

## **WVDNR SPRING FISHING REPORT (MARCH, APRIL, MAY)**

**District 5 (Jeff Hansbarger, Steven Hincks) - 304 756 1023**

**50 Rocky Branch Rd.**

**Alum Creek, WV 25003**

### **D5 Reservoirs -**

East Lynn (1005 acres) and Beech Fork (720 acres) reservoirs are both located in Wayne County and are the two largest reservoirs in District 5. Both offer ample opportunity for anglers to catch a variety of gamefish species. Bluegill, Largemouth Bass, and Channel Catfish are sought after species in these waterbodies. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USCOE) manage each of these reservoirs for flood control. Both reservoirs are drawn down during the winter months to create storage for snow and rain run-off. The USCOE raise the lake to summer pool April 1<sup>st</sup>.

As temperature begin to rise gamefish become more active and anglers can have greater success during this time of year. During early to mid-spring anglers should concentrate their efforts along transitional banks. These are areas where bass will stage prior to moving to the desired spawning flats. Transitional banks are those located in intermediate depth waters (6-10 feet) that provide bass the option to go to the shallows to feed on bait fish (2-6 feet), return to the depths (10-12 feet) or move in to the spawning flats (2-4 feet). Once the angler locates their desired target species, the same technique and depth should be successful in similar areas throughout the reservoir. A good method for anglers to locate spring Bass is to have multiple rods rigged for fishing various depths of the water column. One rod should be set up with a "search bait" like an X-Rap and another rod rigged to fish vertically in the water column with a bait such as 4" Trigger X tube brightly colored. Inactive fish will be more enticed by a vertical, slower moving, less aggressive type baits such as tubes and jigs. Having both options for the water column will allow the anglers to locate fish more efficiently. If you are catching fish at 8' in the water column at one point in the lake, follow that pattern and fish the same depth and structure in other portions of the lake for continued success.

Both East Lynn and Beech Fork have many habitat structures which have been added by the WVDNR. Structures provide additional habitat for forage species, as well as ambush cover for game species. Areas with felled trees, as well as sunken evergreen tree reefs, are marked with signage and can be easily targeted by anglers. GPS points for these habitat structures are posted at [www.mapwv.gov](http://www.mapwv.gov).

A key factor to early spring fishing is sunlight and corresponding water temperature. Fish the sunny side of the lake in the morning, as the water temperature will rise faster, therefore the fish will be more actively moving and feeding. Consequently, as the day progresses fish the opposite side of the lake in the afternoon hours as the water temperatures rise.

East Lynn featured species are Muskies. For East Lynn Muskies try glide baits and soft plastics early, and progress to cowgirl spinners and faster moving jerkbaits with warmer temperature levels. Spotted Suckers and Gizzard Shad are East Lynn Muskies main forage - choose artificial baits that closely

resemble these for improved success. Below the dam Twelvepole Creek can also be productive for Muskies as well but access can be problematic during higher flows.

Beech Fork featured species are Hybrid Striped Bass. Anglers do well close to the dam using silver, white or other flashy lures that imitate shad, their preferred baitfish in Beech Fork. Some lures that imitate baitfish effectively include a Mann's Little George, Silver Buddy, any white/silver jig combo, and white spinners with a silver blade. Bait fish suspended below a bobber near the dam is another productive way to fish for these hard-fighting fish!

The tailraces of Beech Fork and East Lynn are stocked with Trout in the early spring as well, check online (WVDNR.gov) for a stocking report, or at 304-558-3399. Try Powerbait and natural bait early, then as the water warms switch to faster moving lures such as Roostertail spinners and mini crankbaits. Vary your retrieve until you find what the trout prefer that day. Mealworms, nightcrawlers, and red wigglers are all good choices for trout anytime, especially early season.

#### **D5 Nav Rivers –**

Early spring is a great time to target all species of catfish in the large Navigable Rivers, the Kanawha and Ohio. To target these species, locate tributary mouths, deep holes, and below or adjacent to moored barges. Many anglers use Skipjack or Gizzard Shad as bait for Catfish. Utilizing a sinking rig for flatheads and subsequent floating rig for large Blue Cats. Flatheads prefer live bait whereas Channel Cats are not as selective and will strike either live or cut bait. The use of heavy action rods, heavy line, and heavy weights combined with circle hooks is essential for a successful catch and release of these large gamefish.

Early spring is a good time to target Sauger and Walleye. The peak time for these species is February through mid-March and can be targeted below lock and dams as well as tributary mouths. The Walleye spawn at water temps between 40-48 degrees F. Target these fish with slow moving lures in a chartreuse color, jerk baits, or small jigs tipped with minnows. As the water temperatures rise increase your rate of retrieval for continued success.

Kanawha and Ohio River Bass anglers should target embayment's, tributary mouths, and current breaks. The section of the Navigable Rivers in District 5 is heavily pressured, leading to difficult days on the water with few fish brought to the boat. Lack of structure, pressure from numerous tournaments, as well as the continued dredging to keep the shipping lanes clear, has created a less than ideal habitat for large river bass populations. Bass anglers should concentrate their efforts in early spring to the many embayment's along each river. These embayment's create the viable habitat needed for these species to thrive, provide needed current breaks and opportunity to both feed and spawn out of the main current. When targeting these backwater embayment areas start by using soft plastics and compact spinnerbaits with round blades. As the day progresses and the water begin to warm at the surface switch to top water baits such as a buzzbait or crankbait.

As flows this time of year tend to be stained choose colors that will contrast the water. Colors such as chartreuse, pink, orange, and reds are all excellent choices in early spring. As water clarity begins to increase as the season progresses, usually into later May, try to experiment with smaller sized lures in more natural colors like blue, black and green pumpkin. There are many options of soft plastic baits in size, shape, and color, many of which can be used to trigger a strike on otherwise pressured fish.

### **D5 Rivers & Streams –**

The spring can be a rewarding time to head out to the District 5 rivers and streams. Flows can be variable during this time of year, but the dedicated angler can keep a keen eye on the precipitation and flows of the select river, can be very successful in the spring months. Visit <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/wv/nwis/rt> for up to date stream gauge data. There are many species to target in the District rivers. Walleye anglers should concentrate on tributary mouths, shallow feeding flats adjacent to deeper pools and below barriers. These are all productive areas for spring walleye. Husky Jerk Rapalas, minnow tipped jigs, and other various jerk baits are good choices. Main spawning activity is February through mid-March, so earlier the better to target these fish this spring.

The approaching Muskie spawn will have these fish active and moving throughout low-gradient river systems with an abundance of woody cover after the Walleye spawn. Their presence will be noticed especially when water temperature levels reach 50 F and above. Try slow moving glide baits and large soft plastics for early spring Muskies. A variety of rarely seen colors and models are also available from the plethora of WV bait makers – get out and purchase new colors and models during the early spring banquets across the state. As spring progresses into early summer switch to bucktails and double-bladed spinners ‘waked’ just below the surface and even topwater lures such as Fat Bastards, large Whooper Ploppers, and Top Raiders. Finish each cast with a figure 8 ALWAYS, many strikes come to Muskie anglers at this crucial part of the process, pay attention! A great throwback bait if a Muskie shows itself but disappears after a figure 8 - is a large super fluke or Red October Tube. If you locate a nice Muskie but does not strike, leave, and come back and try again in the same area, perhaps with a different lure or color. Persistence in Muskie fishing spells success. If fishing with bait please always utilize quick strike rigs, which promote release and survival of angled Muskellunge. The Elk, Coal and Mud Rivers all hold good populations of Muskies, try your luck at these locations and their tributaries.

The Tug River, the Guyandotte River, and the Coal River all offer ample opportunity for Smallmouth anglers during moderate Spring flows. Locate areas upstream and downstream of shoals, where the flows increase, and/or channel to create deeper pools for Smallmouth to ambush bait. Locate areas where currents wash over shallow sand bars and creates pockets in the sand. These pockets will be darker spots in the water, fish will sit in these areas and wait for bait to wash past them. Soft plastic baits and spinners are both extremely effective for Smallmouth in the spring. When choosing baits for Smallmouth use natural colors such as blacks, blues, and greens. Some examples of effective spinner baits are the classic Roostertail and bladed micro-spinner baits in 1/6 and ¼ oz weights. Soft plastics such as grubs, hellgrammites, and tubes are good choices for Spring Smallmouth. These soft plastic baits can be rigged on jig heads or used as trailers on spinner baits to present a larger profile target. As the Spring progresses and the water surface temperatures begin to rise, surface lures become more effective, not to

mention a lot of fun! Rapala's original floater in various sizes and colors, buzz baits, Jitterbugs, and chatter bait variations are all good baits to choose for topwater action this Spring. A few select District 5 streams receive trout stockings throughout Spring. Check [www.wvdnr.gov](http://www.wvdnr.gov) to check frequency and where stocking event will occur in the District.

#### **D5 Small Impoundments:**

Many small impoundments are located throughout District 5. These small impoundments are: Hurricane (Putnam), Laurel Lake (Mingo), Chief Logan Lake SP Pond (Logan), Rockhouse (Logan), Krodel(Mason), Coonskin (Kanawha), Lick Creek Pond (Wayne), Millers Fork Pond (Wayne), and Pettigrew (Kanawha). Many of these waters are stocked with catchable Channel Catfish during the end of May and the beginning of June. Target Channel Catfish in small impoundments by fishing on the bottom using liver-based baits or simple hot dogs soaked in anise (licorice). A simple bobber rig is also a good set-up to try. Other baits that can be used successfully for Channel Catfish in these impoundments are, nightcrawlers, leaches, chicken liver, crawdads, grasshoppers, cut bait and a various multitude of 'stink' baits on the market. The DNR stocks catchable sized Channel catfish, prior to free fishing weekend (June 12<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup>, 2021) at waters throughout District 5. During this weekend, no fishing license is required. These small impoundments provide families, especially with young children, opportunities to get out and introduce youth to the sport of angling. Set your child up with a simple bobber over a hook baited with any previously mentioned baits and watch them as they are introduced to a lifetime of enjoyment in the pursuit of angling.