LDWF Office of Fisheries

Louisiana's Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Report MRBP Fall 2022

(May 2022 – Oct 2022)

New Reported ANS:
Peacock Bass:
A report of a Peacock Bass was seen by LDWF Biologists on Facebook. The LDWF ANS Coordinator contacted the fisherman. The fish was deeply hooked and in the process of unhooking the fish, the fisherman was also hooked. He needed medical attention, so he kicked the fish back into Bayou St. John. The fisherman was very cooperative and met a biologist at the location where he caught the fish. LDWF electro-fished the area but did not find the fish. This area is very near a long-term sampling site so it will be checked a few times a year. Based on the description of how the fish was hooked that it had a low chance of surviving. The climate match for this fish is low for this part of LA, we do not feel it could become established.

Update to recently reported ANS:
Murray Cod:

As previously reported during our Spring 2022 update, there have been no additional reports or sightings of the Murray Cod. LDWF has sampled 2 times in the area and has not seen the fish or any natives that could be mistaken for it. LDWF will continue to monitor the area in the future for this fish.

Status of established ANS

Apple Snail:

Public reports of Apple Snails slowed from the normal pace in previous years. Drought conditions early in the reporting period had kept the public reports at low levels. Southern LA entered a rainy period that resulted in a sudden increase in reports. The current drought and cooler weather have resulted in lower reports.

In October, we received a report of apple snails 20 miles further north than the nearest reported sighting. In discussions with the person that reported it, we learned that a neighbor released the snails into the pond. He had eaten some and wanted a source of them closer to his home. LDWF Enforcement investigated the incident and issued the appropriate tickets to the individual.

Invasive Carp:

In the fiscal year 2020, LDWF started two projects funded through USFWS's Lower Mississippi River Invasive Carp Partnership and the Atchafalaya, Red, and White Rivers Invasive Carp Partnership. These two projects should assist LDWF in locating breeding areas and in identifying potential locations for carp barriers. LDWF has also tagged approx. 155 invasive carp to help increase the understanding of the movement of the carp in South Louisiana.

One interesting finding of the carp telemetry study was one silver carp spent December and January in NW Vermilion Bay until it showed back up on the receiver array 125 km away in the Atchafalaya River. It appears to be migrating upstream as would be expected for the spring reproductive period.
This has confirmed our suspicion that invasive carp can use coastal waters to move between river basins.

In the fiscal year 2021, LDWF started four partnership-funded projects to investigate the developing markets for invasive carp, investigate obstacles inhibiting commercial fishermen from harvesting invasive carp, and study the impacts of invasive carp on native commercially important fish. Early results from the survey of fishermen and wholesale dealers indicate that the commercial harvest can increase if markets are available for the fish.

For the fiscal year 2022, LDWF has additional studies to expand the telemetry project, develop commercial markets for carp, help define the exact breeding periods of the carp, continue studying impacts on native fisheries, and investigate the effectiveness of commercial gill nets in off-channel habitats. These projects will start in January 2023.

Asian Swamp Eels:

Monopterus cuchia was found in Bayou St John, New Orleans in June 2019. LDWF and a local college professor continue to monitor and sample the population. Two small eels were found in samples collected in Sept 2020. No eels were found by LDWF or college researchers from September 2020 to May 2022. In 2021, the few swamp eels that were found were attributed to the vegetation control of both LDWF and local community organizations. The vegetation control is ongoing and appears to be just as successful as last year. Only one specimen has been reported thus far in 2022 and was caught by an angler and confirmed via photograph. This specimen was caught at the original site where the swamp

eels were first detected. LDWF sampled in August 2022 and did not find any swamp eels. A more intensive survey is being discussed for the spring to ascertain the status and range of the species.

Aquatic Plant Control Program:
LDWF continued with our control of invasive aquatic weeds using a variety of techniques. Aquatic plant control plans were developed for 74 different waterbodies during the reporting period. A total of 25,271 acres of nuisance vegetation were treated in 2021. Giant Salvinia continues to be the most problematic invasive plant in Louisiana, with herbicides being applied to over 20,000 acres during that time. Additionally, approximately 15,000 acres of Water Hyacinth were treated across the state during the reporting period. LDWF uses an integrated approach to control aquatic plants consisting of chemical, physical (booms and drawdowns), and biological (insects and grass carp) methods to achieve a greater combined benefit. In 2021, LDWF had an Aquatic Plant Control Program budget of $3,200,000, of which more than 50% of that was spent on Giant Salvinia alone for monitoring, treatment, and research.

LA Invasive Species Project on iNaturalist:
A project was initiated where observations from members of the public are filtered on iNatualist to produce a list of all invasive species reported. The LDWF ANS coordinator looks for new invasive species as well as any range extensions using this list of species and locations. Any observations of interest may generate a site visit to determine if the report is accurate. Thus far, no data has yielded any confirmed new invasive species.