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Fall is on our doorstep. The days are getting shorter, the first few leaves are starting to turn, and subtle temperature changes are triggering many sportsmen to set their fishing gear aside and start sighting in their bows and rifles. With that said, there are high rewards waiting in West Virginia rivers and lakes for those who consider adding a layer under their wading boots or postpone overwintering the boat for just a few more weeks!

D2 Impoundments

It has been a busy summer of habitat enhancements at Mount Storm Lake. In addition to Christmas tree structures that we sink annually, we've implemented a process of felling trees along the shoreline in areas of the lake that drastically needed habitat upgrades. Just over fifty maple trees were felled near one another, some overlapping; this creates complex cover for fish. Even with the disturbance of trees falling into the lake, large assemblages of bait fish were seen flocking to them almost instantly! Don't be shy about casting aggressive presentations into the trees, as black bass are waiting to ambush them.

Striped bass fishing is about to heat up at Mount Storm in a big way this Fall. As with most large impoundments, if you're able to track down the shad they're feeding on, success will follow. Trolling with large crankbaits and umbrella rigs is a good way locate them. Trophy sized stripers are most definitely a possibility, due to astoundingly fast growth rates, so be sure you're outfitted with strong fishing line. Braided line in the 30-50lb test range with a fluorocarbon leader should help you steer clear of losing sleep over the one that got away.

October will bring the return of stocked trout fishing in many of our small impoundments. Popular destinations in our district include Warden Lake, South Mill Creek Lake, Fort Ashby Lake, and Edwards Run Pond. Light action rods with a size 6-8 hook and split shot is a good setup for hooking up with trout on live bait. This opens the possibility for hooking into bonus panfish as well. Kastmasters and Panther Martin in-line spinners are good artificial options that produce trout. This could be the first stepping stone to a lifelong hobby for your kids or friends who are new to fishing! To stay up to date with stocked trout opportunities near you here: <http://www.wvdnr.gov/fishing/stocking/dailystock.shtm>

D2 Rivers and Streams

Float trip traffic will start to wane on the South Branch of the Potomac River in the coming months, as will fishing pressure in general. With the right approach, you could capitalize on some truly memorable smallmouth fishing. Water temperatures will peak in the afternoon, as will fish activity. The best time to hit the water would probably sometime between 3pm and 5pm. Lower flows will bring increased water clarity, and thus, fish are easily spooked or simply put off by less realistic lures. You can't go wrong by mimicking the size and color of crayfish, their primary prey item. Medium action rods with a spinning

reel and 8-lb test line are standard for this type of smallmouth fishing. It's also a great time to try fly fishing for smallmouth. Dry flies that imitate grasshoppers are a good go-to this time of year.

Targeting rock bass is a great way to spend a day on the river as well. True to their name, their preferred habitats are along rock ledges and eddies behind boulders. Small crayfish and nightcrawlers are the ideal bait for rock bass, and in the right conditions, it's not uncommon to land dozens of them.

Large channel catfish will be on the move in the Fall from the main stem of the Potomac. Though catfish are generalists, it's worth noting that the bigger fish are more likely to seek out live bait than the smaller ones. Patience is key with catfishing. An array of strike indicators are available, these emit a sound or flash of light when you have a fish on the line, just in case you're caught during a moment of inattention.