

## 2018 State Updates

### Louisiana

#### Get Out and Fish

**Objective:** Increase the number of recreational fishing opportunities and participation in recreational fishing each year

1. Develop cooperative relationships with local government and community organizations to provide community fishing opportunities
2. Develop and/or maintain a fishery that will provide the opportunity to catch fish
3. Provide training and educational opportunities to teach children and adults how to fish and enjoy other related aspects of nature
4. Develop and increase anglers' and nonanglers' environmental awareness and conservation ethics in the community

**Current Status:** Get Out & Fish!," a community fishing program was developed and initiated in November 2014. The ponds are stocked with adult size channel catfish in the spring and fall and adult size rainbow trout in the winter when weather permits. There are currently 11 community fishing sites throughout the state including Girard Park in Lafayette, Zemurray Park in Hammond, Sidney D. Torres Memorial Park in Chalmette, BREC's Burbank Park in Baton Rouge, Kiroli Park in West Monroe, William T. Polk Park in Vidalia, Turner's Pond in Minden, Purple Heart Memorial Park in Ragley, Grambling City Park in Grambling, Southside Regional Park- Fabacher Field in Youngsville and Elmore D. Mayfield Park in Ruston. The Youngsville and Ruston sites joined the program in FY 2017-2018 and both will be stocked for the first time in spring of 2018.

**Summary:** The new program is a huge success with numerous fishermen of all ages coming out to fish and harvesting fish that were stocked.

## **Mississippi**

### **Winter rainbow trout stocking in state lake**

**Objective:** Determine angler acceptability, catch/harvest rates, angler use and exploitation, and cost/benefit of stocking trout during a typically low use period

**Current Status:** Ongoing

**Summary:** Anglers have used the resource and increased winter effort, catch rates and exploitation have been high (fish disappear before water gets too warm), but cost/benefit analyses were incomplete.

### **Periodic stocking of Channel Catfish in an urban fishing pond**

**Objective:** Increase angler use at a Community Fishing Assistance Program (cooperative between MDWFP and local entities) urban pond

**Current Status:** Ongoing

**Summary:** Trail cameras were used to determine angler effort. Catfish stocking showed a 40% increase (from baseline effort determined year 1) in angler effort, with peaks in effort after publicity about stocking.

### **Use of trail cameras to estimate angler effort**

**Objective:** Compare trail cameras to onsite surveys to determine angler effort at Community Fishing Assistance Program (cooperative between MDWFP and local entities) urban ponds

**Current Status:** Completed

**Summary:** Both trail cameras and onsite surveys found high fishing effort (over 1000 hr/ac), but onsite surveys estimated higher fishing effort than trail cameras attributable to low resolution of cameras and inability to identify anglers. Onsite surveys required more manpower, but also provided harvest and demographic data.

### **Use of traffic counters to estimate fishing effort at state fishing lakes**

**Objective:** To determine if traffic counters could be used to estimate fishing effort at state fishing lakes

**Current Status:** Completed

**Summary:** Traffic counters proved to be a useful indicator of angler usage (an alternative to angler creel surveys, trailer counts, or permit sales) when used in conjunction with on-site observations to determine the percentage of angler vehicles. Counters also showed high use of some lakes by non-paying visitors at site facilities (ex. bathrooms, picnic tables, etc.) that provided administrators justification for requesting additional operation and maintenance funding.

### **Relationship of survival to size at stocking of Hybrid Triploid Crappie**

**Objective:** Increase post-stocking survival of hybrid triploid (sterile) crappie to create a non-reproductive put/grow/take fishery in small impoundments

**Current Status:** Research project with Mississippi State University

**Summary:** Recently started

## Oklahoma

Creel surveys at Dolese Youth Park and NE Lions Park ponds to evaluate catch and harvest after multiple stockings of large hybrid sunfish. Angling pressure was monitored via trail cameras at each pond. Visitation was high at both sites. Catch and harvest was low at both. Marketing efforts will be increased to highlight ponds. An educational component will be added to help visitors catch more fish.

Dahlgren State Fishing lake renovation was completed in October 2017. Several fishing jetties were constructed. Multiple brush piles and rock piles were set in place around the berms. The old fishing dock was refurbished and a new section was added to extend further out in the pond. A new, 2 lane boat ramp was poured and the parking lot was leveled and widened. 150 redear sunfish brooders were stocked to seed the lake. The lake is currently 1/2 full.

All 4 State hatcheries are now producing hybrid sunfish (BG x GRN) for use at the Close To Home Fishing Program sites. Three year process involves brooder ponds, rearing ponds and growth ponds. Goal is to annually yield 12,000 6 – 8 inch fish.

Multiple contacts were made with land owners statewide regarding pond management issues such as design and construction, aquatic vegetation control, turbidity, fish stocking strategies, fish harvest strategies, suitable fish habitat, turtle / snail control and leaking ponds.

A land access program was implemented in order to provide sportsman with additional hunting and fishing opportunities statewide. Program emphasis is in the western half of the state where there is less public water and land is mostly leased or off limits. USDA – NRC funds are paying for most of the program's incentives for land owners.

## **Texas**

In Texas, public water bodies range from a fraction of an acre to over 100,000 acres in size; however, this summary focuses on bodies of water under 500 acres. These smaller impoundments are typically managed by local governments (cities, townships and counties) and serve the purpose of flood control, water supply and recreation. Some reside within state parks and are great venues for those looking for an all-around outdoor package. State park ponds provide free fishing opportunities under a free fishing initiative program. Anglers fishing within a state park are not required to possess a fishing license. This was designed to entice people to become involved in fishing while visiting state parks. Many small impoundments are focal points in small communities and serve as a great attraction for local residents. Others are spread throughout major metropolitan areas and serve as close-to-home opportunities for fishing and outdoor recreation. Most of these waters are managed with regular fish stockings to sustain fishing activity. Over 735,000 Channel Catfish and 325,000 Rainbow Trout were stocked into Texas waters; many into small impoundments to provide excellent fishing opportunities for Texas anglers.

The Texas population is expected to double by 2050, with most residents living around major cities. As demographics shift, fisheries managers need to work to maintain fishing relevant for future generations. With most residents centered on areas with small impoundments, these waters can serve as our best tools to provide fishing opportunities close to home. Also; with fluctuating water levels affecting access at many major Texas reservoirs, these small lakes, at times, become the most reliable fishing holes for Texas anglers. In the future, these small impoundments may become invaluable fishing resources as water issues become more challenging. TPWD, in conjunction with local authorities, is focused on managing these impoundments to provide fishing opportunities for everyone. For management purposes small impoundments have been classified into several categories to identify with certain programs/initiatives.

### **Small Lakes**

These are typically small impoundments between 75 and 500 acres, constructed as water supply reservoirs for smaller cities or are nested within state parks. These reservoirs may have regulated access and more restrictions than our larger reservoirs to preserve water quality and wildlife populations. When appropriate, TPWD will manage these small lakes similar to large reservoirs by applying fishing regulations, restoring fish habitat and angler access to enhance fishing opportunities. Stockings may not be applied as rigorously as in some smaller impoundments since the larger size and habitat availability will aid self-sustaining populations. Creel surveys and general fish population monitoring efforts are typically conducted as needed in these small lakes.

### **Community Fishing Lake (CFL)**

A CFL is a small impoundment designation, defined as a public impoundment, 75 acres or smaller located totally within incorporated city limits or a public park, or any impoundment lying totally within the boundaries of a state park. Nearly 800 CFLs have been registered statewide, with many new ones being added every year, mainly around large metropolitan areas, where development is high. Many CFLs are stocked annually with Channel Catfish and/or Rainbow Trout. Special fishing regulations apply

to CFLs, which differ from statewide fishing regulations. While stocking and regulation have been the primary management action for this classification of lakes, other management efforts have been applied at several locations. These waters regularly serve as host sites for state programs, angler outreach events and other educational purposes.

### **Neighborhood Fishin' Program (NF)**

Neighborhood Fishin' has become a trademark for urban fishing in Texas. This successful program has grown significantly thanks to generous funding support coming from the prestigious Toyota Texas Bass Classic (TTBC); a world class professional bass fishing tournament benefiting the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). Since its inception in 2007, the TTBC has generated nearly \$3.0 M in funding to support youth fishing initiatives, including the Neighborhood Fishin' program. In 2017, the Bass Angler Sportsman Society (BASS) joined Toyota as a major sponsor to continue these fundraising efforts. The new annual event is now called the Toyota Bassmaster Texas Fest (TBTF), which will continue raising money for this cause. The NF program is also supported by numerous other local government and private partners. Total program costs run about \$525K per year at current levels.

Neighborhood Fishin' consists of 18 small (1-6 acre) community park lakes (CFLs) located in 11 major metropolitan areas. Lakes are stocked on a seasonal, biweekly regime of Channel Catfish or Rainbow Trout eleven months during the year. With the program surpassing 14 years since inception, TPWD continues to pursue an extensive marketing campaign. For information on Neighborhood Fishin', please visit [www.neighborhoodfishin.org](http://www.neighborhoodfishin.org)

### **Diversified Community Angling (DCA)**

DCA is an initiative designed to provide a more advanced quality fishing opportunity for anglers. Small impoundments, mainly CFLs, serve as host sites for these unique fisheries. These impoundments are intensively managed for different species utilizing management practices such as highly-restrictive harvest regulations, fertilization, aeration, forage stockings and habitat and access enhancement. The goal is to develop and manage for diversified angling opportunities to existing and potential anglers in Texas. This will create quality urban fishery options not directed towards harvest opportunities, like provided by Neighborhood Fishin'; but more towards catch and enhancing sport fishing skills. DCA impoundments portray the following characteristics:

- A. Self-sustaining/productive lakes (larger size, habitat)
- B. High-quality, non-harvest oriented fishery; focus on recreational opportunity
- C. Controlled and improved access
- D. Improved infrastructure and fish habitat via effective partnerships
- E. Marketable to more experienced anglers

Currently pilot sites in different cities are at different stages or progression under their exclusive management plans. The goal is to successfully implement these management plans and evaluate impacts on anglers within five years of implementation. Afterwards, the plan is to make this initiative

marketable and will become the focus of expansion under developed partnerships with local stakeholders.

### **Other**

- Inspired by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's "60 in 60" challenge, Texas is committed to increasing participation in angling and improve state fishing revenue. The R3 initiative aims at **recruiting** new anglers, **retaining** active anglers, and **reactivating** lapsed anglers. TPWD put together a R3 task force to research strategies to implement marketing and management specifically in urban areas, where the maximum return on investment can be achieved. Small impoundments will serve as important venues in these future management efforts.
- The TPWD Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center (TFFC) outreach pond in Athens is stocked and used for fishing events, reaching well over 10,000 participants annually.
- TPWD offers valuable small impoundments management information for the private sector in its web site at: [http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/habitats/private\\_water/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/habitats/private_water/)
- Information on TPWD fishing programs, please visit: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/>

## Virginia

### **Determine seasonal and environmental effects on LMB electrofishing catch rates and catchability (q).**

**Objective:** To address questions concerning optimal timing of electrofishing surveys and strength of the data collected over a 4-6 week window.

**Current Status:** Data analysis and publication preparation phase

#### **Summary:**

- We evaluated the effects of timing and associated environmental variables on largemouth bass catch rates and catchability (q) in small impoundments across Virginia.
- The entire shoreline of 17 lakes (<150 acres) were sampled; eight lakes in spring of 2016 and eight in spring of 2017. Each lake was sampled at least four times, starting at least two weeks prior to typical sampling date, and once weekly until at least two weeks post normal sampling date.
- Fish were marked and enumerated each sampling trip to estimate population size, using the Schnabel multiple recapture event estimator.
- General mixed models were used to evaluate the effects of timing (repeated trips within lake) and environmental variables (water temp, secchi depth, and conductivity) on electrofishing catch rates. Although lakes showed considerable variability with LMB cpue, mixed model results suggest the variability had little to do with seasonality or any of the environmental variables.
- Estimates of catchability (distance: mean = 0.15, 95% C.I. (0.12-0.18)) (area: mean = 0.39, 95% C.I. (0.33-0.45)) were also not affected by seasonal or environmental variation.
- Catch rate variability was attributed both lake specific effects and user bias.
- Although, we determined electrofishing catch rates provide a strong estimate of overall largemouth bass population size in small impoundments, we recommend that small impoundments should be sampled at minimum three times/year to conduct mark recapture estimates to determine overall population size, if CPUE is to be used as an estimate for population size.
- Given catch rate and catchability variability, relying on one sampling occasion to estimate population size in small impoundments can result in under or over estimation of population size by (200-300%)

