

## What's the Catch in the D.C. Metro Area?

*A Fishing Report for April 2012*

Cool spring water temperatures in the Potomac River and nearby tributaries mean fishing is “hot.” Cold waters hold more dissolved oxygen than warm waters—meaning fish are breathing easily. In the Potomac, Largemouth Bass are hitting lures, including soft plastic jigs and vertically jigged spoons, with frenzy! D.C. and Maryland regulations limit a daily take of five fish measuring at least 12 inches (15 inches after June 15th), and conservation officers will ticket anglers over their limit!

The mouth of Little Hunting Creek (VA) is usually a great spot for catching bass, but runoff from a nearby construction project is washing soil into the river causing high turbidity (muddy water) even after light rains. To compensate for the turbidity, anglers are using dark lures. Later in the season, bass anglers know they can catch fish in the grass beds (submerged aquatic vegetation) near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

Yellow Perch have spawned out, but a few are still being caught in Piscataway Creek (MD). Anglers reported strong Bluegill action at Cameron Run (VA) when casting small jigs toward the grass edges, shoreline vegetation or under overhanging trees. This riparian zone provides shade that cools the water. Roots prevent bank erosion and are perfect structure for hiding or resting perch.

TROUT IN WASHINGTON? Paint Branch Creek (MD) is a unique urban cold-water fishery with wild brown trout. Nonpoint source pollution from urban runoff continues to threaten these pollution-intolerant fish. Fisheries biologists and local conservation groups have educated people living along the creek about the need to reduce fertilizer use, especially before a rain. Nutrients in fertilizers, manure, leaky septic tanks, and pet wastes cause explosive algal blooms. Eventually, this algae rots, causing a stinking mess that consumes dissolved oxygen—suffocating fish and other aquatic critters. To find trout, focus on riffles—the swift, bubbly areas that help oxygenate water.



The Anacostia Park (D.C.) is always good for Channel Catfish. Serious anglers fish right from the shore, using surf rods to get their lines into the river channel. A weighted line with cut bait works best. These fish are fun to catch, but D.C. has published a fish consumption advisory against eating catfish, as they may harbor harmful toxins.

This past spring biologists reported record numbers of spawning American Shad just below Chain Bridge off Fletcher's Boathouse (D.C.). The return of this historic fish is due in part to the hundreds of students raising fish in the classroom and the fishway or ladder at the Little Falls Dam that helps spawning fish navigate the 12-foot dam upstream to their preferred habitat.

Other local improvement plans include a shoreline revitalization project along the Anacostia River. Once completed, people will be able to enjoy fishing piers, boardwalks, and parks—the perfect spot to grill up your catch. In the meantime, we encourage anglers to join a river cleanup organized by the Earth Conservation Corps—Riverkeepers. To date, Riverkeepers have hauled out 536 tons of trash and 8,103 tires.

### Homegrown Heroes:

Since 1989, the Anacostia Watershed Society—along with thousands of volunteers—has aimed to make D.C.'s Anacostia River more “fishable and swimmable.” Their projects include:

- ✓ Watershed Stewards Academy
- ✓ River Report Card
- ✓ Water Quality Monitoring
- ✓ Invasive Plant Management
- ✓ RiverSmart Schools
- ✓ River Cleanups
- ✓ Trash Trap
- ✓ Shad/Herring Awareness and Restoration Effort (SHARE)

**GOOD OLD DAYS?** - Old timers might remember when fishing our nation's

rivers wasn't this good. Back in the 1950s, the Potomac ran foul with factory discharge and poorly treated sewage (point source

pollution). The Clean Water Act in 1972 regulated this pollution, and now 60% of U.S. waterways are “fishable and swimmable”—twice the number of fishable waters as before the Act. Today, the Potomac is considered one of the nation's premier bass fisheries, and anglers can watch nesting Bald Eagles while they fish—an indication that water quality has improved. Biodiversity in a waterway is not just about lots of different fish species—but includes all other animals and plants living in or near the waterway.



Source: Foundation for Ohio River Education, [fore.orsanco.org](http://fore.orsanco.org).