

Friday, September 19, 2014

About 23,000 fish killed in Blackwater mistake

Staff reports

DAVIS, W.Va. — An estimated 23,000 fish were killed when an automated pollution control system dumped too much hydrated lime into the Blackwater River in Tucker county, state officials said Friday.

“It is a lot of fish,” said Bret Preston, fisheries chief with the state Division of Natural Resources. “It would be in the moderate to severe range.”

Preston said DNR officials are still investigating exactly what went wrong with the automated system that controls the liming station, which is just upstream from Davis and is used to reduce acid pollution in the river.

According to Preston, DNR officials set up four sampling stations on a nearly two-mile stretch of the river down to Blackwater Falls. They found 1,917 dead fish, mostly minnows and darters, but also several trout and smallmouth bass. “That’s not uncommon, to have most of those killed be small, nongame fish,” Preston said.

Using common expansion factors, DNR officials estimated that their sample indicated about 23,000 fish in all were killed.

Preston said DNR officials did find live fish, and that the pH levels in the river were going back to normal. For now, though, the liming station is shut down until DNR finishes its investigation of the incident, Preston said.

- See more at:

<http://www.wvgazette.com/article/20140919/GZ01/140919148/1419#sthash.yWnAzDJc.dpuf>