2017 State of Tidal Largemouth Bass Fisheries (Maryland)

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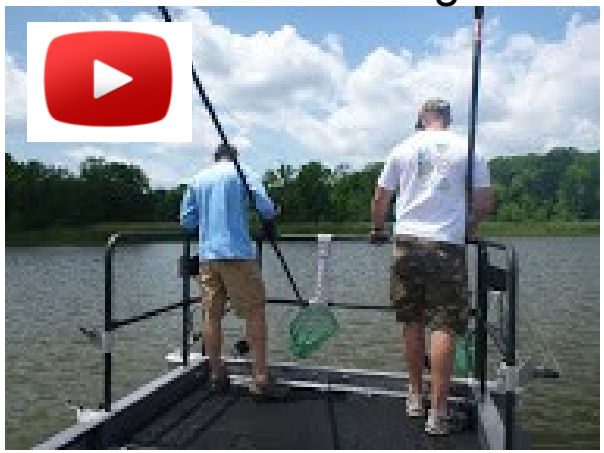
Status of Upper Bay Fishery

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Boat Electrofishing



2. Stun Fish

3. Measure and Weigh Fish

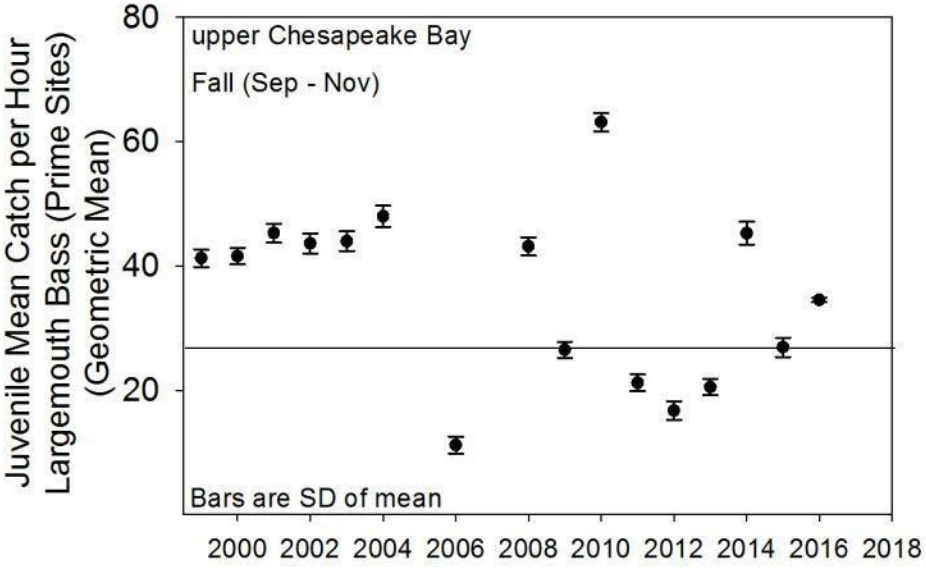
4. Inspect and Release Fish

Status of Upper Bay Fishery

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Juvenile Bass – Upper Bay

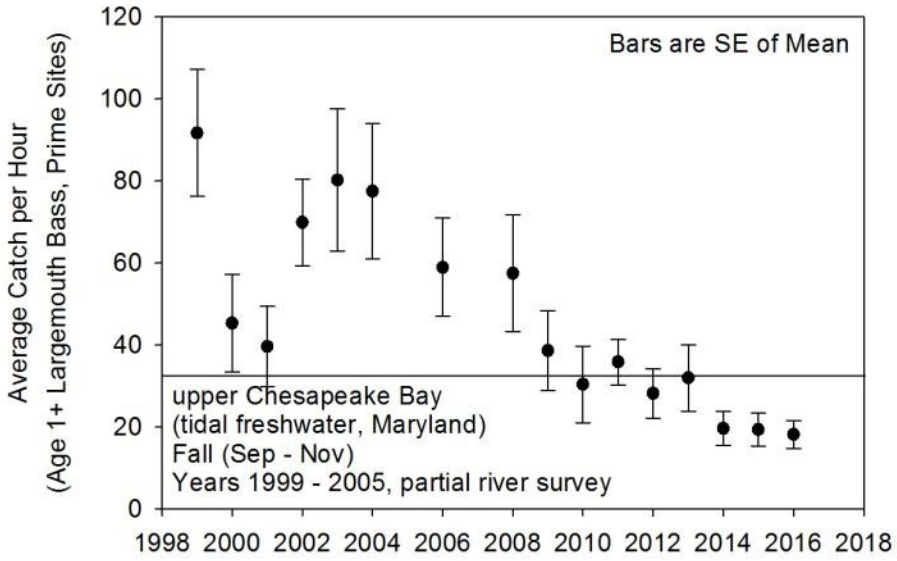
- 2000-2004 GREAT
- 2006-2010 POOR TO GREAT
- 2011-2013 POOR
- 2014-2016 FAIR TO GREAT



Status of Upper Bay Fishery

Age 1+ Bass – Upper Bay

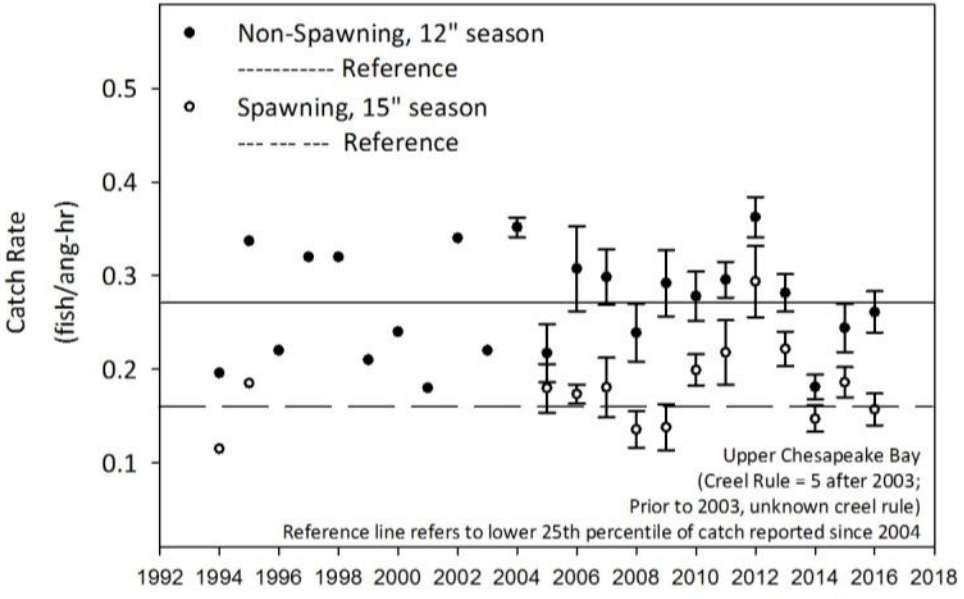
- 2000-2008 GREAT
- 2009-2013 FAIR
- 2013-2016 POOR



Status of Upper Bay Fishery

Angler Catch – Upper Bay

- 2000-2011 FAIR
- 2012 GREAT
- 2013 FAIR
- 2014-2016 POOR



So what's going on?

Possible Causes

- Some years of poor reproduction
- Changes in SAV cover
- Largemouth bass virus
- Other habitat issues?
  - invasive species, for example

Actions Taken

- Stocking (department)
- Determining Harvest Levels/Enforcement (department)
- Invasive Species Management (general public)
- Voluntary Best Management Practices (tournaments)
- Additional Permit Conditions (tournaments)

Actions

Voluntary Best Management Practices

Tournament Registration Form

Fisheries Service

Watch Video
Fishing Best Practices - Complete 6 Part Video

Watch Video
Stopping the Spread of Invasive Species in Maryland Waters

Actions

Voluntary Best Management Practices

Below are Best Management Practices (BMP) that Maryland Department of Natural Resources, other agencies, and bass conservation groups encourage during tournaments.

Please select the BMPs that you will use during this tournament. Pass your cursor over bold lettering of each BMP for more details.

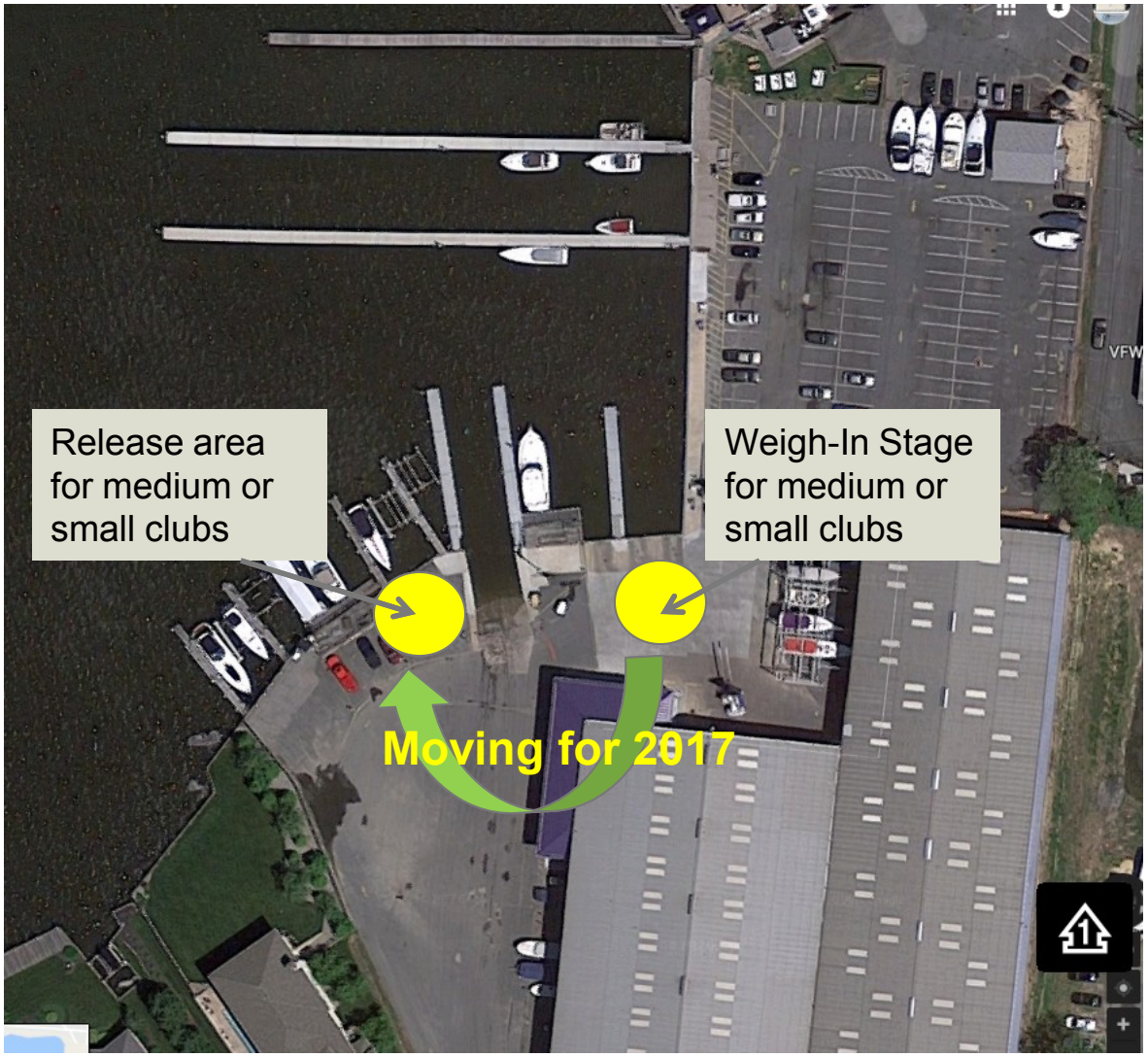
- ☐ Improve survival of bass by providing handling tips to anglers
- ☐ Improve survival of bass by excluding July and August in tournament schedule
- ☐ Improve survival of bass by creating a fishing off-limits area at weigh-in site
- ☐ Reduce number of fish released at weigh-in area by having a plan for redistributing fish
- ☐ Reduce number of fish released at weigh-in area by using multiple weigh-in sites within the lake or river
- ☐ Reduce number of fish released at weigh-in area by lowering creel limits per angler or boat
- ☐ Reduce number of big fish released at weigh-in area by implementing a fishable slot
- ☐ Reduce number of fish released at weigh-in area by using a no possession rule
- ☐ Increase chances a fish will return home by restricting fishing to within 20 miles of weigh-in site

- Most tournament directors voluntarily implemented BMP's since Feb 2016
- 24% of groups did not in 2016

Actions

- Permit Modification
  - Option 1: June 15 to October 31 (5 fish possession with a 12-inch minimum, but only 1 of those fish may be greater than 15-inches between June 16 and October 31, unless tournament directors choose Option 2)
  - Option 2: Permit modifications (June 15 to October 31)
    - "A culling system …that require punching a hole in the fish's mouth are NOT permitted."
    - "Bass shall not be kept in water-filled containers longer than two (2) minutes…without supplemental aeration and/or water exchange"
    - "Tournament participants must ensure bass are recuperated before their release…[t]o allow for recuperation, tournaments shall have mobile holding tank facilities that provide high quality oxygenated and temperature conditions prior to release of the fish…ways that include, but may not be limited to, any of the following: 1) using live wells of bass boats…;2) using a pre-release tank…additional and alternative special conditions may be developed with assistance from the Department"
  - All accountability on shoulders of director
  - Does not apply to all tournaments
  - Does not apply to harvesters or guides who possess bass

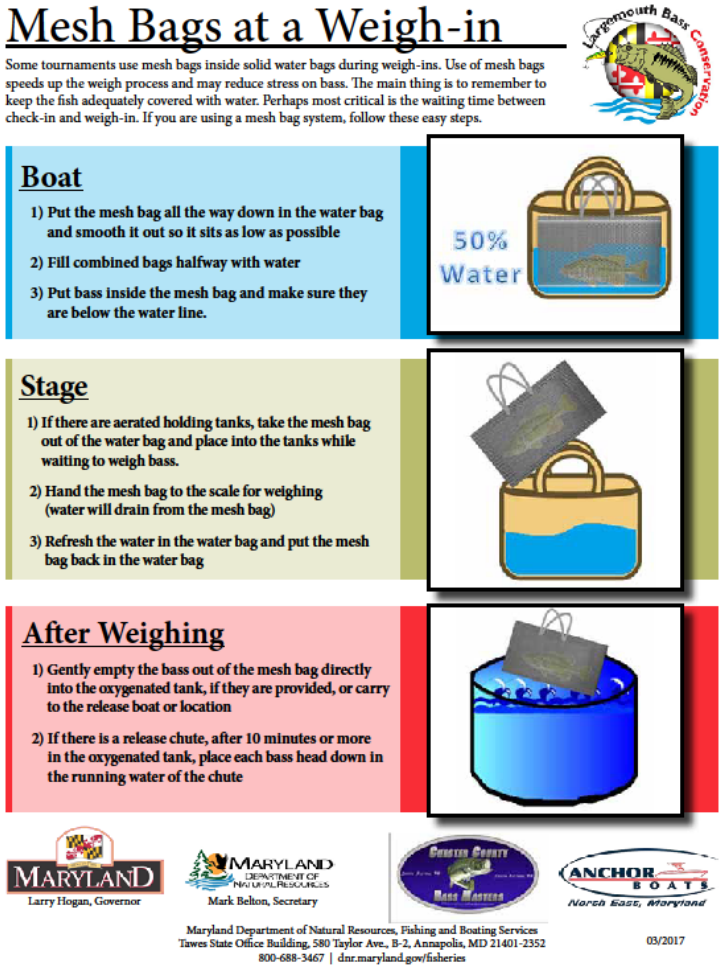
Infrastructure: Anchor



- Tanks with oxygenated water
- Mesh bags
- Chute for release

Infrastructure: Anchor

- Mesh bag outreach (right) tethered to tanks
- Bass should be kept in tank for a minimum of 10 minutes before release
- Additional information on tournaments held at Anchor Marine can be found here.



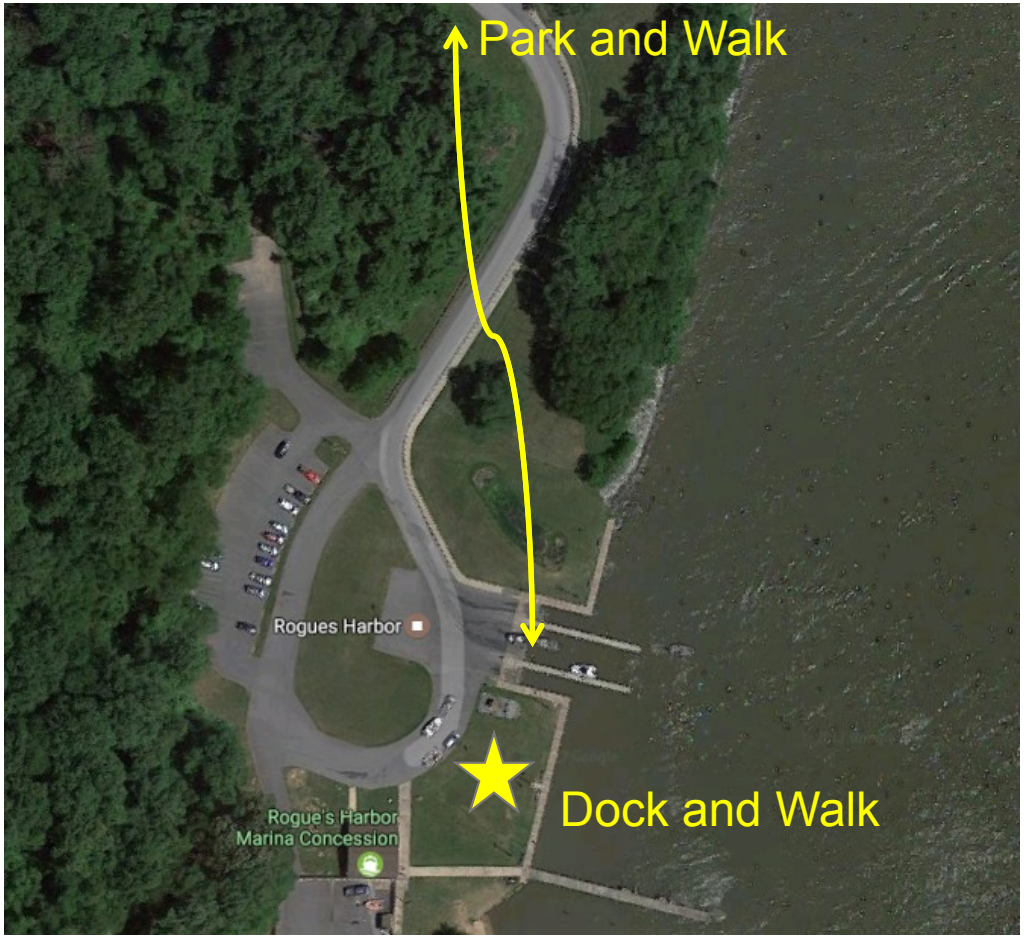
Infrastructure: ENSP

Elk Neck State Park

Infrastructure: ENSP

Elk Neck State Park

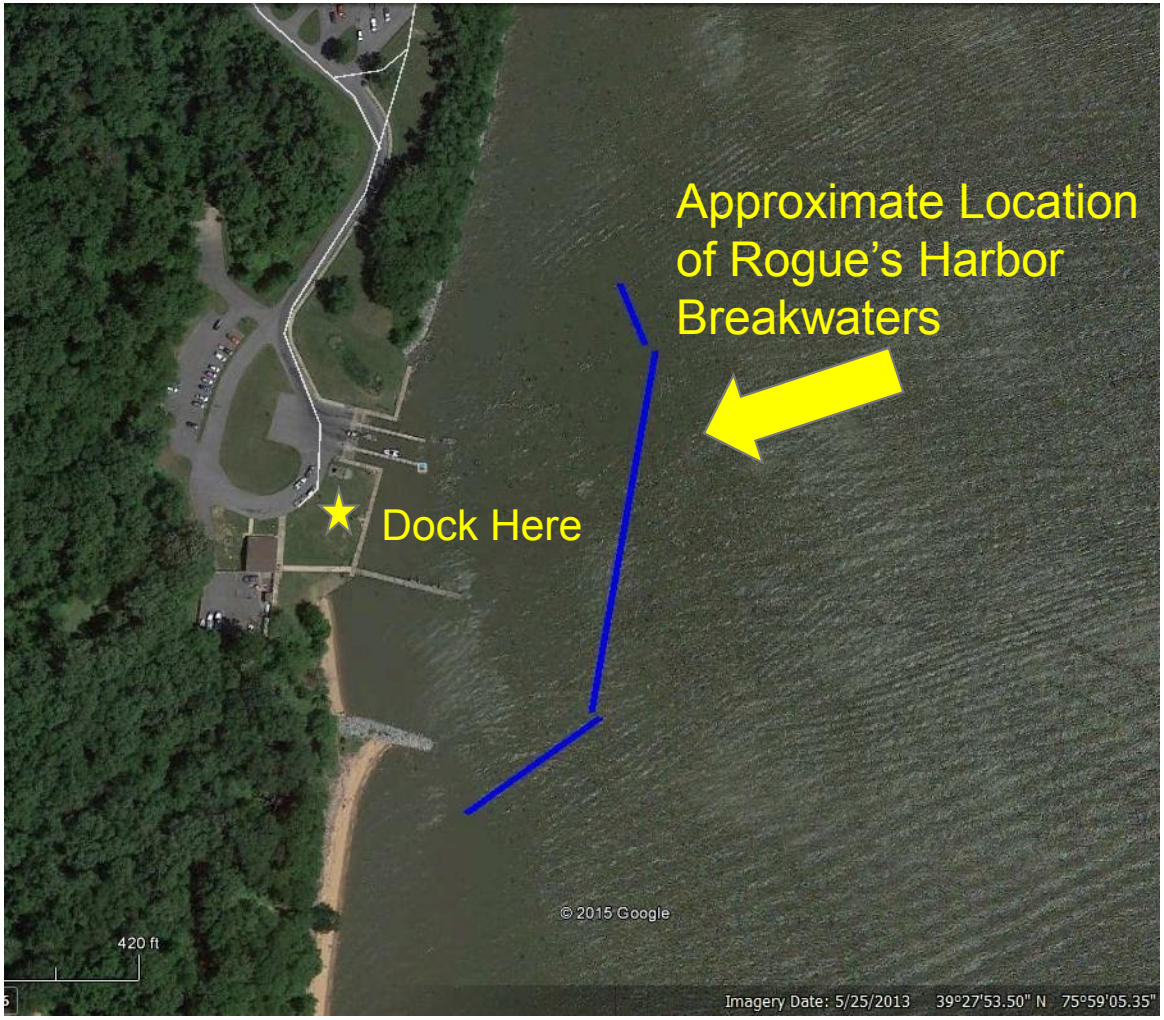
- Dock and Walk
  - waves and wakes can rock boat
  - a small number of boats may be moored at one time
- Park and Walk
  - bass will be contained in bags longer than 2 minutes
  - slows pace of weigh-in



Infrastructure: ENSP

Elk Neck State Park

- Dock and Walk
  - breakwaters could provide more slips for boats and protect moored boats
  - Funding has been allocated
  - Evaluating materials for breakwater
  - Working with experts to finalize plans
  - Start date for the project is not yet known



Infrastructure: ENSP

- Park and Walk
  - tentative organizational map for tournaments planned by 2018
  - oxygenated water tanks may be made available at stage, if requested
  - no current solution for addressing this problem – ideas?

Black Bass Advisory Subcommittee

- Black Bass Advisory Subcommittee (2016)
  - Purpose is to make recommendations on black bass management to Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission, who may then submit a recommendation to the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources
  - Members were vetted using an application process followed by appointment by Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission
- Keep up with BBAS meetings!

  http://dnr2.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/mgmt-committees/bbas-index.aspx

Problems?

- Problems or concern
- Problems or concern
- Problems or concern
- Problems or concern