

District 3 Spring Fishing Report

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163 Wildlife Rd.

French Creek, WV 26218

D3 Reservoirs –

District 3 has 5 large reservoirs all situated along the I-79 corridor in central West Virginia. Stonewall Jackson, Burnsville, Stonecoal, Sutton, and Summersville Lakes.

Stonewall Jackson lake (Corps. of Engineers) is well known for its largemouth bass population, musky, and panfish. It's a relatively shallow lake, still contains lots of standing timber and has 82 miles of shoreline. The lake is lowered for flood control 6 feet from Nov-April but typically is at the summer pool level (recreation pool) by mid-April. Largemouth will be moving from deep water winter locations to shallower water as the water temperatures increase. Find areas where shallow water with cover is next to deeper water. Anglers should target riprap banks, shallow points, old roadbeds, as well as standing timber and trees that have fallen. Head ends of coves can also be productive springtime bass spots. Start with slower moving lures such as soft plastics and progress to faster crankbaits and topwater lures as temperatures increase. Pre-spawn bass will be shallow (4-6 feet of water) as temperatures climb and will be actively feeding before moving onto the spawning beds. Musky move to shallow water this time of year as well and head to small tributaries and shallow coves. Successful anglers troll and cast large plugs, spinners and specialized musky baits. Fishing for crappie (black and white), perch, bluegill (panfish) this time of year is great. Try beaver huts, blow down trees, bridges, and shallow coves as water temperature increase. Live bait (minnow on light jig) or small plastic jigs can produce many fish and is a great way to introduce a new angler to the sport of fishing because action can be fast. The tailwater area of this lake contains many warmwater gamefish and is stocked every 2 weeks with trout February-March and once in May as well. When streams and rivers are high the tailwaters are sometimes the only fishable water with good access and parking. Daily lake and tailwater conditions can be obtained by calling the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at: 304-269-4588

Burnsville lake, (Corps. of Engineers) is known for its largemouth, spotted bass, catfish, musky, and panfish. The lake is lowered for flood control 13 feet from Nov-April but typically is at the summer pool level (recreation pool) by mid-April. It's a shallow lake and still contains some standing timber. Largemouth will be moving from deep water winter locations to shallower water as the water temperatures increase. Find areas where shallow water with cover is next to deeper water. Rip rap banks, shallow points, roadbeds, standing timber, trees that have fallen are all good structures to fish. Head ends of coves can also be productive springtime bass spots. Present slower moving lures such as soft plastic worms first and progress to faster crankbaits and topwater lures as temperatures increase. Pre-spawn bass will be shallow (4-6 feet of water) as temperatures climb and will be feeding actively before moving onto their spawning beds. A channel/flathead catfish population is a bonus to Burnsville and fish have been caught in the 20-30 lbs. range. Try live bait on the bottom as temperatures warm up. Musky move to shallow water this time of year as well and head to small tributaries and shallow coves. Successful anglers troll and cast large plugs and specialized large musky baits. Fishing for crappie and bluegill (panfish) this time of year is great. Try beaver huts, blow down trees and shallow coves as water

temperature increase. Live bait (minnow on light jig) or small plastic jigs can produce many fish and is a great way to introduce a new angler to the sport of fishing because action can be fast. The tailwater area of this lake contains many warmwater gamefish and it is stocked every 2 weeks with trout February-March and once in May as well. When streams and rivers are high the tailwaters can be the only fishable water with good access and parking. Daily lake and tailwater conditions can be obtained by calling the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at: 304-853-2371

Stonecoal Lake (Mon. Power Company) is well known for its largemouth and smallmouth bass, walleye, musky, and panfish. It's a deep lake (80ft max) and has a 9.9 hp limit. The horsepower restriction keeps the lake quiet and creates a backcountry feel perfect for canoe or kayak fishing. Largemouth will be moving from deep water winter locations to shallower water as the water temperatures increase. Find areas where shallow water with cover is next to deeper water. Anglers should target rip rap banks, shallow points roadbeds, weed beds and tree/brush structures created by WVDNR for habitat. Head ends of coves can also be productive springtime bass locations. Present slower moving lures such as soft plastic worms first and progress to faster crankbaits and topwater lures as temperatures increase. Pre-spawn bass will be in shallow water (4-6 feet) as temperatures climb and will be feeding actively prior to spawning. Walleye like to congregate around the rocky dam face as well as upper end creek channels as water temperatures warm. Musky move to shallow water this time of year as well and head to small tributaries and shallow coves. Successful anglers troll and cast large plugs and specialized large musky baits. Fishing for crappie, perch, bluegill (panfish) this time of year can be great. Try upper end of lake, beaver huts, blow down trees and shallow coves as water temperature increase. Live bait (minnow on light jig) or small plastic jigs can produce many fish and is a great way to introduce a new angler to the sport of fishing because action can be fast. Find the latest fishing map of Stonecoal Lake here: http://www.wvdnr.gov/Lake_Maps/

Sutton Lake (Corps. of Engineers) is known for its largemouth and smallmouth bass, and panfish. The lake is lowered for flood control 29 feet from Nov-April but typically is at the summer pool level (recreation pool) by mid-April. It's a deep and steep sided lake with lots of rock and blow down shoreline trees. Largemouth will be moving from deep water winter locations to shallower water as the water temperatures increase. Find areas where shallow water with cover is next to deeper water. Rip rap banks, shallow points, roadbeds, and fallen timber are structures to target. Head ends of coves can also be productive springtime bass locations. Try slower moving lures such as plastic worms hooked wacky style first and progress to faster crankbaits and topwater lures as temperatures increase. Pre-spawn bass will be in 8-10 feet of water as temperatures climb prior to the spawn. Smallmouth can be found throughout the upper end of lake in spring all the way to the first riffle section of the Elk. Crappie, bluegill, and rock bass (panfish) this time of year is great. Try beaver huts, blow down trees and shallow coves as water temperature increase. Live bait (minnow on light jig) or small plastic jigs can produce many fish and is a great way to introduce a new angler to the sport of fishing because action can be fast. Native walleye reintroduction has begun above Sutton Dam and restrictive walleye regulations are in place. All walleye 20-30 inches in length must be released at once, with a daily creel limit of 2 walleye. Please obey these regulations as we try to re-establish the walleye fishery. The tailwater area of this lake contains many warmwater gamefish and is stocked with trout February-May. When streams and rivers are high the

tailwater areas can often be the only fishable water with good access and parking. Daily lake and tailwater conditions can be obtained by calling the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at: 304-765-2816

Summersville lake (Corps. of Engineers) is known for its smallmouth bass, naturally reproducing walleye population, and panfish. The lake is lowered for flood control 77 feet from Nov-April but typically is at the summer pool level (recreation pool) by mid- April. It is a deep and steep sided lake with lots of rock, blow down shoreline trees, and WVDNR habitat enhancement structures at various levels. Walleye will begin moving to the upper end of the lake when water temperatures begin warming to the mid-40s (March-April) will continue their spawning migration to the first riffle and beyond into the Gauley River as water temperatures approach 50. It's a great time of year to target them. Try a minnow tipped jig or night crawler on bottom bouncer. Trolling small crankbaits is a very effective method for catching walleye at different depths. Try shore fishing along the route 39 bridge access but wear your mud boots! Smallmouth will be moving from deep water winter locations to shallower water as the water temperatures increase. Find areas where shallow water with cover is next to deeper water. Rock drop off banks, shallow points, roadbeds, and WVDNR habitat structures are areas to target. Head ends of coves can also be productive springtime bass locations. Try live crawfish or crawfish imitation lures such as plastic worms and progress to faster crankbaits and topwater lures as temperatures increase. Pre-spawn bass will be in 12-15 feet of water as temperatures climb before moving onto the beds. Smallmouth can be found in the upper end of lake in spring to the first riffle up the Gauley River. Crappie, perch, bluegill, and rock bass (panfish) this time of year is great. Try beaver huts, blow down trees, WVDNR habitat enhancement structures, and shallow coves as water temperature increase. Live bait (minnow on light jig) or small plastic jigs can produce many fish and is a great way to introduce a new angler to the sport of fishing because action can be fast. Use sonar to find WVDNR habitat enhancement locations that will hold fish. Gauley River upstream of Persinger Creek (Head of the lake at Summer Pool Level) now has a reduced creel limit for walleye. Anglers may harvest 2 walleye per day above the mouth of Persinger Creek and all walleye 20-30 inches must be released at once. The tailwater area of this lake is stocked with trout February-May and contains many warmwater gamefish as well. When streams and rivers are high tailwater areas can be the only fishable water with good access and parking. Daily lake and tailwater conditions can be obtained by calling the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at: 304-872-3412

D3 Rivers/Streams –

The Elk, Gauley, Little Kanawha, Greenbrier Rivers, and Buckhannon are super springtime fisheries. Focus on the Elk and Gauley for big walleye in early spring around tributaries and riffles. Little Kanawha and Buckhannon are great for spring musky as the current state record musky came from Little Kanawha in spring of 2017. Smallmouth Bass can be found in all above rivers and springtime is the best time. Anglers should target deep pools near shoals and flats, eddies along the bank, fallen timber from the shore, and along boulders or other current breaks. As the water warms Smallmouth Bass will move from the back of the deep pools to the head of the pools closer to the current. Spawning will occur in shallow areas with sand, gravel and small rocks. Popular lures are jigs, tubes, jerkbaits, crankbaits, spinnerbaits, swimbaits, and crawfish imitations.

District 3 is mountain trout country and gets a tremendous number of streams stocked with rainbow, brown, and brook trout from January-May. So please visit WVDNR website for daily stream trout stockings and remember the Gold Rush stocking will be happening during the week of March 31-April 4, 2020. Streams that are included in this are: Cranberry, Shavers Fork, Greenbrier Rivers (Cass and Durbin). Please check the website for complete listing. <https://commerce.wv.gov/goldrush>

D3 Impoundments

District 3 has 12 small impoundments scattered around an 8-county region. Most of them are stocked with catchable trout January-May. So please visit WVDNR website for daily updates on trout stockings. They contain good bass populations, channel catfish, excellent panfish opportunities, and are excellent places to introduce new anglers to the sport of fishing. Anglers can find Largemouth Bass around cover in the form of fallen trees, beaver huts, submerged timber, stumps, points, and riprap. Several of these impoundments are stocked with trout and surprisingly the warmwater fish population is overlooked but can produce bass in the 7 lbs. range. During the pre-spawn find shallow areas with mixed sand and gravel or small gravel and rocks near woody structures. Try soft plastics, crankbaits, and topwater as water temperatures warm. Good populations of crappie and bluegills with some larger-than-average-sized fish are found in several small impoundments, most notably Big Ditch and Wallback Lakes. Find structures like stumps and submerged timber. Look for pre-spawn areas and use small jigs, minnow imitations, night crawlers, and wax worms. Bluegills will move to shallow areas during the pre-spawn and make circular depressions (nests) in the bottom.

The Gold Rush stocking will be happening during the week of March 31 April 4, 2020. 6 impoundments in District 3 that will be stocked with golden trout are: French Creek Pond, Watoga, Spruce Knob, Buffalo Fork, Wallback, and Seneca.