



Staunton River 2010

From Leesville Dam downstream to the headwaters of Kerr Reservoir, the Staunton River offers 81 miles of diverse fishing opportunities. This reach of river has two fairly distinct sections based on habitat availability. The area from Leesville Dam to Brookneal has a better gradient and a better ratio of riffles:runs:pools. For anglers, this equates to excellent habitat for smallmouth bass and walleye. The Leesville Dam tailrace offers some of the best walleye fishing in Virginia but fish can be found throughout this reach. The smallmouth bass fishing is excellent as well, with trophy fish a real possibility. Channel catfish and flathead catfish are found in high abundances in this reach as well. Channel catfish are collected in greater abundances in the Staunton River than any other river in the state so anglers can anticipate good catch rates. While not as abundant, large flathead catfish are found throughout the entire reach.

From Brookneal downstream to its confluence with the Dan River, the Staunton River has less rocky habitat, is wider and has a predominantly sandy bottom. Habitat is abundant along the river banks in the form of fallen trees. Black bass (smallmouth, largemouth and spotted bass) are still found in this area but density's are generally lower than the upper section. Catfish are still abundant and anglers will have a better chance of catching blue catfish below Brookneal than they do above. During the spring, this section of the Staunton River is full of striped bass who are making their spawning run out of Kerr Reservoir. Angling during this time of year in the river for striped bass is a great way for fishermen to catch a species that for most of the year is found in deep water of Kerr Reservoir.

Biologists monitor the fish populations in the Staunton River with electrofishing in the fall each year. All species are collected and measured but smallmouth bass tend to be the focus of these samples. Biologists track year class strength (how good or bad was the spawn that year), size structure, growth and mortality with data collected from electrofishing surveys. Additionally, most of the rivers in the state are compared to give biologists a better perspective of the smallmouth populations across the state.

Smallmouth bass in the Staunton River are generally found in low abundance when compared to other rivers in the state. However, growth and survival are above average and this leads to a fishery where anglers can expect lower than normal catch rates but higher than average size fish. For more information on statewide comparisons of riverine smallmouth bass:

<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/waterbodies/reports/2009%20Smallmouth%20Bass%20Rivers%20Report.pdf>

Smallmouth bass in all rivers exhibit years of good reproduction and years of bad reproduction. Research conducted by VDGIF staff has indicated that flow rate in June is an indicator of year class strength. To try and negate the impacts of poor year classes, VDGIF is studying that affect of stocking fingerling smallmouth bass in the Staunton River.

Access to the Staunton River is excellent. For more information on public boat launches:

<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/waterbodies/display.asp?id=175§ion=maps>

Anglers should also be aware of fish consumption advisories before harvesting fish. However, just because a species may have a consumption advisory imposed does not mean that recreational fishing is diminished.

<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/regulations/advisories.asp>