

# **LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & FISHERIES**



**OFFICE OF FISHERIES  
INLAND FISHERIES SECTION**

**PART VI -A**

**WATERBODY MANAGEMENT PLAN SERIES**

**BLIND RIVER**

**HISTORY & MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

# **CHRONOLOGY**

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# HISTORY

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Description

Blind River is a tributary of Lake Maurepas in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. The head waters begin approximately 2.5 miles north of Convent, Louisiana, 4.5 miles off the eastern levee of the Mississippi River. It flows northeast from St. James Parish through both Ascension and St. John the Baptist Parishes before discharging into Lake Maurepas. Blind River has numerous tributaries consisting mostly of pipeline canals and bayous. The majority of the watershed consists of Maurepas Swamp and surrounding developed land and agriculture.

### River stage

Currently, there is no gauge station in Blind River. The nearest gauge is Amite River at French Settlement approximately 10 river miles northwest of where the Amite Diversion Canal converges with Blind River

(<http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=lix&gage=fsll1&view=1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1&toggles=10,7,8,2,9,15,6&type=0> ).

Flood stage at French Settlement is at 4 feet.

### Parishes located

St. James, Ascension, St. John the Baptist and Livingston Parishes ([APPENDIX I – MAP AND PARISHES](#)).

### Border waters

Lake Maurepas  
Amite River  
Mississippi River (historically)

## ACCESS

### Boat docks

2 boat ramps  
(SEE [APPENDIX II – MAP AND LANDING](#))

Table 1. Locations of boat ramps for Blind River, LA.

RAMP NAME	COORDINATES*	
St. James Boat Club	30.1012389	-90.7355056
642 Landing	30.0744861	-90.7485417

\* Coordinates listed in NAD 83, decimal degrees.

Piers

St. James Boat launch

State/Federal facilities

Maurepas Swamp WMA self-clearing permit stations located at St. James Boat Club and 642 Landing

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

Shoreline length

46 miles (both shorelines of 23 river miles)

Timber type

Bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and tupelo gum (*Nyssa aquatica*)

Average depth

12 feet

Water fluctuation

Amite River at French Settlement had a historic high crest of 7.4 feet and a historic low of 0.21 feet. High water periods are typical for late spring/early summer. High water is also influenced by local tropical storm events. Extremely low water (less than 1.0 feet at Amite River at French Settlement) is rare and only occurs during extreme drought.

Shoreline development

Less than 5% of the shoreline is developed by landowners. Most developments are camps that are only accessible by boat.

**EVENTS / PROBLEMS**

- Levees disconnect Blind River and surrounding swamps from the Mississippi River. The lack of fresh river water has led to deterioration of Maurepas Swamp and Blind River water quality. The lack of river water has also resulted in the occasional backflow of water from Lake Maurepas.
- The railroad and Highway US 61 act as dams to the transfer of water through the swamp system.

**MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

**AQUATIC VEGETATION**

Nuisance species

Common salvinia and water hyacinth have been the main subjects of access and habitat complaints over the past few years. Common salvinia is scattered throughout the basin and is constantly being restocked by the flushing and draining of adjacent swamps and bayous.

Estimates of vegetation coverage (as of December 2, 2014) are provided below:

**Problematic Species-**

- Common Salvinia (*Salvinia minima*) – 300 acres
- Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) – 100 acres
- Duckweed (*Lemna spp.*) – 100 acres
- Duck Lettuce (*Ottelia alismoides*) – 100 acres

**Beneficial Species**

- Yellow Water Lily (*Nymphaea mexicana*) – 45 acres
- Coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*) – 45 acres

Control Measures

*Biological Control*

Florida salvinia weevils (*Cyrtobagous salviniae*) have been stocked periodically since 2008 for common salvinia control. Future stockings will be conducted as weevils become available. Samples of common salvinia were taken in the fall of 2009 yielded no weevils. This was likely due to the flushing out of plant material following Hurricane Gustav. All samples of common salvinia following the 2013 stockings have yielded adult weevils. Detection of weevils in the springs of 2014 and 2015 is an indication that there is a successful overwintering and reproducing population established.

Table 2. Common salvinia weevil stockings on Blind River, LA from 2008-2014.

BLIND RIVER SALVINIA WEEVIL STOCKING HISTORY			
YEAR	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS	COORDINATES	
2008	500	30.139167	-90.694722
2013	15,927	30.13862	-90.786074
2014	9,000	30.09492	-90.77851
2014	7,900	30.15024	-90.80627

*Chemical Control*

Common salvinia is controlled with foliar applications of diquat (0.75 gallons per acre) and a non-ionic surfactant (0.25 gal/acre) from November 1 through March 31. A mixture of glyphosate (0.75 gal/acre) and diquat (0.25 gal/acre) with Aqua King Plus (0.25 gal/acre) and Air Cover (12 oz/acre) surfactants is used outside of that time frame.

Water hyacinth is controlled with foliar applications of 2,4-D at a rate of 0.5 gallons per acre. During the colder months when plant activity is slowed, or if the problem area is in a restricted zone, diquat (0.75 gal/acre) with a non-ionic surfactant (0.25 gal/acre) is used.

The Blind River generates a large number of complaints each year, and they are addressed

accordingly. An average of 805 acres of vegetation is chemically treated annually. The majority of the treated vegetation is common salvinia. The remaining acreage is composed of water hyacinth, alligator weed, pennywort, primrose, water paspalum and duckweed (Table 3).

The use of herbicides is an important component of the LDWF integrated pest management program. The proper selection and use of herbicides is essential to achieve cost effective benefits and to avoid damage to non-target species. Each product listed has been approved by the Environmental Protection Agency for aquatic use. Aquatic vegetation is treated according to the Aquatic Herbicide Application Procedure as adopted by the LDWF Inland Fisheries Section (Table 4).

Table 3. Foliar herbicide treatments on Blind River, LA from 2005 – 2014.

<b>BLIND RIVER ACRES AQUATIC VEGETATION TREATMENT BY YEAR</b>										
<b>PLANT</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
Alligator weed	5	111	358	45	-	25	82	48	63	15
Duckweed	-	-	-	-	15	207	84	21	24	2
Pennywort	-	158	113	3	17	3	18	7	192	5
Primrose	-	24	86	71	-	3	9	-	1	69
Common salvinia	7	230	286	616	820	444	862	1001	183	161
Water hyacinth	78	302	334	149	48	86	29	47	105	-
Water Paspalum	11	1	10	-	23	135	72	-	-	-
Other	-	42	29	14	1	-	29			
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>868</b>	<b>1,216</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>923</b>	<b>903</b>	<b>1,185</b>	<b>1,124</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>266</b>

Table 4. Foliar herbicide treatments by plant species and acres sprayed on the Blind River, Louisiana during 2014.

<b>BLIND RIVER ACRES OF AQUATIC VEGETATION TREATED IN 2014</b>			
<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>HERBICIDES*</b>	<b>APPLICATION RATES</b>
Alligator weed	15	Glyphosate	0.75 gal/acre
Duckweed	2	Diquat	0.75 gal/acre

Pennywort	5	Diquat	0.75 gal/acre
Primrose	69	Glyphosate/Diquat	0.75 gal/acre, 0.25 gal/acre
Common salvinia	161	Glyphosate/Diquat	0.75 gal/acre, 0.25 gal/acre
Other	14	Glyphosate/Diquat	0.75 gal/acre, 0.25 gal/acre
<b>TOTAL</b>	266		

\*All herbicide applications included a non-ionic surfactant at a rate of 0.25 gal/acre.

*Limitations*

During high water periods within this river complex, common salvinia floods into the surrounding swamps where it flourishes. The LDWF spray crews are unable to access these areas due to the stands of dense timber and shallow water. Consequently, healthy populations of common salvinia drain out of the swamp into the river when water levels drop.

**HISTORY OF REGULATIONS**

Standardized Regulations

Statewide standard commercial and recreational regulations apply.

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/regulations>

**FISH KILLS / DISEASE HISTORY**

- July 29, 1991 – Unknown cause
- August 1992 – Hurricane Andrew
- May 24, 1996 – A pipeline failure resulted in the spill of 8,700 barrels of unleaded gasoline. The impact area was approximately two miles of right-of-way and tributaries between Hwy 61 to the KCS railroad tracks. A preliminary list of species included gar, bowfin, gizzard shad, freshwater drum, and sunfishes.
- August 2005 – Hurricane Katrina
- September 2008 – Hurricane Gustav
- August 2012 – Hurricane Isaac

## CONTAMINANTS / POLLUTION

### Water quality

In 2006, the EPA listed Blind River as an impaired river due to organic enrichment/depletion of oxygen, mercury, nitrates, sedimentation/siltation, total phosphorus, and turbidity. There were no potential sources reported and achievement of the total maximum daily loads was anticipated by 2011.

[http://ofmpub.epa.gov/tmdl\\_waters10/attains\\_watershed.control?p\\_huc=08070204&p\\_cycle=&p\\_report\\_type=T](http://ofmpub.epa.gov/tmdl_waters10/attains_watershed.control?p_huc=08070204&p_cycle=&p_report_type=T)

### Fish consumption advisory

A consumption advisory was issued April 23, 1998 after an unacceptable level of mercury was detected in bowfin. Women of child bearing age and children under the age of seven should limit bowfin consumption to no more than one meal per month. Other adults and children over the age of seven should limit bowfin consumption to no more than four meals a month. This advisory was last reviewed December 4, 2003.

<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/PROGRAMS/MercuryInitiative/FishConsumptionandSwimmingAdvisories.aspx>

## BIOLOGICAL

### Fish sampling

To monitor the sport fishery of Blind River, LDWF initiated standardized sampling in 1996 (Table 5).

Table 5. Historical and proposed sampling efforts on Blind River, LA from 1996 – 2017.

<b>BLIND RIVER SAMPLING</b>	
1996	Electrofishing – 2 stations (spring and fall)
1997	Electrofishing – 3 stations (spring) Electrofishing – 4 stations (fall)
2006	Electrofishing – 4 stations (spring and fall)
2007	Electrofishing – 4 stations (spring and fall)
2008	Electrofishing – 4 stations (spring and fall)
2009	Electrofishing – 4 stations (spring and fall)
2010	Electrofishing – 4 stations (spring and fall)
2012	Electrofishing – 4 stations (spring and fall) Hoop nets – 3 sites

2013*	Electrofishing – 4 stations (spring and fall) Larval fish tows – 2 stations (May, June, July)
2014*	Electrofishing – 4 stations (spring and fall) Larval fish tows – 2 stations (April, May, June)
2015**	Comprehensive community sampling
2016	No scheduled sampling
2017	Comprehensive community sampling

\*Years of post-hurricane electrofishing sampling efforts to measure natural recovery of fishery.

\*\* Protocol not finalized for future sampling

### Stocking History

Initial stocking efforts were a response to major fish kills caused by Hurricane Andrew. Subsequent stockings were the result of Hurricanes Katrina and Gustav. Blind River has been stocked with 152,704 Florida strain largemouth bass since 1984 (Table 6).

Table 6. Stocking history of Blind River, LA from 1993 – 2011.

YEAR	CHANNEL CATFISH	LARGEMOUTH BASS	FLORIDA BASS	BLACK CRAPPIE	BLUEGILL
1993	3,600	64,273			
1994	1,800	99			
1995			27,000		
1996			27,032		
1997			9,800		
1999			12,043		
2000			14,244		
2001			10,000		
2002			10,546		
2003			10,036		
2004			10,013		
2005			6,972		
2006			75,248		89,661
2007	75,169		73,743		60,545
2008	9,168		76,901	1,500	
2009	30,884		75,862		200,976
2010	3,366				
2011			3,350		

A majority of these fish were stocked post hurricanes Katrina and Gustav, in response to public outcry over the massive fish kills that occurred following these storm events. In the post storm absence of predation and competition, the Florida largemouth bass should have become dominant in this coastal river. However, this species failed to become established. Genetic testing conducted in 2010 indicated that less than 7% of the Florida genome was present in the sample results (Table 7). The stockings of Florida largemouth bass in the nearby Tangipahoa, Tickfaw and Amite Rivers yielded similar results (Table 8). The tenacity for recovery of native largemouth bass populations has also been noted in other coastal river systems including the Calcasieu, Mermentau and Sabine rivers in southwest Louisiana following Hurricanes Rita (2005) and Ike (2008). These systems received little to no stockings of largemouth bass before and after the hurricane related fish kills, yet yielded record catch rates within two years into recovery. These observations suggest that native coastal populations of largemouth bass (and other indigenous fish species) have adapted to these periodic storm events and rapid recovery is part of the natural selection process.

Largemouth bass genetics

Over 435,000 Florida largemouth bass have been stocked regularly into Blind River since 1995. A majority of these fish were stocked post Hurricanes Katrina and Gustav in response to massive fish kills. As shown in Table 7, genetic testing of 206 largemouth bass in 2010 showed that less than 7% of the fish sampled were carriers of the Florida allele.

Table 7. Results of 2010 genetic testing for the Florida largemouth bass gene on Blind River, Louisiana.

Number of fish	% Northern	% Hybrid	% Florida
206	93.7	5.8	0.5

Table 8. FLMB stocking details and the resulting genetic composition of northern, Florida, and Fx largemouth bass (intraspecific hybrids) collected during fall electrofishing samples 1996 - 2013.

River/Marsh System	Years Stocked	Number stocked	Sample size	Native LMB Average %	Florida LMB Average %	Hybrid LMB Average %
Amite River	1996-2010	780,308	151	91	2	7
Atchafalaya Basin	1992-2009	5,600,000	219	93.7	0.3	6
Blind River	1995-2009	439,440	206	93.7	0.5	5.8
Caernarvon	1996-2008	1,267,277	409	83	4.8	12.2
Cataouatche	2002-2013	52,528	554	84	2.1	13.9
Des Allemands	1993-	1,747,752	48	88.2	0	11.8

	2011					
Tangipahoa	1996-2011	156,052	30	100	0	0
Tickfaw	1996-2011	368,214	93	93	0	7
COMBINED SYSTEMS	1992-2013	10,411,571	1,710	90.8	1.2	7.9

### Species profile

A list of species collected or known from Blind River is found in Table 9 below:

Table 9. Family, scientific and common names of fish species collected or known from the Blind River watershed.

Achiridae – American soles

Northern hogchoker - *Trinectes maculatus* (Bloch and Schneider)

Acipenseridae – sturgeons

Atlantic sturgeon, *Acipenser oxyrinchus* (Mitchill)

Amiidae – bowfin

Bowfin, *Amia calva* (Linnaeus)

Aphredoderidae – trout perches

Pirate perch, *Aphredoderus sayanus* (Gilliams)

Anguillidae – freshwater eels

American eel, *Anguilla rostrata* (Lesueur)

Atherinopsidae - New World silversides

Brook silverside, *Labidesthes sicculus* (Cope)

Inland silverside, *Menidia beryllina* (Cope)

Catostomidae – suckers

River carpsucker, *Carpionodes carpio* (Rafinesque)

Lake chubsucker, *Erimyzon sucetta* (Lacépède)

Creek chubsucker, *Erimyzon oblongus* (Mitchill)

Western creek chubsucker, *Erimyzon claviformis* (Cook)

Sharpfin chubsucker, *Erimyzon tenuis* (Agassiz)

Northern hogsucker, *Hypentelium nigricans* (Lesueur)

Spotted sucker, *Minytrema melanops* (Rafinesque)

Blacktail redhorse, *Moxostoma poecilurum* (Jordan)

Smallmouth buffalo, *Ictiobus bubalus* (Rafinesque)

Bigmouth buffalo, *Ictiobus cyprinellus* (Valenciennes)

Black buffalo, *Ictiobus niger* (Rafinesque)

Centrarchidae - sunfishes

- Flier, *Centrarchus macropterus* (Lacépède)
- Banded pygmy sunfish, *Elassoma zonatum* (Jordan)
- Green sunfish, *Lepomis cyanellus* (Rafinesque)
- Orangespotted sunfish, *Lepomis humilis* (Girard)
- Bluegill, *Lepomis macrochirus* (Rafinesque)
- Warmouth sunfish, *Lepomis gulosus* (Cuvier)
- Dollar sunfish, *Lepomis marginatus* (Holbrook)
- Longear sunfish, *Lepomis megalotis* (Rafinesque)
- Redear sunfish, *Lepomis microlophus* (Günther)
- Bantam sunfish, *Lepomis symmetricus* (Forbes)
- Spotted bass, *Micropterus punctulatus* (Rafinesque)
- Northern largemouth bass, *Micropterus salmoides* (Lacépède)
- Florida largemouth bass, *Micropterus floridanus* (Kassler et al.)
- Hybrid largemouth bass, *M. floridanus* X *M. salmoides*
- White crappie, *Pomoxis annularis* (Rafinesque)
- Black crappie, *Pomoxis nigromaculatus* (Lesueur)

Clupeidae – herrings

- Skipjack herring, *Alosa chrysochloris* (Rafinesque)
- Gizzard shad, *Dorosoma cepedianum* (Lesueur)
- Threadfin shad, *Dorosoma petenense* (Günther)
- Gulf menhaden, *Brevoortia patronus* (Goode)

Cyprinidae - carps and minnows

- Speckled chub, *Macrhybopsis aestivalis* (Girard)
- Golden shiner, *Notemigonus crysoleucas* (Mitchill)
- Pallid shiner, *Hybopsis amnis* (Hubbs and Greene)
- Taillight shiner, *Notropis maculatus* (Hay)
- Weed shiner, *Notropis texanus* (Girard)
- Blacktail shiner, *Cyprinella venusta* (Girard)
- Pugnose minnow, *Opsopoeodus emiliae* (Hay)
- Fathead minnow, *Pimephales promelas* (Rafinesque)
- Bullhead minnow, *Pimephales vigilax* (Baird and Girard)
- Cypress minnow, *Hybognathus hayi* (Jordan)
- Common carp, *Cyprinus carpio* (Linnaeus)
- Emerald shiner, *Notropis atherinoides* (Rafinesque)

Elopidae – tarpons

- Ladyfish, *Elops saurus* (Linnaeus)

Engraulidae – anchovies

- Bay anchovy, *Anchoa mitchilli* (Linnaeus)

Esocidae – pikes

Grass pickerel, *Esox americanus* (Gmelin)  
Chain pickerel, *Esox niger* (Lesueur)

Fundulidae – topminnows and killifishes

Golden topminnow, *Fundulus chrysotus* (Günther)  
Studfish, *Fundulus catenatus* (Storer)  
Blackstripe topminnow, *Fundulus notatus* (Rafinesque)  
Blackspotted topminnow, *Fundulus olivaceus* (Storer)  
Broadstripe topminnow, *Fundulus euryzonus* (Suttkus and Cashner)

Ictaluridae - North American catfishes

Black bullhead, *Ameiurus melas* (Rafinesque)  
Yellow bullhead, *Ameiurus natalis* (Lesueur)  
Brown bullhead, *Ameiurus nebulosus* (Lesueur)  
Blue catfish, *Ictalurus furcatus* (Lesueur)  
Channel catfish, *Ictalurus punctatus* (Rafinesque)  
Flathead catfish, *Pylodictis olivaris* (Rafinesque)  
Tadpole madtom, *Noturus gyrinus* (Mitchill)

Lepisosteidae - gars

Spotted gar, *Lepisosteus oculatus* (Winchell)  
Longnose gar, *Lepisosteus osseus* (Linnaeus)  
Shortnose gar, *Lepisosteus platostomus* (Rafinesque)  
Alligator gar, *Lepisosteus spatula* (Lacépède)

Moronidae – temperate basses

Yellow bass, *Morone mississippiensis* (Jordan and Eigenmann)  
White bass, *Morone chrysops* (Rafinesque)

Mugilidae – mullets

Striped mullet, *Mugil cephalus* (Linnaeus)

Petromyzontidae - northern lampreys

Southern brook lamprey, *Ichthyomyzon gagei* (Hubbs and Trautman)

Paralichthyidae – flounders

Southern flounder, *Paralichthys lethostigma* (Jordan and Gilbert)

Percidae – perches

Bluntnose darter, *Etheostoma chlorosomum* (Hay)  
Swamp darter, *Etheostoma fusiforme* (Girard)  
Cypress darter, *Etheostoma proeliare* (Hay)  
Dusky darter, *Percina sciera* (Swain)  
Logperch, *Percina caprodes* (Rafinesque)

Poeciliidae – livebearers

Western mosquitofish, *Gambusia affinis* (Baird and Girard)  
Sailfin molly, *Poecilia latipinna* (Lesueur)  
Least killifish, *Heterandria formosa* (Girard)

Polyodontidae – paddlefishes

Paddlefish, *Polyodon spathula* (Walbaum)

Sciaenidae – drums

Freshwater drum, *Aplodinotus grunniens* (Rafinesque)

Atlantic croaker, *Micropogonias undulatus* (Linnaeus)

Sparidae – porgies

Sheepshead, *Archosargus probatocephalus* (Walbaum)

Pinfish, *Lagodon rhomboides* (Linnaeus)

Syngnathidae – pipefishes and seahorses

Gulf pipefish, *Syngnathus scovelli* (Evermann and Kendall)

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Nomenclature and phylogenetic order follows Nelson, *et al.* 2004. Common and Scientific Names of Fishes from the United States, Canada, and Mexico, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. American Fisheries Society Special Publication 29. 386 pp. Exceptions are noted.

#### Threatened/endangered/exotic species

The pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) inhabits the reach of the Mississippi River adjacent where it used to connect to Blind River. Paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*) and Gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*) are inhabitants of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin.

It is possible that Asian carp (*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix* and *H. nobilis*) have entered the system via the Bonnet Carre Floodway post 2011 Mississippi River flood event. No reports have been verified at this time.

#### **ANGLER SURVEYS**

No angler surveys conducted

## HYDROLOGICAL CHANGES

- Mississippi River levee resulted in the lack of fresh river water entering the system.
- Construction of Highway 61 and railroad have impeded water flow through adjacent swamp

## WATER USE

### Hunting

Yes. Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area encompasses more than half of Blind River and its tributaries ([APPENDIX III](#) – MAP AND WMA).

### Skiing

Yes

### Scuba Diving

No

### Swimming

Yes

### Irrigation

No

### Fishing

Yes

### Boating

Yes

# APPENDIX I – MAP AND PARISHES

[\(Return to document\)](#)



# APPENDIX II – MAP AND LANDING

[\(return to boat docks\)](#)



## APPENDIX III – MAP AND WMA

[\(Return to Hunting\)](#)

