

Shenandoah and James River Fish Kills
June 15, 2007 Update

Fish kills on the North and South Forks of the Shenandoah River have again occurred in the spring of 2007 and continued through mid-June 2007. The patterns seen in the Shenandoah each spring since 2004 – widespread areas with low numbers of dead and dying fish (mostly adult smallmouth bass and sunfish) and a high prevalence of skin lesions within these same species, with problems persisting for 2-3 months – have been repeated. Investigators have also encountered similar problems in the lower portions of the Cowpasture River (mostly downstream of Route 39) and the upper James River. Problems in the James River have been most severe upstream of I-81 (near the Town of Buchanan), but also have been seen as far downstream as Lynchburg. Isolated reports of fish lesions and mortality have also been received from the Maury River near Buena Vista. The observations in these Rivers have been nearly identical to those from the North and South Forks of the Shenandoah River (high prevalence of fish with lesions and low-level, but prolonged, mortality). The findings and recommendations in this report apply to investigations of fish kills in all of the above referenced streams.