Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
2015 Three Lakes Park Lake #1 Management Report

Three Lakes Park, located on Wilkinson Road, one mile east of Rt. 301, is owned and operated by Henrico County. As the name states, the park contains three lakes, two of which are open to fishing. The two fishing lakes are approximately 7 acres (Lake #1) and 5 acres (Lake #3) in size, and are actually old borrow pits dug during the construction of I-64. The middle lake (Lake #2) has a nature center with a large aquarium embedded in the shoreline, and it is closed to fishing. No boats are allowed, but various areas of the largest fishing lake (Lake #1) can be accessed along the shoreline, at the picnic pavilion, or from the fishing pier. Lake #1 is immediately on the left after entering the parking lot; just walk past the gate and follow the hard path to the lake on the left. Lake #1 is incorporated into the Department's Community Lakes Improvement Program (CLIP) and receives annual stockings of harvestable-sized channel catfish. Fish attractors have been placed at two locations in Lake #1 to enhance angling opportunities. Lake #3 is not accessible to our sampling gear, and therefore, we have no information regarding the status of the fish community.

On October 21st, 2014, the fish community of Lake #1 was sampled by boat electrofishing. A total of 14 species were collected with bluegill and gizzard shad being by far the most abundant species collected. The most prevalent predator species collected was largemouth bass, which exhibited a lower than expected catch rate. The fishery showed some signs of improvement when compared to the previous survey, but still revealed a stock-piled bluegill population with a limited number of predator fish species.

Largemouth Bass

The survey produced a total of 19 largemouth bass for a CPUE (Catch Per Unit of Effort) of 57 fish/hr. This catch rate ranks lower than most public waters within Region 1, but holds toward the middle of the pack when compared to other Henrico County ponds. The catch rate showed an increase when compared to the 2009 survey (CPUE = 27 fish/hr). The largemouth bass fishery is rather limited in terms of overall abundance, but there is some potential to produce a few larger bass. Collected bass range in size from 2 to 18 inches. The largest bass measured 18.6 inches and weighed 4.6 pounds. The overall health of the collected bass was in great shape with relative weight values being very favorable. Relative weight values from 95-100 represent an ideal range that indicates collected fish are finding plenty of suitable forage. The limited sample size revealed the bass to have an overall relative weight value of 107. The two preferred-sized bass (≥ 15 inches) had a relative weight value of 118. These larger bass have plenty of forage in the form of the abundant bluegill population as well as some of the smaller gizzard shad.

The limited adult bass population along with other variables, (common carp, abundant bluegill population, turbid water condition, etc.) may have all worked against bass recruitment. The bass population in Lake #1 is regulated under a minimum size limit of 18 inches with a harvest limit of one bass per day. Although anglers can harvest one bass per day, anglers should carefully release all bass from the lake unless they are in serious need of a fish dinner. By protesting the limited number of adult bass, the fishery may eventually reach a better balance in the future.

Bluegill and Redear Sunfish

The survey produced a total of 429 bluegill for a CPUE of 1,287 fish/hr. This catch rate showed a major increase from 2009 (CPUE = 87 fish/hr). The collected bluegill ranged in size from 1 to 7 inches with the majority of fish in the 3 to 4 inch range. The largest bluegill measured 7.16 inches. The average size bluegill was only 3.6 inches in length. Only 4 bluegill were larger than 6 inches in total length. Anglers that fish the lake should not expect to catch too many larger bluegill. The limited bass population has not been able to keep the bluegill population in check.

The survey collected a total of 35 redear sunfish for a CPUE of 105 fish/hr. This catch rate showed an increase from 2009 (CPUE = 4 fish/hr). The collected redear sunfish ranged in size from 2 to 6 inches with most fish around five inches in size. The largest redear sunfish measured 6.22 inches. The average size redear sunfish was 4.4 inches and slightly better than the bluegill average. The redear sunfish provide some fishing diversity, but will most likely never produce many trophy-sized fish. Redear sunfish tend to grow better in impoundments that have clearer water than the normal turbid conditions found in Lake #1.

Black Crappie

The survey produced a total of 13 black crappie (CPUE = 39 fish/hr) which showed a slight increase from 2009 (CPUE = 29 fish/hr). Collected crappie were relatively small in length and ranged from 3 to 7 inches. The largest crappie measured 7.4 inches and the average size crappie measured 5.76 inches. The 2009 survey found a couple larger crappie in the 13 to 14 inch range, but the 2014 survey did not find any trophy fish. Crappie populations within small impoundments can result in an overcrowded and stunted population of crappie, but from all indications, does not appear to be the case. The abundant bluegill population most likely has cropped down the abundance of crappie fry that survive being hatched each spawn.

The abundant gizzard shad could be limiting the juvenile panfish populations (bluegill, redear, and black crappie), due to potential competition for food resources. The survey collected a total of 44 gizzard shad (CPUE = 132 fish/hr). Gizzard shad ranged in size from 3 to 11 inches with the average shad being 6 inches. These fish were removed from the lake in an attempt order to create a better balance to the fishery. Another potential detriment to the panfish populations are the presence of common carp in Lake #1. The lake remains somewhat turbid and unfortunately this could be due to the carp. The suspended materials created by the carp could negatively affect the spawning success of panfish species. The survey collected/counted 12 common carp that ranged in size from 16 to 22 inches.

Additional Species

The survey revealed high species diversity within Lake #1 with the collection of 14 fish species. The remaining species collected in limited abundance were: brown bullhead (N = 1), channel catfish (N = 1), creek chubsucker (N = 5), American eel (N = 1), yellow perch (N = 1), pumpkinseed sunfish (N = 3), golden shiner (N = 3) and warmouth sunfish (N = 2). Of these fish, the only noteworthy one was the channel catfish that was 16.22 inches long and weighed 1.45 pounds. Many of the catfish stocked in the previous years were most likely caught and harvested by anglers. Additionally, catfish often frequent deeper water making them more difficult to catch with electrofishing gear that usually targets the shoreline cover. Channel catfish continue to be stocked annually at high rates, so anglers always have a good chance of catching a few especially near the time of the stocking. The fishery within Lake #1 has some potential, but anglers will have to weed through the abundance of small fish in hopes of catching a few decent ones.