

**North Central Division of the American Fisheries Society**  
**Urban & Community Fisheries Technical Committee**  
**2023 State Reports**



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**Dakota Chapter  
2023 Annual Report  
to the  
NCD Urban & Community Fisheries Technical Committee**  
Submitted by Jeff Merchant, Dakota Chapter Representative ([jmerchant@nd.gov](mailto:jmerchant@nd.gov))

**Use of Adult Northern Pike in Community Fisheries**  
Paul Bailey-South Central District Fisheries Supervisor

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department manages numerous urban fisheries that are integral to our R3 efforts. Unfortunately, many of these fisheries are prone to frequent winterkill necessitating annual stocking with catchable fish. Historically, hatchery rainbow trout and naturally sourced panfish and catfish have been the focus of our management. More recently, the Department has stocked adult northern pike that are routinely encountered in spawning operations and other spring netting projects into several urban fisheries. The response of the angling public has been very positive and appreciated as these pike have proven enormously cooperative and provide a great angling experience. The Department stocked a total of 2,301 adult northern pike as part of our urban fisheries management efforts in 2023.

**New Community Fishery**  
Bryan Sea-Northeast District Fisheries Supervisor

Ruger Park Pond is a new community pond in 2023. In May, mostly pike were stocked with some walleye, perch, and crappie. At the time of stocking, spring runoff was still coming into the pond and going over the control structure and throughout the summer we got reports of no one catching fish. We are not sure if the fish went downstream with the water going over the outlet or if they followed the current upstream into the marsh and got stranded up there. In late July we were able to scratch a few walleye, bluegill, crappie, and perch to put in. Our plan for 2024 is to stock the pond later, once the spring runoff is done or almost done to hopefully keep the fish in the pond.

**Trout Stocking in Urban and Community Fisheries in North Dakota**

Catchable-size trout comprise the majority of fish stockings in North Dakota Urban & Community Fisheries annually. In 2023, this list included: 1,138 cutthroat trout in eight waterbodies, and 16,737 rainbow trout in 27 waterbodies. In an effort to renew interest and create additional opportunities, tiger trout were stocked in two waterbodies in 2023 for the first time. Their success is still being evaluated, however there may be potential for our community fisheries. In addition to trout, many of our community fisheries are managed for panfish species such as bluegill or yellow perch. However, given the high likelihood of winterkill in many of these ponds, recent efforts have focused on larger catchable size fish such as adult white bass, and adult channel catfish. These efforts have been well received by the public.



Tiger Trout at the Hatchery

### **South Dakota Updates**

Dave Lucchesi-Area Fisheries Supervisor, Sioux Falls

We are evaluating angler use and opinions of fall Rainbow Trout stockings in two Sioux Falls urban fish ponds done to create a winter fishery. Trout Lodge strain Rainbow Trout (~1 fish/lb) were stocked in Family Park and Covell lakes in November, and we have been recording angler use with a combination of camera and in-person creel counts since early December. To understand angler opinions associated with these stockings, we are also asking questions about angler preference for size (more small vs. fewer big trout) and importance of harvesting trout on these waters to help inform production requests.

Additionally, we are evaluating angler use with camera counts on two other community fish ponds (CFP) which received stockings of large Rainbow Trout (~1 fish/lb) and on one CFP which received a stocking of smaller Rainbow Trout (~8 fish/lb). We have been recording angler use on a few of these waters now for at least two years to potentially evaluate trends in angler use based on stocking or environmental characteristics.

Aquatics staff out of Sioux Falls are getting the opportunity to go ice fishing on several community fishing ponds that had received smaller Rainbow Trout from Blue Dog State Fish Hatchery to determine if those fall stockings produced viable winter fisheries. Several of these ponds are located in rural area and we often do not get a lot of fishing pressure so feedback on management activities can be limited. Staff will make three 2-h trips to each of six RBT-stocked ponds and time fished, fish caught, gear used, and fishing conditions will all be recorded.

**Iowa Chapter  
2023 Annual Report  
to the**

**NCD Urban & Community Fisheries Technical Committee**

Submitted by Tyler Stubbs, Iowa Chapter Representative ([tyler.stubbs@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:tyler.stubbs@dnr.iowa.gov))

**Fish Iowa! Program**

Contact: Gustaf Elliot

In 2023 Barb Gigar, who coordinated our Fish Iowa! Education program for over 30 years retired. Her position was filled by Gustaf Elliot in the fall of 2023. Additional positions called "Outdoor Skills Specialists" are established and have taken on the various roles of "events" regarding general outdoor skills including fishing, archery, outdoor cooking, foraging, etc. Gus has been working with schools and our Department of Education to not only get our data in to teacher's hands and into the classrooms, but also teacher and instructor training. This has also opened new doors with recruitment of potential future full time and seasonal employees.

**Community Trout Evaluation**

Contact: Ben Dodd, Lewis Bruce, Tyler Stubbs

A project was initiated in 2023 to evaluate some of our annual trout stockings in the Des Moines metro. Fall and winter creel surveys were established to learn more about catch and harvest rates of stocked trout and the anglers that are fishing these locations. This is a multi-year project.

**Angler Usage at Community Fisheries Utilizing Time Lapse Photography and Onsite Creel Surveys**

Contact: Lewis Bruce

Preliminary results suggest our community ponds provide ample fish to be caught and that a large percentage of the usage at some of our community fisheries is by anglers less than 16 years of age making these a great recruitment tool. Additionally, our community fisheries receive very high usage per acre compared to our rural fisheries; however, fish harvest is near zero in our urban areas. 2024 is the final year of this project.

**Increase in Community Fishing Locations**

Contact: Tyler Stubbs

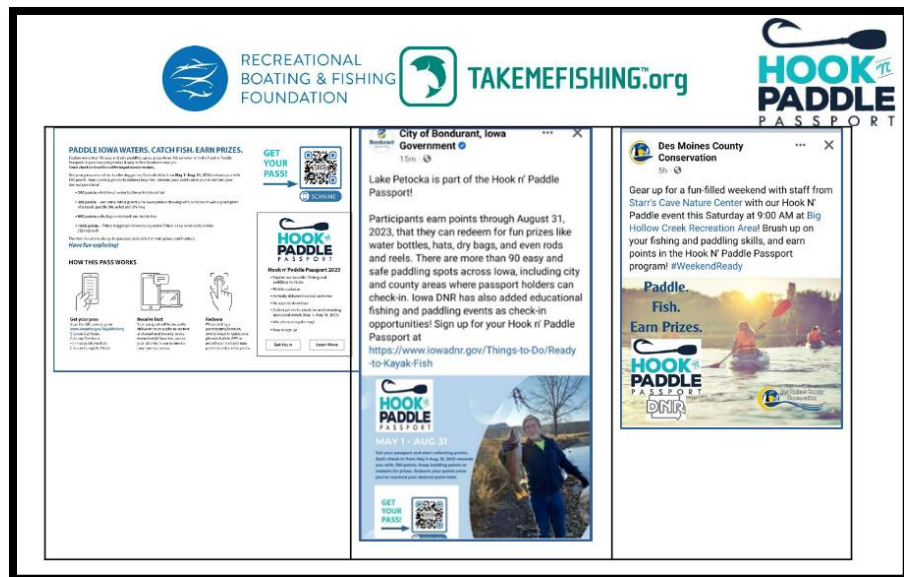
In 2023, through the Community Fishing Program, the Iowa DNR was able to work with 11 partnering cities and counties to stock newly built, newly acquired, or renovated public fisheries, totaling 38.1 acres of new public access to our database. The Iowa DNR assists partners across the state each year to enhance or increase public access within or near the city limits of Iowa's communities. Additionally, with the help of the Vegetation Management Biologist, the Iowa DNR worked with communities on plans to manage or eliminate overabundant and/or invasive plants to improve shoreline angler access on many ponds. Looking ahead to 2024, the Community Fishing Program has already been working with partners on 15 new public fisheries within 9 communities, totaling 39.6 new acres of fishable public access. Since 2016, through the Community Fishing Program, the Iowa DNR has assisted 32 partners with 81 new waterbodies, totaling 237.8 acres of new or improved public fishing access within or near the city limits. None of which are owned by the DNR. All of these locations are marketed on our website at

[www.iowadnr.gov/fishlocal](http://www.iowadnr.gov/fishlocal). Preliminary results suggest our ponds provide ample fish to be caught and that a large percentage of the usage in our community fisheries is by anglers less than 16 years of age. Additionally, our community fisheries receive very high usage compared to our rural fisheries, however, fish harvest is near zero in our urban areas.

## Hook N' Paddle Passport

Contact: Shannon Hafner

In 2023 we received an RBFF marketing grant to promote paddling and fishing to anglers around the state with an emphasis on marketing to females with locations in or near urban areas. Many of our community fisheries also allow paddling, and paddlers are a group that we have struggled to communicate with in the past, even though kayak anglers are a fast-growing demographic. This was the second year of us running the passport. It proved to be informative and popular, and provided a way for us to better communicate and market fishing to the paddlers in the state. A report of our project can be found on RBFF's website in the near future.



**Kansas Chapter  
2023 Annual Report  
to the  
NCD Urban & Community Fisheries Technical Committee**  
Submitted by Jeff Conley, Kansas Chapter Representative ([Jeff.Conley@ks.gov](mailto:Jeff.Conley@ks.gov))

**Sportfish Education**

In 2023 Fishing education in our urban areas has continued to be a focus of the Fisheries Division. Along with staff participation a focus of getting others to educate thru our instructor education program thru Fishing Futures program. These volunteers help bolster our ability to do Sportfish Education. Partner such as Cabela's/Bass Pro shop have also been a big supporter of fishing education in our Urban areas.

**Urban Catfish Program**

In 2023 we continued our long-standing program of stocking catchable sized Channel Catfish for urban anglers. Over 82,000 pounds of Channel Catfish were stocked in community waters in urban locations throughout the State. We are also evaluating this program currently to determine if the stocking density we presently are doing line up with the creel take we see at two locations in Wichita (our largest populated city) to see if we need to adjust what we are doing with the program at present.

**Trout Winter Fishing Opportunity**

In 2023 we conducted an in-person survey of anglers at our trout waters to determine how best to modify season to account for the increase price of Trout from our trout Vendors. The Fisheries Division was able to talk to over 500 trout anglers around the state so we could see what their motivation where for trout angling in Kansas. With that information we shortened the season and place it from Dec. 1 to March 31. This shorter season allowed us to stock less frequently to lower the cost of this program.

**Community Fisheries Access Program**

In 2023 we had 125 community partners that we continued to pay a lease payment. This supplies our partners with funds to help insure proper operation and maintenance of their community waters. A total of \$758,813.78 of Sportfish and State Funds where use in this SFR Program. Many of these communities benefit from stocking in our Urban Catfish Program and Trout Winter Fish Opportunity to make fishing a more attractive recreational activity in the Communities of Kansas both large and small. Also offered to our community partners this year we funded \$200,000.00 worth of projects to provide cost share to do fisheries Capitol Improvement project for the benefit of Kansas anglers. The funds for this program come from state angler license fees.

**Michigan Chapter  
2023 Annual Report  
to the**

**NCD Urban & Community Fisheries Technical Committee**

Submitted by John Buszkiewicz, Michigan Chapter Representative ([BuszkiewiczJ@michigan.gov](mailto:BuszkiewiczJ@michigan.gov))

**Milestone reached in continuing Arctic grayling reintroduction effort**

Contact: Ed Eisch, 231-499-4118 (DNR) or Archie Martell, 231-398-2193 (Little River Band of Ottawa Indians)

In early November, three Michigan lakes were stocked with Arctic grayling. These fish are surplus from the establishment of a grayling brood stock as part of the Michigan Arctic Grayling Initiative. The initiative has been underway since Little River Band of Ottawa Indians and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources began a partnership aimed at reintroducing this iconic species to Michigan waters in 2015. The full partnership now includes nearly 50 stakeholder and partner groups, along with the general and angling public. Four hundred grayling were stocked at Alger County's West Johns Lake, 300 at Penegor Lake in Houghton County and 1,105 in Manistee County's Pine Lake. The fish were taken from the Marquette State Fish Hatchery in Marquette and represented year classes from 2019 and 2021. With the third year-class recently clearing their requisite health inspections, it is highly likely that there will be additional surplus available for stocking again next fall.

The Arctic grayling, called "Nmégos" by indigenous people, was an important connection to nature as it provided a substantial food source for the Anishinabek people's subsistence. This connection has been lost for the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians community and the Anishinabek people through the extirpation of the Arctic grayling from Michigan. The arctic grayling reintroduction initiative, with the supporting partners, provides a way to reconnect the Anishinabek people with their culture and heritage. At the October meeting of the Michigan Natural Resources Commission, fishing regulations were modified so that it is now legal for an angler to attempt to catch, but not harvest, Arctic grayling. With the exception of Pine Lake, the lakes the grayling are stocked in are open to fishing from the last Saturday in April until Oct. 31.

Arctic grayling are known to be susceptible to handling stress when caught by recreational anglers. Anglers are encouraged to use single, barbless hooks and to allow the fish to remain in the water when taking them off the hook. Actions such as these will reduce the chances that the released fish will die. Now that the three lots of future broodstock have been developed, the Little River Band, the DNR and other partner groups are eyeing spring of 2025 as the likely timeline for the first eggs to go into remote site incubators. While it would be great to start earlier, females of one year class need to be spawned with males from a different year class. This results in the most genetically fit fish possible by avoiding the potential of crossing siblings. Work continues by several partner groups to collect stream data to determine which watershed will be selected to receive the first eggs in this initiative.

**Minnesota Chapter  
2023 Annual Report  
to the**

**NCD Urban & Community Fisheries Technical Committee**

Submitted by Jessie Koehle, Minnesota Chapter Representative ([JKoehle@cityofeagan.com](mailto:JKoehle@cityofeagan.com))

**Minnesota DNR *Fishing in the Neighborhood (FiN)* Update for 2022-2023**

Contact: Mario Travaline

FiN is the MN DNR's urban fishing program and operates on all levels of urban fisheries management. This begins with identifying waters that can be added to the program, biological monitoring of new and existing program waters, enhancing fish communities through stocking plans, and introducing surrounding communities to their nearby fisheries resources. Evaluation of management actions are on-going and take the form of effort creels, participant commentary, and satisfaction surveys. The following is a 2-year summary.

In 2022-2023 fish stocking had increased back to expected levels across FiN waters. Winterkill in several waters presented a challenge, especially in some lakes that experienced low oxygen in consecutive years. Nine species were stocked each fiscal year, 36 waters in FY22 and 31 waters in FY23. In total, 43,895 fish were stocked during this biennium, excluding fry. In addition to 965,000 Walleye fry were stocked in FiN waters.

A total of 62 angling and aquatic education events were conducted. A total of 3959 participants were reached, and 41 different groups hosted FiN events. Approximately 62% of all outreach events were expressly for shore angling, while the remaining 38% included fish identification, angler education, career information, and fish biology themes (e.g. fish dissection).

With the help of the Women Anglers of Minnesota & the City of Savage, the pier at McColl Pond (FiN water) was replaced. After a long journey and a unique configuration, the pier found a new home on McColl Pond helping anglers access the excellent fishing the lake has to offer. Women Anglers of Minnesota dedicated the pier with a commemorative plaque in July 2023.

**City of Eagan Neighborhood Fishing Program**

Contact: Jessie Koehle

Working for the City of Eagan, I am the employee tasked with our Neighborhood Fishing Program, for which my duties include surveys, stocking, GIS mapping, water quality testing, plant harvesting, AIS control, public outreach and education, volunteer programs, spill response, winter dissolved oxygen testing and lake aeration, and other various community services. With the variety of projects our small team is responsible for, we tend to have less than 10 public fishing programs per year. We hold monthly free fishing events for the public in summer at various locations in Eagan, one large public free ice fishing event (weather permitting!), and can respond to requests for taking smaller groups fishing as well. Sometimes it's ice fishing with a group of high schoolers; sometimes it's a summer fishing clinic for our seniors who sign up from the community center programs; sometimes it's a class lecture about fishing to elementary students. Our program and efforts are varied and robust, partly because we have 15 small fishing lakes within our 33 square miles in a community of about 69k residents. This coming year we look forward to our public fishing-centered event in July to celebrate Lakes Appreciation Month,

and will bring on the staff of Baztec to help run the fishing education components to free up our staff for other event-related tasks. We also have a number of projects going around town to protect and improve lake water quality. We network/communicate with other local cities and counties, and it sounds like they often have at least one or two fishing events per year, location dependent. I would like to increase MN AFS chapter membership to folks like myself who are running fishing outreach and education programs locally, whether or not they have a traditional fisheries background. I would welcome input from others about how to improve our programs, how to network with peers more effectively, and how to better reach more diverse populations especially those who have been historically overlooked or under-served. We partner with local MN DNR FiN and fisheries and aquatic plant permitting staff for permitting, occasionally stocking, surveys, and public outreach events whenever possible. We would also be open to partnerships and volunteered time from members in groups such as Minnesota Valley In-Fisherman's Club, Women Anglers of Minnesota, the Eagan and Rosemount High School fishing teams, and some of the local scout troops.

**Missouri Chapter  
2023 Annual Report  
to the**

**NCD Urban & Community Fisheries Technical Committee**

Submitted by John Schulte, Missouri Chapter Representative ([John.Schulte@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:John.Schulte@mdc.mo.gov))

### **Urban Stockings**

In 2023 the Missouri Department of Conservation shifted sourcing Channel Catfish for Urban Fishing Program stockings from external providers to in-house production. The change was enacted as a means to combat rising-costs and previous elevated mortality events following summer stockings and maintain costs with market value. 80,000 Channel Catfish with an average measurement of 320-mm raised at Lost Valley Hatchery were stocked in 29 lakes across Kansas City and Saint Louis Urban and Communities between April and September.

Select community lakes receives over 95,000 Rainbow Trout (RBT) raised by agency cold-water hatcheries at Shepherd of the Hills, Montauk, Bennet. The Winter Trout Program helps to provide close-to-home fishing opportunities for urban community anglers. RBT stocked in lakes between November and February averaged 304-mm or greater, and 84 retired RBT brood stock lunkers averaging 1.45-kg were also included from the providing hatcheries as trophy length fish, as a means of boosting participation and angler satisfaction. Currently 8 lakes across Missouri are being included in a preliminary angler use survey to assess usage and participation with an eye towards an expanded creel survey in next few years.

### **Creve Coeur Lake**

Creve Coeur Lake (CC Lake) is a 320-acre former oxbow of the Missouri River and is one of this State's only naturally occurring lakes. Historically this lake had supported an exceptional Crappie fishery that has rapidly declined over the last decade due in part to the abundant presence of invasive Silver Carp in

CC Lake. Recent Crappie Fall fyke net surveys indicate poor recruitment and size structure in the crappie population. Frequent and sustained periods of Silver Carp specific fish-kill events in '22, '23 seem to allude to the carp population breaching the current population carrying capacity of the lake, as most fish recovered appeared stunted and emaciated. In 2015 a coalition of participants led by MDC successfully helped remove over 119-tons of Silver Carp and other invasives with a while minimizing any bycatch ratios. However, in 2018 the lake was flooded during a highwater event from the neighboring MO River, which contributed to the repopulation of invasive carp into CC Lake. MDC is working closely with USFWS and USGS to obtain updated carp population size structures with an eye towards a potential removal project in early 2025. Goals also include population capture studies, testing new equipment and utilizing commercial fishing permits as final means of carp removal and utilization.

### **Fish Habitat & Infrastructure**

Recent urban fish habitat efforts have been aimed at supporting gamefish populations, managing lake sediment and nutrient loads, and supporting greater urban and suburban ecology (like native pollinators and invertebrate forage). Some of these recent initiatives for aquatic habitat on community lakes includes, expanding native aquatic plantings, introduction of floating islands on semi-eutrophic waters, and incorporating partner constructed porcupine cribs to provide juvenile fish cover. MDC press releases support partner Christmas tree recycling drives for sinking fish brush piles which continues to be a success, as ice permits!

Urban and Community Lake infrastructure projects and closures include Forest Park's Jefferson Lake, which includes improvements to shoreline ADA access, aeration, and sediment removal. Wild Acres Park Lake, and Gendron Lake are closed due to dam breach and spillway issues, with engineer planning and work underway.

### **Nebraska Chapter 2023 Annual Report to the**

### **NCD Urban & Community Fisheries Technical Committee**

Submitted by Jordan Katt, Nebraska Chapter Representative ([Jordan.katt@nebraska.gov](mailto:Jordan.katt@nebraska.gov))

### **Nebraska Community Waters Update**

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has expanded its Community Waters Program to include not only educational programming, but also a fisheries management component. The educational component has been building for many years and is currently operating a very successful Community Fishing program which runs fishing events at Community Waters across the state. The new management component will begin to look more in-depth at stocking strategies, every day angler use and potential improvements to these Community Waters. During 2023, initial discussions began for a statewide Rainbow Trout stocking evaluation in these Community Waters, which will begin in the near future. Also, Nebraska's 3<sup>rd</sup> Aquatic Habitat Plan is in the initial planning stages, which provides significant funding for waterbody rehab projects throughout the state. Discussions are being had on how to best incorporate the Community Waters into this plan.

**Ohio Chapter  
2023 Annual Report  
to the  
NCD Urban & Community Fisheries Technical Committee**  
Submitted by Tory Gabriel, Ohio Chapter Representative ([gabriel.78@osu.edu](mailto:gabriel.78@osu.edu))

**New Fishing Agreement between ODNR Division of Wildlife and the City of Columbus**

Contact: Nick Radabaugh

On Saturday, April 22, ODNR Division of Wildlife District One staff partnered with the City of Columbus to host a trout fishing / Earth Day Event at the newly renovated Linden Park and community center in Columbus. The event highlighted a new fishing agreement that allowed the Division of Wildlife to stock seven new City of Columbus ponds with over 6,000 rainbow trout this year, including 600 for this event. The new trout stocking locations provide fishing opportunities close to home for Columbus residents, making them more accessible to new anglers, kids, and families. Morning speakers included Columbus Recreation and Parks Director - Bernita Reese, Recreation and Parks Commission President – Letha Pugh, Division of Wildlife Executive Administrator of Fish Management and Research – Scott Hale, and Division of Wildlife Chief – Kendra Wecker. Despite the gloomy forecast, the sun came out and the fish began to bite. Throughout the day, anglers of all ages showed up and caught fish using cane poles and bait provided by the Division of Wildlife. Wildlife staff were also cleaning trout on site for folks who were unfamiliar with the process, assisting with fishing, and providing information about our Wild Ohio Harvest Community Program. A huge thank you to everyone who helped make this event a success, including: Tim Parker, Ethan Simmons, Nick Radabaugh, Kassie Mitchell, Doug Wensink, Abby Rhodebeck, Johanna Dart, Brad Kiger, Tim Daniel, Scott Hale, Chief Kendra Wecker and our partners at Columbus RPD.



*(Left)* A picture of the crowd at Linden Park. *(Right)* Division of Wildlife staff with ABC 6 reporter, Alissa Henry, who was able to catch a trout and clean a trout during two live TV spots.

**Cleveland Metroparks and Partners Host Multiple Events in 2023**

Contact: Mike Durkalec, Aquatic Biologist, Cleveland Metroparks

Cleveland Metroparks hosted multiple urban and community fishing events in 2023. Three of the major events are highlighted below. These were free events, and any barriers to trying fishing were removed with free loaner poles, bait and one-on-one instruction offered to attendees. Prizes were awarded for different fish categories and age groups.

May 20 & 21 Spring Children's Fishing Derbies – These were held at two locations: one in Cleveland Heights (urban) and the second in Berea (suburban). All children under 16 years old were welcome. These events were supported in part by ODNr Division of Wildlife grant funds secured by Ohio Central Basin Steelheaders. Trout and catfish were stocked. The total attendance was 1,306 people.



July 29 Doan Brook Family Fishing Day. Urban core location at Rockefeller Lagoon off MLK Drive. This event was offered in partnership with Doan Brook Watershed Partners and was child friendly, but anyone was welcome. Catfish were stocked for the event. The total attendance was 105 people.



10/14 Fall Family Fishing Day at Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation (urban). This event was child friendly, but anyone was welcome. This event was supported in part by ODNR Division of Wildlife grant funds secured by Ohio Central Basin Steelheaders. Trout and catfish were stocked. The total attendance was 262 people.

