



Explore National Fishing Month in Madison County

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EDWARDSVILLE —The reason every angler takes to the water is different and for Patrick McRae it's the lure of being able to catch a 100-pound catfish.

National Fishing Month starts Sunday and McRae is helping the county kick off its campaign and looking forward taking part in one of his favorite sports.

“The largest fish I've caught so far is a 90-pound blue catfish,” McRae said. “The most unusual was a pallid sturgeon, which is an endangered species.”

McRae, who is the Madison County chief deputy treasurer, caught both fish in the Mississippi River near Alton where he's spent quite a bit of time dropping a line.

McRae's father, Madison County Circuit Clerk Tom McRae, took him fishing for the first time when he was 5-years-old and he's continuing the tradition by taking his 3-year-old twin boys, Rory and Grady.

“It's a great father-son experience,” McRae said. “It's a great way for anyone to get out and enjoy the outdoors.”

Officials want people to explore all Madison County has to offer during the month-long celebration.

“It is a chance for more people to get out there and fish the county's waterways,” Chairman Kurt Prenzler said.

Prenzler said although the Mississippi River borders the western side of the county, there are dozens of creeks, lakes and ponds throughout the county where people can fish.

“My favorite spot is at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers in Hartford,” McRae said. “But I enjoy fishing almost anywhere.”

McRae said before someone goes fishing they should know the rules, especially on public waterways. Visit the Illinois Department of Natural Resources website at <https://www.ifishillinois.org/> for more information, including licensing requirements.

“Not only do you need a license if you're older than 16, but there are some fish you can't keep,” he said. “Anytime I catch a large fish I use the CPR method.”

McRae said in the trophy fishing community, anglers practice CPR, or Catch, Photograph and Release.

Catch and release fishing improves native fish populations by allowing more fish to remain and reproduce in the ecosystem. Smaller fish like crappie are more plentiful and can be kept, whereas the practice of catch and release is reserved for larger fish

The public can share their fishing photos on with Madison County on its Facebook or Instagram pages by tagging them #ifishmadcoil or #MadisonCountyIL. Photos could be shared in an upcoming issue of the county newsletter.

“National Fishing Month is a great way for more people to get outdoors, learn a new skill and make new friends,” McRae said.