






FISHERIES BLACK BASS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER
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The Black Bass Program (BBP) stayed busy this summer with numerous projects and activities that included: planting aquatic vegetation at Bull Shoals and Lake Greeson, collecting smallmouth bass for a statewide genetics survey, attending meetings with the Arkansas Bass Association (ABA), Arkansas BASS Federation (ABF), and the Arkansas Black Bass Coalition (ABBC), assisting bass tournaments on Lake Hamilton and the Arkansas River, assisting both Districts 1 and 8 with fish population samples on lakes Ouachita, Catherine, and Beaver, assisting Joe Hogan Hatchery staff and the ABA with harvest and distribution of largemouth bass from the Cummins nursery pond in Lincoln County, and assisting District 10 and our Fish Pathologist with an assessment of the largemouth bass population in Lake Cargile.

Aquatic Vegetation Planting

Mother Nature finally helped us out at Bull Shoals by providing normal water levels during the spring and summer growing seasons. Throughout the summer we made several trips and evaluated our 2004 plantings. As you can see from the picture, the plants really took hold and expanded outside the protected cages.



American pondweed spreading outside of cage at Bull Shoals

We were able to make five trips this summer to Bull Shoals planting additional cages and pens as the water level slowly dropped. We have plans to return to the lake in late October to build some additional large pens at our sites in an effort to allow our plants to grow and expand into larger protected nursery areas.

In addition, we were able to evaluate and conduct three plantings on Lake Greeson this summer. Unlike Bull Shoals, Greeson remained low throughout the spring and summer, which exposed many of our plants to drying conditions. These low water levels cut both the growing and planting seasons short. Hopefully, we will have some good fall and winter rains to bring both lakes back up near conservation levels in 2006.

Tournament Assistance

The BBP assisted with three bass tournaments this summer including the FLW Outdoors Championship and the Wal-Mart BFL Arkie Division at Lake Hamilton, and a benefit tournament for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation at Murray Park on the Arkansas River. Our new live-release trailer was provided to recover and re-distribute the fish after the weigh-ins and technical advice was offered to anglers in an effort to help them do a better job of taking care of their catch.



George Cochran winner of the FLW Championship on Lake Hamilton

The BBP received a \$6,000 donation by the Fish America Foundation at the FLW Championship. These monies will be used in the development of a sport fishing support station to include fish cleaning facilities, restrooms, tournament weigh-in facilities, and interpretive/informational panels at the AGFC Hulsey Fish Hatchery Access area on Lake Hamilton.



Colton receiving \$6,000 donation from FLW

The construction of this building will be instrumental in bass conservation efforts on Lake Hamilton and will greatly assist our efforts to educate and put into practice good bass tournament handling, weigh-in, and release applications. The development of a live-release trailer into the design of the building will allow tournament directors to not only help recover fish after the weigh-in process but also help re-distribute fish to other locations around Lake Hamilton and reduce stockpiling of tournament caught bass around this heavily used access area.

Bass Stocking

In October, the Arkansas River became the new home to approximately seventy-eight thousand largemouth bass from the Cummins Nursery pond. The Lonoke hatchery crew received help from the ABA, BBP, District 5 Biologists, and Biologists from the Urban Fishing Program with the harvesting of these largemouth bass.



Lonoke hatchery staff seining largemouth bass at Cummins nursery pond

The majority of these fish were drained directly into Pool 2, however; approximately twenty-six thousand were loaded onto transport trucks and hauled to pools 6, 7, 10, and 13. The fish were in good shape and averaged four inches in length.



Doug Swann of the ABA loading bass for distribution

This very successful project is a result of a collaborative effort between the Arkansas Department of Corrections, ABA, and the AGFC. The ABA spent over \$2,500 on minnow purchases to feed the growing bass and diesel fuel to run the pond aerators.

Bass Sampling

During the summer we assisted our Fish Pathologist with collecting

smallmouth bass on numerous rivers and streams for a statewide genetics survey.



Smallmouth bass

Historically there were three different strains of smallmouth in Arkansas. This survey is being conducted in an effort to determine if all three strains still exist or if the native fish have been displaced through hatchery stockings that took place decades ago. This information in addition to age and growth analysis conducted on the bass collected will hopefully lead to better smallmouth bass management in Arkansas.

We also assisted District 8 Biologists Stuart Wooldridge and Brett Hobbs with fish population samples on lakes Ouachita and Catherine and assisted District 1 Biologists Ron Moore and Stephen Brown on Beaver Lake.

The BBP assisted District 10 Biologists, Carl Perrin and Tom Bly, and our Fish Pathologist, Jon Stein, perform a complete assessment including health, age and growth, genetics, and LMBV analysis on the largemouth bass population in Lake Cargile located near Morrilton. As a result of this sampling, Lake Cargile may be the recipient of a different harvest regulation and/or the removal of the current 16-21" slot limit.