

Laurel River Lake Public Meeting Notes
3/20/18

- Ron Brooks welcomed everyone and introduced KDFWR staff including 9th District Commissioner Dr. Karl Clinard
- Director Brooks offered chance for public to ask questions
- Director Brooks referenced the current creel survey going on at Laurel River Lake
- District Program Coordinator Marcy Anderson gave a presentation on Laurel River Lake
 - Electrofishing data
 - Marcy discussed locations we sample and variability between them
 - Catch per unit effort (CPUE) for bass greater than 14 inches is variable (average 2 fish/hour)
 - CPUE for bass 17-inches and greater is highly variable (average 1 fish/hour)
 - Growth rates – 6 years to reach 18 inches
 - Similar to Dale Hollow and Lake Cumberland
 - Creel survey data
 - Explained data we collect (what anglers are catching, what they are harvesting, how long they fish each day, etc)
 - Also ask questions to get angler attitudes about fishing
 - See link to presentation
 - Saw increasing trend in catch of fish over 15 inches through 2006. Slight decline in 2010.
 - Discussed lengths of fish being caught by all anglers
 - Shift to larger fish being caught
 - Harvest low (low impact on mortality)
 - Bass angler satisfaction: 2003 satisfaction somewhat low; increased in 2006 (99% satisfied)
 - 2010: 93% smallmouth bass anglers satisfied; those unsatisfied mainly said it was due to number of fish caught
 - 83% of largemouth bass anglers were satisfied
 - Expansion of largemouth bass population
 - 1990: 5 largemouth bass sampled/hour; 2003 increasing; 2005 over 20 fish/hour collected with electrofishing gear
 - In 2005, KDFWR started statewide largemouth bass stocking program
 - Based on young of year sampled in the fall. If low, will stock to add to the poor year class
 - Largemouth bass first stocked in 2005
 - Population was already expanding before we stocked
 - Stocked largemouth contribute (add to the natural year class in that year) in the first year they are in the lake
 - Contribution over time, however, is low
 - Haven't stocked largemouth bass since 2011
 - Trophic status of lake

- Lake has gone from oligotrophic (clear/less fertile) to mesotrophic (mid-range fertility/clarity) or eutrophic (very fertile/less clarity)
 - In 1970 most of lake was oligotrophic (upper lake mesotrophic)
 - In 2012 most of lake was mesotrophic and upper lake was eutrophic
 - Lake is now more favorable to largemouth bass; smallmouth struggling; also may be reason for decline in trout population
- Presentation ended and floor was opened up to questions
- Q: Why is lake changing?
 - Increased nutrients from outside sources
 - Lakes become more fertile over time
- Why no little smallmouth bass?
 - Hard for us to sample small smallmouth bass
 - Creel survey is showing smaller fish showing up
 - Smallmouth losing advantage in recruitment with lake's increasing fertility
 - Habitat favoring warmer water species
- Can we stock smallmouth bass?
 - Difficult to obtain brood fish
 - Stocked smallmouth bass will struggle, mainly due to competition with largemouth bass and conditions not conducive to survival (lack of cool water habitat)
 - Poor survival in other lakes KDFWR has tried to stock with smallmouth in recent past
 - Ends up being a waste of resources; could better use hatchery space for other species
 - Largemouth usually dominate when they begin to expand due to favorable habitat
- Can we introduce grasses to change fertility?
 - Not with lake that size; won't impact fertility at level we can establish vegetation
 - Need to change influx of nutrients to have greatest impact.
- What makes Dale Hollow so special?
 - Dale Hollow progressing slower as far as fertility goes
 - Watershed providing less nutrient input
- What about crappie? Can we stock?
 - Can look into active management and take crappie out of another lake that is overpopulated and stock them in Laurel.
 - Don't have crappie in our hatcheries
 - Did this at Taylorsville Lake and looks like it has had positive impact
 - However, stocking crappie into Kentucky and Barkley lakes did not have a major impact
 - Mother Nature has a much larger effect than what we can do with stocking
 - We did stock crappie from 2000-2005 in Laurel (about a 6% contribution; marginally successful)
 - With eutrophic shift, can potentially try again
- When was last creel survey?
 - 2010
 - Currently conducting creel survey on Laurel River Lake this year (2018)
- Why are fertile lakes in New York so good?
 - Further north, water cooler.
 - Largemouth bass don't have as big of an advantage

- Smallmouth bass have more competition in Laurel
 - Habitat plays a big part.. Not sure why Pickwick is so good.
- Will smallmouth bass go away completely?
 - Will probably hold on at lower level
 - Will have good years and bad spawning years depending on water quality (drought years vs. wet years).
- What affect have baitfish changes had on this?
 - Should not have much affect
 - See threadfin, gizzard and alewife
 - No real changes have occurred in lake
- Has spawning declined?
 - Tough to get a good handle on that due to sampling inefficiencies
 - Creel showing some smaller fish, so that is a good sign
- Can we make part of lake off limits for fishing?
 - Possibly... Would need to collect public input on that
 - Will add that question to the angler attitude survey
 - Will be tough on officers to enforce
- No fishing during certain dates (month of April)?
 - Need public input
 - Can add that to survey as well
- Spotted bass?
 - Spotted bass are doing well in the lake
- Can size limit be increased?
 - Can add to attitude survey
 - If supported, we can look into that
- How long until the creel survey data is available to public?
 - Will be available online around June of 2019.
 - Can call fisheries office in Somerset starting late November/early December and they can provide some of the information at that time
 - Annual reports for all districts are online
- Could smallmouth bass stocking actually work in another lake?
 - We have not had success with our stocking efforts
 - Paintsville and Cave Run are examples of recent efforts that did not succeed
 - Drought years provide better spawns and survival. Wet years not good
- What is being dumped in Laurel from the watershed?
 - Kentucky Division of Water monitors water quality
 - Little Laurel River has high nutrient load and has suffered fish kills due to oxygen issues.
- Reports of dead walleye two years ago
 - Need to make sure these issues get reported
- Attendees did not want hybrid striped bass stocked in Laurel....
- Does KDFWR stock shad in the lake?
 - No
- There are issues at Woods Creek Lake
 - Vegetation issues

- Need to work on management agreement on the lake to work out solution to spraying the weeds
- Exemption of FLW tournament on Cumberland?
 - It is part of a three-year study looking at mortality impacts from regulation exempted tournaments
 - Can use statewide regulations on Lake Cumberland and Cave Run Lake during study, but only for a limited number of tournaments
 - Two spring tournaments and two fall tournaments at each lake, each year
 - Shooting for one large tournament and one small tournament each season at each lake
- Can you do exemptions for the High School tournaments?
 - We are currently exempting the regionals at Cave Run and Cumberland each year and one other larger high school tournament at Cumberland.
- What data do you have on walleye?
 - Don't have any data with us tonight, but you can call the office and we can provide anything you need.
- Commissioner Clinard offered his assistance to those attending the meeting on any fish and wildlife issues in his district. His contact information is on the KDFWR web site and he also handed out cards.
- Can KDFWR work with the Corps to control water levels for the spawn
 - We work together the best we can, but flood control is a key function of the reservoirs and sometimes the need to adjust water levels for flood control overrides water level stability for the fisheries.
- End of meeting