

Greetings B.A.S.S. Nation Members,



I wanted to give you all an update on the direction that DWR is taking for 2021, particularly as it relates to our biggest priority: containing the spread of invasive Alabama bass. This fish, commonly known as the “Coosa spot”, has been found in Lake Gaston, Claytor Lake, Diascund Reservoir, Martinsville Reservoir, Philpott Lake, and the Chickahominy River. In these systems, any spotted bass that you catch is likely to be an Alabama bass. While Alabamas can be entertaining to catch, they represent a great threat to our established bass populations. The Alabama bass outcompetes largemouth bass and displaces smallmouth populations through hybridization. Case studies demonstrate declines of up to 90% in largemouth abundance and the total loss of smallmouth populations following the introduction of Alabamas. DWR is working with organizations such as BASS, TBF, and the Bass Fishing Hall of Fame to prevent further spread and to assist with surveillance. You may see posters or pamphlets in the near future as we work together to get the word out. As a reminder, it is illegal to release Alabama bass outside of the water of body of capture, and illegal to stock them into private or public bodies of water. Please see our regulation guide or website <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/fish/alabama-bass/> for more information.

Another priority for DWR is determining the effectiveness of stocking F1, or “Tiger bass”, into our large impoundments. We have implemented a stocking study and have stocked F1 bass into Smith Mountain Lake, Beaverdam Swamp Reservoir, Lake Anna, and Lake Chesdin. Stocking rates were selected to reflect levels that are sustainable over the long term. While these efforts have occurred in the past on a sporadic basis, oftentimes angler supported, we want to approach this in a controlled, scientific fashion to truly determine effectiveness. If we are able to positively impact our bass fisheries through low density stockings, we are likely to integrate this practice into our annual management activities.

We’ve also been increasing our presence on social media, with the intent of getting the word out about fishing opportunities in Virginia and techniques that will help anglers catch more fish. Just like BASS,

VDWR is very interested in growing the sport of fishing and getting people outdoors. We have highlighted lakes and rivers that provide a quality angling experience and have created content that we think is of value to new and more experienced anglers. Take a look on our Facebook page and be sure to subscribe to our “Notes from Field” and our “Fishing Report.” And, if you’ve got something you’d like to see us highlight, please reach out and let us know.

The last goal that I will highlight is DWR’s interest in building stronger relationships with local fishing organizations such as the BASS Nation of Virginia. We have many common goals, and by working together, we can move forward and improve recreational fishing in Virginia. By fostering these relationships and improving communication, we can also keep each other informed of rising issues and have a productive dialogue. I’m happy to attend meetings on behalf of DWR, so please, send along the invite. I’ll also share information on upcoming meetings and regulatory processes so that you can all be more involved with the process.

See you on the water!

Mike Bednarski

Chief of Fisheries – Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

