TIDEWATER CHAPTER

Southern Division - American Fisheries Society

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NATIONAL FISHING WEEK

The Tidewater Chapter was a local sponsor of the Fishing Clinic held at Lake Trashmore in Virginia Beach. The Chapter provided financial support by purchasing bait for the clinic. Chapter President Ron Southwick, Secretary/ Treasurer Rick Eades and member Dean Fowler attended the clinic and helped with fishing instruction and coordination of activities.

As part of National Fishing Week, the Commonwealth of Virginia allows two free fishing days:a state fishing license is not required. In conjunction with the free fishing days, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Virginia Bass Federation, and McDonald's Restaurants co-sponsored six Family Fishing Clinics in Virginia on June 2. The clinics provided fishing instruction for children and their parents free of charge. Fishing tackle, bait, and refreshments are provided by state and local sponsors. Ninety-five children and 74 adults participated in the clinic.

FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING

President-elect John Merriner has scheduled the fifth annual meeting for 7-9 February 1991 at the Trinity Center, Pine Knoll Shores, NC. The Center is located on Bogue Banks Island between Atlantic Beach and Emerald Isle. The tentative program at present is: social on Thursday evening; paper presentations on Friday; and Saturday morning. Meeting will adjourn on Saturday at noon. There will be a poster session during the meeting. A complete program and travel information will be included in the December newsletter. Planning for this meeting will be discussed at the upcoming Executive Meeting.

MID-YEAR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The Executive Committee meeting of the Chapter will be held on 20 July 1990 at Waterman's Hall, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Gloucester Pt., VA., beginning at 0800. Items on the agenda include the usual reports plus formation of other Chapters within our area; Fifth annual meeting; fund raising; student social at Southeastern meeting (Richmond); art print raffle; Chapter-sponsored Student travel grants; plus many others. Chapter members are invited to attend and express their views. For travel information, contact Richard Eades at 804-683-9161.

MEMBERSHIP SUMMARY

As of 26 June 1990, the Chapter has lost 51 members from 1989, gained 45 new members, and now has a total membership of 85. Of these, 80% are also members of AFS. Total membership is similar to past years (30 below the highest total) and AFS membership has increased about 35%.

NEWS FROM THE STATES

North Carolina. ROANOKE RIVER STRIPED BASS. Increasing pressure from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and public conservation and interest groups forced the State to cancel the recreational striped bass fishery on the Roanoke River in mid-season this year. The Marine Fisheries Commission and Wildlife Resources Commission had negotiated harvest quotas for the commercial and recreational fisheries and each fishery was closed upon reaching the quota. This action was met with with mixed reactions, as might be expected. The closure may have affected the Wildlife Resources Commission creel survey conducted on the Roanoke River which was in full swing at the time of the closure.

Striped bass spawning activity monitoring conducted each year by East Carolina University indicates that spawning was more of a low-level and persistent nature compared to other years in which a number of spawning peaks were observed. In 1990, spawning began in late April and was ongoing in mid-June when monitoring was terminated. A major spawning peak occurred between 7 May and 10 May.-*RR*

APES PROGRAM. Dr. Robert M. Holman, Coordinator of the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study (APES), resigned effective in May to pursue other interests. According to APES personnel, the search for his replacement is underway and the position is expected to be filled by late summer.-*RR*

FINFISH BYCATCH WITH SHRIMP. Bycatch reduction seems to be the buzzword of the 1990's in the Southeast particularly in the shrimp fishery. Researchers Jim Bahen and Jim Murray of the UNC-Sea Grant program are conducting a study funded by NMFS to design and test a bycatch reduction device. Flume study trials on quarter-sized models were conducted at the David Taylor Research

Center in Rockville, Maryland, to determine flow patterns and compatibility of the devices with standard shrimp trawls. Full scale models were tested in June onboard the R/V Georgia Bulldog off the coast of Brunswick, Georgia. Initial results look promising: total weight of the catch was reduced in two of the three gear types tested without affecting total weight or numerical count of shrimp caught. Additional testing will be conducted in October.-*RR*

FISH KILLS. The Pamlico River estuary is once again the site of extensive summer fish kills. The environmental response team set up by the Division of Marine Fisheries suspects that very warm water and low dissolved oxygen levels combined with fish stress caused by open lesions (the so-called "ulcerative mycosis") probably caused the fish kills. Investigations are continuing.-*RR*

TRAWLING IN INTERNAL WATERS. The Marine Fisheries Commission, after two weeks of hearings and a summary report by the Division of Marine Fisheries, voted 7 to 6 to deny any changes in the trawling regulations. The Marine Fisheries Commission had been petitioned by recreational and environmental groups to consider eliminating crab/flounder trawling in the internal waters of the state. After hearing arguments from commercial, recreational, and environmental groups, the Commission heard the summary report from DMF Director Bill Hogarth in which Hogarth addressed three concerns: 1) bycatch of undersize fish and crabs; 2) directed flounder trawling; and 3) benthic habitat alteration. Hogarth stated that the first two concerns warranted a regulatory response from the Commission but felt that an outright trawling closure would impose too great a burden on the crab trawlers. He advised the Commission to do three things: 1) stop all night trawling; 2) require an increased mesh size to 4.5 or 5 inches; 3) restrict total incidental fish bycatch to 500 pounds from the present 1000 pounds of flounder. The interested groups gave a favorable response to this compromise. But the Commission's vote will start the process over again.-*JC,PTRF*

Virginia. MEHERRIN RIVER FISH LIFT. After a series of mechanical problems, the Emporia fish lift finally went into operation this spring. The Emporia Dam, located in Emporia, Virginia, on the Meherrin River, was built in 1908 and has been a barrier to anadromous fish ever since. With the new lift, anadromous fish species such as American shad, blueback herring, and alewife will be able to continue their migration upriver.

Unfortunately, things didn't go too well in the lift's first season of operation. The lift went into operation for the first time on March 30, too late for the early-spawning alewives. American shad showed up below the dam in fair numbers in March and remained into May. There were a few problems, particularly the close proximity of the lift entrance to the hydroelectric turbine discharge that kept shad from entering the lift. Fisheries personnel electroshocked and then manually transported approximately 100 American shad over the dam along with several blueback herring. Blueback herring did not come up the river in any numbers.

While the lift has not passed many of the species it was intended to, it is passing a fair number of fish over the dam, particularly crappie, bluegill, largemouth bass, redhorse sucker, and gizzard shad. It will be interesting to see what effects(particularly the introduction of gizzard shad) this has on Emporia Reservoir and the river above it. The lift has also passed a good number of adult sea lampreys which run up the river with the shad. It is hoped that next season will be more successful. Personnel from VDGIF, USFWS, and Synergics (dam operators) will examine the results from this year and make necessary changes in the lift design so that more fish can be passed successfully.

If any Chapter members would like more information or have some they can share with us, contact Mitchell Norman, Ron Southwick, or Richard Eades in Chesapeake, Virginia.-*RE*

Maryland. STRIPED BASS AQUACULTURE. After returning thousands of striped bass to Chesapeake Bay, the Baltimore Gas & Electric Company (BG&E) agreed on 30 May 1990 to relinquish operations of its Crane Aquaculture Facility to Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) for the next 10 years. Under the terms of the private/public cooperative agreement, MDA will contract with the University of Maryland's Agricultural Experiment Station (MAES) to operate the facility for research, education, and demonstration.

Established in 1983 at BG&E's C.P. Crane power plant on the Patapsco River in eastern Baltimore County, the facility was the first waste-heat of its kind for striped bass culture in the Chesapeake Bay Region. Between 1983 and 1989, 75,000 pounds of striped bass were reared there and 350,000 six-to-ten inch fish were stocked in Chesapeake Bay. An additional 50,000 stripers were consigned to cooperative research programs investigating the decline of striped bass populations.

Maryland's recent decision to lift the five-year moratorium on striped bass stimulated BG&E's decision to cease stock enhancement efforts. Now, the focus will shift to the growing field of aquaculture. Last year, striped bass reared at the Crane Aquaculture Facility spawned naturally in tanks for the first time, a major step toward development of an on-site broodstock for any aquaculture project.

MDA's Secretary, Wayne A. Cawley, Jr., remarked that "with this cooperative facility, Maryland has the opportunity to move into the forefront in aquaculture research by having a million dollar research and demonstration unit in immediate operation." Cawley added that the Crane facility will be the focal point for aquaculture research funded by state and federal appropriations to MAES. He also pointed out that the 1990 State legislature appropriated $250,000 to operate the Crane facility.

According to Dr. Raymond J. Miller, Vice Chancellor for Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Maryland, aquaculture research will include nutrition, reproduction, and disease prevention studies using the Crane facility's flow-through and closed-loop isolation tanks. "This facility and the continued development of its domesticated broodstock, gives the Agricultural Experiment Station a unique opportunity to conduct research that can lead to the intensive, tank-produced production of striped bass in Maryland," said Miller. "This will provide a profitable alternative agricultural enterprise that will benefit Maryland's aquaculture industry and Maryland's economy."-*RK*

PROPOSED STRIPED BASS FISHING REGULATIONS IN CHESAPEAKE BAY: 1990-1991

Virginia officials held a public hearing on 26 June on the proposed striped bass fishing regulations: public sentiment in Virginia appeared to favor a charter boat creel limit of 2 fish/person/day. Maryland officials will hold public hearings on 30 July in Annapolis and on 31 July in Salisbury. The Potomac River Fisheries Commission will meet on 17 August to finalize the proposed regulations. Dates for the pound net fishery in the Potomac are still subject to change.

SEASONS	Maryland	Virginia	Potomac River Fisheries Commission	District of Columbia
COMMERCIAL				
Gill net	Jan 1-31	Nov 5-Dec 5	Oct 8-14 Nov 8-14 Dec 8-14 Feb 8-28	No Commercial Fishery
Pound net	Nov 12-Dec 7	Nov 5-Dec 5	Sept 1-7 Oct 1-7 Nov 1-7 Dec 1-7	
Hook/Line	Nov 12-Dec 7	No Season	Sept 1-30 Nov 1-30	
All other	Nov 12-Dec 7	Nov 5-Dec 5	Dates above*	
RECREATIONAL	Oct 5-Nov 9	Nov 5-Dec 5	Oct 5-Nov 15	Oct 5-Nov 16
CHARTER BOAT	Oct 5-Nov 9	Nov 5-Dec 5	Oct 5-Nov 15	No Fishery
CAPS/QUOTAS (LBS.)				
Commercial	318,750	211,000	158,000	No Fishery
Recreational	318,750	No Cap	57,000	No Cap
Charter Boat	112,500	No Cap	14,000	No Fishery
CREEL LIMITS (No./person/day)				
Recreational	2	2	2	2
Charter Boat	5	5	5	-
LEGAL SIZE				
Minimum (in.)	18	18	18	18
Maximum (in.)	36	36	36	36

*Other gear allocated only 1,000 lbs.; may catch and sell during commercial seasons for pound nets, gill nets, and hook/line.

YELLOW PERCH POPULATION. According to fishery biologist Harley Speir, Maryland's Department of Natural Resources stocked approximately 600,000 yellow perch fingerlings this spring into the Corsica River (tributary to the Chester River) and Marshy Hope Creek (tributary to the Nanticoke River). Both stocked streams are on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Eggs were collected from wild adults in the Sassafras River in March and grown out in DNR ponds near Elkton, Md. The stocked fingerlings were marked with oxytetracycline so that their future contribution to Maryland's declining yellow perch populations can be assessed.-*RK*

FISH KILLS. Officials from Maryland and Virginia environmental agencies are investigating the possibility that a toxic chemical spill in the Potomac River killed thousands of catfish, American shad, white perch, carp, and river herrings in early May, 1990. Virginia's Water Control Board office received reports of dead fish floating in the river between Fort Belvoir to just south of the Quantico Marine Corps Base. In Maryland waters of the river, the fish kill appeared to be concentrated off Piscataway National Park.

Tests by Virginia and Maryland officials did not find low dissolved oxygen levels in areas where dead fish were observed. University of Maryland research scientist, Lenwood Hall, was conducting in situ toxicity tests with striped bass in the fish kill areas prior to and during the period when dead fish were observed. His continuous monitors did not reveal low dissolved oxygen levels. However, water samples collected by Hall at his study sites had elevated levels of zinc and chromium that approached or exceeded water quality standards. The search for cause(s) of the fish kill is continuing.- *RK*

RIVER HERRING SPAWNING GROUNDS. River herring populations in Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay have steadily declined since the late 1960's. Loss and degradation of spawning habitat are contributing factors to the decline. For decades, culverts and dams have blocked river herring migrations to the upper reaches of tributaries to Chesapeake Bay that could offer prime spawning sites. Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is attempting to recover lost spawning habitat with a two-pronged program aimed at the reopening of historic spawning sites.

This spring, Jay O'Dell, DNR biologist, directed the collection, transport, and release of about 30,000 prespawning river herring to stretches of Maryland streams that have not seen spawning migrations of anadromous fish in several decades. It is hoped that the transplanted adults will spawn in these presently inaccessible areas, their offspring will imprint to the stream chemistry, and as adults, will return to these sites in four or five years to spawn.

In the meantime, DNR, with support from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the National Wildlife Federation, will install 24 fish passage facilities to ensure that any adult river herring that find their natal streams can reach their historic spawning grounds.-*RK*

ALOSID AND BLUE CRAB MANAGEMENT. Two fishery management plans for Chesapeake Bay were completed and released in July 1989. Jointly funded by the Coastal Resources Division, Tidewater Administration, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and NOAA, the management plans fulfill part of the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement endorsed by the governors of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, the mayor of the District of Columbia, the Chesapeake Bay Commission, and the USEPA.

The Alosid Management Plan focuses on four species (American shad, hickory shad, alewife, blueback herring) that have declined dramatically in Chesapeake Bay. The goal of the plan is to protect, restore and enhance baywide shad and river herring stocks to generate the greatest long-term ecological, economic, and social benefits from the resource. Four problem areas - declining abundance, overfishing, stock assessment deficiencies, habitat loss and degradation - and associated management strategies are described.

The Blue Crab Management Plan focuses on the major shellfish species harvested in Chesapeake Bay. Blue crabs are currently the most valuable commercial species in the Bay. The 1988 reported commercial harvest of almost 83 million pounds (hard crabs and soft/peeler crabs) had a dockside value of almost 39 million dollars, and several times that amount to the retail market. The recreational blue crab harvest is not well documented, but may have approached 22 million pounds in 1988. Although catch statistics and other data have not detected a significant decline in the Bay's blue crab population, fishing effort is increasing and wasteful harvesting practices are evident. Thus, it makes good sense to develop a sound management plan and set research priorities for blue crabs now when they are still abundant, rather than wait for a dramatic decline to stimulate "catch-up" regulatory actions.

DNR staff are currently working on management plans for bluefish and weakfish that should be available later this year.- *RK*

FISH NOTES

The Estuarine Research Federation is planning to create a "Directory of Estuarine Scientists and Managers", presumably along the line of AFS' "Directory of NA Fisheries and Aquatic Scientists."

Dr. Rita Colwell, Director of the Maryland Biotechnology Institute and the Center of Marine Biotechnology, was elected national President of Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society, beginning in July, 1991.

The Louisiana House and Senate Natural Resources Committees approved the Governor's coastal restoration policy and an action plan to spend $26 million this year to restore the coastal wetlands and barrier islands.

The World Fisheries Congress now has more than 500 abstracts for papers which includes proposals for 22 work-

shops. Abstracts have been received from 50 different countries, with more than 50 from the Soviet Union.

Membership secretary Ruth Ploff (AFS) has resigned to pursue other interests. Ruth was with AFS for nearly five years. She has been replaced by Trish Maggi, an AFS staff member for three years who is also assistant computer systems administrator.

Get hooked on fishing, not on drugs! That's the message being spread by Maryland DNR staff as they plan a summer series of free fishing clinics for kids at the Horn Point Labs in Cambridge. Morning and afternoon sessions will be held on 9-12 July, 16-19 July, 23-26 July, 30 July-2 August, and 13-16 August. For registration materials or information call Cynthia Grove at 301-974-3664.

Dave Wharton will retire in July from the Maryland DNR after nearly 30 years of distinguished service. Dave is currently Assistant Director, Fisheries Division of Tidewater Administration.

Maryland's Party on the Bay is a 20 day festival that will celebrate the beauty of the Chesapeake Bay and current efforts to restore it. Activities include the Governor's Fishing Tournament (26 August), the Havre de Grace Arts and Crafts Show, Rock Hall fish fry, and Hard Crab Derby race in Crisfield. For details on events, call 301-974-5300.

MEETINGS

WARMWATER FISHERIES SYMPOSIUM I. 4-8 June 1991, in Phoenix, Arizona. The rationale for a western emphasis in the technical session is based on observations that western warmwater fisheries are ecologically different from east-of-the-Mississippi warmwater fisheries and future demand and opportunities on these fisheries is outpacing management attention. For more information, contact Jim Cooper, Forest Service, at 505-842-3264.

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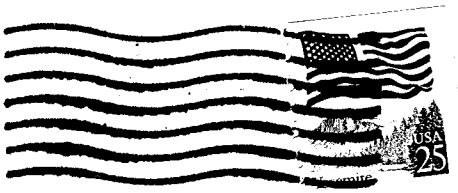

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