



Phelps Pond

2022

Phelps Pond is a 3-acre Department owned pond in Fauquier County that lies within the borders of the C.F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area. This pond was associated with an old plantation that had been in existence since the Civil War, and it is unknown when the pond was built. Currently, populations of Largemouth Bass, Redear Sunfish, and Bluegill are maintained by natural reproduction. Channel Catfish are stocked annually due to limited natural reproduction within the pond. Fisheries biologists occasionally sample it with electrofishing gear to evaluate the species composition and size distribution of the fishery. The most recent electrofishing sample was conducted in 2017.

Abundance is usually described as a catch rate in number of fish per hour (CPUE, or Catch per Unit Effort). Biologists employ numerical descriptors of length-frequency data such as Proportional Stock Density (PSD) and Relative Stock Density (RSD) when evaluating fish populations. PSD is calculated by dividing the number of fish \geq minimum quality length by the number of fish \geq minimum stock length x 100. Quality length is defined as the minimum size of fish most anglers like to catch (these are by national standards -for example, 12" for Largemouth Bass). Stock length is the minimum length at which a fish provides recreational value and/or is recruited to the fishery (8" for Largemouth Bass). RSD is the percentage of any designated length group found within a population. RSD is calculated by dividing the number of fish \geq specified length by the number of fish \geq minimum stock length x 100. Preferred bass are those 15" or larger, while memorable fish are those 20" or larger.

Largemouth Bass

Sampling conducted in May 2017 indicated that Largemouth Bass (LMB) size structure increased from the previous sample in 2008. A total of 40 LMB were collected with size distribution ranging from 4 to 12 inches. CPUE for the sample was 125 bass/hr, a slight decrease from the 144 bass/hr collected in 2008. PSD values increased from 0 in 2009 to 9 in 2017. LMB PSD values were indicative of an unbalanced population (balance PSD 40-70), and the fishery is classified as "bass crowded". The Phelps bass fishery had an RSD-P of 0, which falls outside of the balanced range of 10-40.

Bluegill and Redear Sunfish

Bluegill (BLG) and Redear Sunfish (RDE) collected in the sample were 61 and 11. CPUE was 190/hr (BLG) and 34/hr (RDE) in 2017. PSD values of a balanced BLG and RDE

population falls between 20 and 60. PSD values were 46 and 36, indicating both populations are in balance. The Phelps panfish fishery had RSD-P values of 5 for BLG and 0 for RDE. Bluegills are available in large numbers with few fish larger than 7 inches. Redear Sunfish offer anglers the opportunity to catch some larger panfish.

Additional Species

The EF survey also produced American Eel (AME) and Channel Catfish (CCF). CCF are not overly vulnerable to EF gear and as a result only 3 were collected in the 2017 survey and ranged from 14 to 17 inches.

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) requires an Access Permit for visitors to department-owned Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and public fishing lakes, who are age 17 and older, unless they possess a valid Virginia hunting, freshwater fishing, or trapping license, or a current Virginia boat registration. Phelps Pond has a parking lot located about 200 yards away, next to the WMA work station. No boat ramp exists, but anglers can carry canoes or small boats down to the pond if desired. Anglers can reach Phelps Pond from I-95 and Fredericksburg by taking Rt. 17 north to Rt. 651. Take a left and follow Rt. 651 through Summerduck to the main WMA entrance on the left (gravel road bordered by two columns marked by a large DWR sign). The pond is about 1 mile down this road on the left behind the old plantation residence. Additional information about the pond can be obtained by contacting the DWR Regional Office in Fredericksburg (540- 899-4169).