

Meeting of the Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee
July 14, 2022
Virtual Meeting

Committee Members in Attendance: Jason Andrick (Chair), Sean Beattie, Andy Becker, Randy Dwyer (Vice Chair), Ashleigh Holmes, Emily Mendenhall, Taylor Schmitz, Mike Selckmann, Art Senkel, and Jerry Smith.

DNR Staff in Attendance: Jason Cessna, Dan Goetz, Matt Lawrence, and Tony Prochaska.

Meeting Minutes

Introduction

Jason Andrick opened the meeting and welcomed the committee.

Jason Andrick motioned to approve the minutes from the April 7, 2022 meeting. Emily Mendenhall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the minutes were approved.

Committee Member Introductions

Jason Andrick initiated a roundtable discussion that provided each member in attendance with the opportunity to introduce themselves, provide some background information, and inform the other members about why they are interested in participating on the Coldwater Fisheries Advisory Committee (CFAC). After member introductions, department staff introduced themselves and provided some background as well.

MDE 2019 Triennial Review Update

Matt Lawrence provided a brief update on continuing discussions with MDE about the 2019 Triennial Review and the application of existing use determinations. CFAC discussed several concerns about these issues at the April 7, 2022 meeting and brought the concerns to the attention of the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission (SFAC). In response, SFAC submitted a letter (Attachment A) to the department requesting that Fishing and Boating Services work with Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to discuss and address the committee's concerns. The department leadership reached out to MDE and a meeting was held on July 14, 2022. Outcomes from the meeting included an agreement by both agencies to work together to

address the concerns expressed in the SFAC letter. MDE will craft a response to the letter and provide it to SFAC.

North Branch Potomac River Existing Use Determination

Jason Andrick opened the discussion with some background about recent management discussions between the department and fishing guides that operate on the North Branch Potomac River. While there are some disagreements about the management of the North Branch fisheries, all parties agree that thermal protection for the section of the river from the confluence of the Savage River to Pinto needs improvement. Jason turned the discussion over to Art Senkel.

Art Senkel described the unique nature of the North Branch Potomac River fishery and provided a brief background on both fishing and water quality regulations. Art made the case that the presence of the trout fishery proved the need for an existing use determination with thermal protection. Art recommended that the department should take the necessary steps to prove the need for a Use Class III designation or an existing use determination by providing evidence of a reproducing trout population. This may include altering stocking plans to document multiple year-classes of brown trout.

Tony Prochaska provided a response that described the actions that the department is taking to address this issue. The river is already designated as Use Class III from Jennings Randolph Dam to the confluence with Laurel Run. The 2019 Triennial Review will extend the Use Class III designation to the confluence with the Savage River. The North Branch Potomac River supports an important recreational fishery from the confluence with the Savage River downstream to Pinto but is designated as a Use Class I water body (warmwater). This was discussed with MDE at the July 14, 2022 meeting, along with options for redesignation to Use Class IV (recreational trout water) or an existing use determination. Tony informed the committee that the department has already compiled years of temperature data, fish data, and benthic data and has provided it to MDE. Furthermore, the department is continuing to collect data to support this effort and has already made changes to the stocking program to document trout reproduction.

Mike Selckmann asked if the department was communicating with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to manage Jennings Randolph Lake with a strategy that will protect the tailwater fishery.

Dan Goetz responded that the department is currently working with USACE to optimize dam releases for coldwater resource management while maintaining coldwater availability through warmer months. A previous agreement established 300 cfs as the optimal flow. This may be adjusted to maximize protection of the resource.

Matt Lawrence summarized the department's efforts, including collecting data to provide evidence for additional thermal protection, modifying the stocking program to document trout reproduction, and working with USACE to optimize flow management. This is a priority issue for the department and every effort is being made to protect coldwater fisheries resources in the North Branch Potomac River.

Jason Andrick commented that this is a gorgeous section of the river and it is exciting to see all the effort towards maximizing protection.

Emily Mendenhall asked if the Use Class IV designation was created specifically for this purpose.

Tony Prochaska answered that the Use Class IV designation is already in regulation and protects recreation trout waters. The designation is currently under-defined and will need additional description. The designation will be updated in the future.

Art Senkel commented that MDE needs to put the Coldwater Advisory Committee back together and update the water quality regulations and how they correlate to trout fisheries. Management and conservation efforts will struggle until the regulations are updated.

Tony Prochaska commented that the department understands the challenges with use classes. That is why the department developed the coldwater mapping tool. MDE permitting groups are using the coldwater mapping tool to identify coldwater resources and permit accordingly. The mapping tool isn't perfect, but is a little better at reflecting reality.

Jason Andrick closed the discussion with a special thank you to Art and a thank you to Tony and his team. Jason felt Art did a great job finding common ground between the department and the North Branch guides and that this is a great preliminary response.

Maryland Coldwater Fisheries Management Plan

Matt Lawrence provided some information about the upcoming Coldwater Fisheries Management Plan that the department will develop to manage Maryland's coldwater fisheries resources. Matt described what fishery management plans are and how the department may proceed with a coldwater fisheries management plan. Matt provided a list of fishery management plans for the committee to review and consider. A follow up discussion will be held at the October 6, 2022 meeting of CFAC.

Jason followed the presentation by offering to work with Matt to document comments about the fishery management plans from the committee.

Sean Beattie asked if this is the first coldwater fisheries management plan for Maryland.

Matt Lawrence replied that there is a Brook Trout Fishery Management Plan but this will be the first comprehensive coldwater fisheries management plan.

Jerry Smith commented that he likes this idea and feels that this is something that the committee could be involved with, provide guidance for, and make a dent pretty quickly. This was a great homework assignment with great potential.

Jason Andrick agreed and appreciated that it was brought up now. Jason encouraged members to reach out to him and Matt with any questions.

Jerry Smith commented that documenting a management plan was an important step.

Open Discussion and Public Comment

Sean Beattie informed the committee of an upcoming discussion about outreach signage that will educate the public about redds and how to protect them during spawning season. This discussion will be held at the October 6, 2022 meeting of CFAC.

Jason Andrick stated that people with fishing experience are generally more sensitive to redds. Many local people are either Put-and-Take anglers or do not have fishing experience and are not aware of redds. Outreach and education may help.

Tony Prochaska informed the committee of regulatory scoping documents that will be submitted to SFAC at the next meeting. Tony asked Jason Andrick to disseminate the scoping documents to CFAC so members can share them with their constituents.

Jason Andrick agreed to share the scoping documents with CFAC.

Meeting was adjourned by Jason Andrick at 7:27 pm.