



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
PHIL BRYANT, GOVERNOR

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
TRUDY D. FISHER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Author: Robbie Wilbur

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Contact: Robbie Wilbur

601/961-5277

MDWFP PARTNERS WITH MDEQ TO STOCK LOWER PEARL RIVER

JACKSON – Approximately 14,000 lbs. of harvestable-sized blue catfish were released into the Pearl River near Picayune (Walkiah Bluff) Friday as part of the continued recovery effort by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

The catfish, donated by a Mississippi catfish producer, range in weight from five to more than 20 pounds. They will be ready to spawn next summer, said Curtis Summerlin, hatchery supervisor at MDWFP.

This marks the fourth stocking in the Pearl River since an August 2011 equipment malfunction at Temple-Inland Paper Mill in Bogalusa, La., led to the accidental spillage of paper-making by-product into the river. This spillage depleted oxygen and killed an estimated 219,000 fish and freshwater mussels. The kill stretched 80 miles of the Pearl River, including about 40 miles bordering Mississippi.

The company has agreed to pay a \$100,000 penalty, \$220,000 for fish stocking and \$45,000 to reimburse MDEQ for response and recovery costs.

To date, approximately 2,500 largemouth bass, 8,541 channel catfish and 118,950 redear sunfish (shellcracker or chinquapin) have been released in the lower Pearl River. Additional fish will be stocked as they become available from MDWFP fish hatcheries.

“Next year, these fish will be spawning and producing young blue catfish to help replenish the numbers in the river,” Summerlin said. “It’s our way of helping the Pearl River recover from this man-made accident.”

“The fish kill in August was devastating **to** the lower Pearl River, and we moved as quickly as possible with the enforcement action and settlement to restock the river and begin the process of bringing it back to a normal, healthy state,” said Trudy D. Fisher, MDEQ Executive Director.

Dr. Sam Polles, MDWFP Executive Director, said, “The recovery of the lower Pearl River following last summer’s fish kill is extremely important. Our agencies are working diligently to produce and stock fish needed for the river’s recovery.”

Photos are available from releases on December 2011, May 2012, and June 2012, and can be viewed at MDEQ’s Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.422751034422399.96617.118172664880239&type=1>

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