

**Fisheries Committee Meeting
April 29, 2016
Lake Cumberland State Park**

I. Discussion Item – Idle Speed Only Request for Beulah Lake

The Jackson County Water Association recently passed a local ordinance concerning only allowing idle speed for boats on Beulah Lake. The lake is a public lake of which the Department has a management agreement. In order to allow our conservation officers the ability to enforce the local regulation, we recommend passing an idle-speed only regulation for the lake.

II. Discussion Item – Trolling Motor Only Request for all Ballard and Boatwright WMA Lakes and Sloughs; Except Swan Lake

Currently, Swan Lake notwithstanding, all but a few Ballard and Boatwright WMA lakes and sloughs have trolling motor only regulations. The Wildlife Division has requested that, except for Swan Lake which has an idle speed only restriction, the remaining lakes be added to the trolling motor only regulation. The additional lakes were inadvertently omitted from the original regulation request.

III. Discussion Item – Remove Largemouth Bass Slot Limit on Lake Pennyrile

In 2003, a 12.0-15.0 inch restrictive slot limit was imposed on all largemouth bass caught in Lake Pennyrile. The rationale for the regulation was to allow anglers to harvest a portion of the excess number of bass less than 12 inches, while protecting the few larger fish in the population. Since 2003, the numbers of larger bass has not increased, and the percentage of 12-14.9 inch fish in the sample has remained at 10%. Additionally, the percent of largemouth bass over 15 inches is very low in the lake. Fishing pressure in the 47-acre lake is very low; which suggests that the 12-15 inch protective length cannot have an effect on the bass population. Therefore, in order to simplify our regulations, we suggest removing the largemouth bass protective slot and allow statewide regulations in the lake. If the smaller-sized largemouth bass become more abundant in the lake, then our biologists will manually remove a significant portion of small bass from Lake Pennyrile and stock them in another body of water that is lacking bass recruitment.

IV. Discussion Item – Remove Daily Harvest Limit of Yellow Bass Statewide

Yellow bass are extremely abundant in Kentucky and Barkley lakes but only comprise 3 to 4 percent of the total number (all species) harvested at either lake. In Kentucky Lake, cove rotenone data (1990) suggested that yellow bass accounted for almost 45% of the game fish in within embayments surveyed. From a biological view, a dense population of yellow bass is likely detrimental to other sport fish populations. Yellow bass feed on eggs from spawning nests of bass, crappie and bluegill, and they consume larval fish as they emerge from nests

of sportfish. Daily creel limits have been imposed on anglers harvesting yellow bass, but none of the limits have been based on biology. Yellow bass are prolific and normally stunt where harvest is restricted or where anglers show no preference for harvesting the species. Therefore, there is no biological reason to reduce harvest of yellow bass, and in fact, reducing their numbers would likely promote additional growth potential to their populations. A 2015 creel survey of Kentucky Lake anglers indicated that 86% of the anglers were either in favor of allowing unrestricted harvest of yellow bass (42%) or had no strong opinion for or against unlimited harvest (46%). Only 12% of those surveyed were opposed to unlimited harvest of yellow bass.

V. Update Item – Asian Carp Update

Asian carp continue to be a primary focus of the Fisheries Division. Due to a 2014 Congressional amendment to the Water Resource Reform and Development Act (WRRDA), the Department received \$235,000 from the USFWS to help fund our 2015 efforts. We also will receive the same amount in 2016, and have thus far led efforts of the Ohio River Fish Management Team to complete an Asian carp management plan for the year. Preparations have been made to begin our spring effort to remove as many Asian carp as possible during several months of electrofishing and netting effort on the Ohio River's Greenup, Meldahl, Markland, and McAlpine pools. We also have tagged many Asian carp with sonic transmitters to learn about their movement habits and placed stationary receivers throughout Kentucky's portion of the Ohio River for that study. We intend to ramp up our harvest of Asian carp immediately below Louisville's McAlpine Lock and Dam, and are making arrangements with the USGS to test state-of-the-art sound systems designed to herd the invasive fish into netpens or gillnets. In Western Kentucky, we continue to work with the industry to help the processors and commercial fishermen work together and increase the number of Asian carp harvested for processing. Several fishermen have signed up for the \$0.05/pound subsidy program. There is a new business getting started in Owensboro Kentucky, and that makes five that are (or will be) paying commercial fishermen from Kentucky to harvest Asian carp for profit. In 2015, over 1.2 million pounds were harvested from Kentucky waters, and based on the expanding companies in and near Kentucky, we expect another exponential increase in year-to-year harvest from 2015 to 2016. We are discussing experimental seining techniques with a commercial salmon fisherman interested in maximizing harvests of Kentucky's Asian carp, and we are working with investors interested in developing a commercial business that would create an owner/operator cooperative among Kentucky's commercial fishermen and its businesses; including the new salmon processor. Lastly, we are trying to work with the Department of Interior to train three fish export product inspectors that will be working for KDFWR as technicians and inspectors in order to lower the costs for exporting the fish products from Kentucky to China.

As the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association's (MICRA) Chairperson, the Fisheries Director again accompanied three other Fisheries Directors to Washington D.C. in an effort to inform Congressional staff of our states' needs for increasing Aquatic Nuisance Species funding from its current \$2.15 million to the \$4.0 million authorized by Congress in 2003. Current funding only provides \$43,000 of federal funding to each state with an aquatic nuisance species plan; with the increase, each state would receive approximately \$100,000 annually. The MICRA delegation also tried to educate the congressional staffs about our need to fully fund the ANSTF's National Asian Carp Management Plan at \$20 million. Since 2014, the states have received about \$2.6 million annually to combat Asian carp in the Ohio and upper Mississippi rivers.