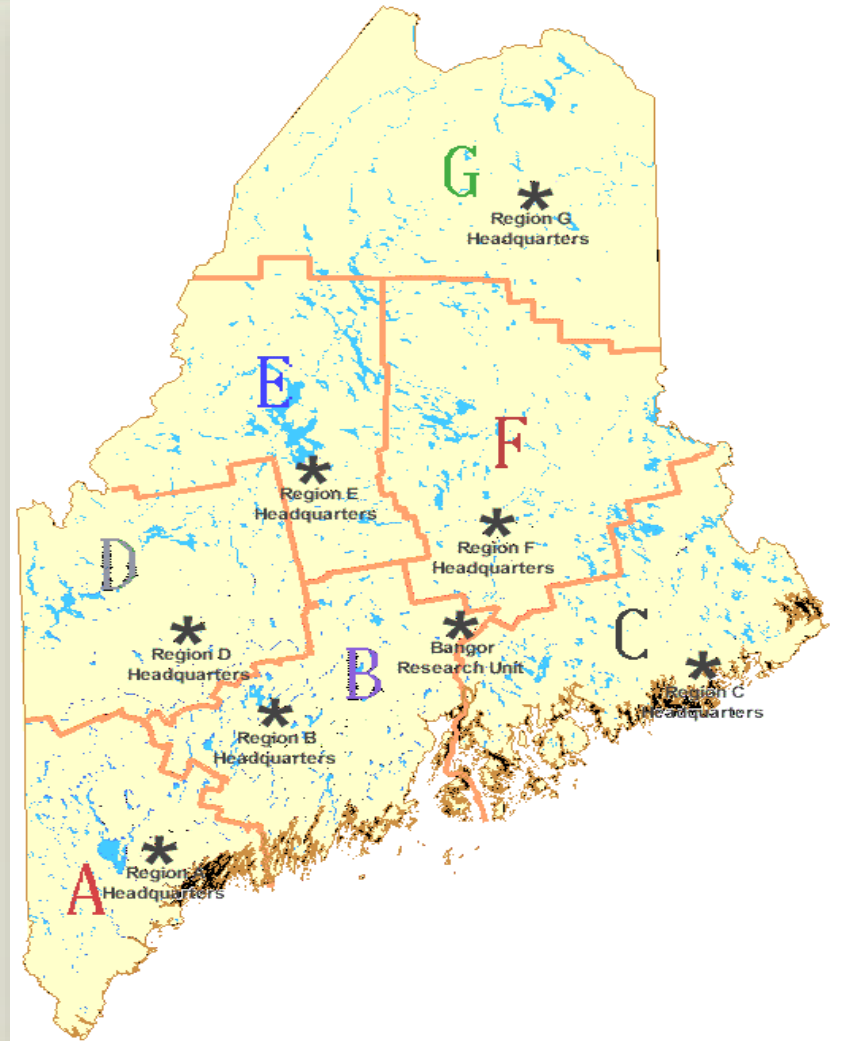




Unwanted Guests: The Problems With Invasive Fishes

Jason Seiders
Regional Fisheries Biologist
Belgrade Lakes Region

IFW Management Regions



Region B – Belgrade Lakes Region



- Almost 4000 square miles.
- 370 Lakes and Ponds.
- Just over 3500 miles of flowing water.
- Second most populated section of 7 regions.
- 3 fulltime fisheries biologists.

Good News and Bad News



- IFW busy dealing with invasives on many fronts.
- Challenges and affected resources vary statewide.
- Spread of invasives continues despite our best efforts.
- Invasive issues dealing with some familiar species and some relatively new ones.
- Information about a huge success story!



What Does “Invasive” Really Mean?



- Any species that is not native to a water can be invasive.
- Fish that are native to Maine can be invasive if moved. →
- Invasive fish that are new to Maine are considered “exotic”. →
- All invasives impact our native fish.



Why Are Invasives So Bad?



- Generally have no predators.
- Usually very adaptable.
- Prolific – a lot of fish!
- Compete with native species for food and habitat.
- Usually impossible to eliminate.



Northern Pike



- Recent spread of northern pike.
- Robust populations in:
 - St. George River.
 - Kennebec River.
 - Androscoggin River.
- Unconfirmed (but likely) in:
 - Chickawaukie Pond (Rockport)
 - Unity Pond (Unity)
- Pike have caused irreparable damage to Maine waters.
 - Loss of salmon fishery in Belgrade Lakes.



Black Crappie



- Black crappie are everywhere!
- New populations:
 - Savade Pond (Windsor)
 - Togus Pond (Augusta)
 - Lower St. George River watershed
 - Lower Sheepscot River watershed
 - Great Moose Pond (Hartland)
- Impacts
 - Native sunfish species
 - Overall lake productivity
 - Largemouth bass?
- Very popular with anglers.



Popularity Problem

Moosehead



75,471 Acres

Sabattus



1,962
Acres

Winter 2017 Total Anglers

- Moosehead – 9,634
- Sabattus – 9,250

Sabattus had approximately 2,000 anglers in one day!



Arctic Char



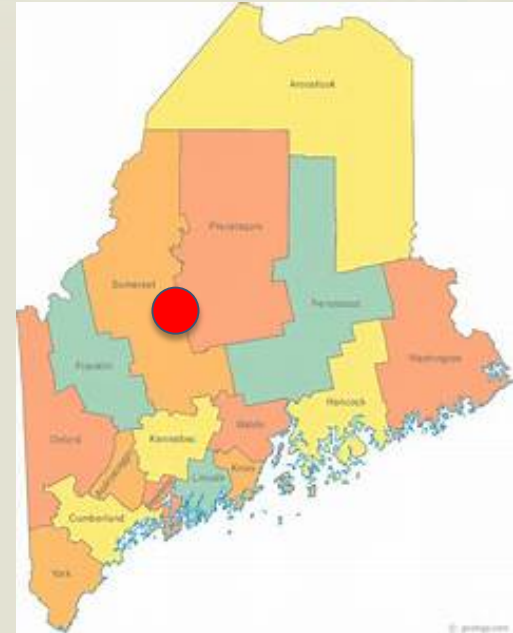
- Maine supports populations of landlocked Arctic char.
 - Only state in lower 48.
- 14 waters, mostly northern Maine.
- Sensitive to invasive fishes.
 - Evolved with simple assemblages.
- Several waters imperiled due to smelt introductions.



Bald Mountain Pond



- Bald Mountain Pond
- Confirmed rainbow smelt in 2014.
- Conducted multiple studies:
 - Radio telemetry
 - Trapnet
 - Gillnet
 - Smelt removal
- Char numbers exceedingly low.
- Reclamation difficult/impossible.
- Developing management plan.



Northern Maine – Big Reed





Big Reed Pond, continued.....

- Several years of study and char capture and removal.
 - 14 char taken to private hatchery.
- Pond reclaimed in 2010.
- 5 tons of rotenone.
- Most complex reclamation in the Department's history.
- Success!
 - No smelt observed since.
 - Pond restocked – several year classes of char present.



Continued Efforts



- Despite best efforts, illegal introductions continue.
- Angler preferences shifting towards invasives in southern and central Maine.
- Social media fuels the invasive fish problem.
- IFW will continue public outreach/education effort.