US Army Corps of Engineers ®
Baltimore District

The Raystown Lake Cooperative Striped Bass Nursery

Raystown Lake Project
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
2016/2017 Handshake Partnership Program

The Raystown Lake Cooperative Striped Bass Nursery Project consisted of one main focus: to develop and implement a long term, cost and energy efficient striped bass nursery as a methodology to maintaining a first class striped bass fishery in Raystown Lake.

The striped bass fishery of Raystown Lake is well known for it's exciting recreational opportunities, its economic impact, and it tourist promotional value (*who wouldn't want the chance to reel in a 35 pound fish?).* What is not well known is that the fisheries existence relies solely on the stocking of the species. With increased fishing pressure and the cost of commercially produced striped bass sky-rocketing, the state and non-profit organizations have been under pressure to maintain fisheries population.

The Raystown Lake Cooperative Striped Bass Nursery is a collaborate project led by the Pennsylvania Striped Bass Association (PSBA) with a host of federal, state, and local non-profit partners including the US Army Corps of Engineers at Raystown Lake, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PAFBC), the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau, the Friends of Raystown Lake, and Juniata College. Overall value of this project during 2017 is estimated at nearly $61,000.

Overall, this Handshake Project included the renovation of an under–utilized Corps maintenance storage facility into a non-profit run cooperative striped bass nursery. Through handshake funding, the PSBA was able to purchase additional large spawning tanks, pumps, and building supplies to conduct the transformation of the facility.

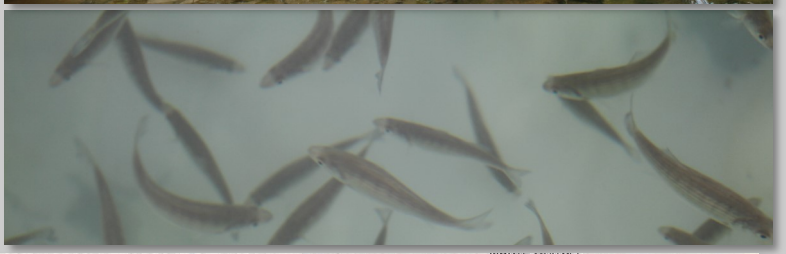
Photograph Above: *Corps staff join PA Fish and Boat Commission Staff in electrofishing for striped bass.*

Photograph Below: *An adult striped bass caught during electrofishing attempts to obtain brood stock from Raystown Lake to be potentially spawned for the Cooperative Nursery.*

Photograph Left: *PSBA Member and Nursery Director, Nelson Wert, provides a tour of the facility to Matt Price, Executive Director of the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau,* ***Photograph Middle:*** *Robert Henderson, PSBA Members looks through a microscope at day old fry during an open house of the facility.* ***Photograph Right:*** *Day old fry reared in the hatchery as viewed through the microscope.*

The project was considered successful as 1) During June of 2017, the PSBA announced it's first, live tank spawn. 2) The PSBA was able to raise 400 (1/2 inch) striped bass provided by the PAFBC to a size of 3-4 inches before releasing them into the lake, thus greatly improving the probability of survival. 3) The purchased tanks are currently being used to "over-winter" six mature Chesapeake-strain striped bass females donated by the University of North Carolina. The PSBA will pair these females with males caught from Raystown Lake in the Spring of 2018 in the hopes of increased successful spawning opportunities. *Currently, this is one of the only known cooperative, non-profit run striped bass nurseries in the nation.*

Photograph Left: *PSBA Members release a striped bass into the tanks for initial assessment after being caught from Raystown Lake.*



Photograph Above: *Nelson Wert, Cooperative Nursery Director provides a tour to Boy Scouts while camping at Raystown Lake.* ***Photograph Top Right:*** *Members of the PSBA stock the 400—4 inch striped bass fingerlings raised from 1/2 inch when received by the PA Fish and Boat Commission.* ***Photograph Right:*** *A close up of the 4 inch fish before they are released into a back cove of Raystown Lake.*

Photographs Above and Below: *Nelson Wert, Nursery Director, provides a tour of the facility to Baltimore District Commander, Colonel Edward Chamberlayne and Chief of Flood Risk Mgmt, Steve Brown, with Raystown Lake Staff participating.*

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Striped bass facility ready for breeders

By Dylan Miller
Valley Log Staff Writer

Following a grant from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Pennsylvania Striped Bass Association (PSBA) has finished its expansion project to accommodate larger tanks that adult stripers from Raystown lake will be able to spawn in, which PSBA volunteers will raise in the facility and release into the lake to maintain the population.

Jim Tucker, PSBA chairman explained the combination between heightened fishing pressures and rising cost of young stripers has contributed to the need for the facility near Raystown to be more sustainable. To accomplish this, the facility will now house adult breeding fish to spawn in captivity.

"In the new section here, we have two 1,200-gallon holding tanks," said PSBA volunteer Nelson Wert. "We will put them in here and keep noise and light intrusion to a minimum to allow them to spawn quietly, and the eggs will go into a tube in the center to be siphoned to a separate tank where we can monitor them. Then, we'll transfer them to the other side of the facility to be hatched and raised."

The new addition also has an initial bin before the incoming fish even get to the larger holding tanks. This bin has a net built into it so we can check the health and sex of the fish.

"It only takes two good males and one female and we'll have all the fish we want," said Dave Rhodes, PSBA president. "For every 10 pounds of fish, you're usually looking at about a million eggs, so if we had a 30-pound fish we'll have three million eggs."

Although volunteers were out this weekend with rod and reel trying to land breeding fish, the weather was against them and they were unable to secure any suitable fish. However, Wert told The Valley Log there is already a male and female fish in the older section tha

Striped bass, *on page 8*

Striped bass, from page 1

is normally used to raise.

"Right now we're just trying to keep the lights low and prevent them from stressing out," said Wert. "Once they're settled, we'll check her for eggs and try to breed them. We also need to get them acclimated to our water parameters, which are different from the lakes but are more conducive to breeding."

Last year, being the first year in operation, volunteers at the raising facility learned a lot that they will use for this crucial time of year.

"One thing we learned is to not start too early," said Rhodes. "Last year we tried to collect breeding stock too early, but it was difficult to guess at when the fish were ready due to the unusual weather cues."

The spring this year has been relatively normal, and PSBA is expecting the window of opportunity to fall within the next few weeks to find females with eggs. Wert explained that this year the state Fish and Boat Commission will also be electro-fishing to help gather breeding stripers for the club.

Thanks to local support, PSBA is looking forward to continue their work to put more stripers in the lake while saving costs as well.

"The support has been pretty good, and the support of the FBC has been great as they help us shock fishing, which doesn't stress the potential breeding fish as much as a hook and line," said Rhodes. "We also have a lot of support from USACE and the Friends of Raystown Lake."

Photo by Dylan Miller

A LARGE FEMALE STRIPED BASS, pulled from Raystown Lake by rod and reel, is becoming acclimated to one of the holding tanks in the Pennsylvania Striped Bass Association (PSBA) breeding facility. Volunteers keep the lights low and sound to a minimum to ensure the health of the fish.