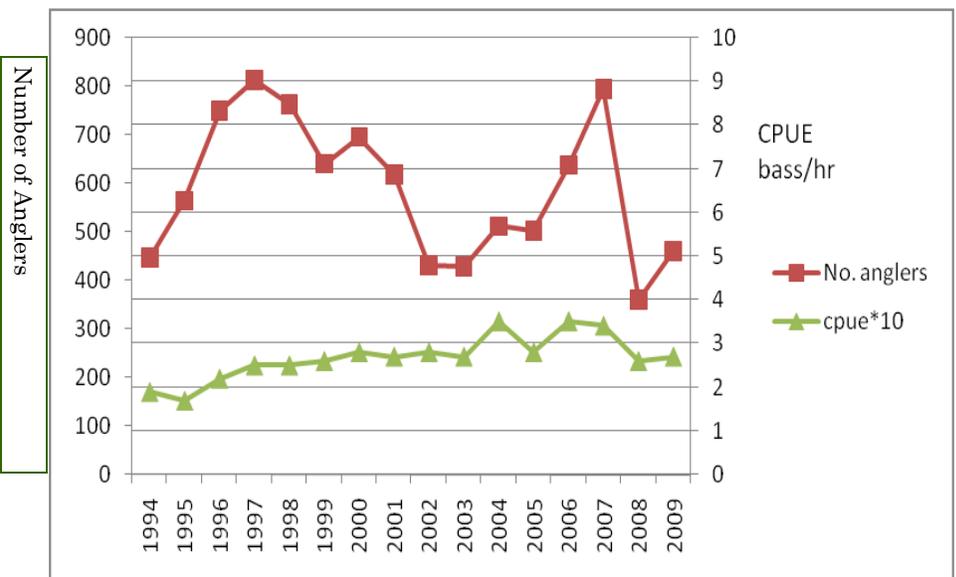
CPUE data between 1989 and 1993 averaged 0.16, on the lower end of the time series. Since 1996, the cpue has never been less than 0.22 fish/angler hour.

The importance of cpue is the overall trend line, not exact val-



ues. It only takes one large tournament held during a bad weather period with resulting very poor catch rates to result in a lower cpue. In 2009, the originally calculated rate was 0.29 until one report came in representing almost 400 angler hours with very few fish taken. The cpue dropped to 0.27 from 0.29. However the general trend is still up over the time period. I would like to see what it would be if all reports were filed.

Nanticoke River tournament reports between 1994 and 2009.



Time Series