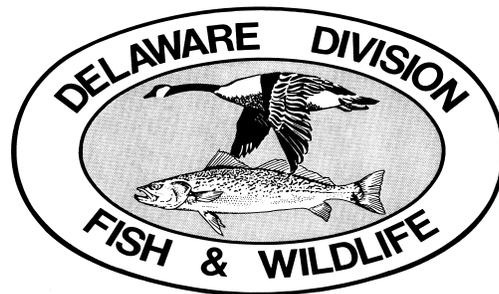


# Tournament News



## Fisheries Section Updates - Cathy Martin

Winter 2012/2013

### Farewell

It is with mixed feelings that I put together this issue of *Tournament News* as it will be my last one. I am retiring from the Division effective March 1 with over 44 years of service, all with DNREC. I have loved my job (almost) every day and worked with many people that I have been lucky to meet along the way.

I have a clipping on my desk that says, "Choose a job that you love and you'll never have to work a day in your life". I lucked into that perfect job in 1970 when I was transferred from the old Water and Air Resources Commission to Fish & Wildlife during the formation of DNREC. It has been a super place to work and wonderful people to work with. I consider some of the bass groups to be among the Division's greatest assets as we all work to improve habitat and fishing opportunities in Delaware. Please continue to support and cooperate with the next person who fills this position. *Cathy*

Check out the update on the tidal bass monitoring in the Nanticoke and Broadkill Rivers during fall 2012 (pg 2). We have begun a three-year tagging project on the Nanticoke and continue to tag bass in the Broadkill. Please report all tagged bass that you catch. A report form is available for print-out on our website or you can call (302-735-8650) and report the data directly. Your cooperation will enable us to determine bass survival rates and movements as well as describe some important characteristics of bass anglers (seasonal activity, boat vs shore, release rates, etc).

### MD DNR Permit System

Maryland DNR has begun a permit system for tournaments in MD waters. Tournament directors need a free permit if they:

- Have at least 10 boats participating and
- Offer anglers a reward for catching bass and
- Have a staged weigh-in area

You can request a permit from MD DNR to host tournaments at:

<http://tinyurl.com/8oanmug> but you still need to contact the overseer of your planned location for dates or times if necessary. If you have any questions, contact Joe Love at 410-260-8257 or [jlove@dnr.state.md.us](mailto:jlove@dnr.state.md.us)



[www.facebook.com/DelawareFishWildlife](http://www.facebook.com/DelawareFishWildlife)

### Telephone numbers of Interest

#### Tournament reports:

- Stew Michels, 302-735-2970 ; [stewart.michels@state.de.us](mailto:stewart.michels@state.de.us)
- Jared Jacobini, 302-735-8661 ; [jared.jacobini@state.de.us](mailto:jared.jacobini@state.de.us)

#### 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/](http://www.fw.delaware.gov/)

Click on *Fisheries*, under *Latest News*, click on photos "Recreational Fishing". Under Freshwater (Bass picture), click on *Fishing Tournament Application*. Form is sent directly to Carol Gondeck.

## Tidal Bass Surveys 2012

Monitoring of the tidal bass populations of both Broadkill River and the Nanticoke system was conducted in September & October, 2012. One portion of the Nanticoke—the area between Woodland Ferry and the MD state line—could not be sampled because the conductivity exceeded the capability of our electrofisher. However, the Nanticoke upstream of Woodland Ferry and Broad Creek from Phillips Landing to Laurel were completed. Bass were collected and marked during the first sample and then sampled again two weeks later to look for marked fish. Scale samples were retained from a wide length range of fish for analysis of age.

### *Nanticoke*

Bass abundance (fish/hr) was 52, an increase over the 2011 catch of 36 bass/hr. The population estimate was calculated as 10,450 well within the range of estimates historically (4,375—11,905). The peak in abundance by length was fish between 10 and 13.5 inches although bass up to 19.3 inches were collected. The 2012 year class was about average.

All legal-length fish were marked with individually numbered spaghetti tags in order to obtain updated information on behavior of anglers (seasonal activity, release rate, boat vs shore, residency, etc). Tagging will continue through 2014 and data will be compared to that obtained during the 1995-1999 tagging project. A total of 295 bass were tagged, 102 in the mainstem Nanticoke and 193 in Broad Creek. Fifty-six tag reports had been called by the end of 2012. One surprisingly, was for a fish tagged in 2006—the longest that one of our tagged bass has been at large. The remaining 55 reports were for fish tagged since mid-September. Two of the fish were caught and released (one by our Director!) and then caught, reported, and released a second time. None of the fish reported have been harvested. The majority of the tag returns were from boat anglers to date, but reports by shore anglers usually pick up between December and February so that may change as the season progresses.

### *Broadkill*

Catches of bass in the Broadkill were lower than those documented in 2011 but remained high (88.7 bass/hr). The peak catch in 2011 occurred in part due to an extreme low tide during sampling which forced fish out of shoreline structure and made them more vulnerable to the electrofishing boat. The population estimate in 2012 was over 3,000 fish, higher than any previous estimate here. Sixty-eight bass were tagged but only two angler reports have been received as of 12/31/12. Recruitment was moderately low in 2012 but stocked fish (i.e. those with coded-wire tags) bumped it up to just above average. Both the 2011 and 2012 year classes had over 20% (1 in 5) stocked fish but older CWT fish were much less abundant.

### *Largemouth bass virus testing (LMBv) 2012*

When we last tested Nanticoke River bass in 2006 for the presence of LMBv, one fish of the 31 collected during a late 2006 summer tournament was positive for the virus. To check for this virus in 2012, 24 bass between 10 and 16 inches were retained during Nanticoke electrofishing for testing. Five of those fish carcasses were also used to determine the level of mercury in the fillets. The US Fish & Wildlife Service Fish Health Center at Lamar PA did the virus testing while the Division of Water Resources funded the mercury analysis. None of these Nanticoke bass tested positive for the virus. The mercury level was determined to be 0.15 ppm, half of the advisory criterion level and below the mean 0.23 ppm documented in 2006.

Twenty-three bass were retained for LMBv testing during electrofishing in the Broadkill. Every one of these fish also tested negative for the virus. It was the first time bass from the Broadkill were tested so this was good news. Periodic testing will be conducted to monitor the incidence of this disease in Delaware bass fisheries.

## Invasive Species: Regional Snakehead Meeting & Plans

A December meeting was held in Annapolis with representatives from the US Fish & Wildlife Service, MD DNR, District of Columbia Environmental Office, VA Division of Game & Inland Fisheries, and DE DFW. The meeting served to provide the latest information on northern snakehead research in the region and to plan for future work.

Delaware's population within the Nanticoke system remains at a low abundance to date. Only three fish were taken by anglers during 2012 of which two were harvested by a bow angler. This type of angling for northern snakeheads seems to be increasing at a rapid rate within the region. It is now specifically covered by Delaware non-tidal regulations except where prohibited - e.g. DE State Park ponds or Becks Pond. No snakeheads were observed or collected during fall 2012 electrofishing efforts within the Nanticoke system .

Unfortunately the northern snakehead population in Becks Pond shows no sign of declining. Reproduction was documented for the second year within the pond. Six electrofishing surveys turned up no adults but they appeared to be in shallow waters inaccessible to the electrofisher. Three adults were taken by anglers and about a dozen fingerlings collected by dipnetting. One 10-inch snakehead was caught by an angler in the spillpool below Sunset Lake in fall 2012. We feel that this fish is likely a juvenile that emigrated from Becks Pond downstream to the Sunset Lake outlet stream and migrated up to the dam at Sunset. As always, if you catch a snakehead, check identification, kill it, and call the Fisheries Office to report it [302-739-9914]. Look for comparisons with other fishes often confused with snakeheads on our website.

Those states within the Chesapeake system who have large populations of snakeheads will be tagging these fish in 2013 in order to obtain population estimates within some of the smaller tributaries. If you catch a tagged fish, please call in the information. MD will continue its angler log database for any snakehead taken within Chesapeake tributaries including the Nanticoke. A summary of results and 2012 award winners is available online: [http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/bass/docs/Write-up\\_NSH.pdf](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/bass/docs/Write-up_NSH.pdf) 1,290 northern snakeheads have been caught and reported to MD DNR by recreational and commercial fishermen. The largest fish killed and reported was 18 pounds.

NOTE: More zebra mussels were found attached to buoys off Havre de Grace in December 2012. Check MD DNR website for precautions before leaving that area to return to DE.



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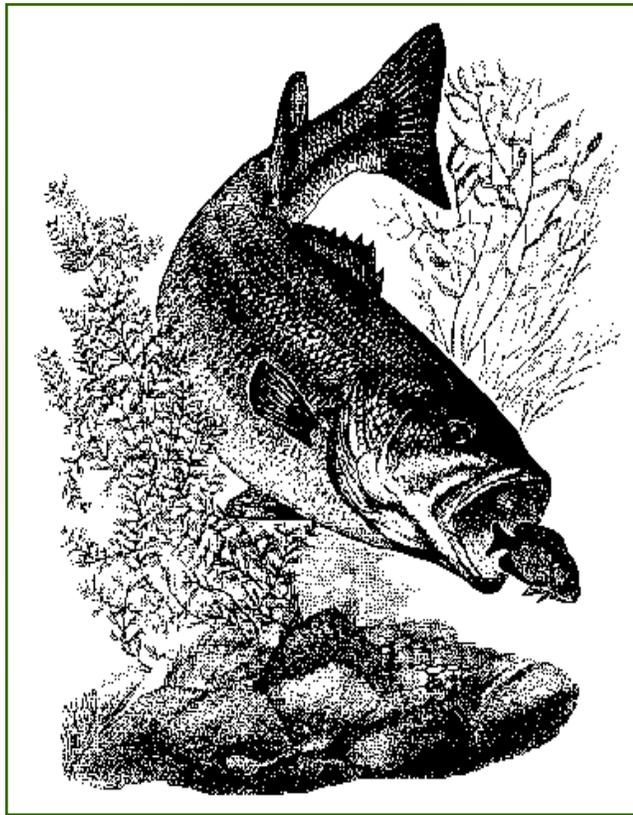
[www.fw.delaware.gov/](http://www.fw.delaware.gov/)

## Stocking Activities

Major storms over the past two years and increasing concern about dam safety have resulted in some emergency draw-downs in several of our ponds. In 2011, preparations for Hurricane Irene led to the near draining of Masseys Mill Pond. Bluegill and golden shiners were stocked in October 2011 to provide for spring spawning. Late spring 2012 electrofishing indicated that both species had reproduced so sufficient forage was available for bass. Therefore, largemouth bass fingerlings (1,500) were stocked in August. The recovery of these pond fish populations will be monitored.

Records Pond was in a similar situation during Hurricane Sandy. Bluegill and golden shiners were stocked in October 2012 and abundance will be checked in spring 2013. Largemouth bass will be stocked as soon as a forage base is established in this pond.

We try to maintain a good population of striped bass X white bass hybrids in Lums Pond. These are sterile fish so they must be stocked to provide a continual presence. Although these fish are not always available, Delmarva Aquatics was able to donate 1,000 fingerlings in November for Lums. The fingerlings averaged 4.7 inches and serve to provide a specialized opportunity for anglers not available in any other pond.



## Tournament Updates

Reports for 72 events (8,099.5 angler hours) were received for 2012, a decline over the 84 reports (10,189 angler hours) tallied in 2011. The biggest drop was for pond events, from 68 to 53. Trap Pond was the most popular location with seven contests totaling 984 angler hours. Eight bass over five pounds were reported during pond fishing events with half of those coming from Millsboro Pond. The highest average weights of bass were reported from Millsboro Pond, Garrison Lake, Broadkill River, and Trap Pond.

Tidal river events were primarily held in the Nanticoke, which had the most reported angler hours (2,290) at any location, although down from last year's 3,078 hours. However the catch rate (bass per angler hour) and pounds of bass per angler hour were both up in 2012. Two small events were held on the Broadkill.

These data are important when evaluating largemouth bass populations in Delaware as they serve to supplement electrofishing data. The tournament data base dates back to 1989 and provides a long-term picture of this specialized type of angling in Delaware waters.