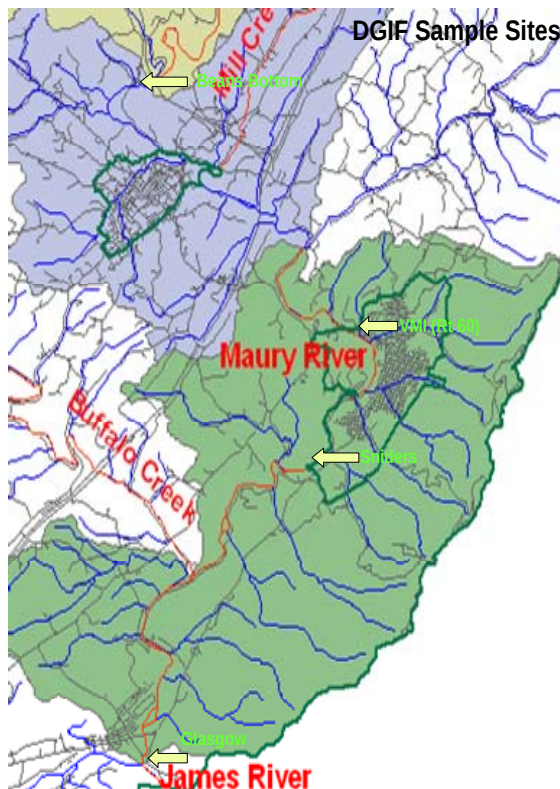




Maury River 2008

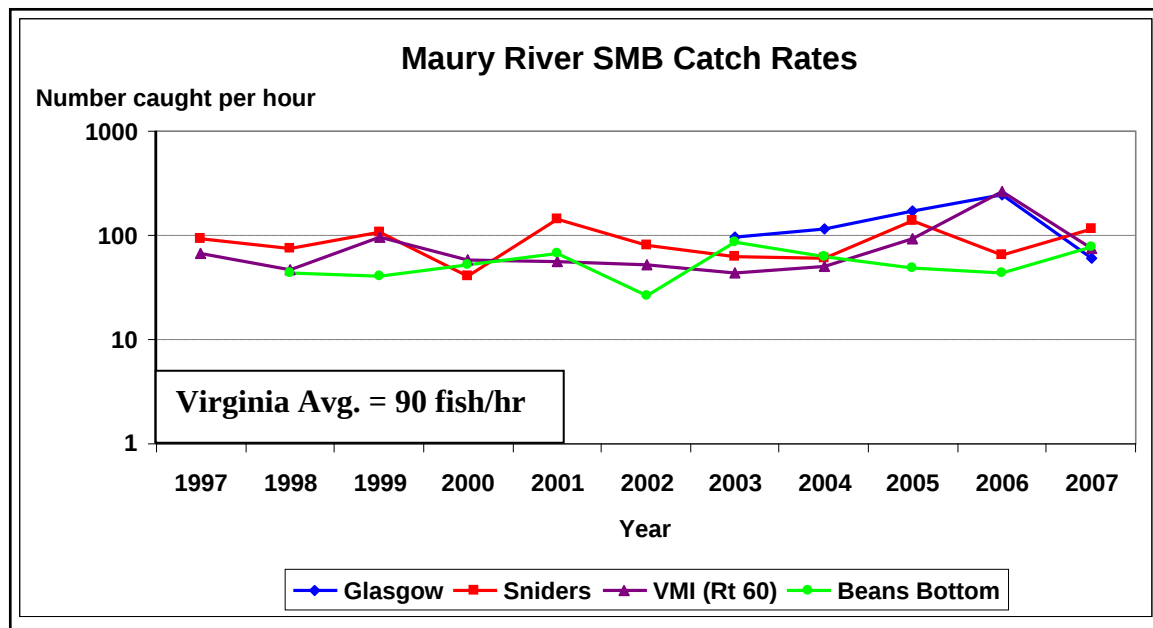
The Maury River runs 42 miles from the confluence of the Calfpasture River and the Little Calfpasture River near Goshen to its mouth in Glasgow. The entire watershed is in Rockbridge County, Va. The Maury River provides ample angling opportunities, from the trout-stocked rapids of Goshen Pass to the deep pools downstream of Buena Vista. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) has sampled the Maury River at several established locations since 1997, all downstream of Goshen Pass. The primary objective is to obtain population statistics for sport fish and to manage them appropriately for the anglers of Virginia.

Sport fish of the Maury River include stocked brown and rainbow trout that are introduced several times annually by DGIF in the Goshen Pass area. Smallmouth bass, redbreast sunfish, rock bass, and carp are the dominant species throughout the system. Muskellunge and flathead catfish are available in limited number near Glasgow. Below is a location map of four electrofishing stations that have been in use by DGIF for a decade.



Smallmouth bass

This species is considered the primary target of most anglers that fish the Maury River. Results are published as “catch rates” or number of fish per hour netted by biologists. The line graph on the next page shows that the catch rates for smallmouth bass rivers across Virginia is about the same as the average over time in the Maury River (91 fish per hour). The highest catch rates occur near Glasgow (139 fish/hour) and the lowest near Beans Bottom, above Lexington. How many smallies are actually in the river? We looked at abundance at 3 locations in 2006 and estimated an average of over 900 smallmouth bass per mile for the river. The average size adult smallmouth bass in the Maury River is around 8 inches long (over 600 fish measured). The largest taken by electrofishing was 21 inches long. Recruitment, or spawning success, is calculated by looking at young-of-year (YOY) bass in the fall each year. In 2005, smallmouth bass recruitment was the highest seen in the previous 8 years. Both 2006 and 2007 were solid years for spawning success, but not even close to 2005. This bodes well for Maury anglers, as the 2005 fish should translate into great fishing by 2008. Smallmouth bass growth is relatively slow, compared to larger systems like the New, James, and Rappahannock. It takes 4-5 years for a smallmouth bass to attain 12 inches in length, then growth really slows after Age 4. An 18 inch smallmouth bass would be over 7-8 years old. This is not due to a lack of food in the river, but primarily a function of energy expenditure to obtain food items.



Panfish

Redbreast sunfish are the most abundant panfish in the river. Over 2,500 fish per mile greater than 4 inches long were calculated in 2006. Rock bass, also known as “redeye”, are very prolific. We estimated over 1,500 rock bass per mile (> 4 inches long) in the Maury in 2006. It was difficult to detect whether rock bass are on the rise, but we

found a definite positive trend in the number of redbreast sunfish at all of the sample stations. Other sunfish collected during our surveys include green sunfish, pumpkinseed, and bluegill. Black crappie have established themselves in small populations in the backwater behind Bontex Dam in Buena Vista.

Other Sport Fish

Muskellunge (musky) and flathead catfish are found in the lower reaches of the Maury River in low numbers. Although musky were briefly stocked in the river, this practice was discontinued in 2002 due to poor survival. Muskies encountered in 2006 may have entered the Maury from the James River. Flathead catfish were never directly introduced into the Maury River, but were stocked into the James in the 1970's. A small population exists in the reach between Buena Vista and Glasgow. Largemouth bass can be located in the power pool behind the Bontex Dam, but they are not very well established in the river.

Fish Health

To date, the fish health/fish kill issues that have plagued the upper James River and the Shenandoah River have not manifested themselves in the Maury River. The Maury will be monitored annually by Department personnel to maintain population statistics and look for signs of diseased fish.