

PROTECT, RESTORE, RECONNECT, SUSTAIN

The Eastern Brook Trout
Newsletter:
North Eastern Division



*A partnership between
Trout Unlimited And the
Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture,
Together with all who value
Brook Trout And its Habitat*

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Important:

Your Response Needed!

In response to grassroots feedback, future issues of this newsletter will be directly emailed to TU members and agency leaders.

This method puts this information to the hands of brook trout leaders and volunteers directly .

You must respond to an upcoming email request to sign up for direct distribution.

Due to spamming ethics, only one request will be sent.

North Eastern Regional Meeting: April 14

Provided by Jan Allardt:

The New England Regional Brook Trout Meeting was held on April 14th with 63 participants from 6 states. In addition, 6 TU staff members, and 4 TU Trustees attended. An outstanding array of speakers emphasized the Protect, Reconnect, Restore and Sustain theme.

First, Jan Allardt addressed the New England leaders. Next, Trout Unlimited's CEO Charles Gauvin presented 'Achieving TU's Vision', then NLC Chair Kirk Otey presented "Fulfilling TU's Mission". Elizabeth Maclin, TU's new Eastern Conservation Director introduced herself and expressed her eagerness to work with the New England team of outstanding leaders.

Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV) chairman Steve Perry gave an update on the EBTJV and goals, individual state conservation strategies, and how TU's

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partnership makes those goals attainable. The newly formed EBTJV has increased its federal funding significantly and will be eager to sponsor joint projects with TU chapters. Grant applications are welcomed. Dianne Emerson, EBTJV and NHFG fisheries biologist, highlighted some of the projects undertaken in NH in conjunction with the EBTJV and outlined a few easy steps for councils and chapters to follow when considering projects within the EBTJV scope.

Walter Smith of the USDA's NRCS discussed the upcoming Farm Bill and the federal dollars available from it that can be used in brook trout restoration projects. As Walter expressed, "The Farm Bill is a large and complicated piece of social machinery". The presentation encompassed a full overview of the Farm Bill and how this bill impacts the flow of money through the USDA NRCS to TU Chapters via the WHIP and other conservation grants available. Highlighted was the USDA NRCS's criteria sought for these grants and information on what makes a successful grant application. It was clearly emphasized the work the USDA NRCS would like to sponsor fits directly into the mission of the EBTJV, and the agency would be very supportive of TU's efforts on the ground. One thought Walter left us with is the enormity of the possibilities for TU's volunteers.

Dr. Ben Letcher of the USGS provided an overview of the work being done at the Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center and Biological Resources Division. His presentation focused on updating brook trout findings, and it stimulated a vigorous question and answer session. Many attendees of the last Regional Meeting remembered Dr. Letcher's presentation on Brook Trout and their habitat and pattern of behavior, and were eager to hear and see his latest data. Perhaps the most significant data offered was the time line extrapolated. Brook Trout, as we know them to exist in New England and in the East, are in a fast decline. The good news is the reversal, if attempted now, can significantly alter the decline and save brook trout. Other data of interest was the gene pool isolation and the effects on the populations. As this data is still under study, it is not ready for release. Perhaps the most significant outcome of Dr. Letcher's presentation is the partnering of the USGS and EBTJV, and furthering Dr. Letcher's study.

In the afternoon New England Conservation program highlights were discussed by contributing BT Committee Chairs. These presentations were made by volunteers to illustrate work done with the support of the above agencies. These outstanding projects of restoration are great examples of what TU chapters can do with the assistance of grant money from the above agencies.

Dave Rogers from TU with the help of Jim MacCartney of NH and Sean McCormick of Maine creatively incorporated the above information and other grant opportunities into two afternoon sessions focusing on chapter projects and grants. The breakout sessions allowed for sharing of ideas and cultivating new ones. The subjects were: Project Selection and Planning, and Project Funding. A great deal was accomplished in this one day meeting.

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The New England meeting was success in projecting the promise inherent in the organization -- especially in the potential TU has for watershed organization and restoration work. The work already accomplished by the New England Councils and a half dozen TU chapters is only a beginning of what TU is capable of doing.

Maine:

Maine Report from Forrest Bonney:

Because Maine has more than a thousand brook trout lakes and an estimated 22,000 miles of lotic brook trout habitat, stream restoration has not been a high priority in the state. However, stream surveys conducted within the last decade revealed that many of our streams are degraded (are lacking in pools and are frequently over-widened), and have probably been so since log-driving days. Accordingly, we have undertaken a number of restoration projects in western Maine, using a variety of treatments. We have installed log deflectors and rock vanes to create pools and logs/root wads to narrow over widened reaches. We have also installed grade control structures to encourage aggradation and reconnect entrenched reaches with their floodplains.

Several years of monitoring indicate that these methodologies are effective in restoring brook trout habitat, but this summer we are planning treatment intended to address the source of degradation rather than its symptoms. We will be adding coarse woody debris to at least one headwater stream in an effort to attenuate extreme flows resulting from forestry cutting. At Bemis Stream, a historic spawning tributary to Mooselookmeguntic Lake near Rangeley, accelerated runoff is destabilizing the downstream reaches, resulting in erosion and avulsions. Coarse woody debris will be added to the upstream reach in an effort reduce destabilization, manifested as erosion and avulsions, in the lower reaches that once provided brook trout spawning habitat. As with all our projects, we will annually monitor results with cross sectional transects, pebble counts, macroinvertebrate sampling, and electrofishing. Our work has been funded by a wide variety of organizations and agencies, including the Trout and Salmon Foundation, Trout Unlimited, the FishAmerica Foundation, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Rangeley Region Guides' and Sportsmen's Association (a local fish and game club), with in-kind support from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

MASS/RHODE ISLAND

Report from Lawson Cary

We have completed the stream continuity project in the Wood/Pawcatuck watershed in November of 2006. I have since sent a letter to the RC&D requesting they award a \$15000.00 grant to the NRCS so they can hire an intern to perform the same support on the Queens River watershed and the Beaver River watershed as they did on the Wood/

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Agreed that TU will actively participate in fisheries surveys in Regions 5 & 6, targeting first UNKNOWN STATUS, then QUALITATIVE PRESENCE. This appears to be a substantial task for TU, requiring: acquisition of fish shocking equipment (Bill Schoch to help direct TU with this), training in use of equipment, methods & data collection by DEC, coordination of teams/setting priorities for watersheds (TU/DEC), data transfer to DEC. TU indicated willingness to start survey work this season.

Follow up -- review by TU for Region 5 alone indicates:

14 Unknown Status watersheds, totaling ~840 sq mi, 56 named & 44 unnamed streams (tables for each watershed prepared)

14 Qualitative Presence watersheds, totaling ~2500 sq mi (range 25 - 500 sq mi)

Follow up -- it seems reasonable for teams to concurrently collect a modified Stream Visual Assessment Protocol concurrently as this will quickly provide valuable indicators of geomorphology/hydrology, fisheries, water quality & invertebrates using a standardized form.

Jim Daley advised TU to pursue a NYS Wildlife Grants Program, contacting Lisa Holst at DEC Central Office. Closure date for FFY 2005 funds is 3/31/07. While the funding range of \$50-150K is appropriate for the large scale of this project & the 1:3 current support rate is highly favorable, it is highly unlikely that there will be sufficient time to complete the process by 3/31/06.

Follow up -- TU discussion agrees that the enormity of the project in regions 5 & 6 will require: partnering with universities, multi-sourced funding, and development of a well coordinated plan of attack. TU will pursue this with possible candidate universities/colleges: Plattsburgh, RPI FWI, Cornell, Paul Smith's, St. Lawrence, Clarkson, Potsdam, Syracuse, Utica, Adirondack Community, ? others.

Possible fin clipping for genetic analysis in select unstocked areas was discussed.

At this point it is unclear what might be feasible/desirable/within budget. DEC to decide on this following review. (Methodology would simply require refrigeration of an ethanol preserved specimen.) Bill Wellman indicated that SUNY Plattsburgh may be able to do some genetic analysis (unclear if it is the same satellite methodology as used by Tim King in VA. who is processing other specimens).

Assessment needs to be addressed separately at the regional level for Regions 1, 3, 4, 6 & 9 (although Region 6 is included in the Adirondack discussion)

II. Habitat Protection & Improvements: (this component is not Region 5 limited)

Promoting appropriate stream crossings as promoted by Mark Migliore of Region 5 involving the use of culverts or bridges at least 125% of the active channel width, with preservation of channel slope and invert at appropriate elevation. (In follow up to this, John B. adds engineering input from flood ridden Region 3 at a Flood Response Workshop on 3/9/07 indicates that an open bottom culvert or 3 sided box is crucial for sediment transport -- allowing for down scour in major events to increase water conveyance with redeposition during the recession limb.)

TU to continue working with DEC, USF&W, SWCD on project ID, design, implementation as well as with stream restoration.

Riparian management -- suggestion made for DEC to consider purchasing use rights of riparian buffers for existing or future PFR. This would have a major effect upon bank & channel stability, temperature & habitat. Various forested riparian buffer widths have been proposed in the literature: ranging from some function of bankfull width to 100'.

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Dam removal/improvement of fish passage: this is a high interest/activity area of Bill Wellman & others on Hydro committee.

Habitat Protection: John Braico briefly presented a draft proposal for Flood Response, Management & Protection Program that is founded upon restoring channel stability while meeting safety & infrastructure needs. Such a program would involve: both the reformulation of a Flood Response Team with adequate training, funding & manpower capable of providing timely expert advice, permitting & monitoring; *and* the separation of flood response into urgent/critical, subcritical, non urgent, long term restoration & flood prevention. The failure to have a coherent program continues to seriously damage habitat, waste money, and worsen flood impacts. Fred Neuffer remains a key DEC contact person on this issue per Daley.

Flow Standards are under development in DEC by Doug Shepard & Mark Woythal, focused upon releases from impoundments. However these standards will not address water withdrawal impacts from streams (ski areas, irrigation), or groundwater withdrawal from the adjacent aquifer.

Protect, Restore & Enhance BT Populations (combined Region 5 & statewide)

Information dissemination: NYS TU has ordered 5000 NYS BT Status & Threats trifold to compliment the 3/7 targeted release of the Roadmap for Restoration by TU National. NYSCTU will be developing a plan for an ongoing state wide media campaign with releases each quarter.

BT anti - management sentiments need to be adequately informed of the importance of these activities: including the Adirondack Council & Administrators within DEC. Meeting with the DEC Commissioner would be appropriate for TU.

In follow up, Bill Wellman resurfaced the idea of an Adirondack BT summit to clear the air & validate management activities to the goals of the EBTJV. A fall summit option will be explored.

Baitfish introduction penalties need to be pressed modeled after Maine's law that assigns a high penalty reflective of the ecosystem impact. Further support may be garnered in view of current concerns for introduced fish diseases. Strong support from outdoor writers will be important here as well.

Agreement to press for wild BT management where feasible, refine the data base on BT genetic diversity & if feasible support salter BT recovery on Long Island.

Jim Daley presented Tim King's graph of eastern Brook Trout genetic relationships & 2005 BT genetic sampling in regions 5,6,9,3 & 2 hatchery samples: demonstration of genetic identity for different sources for each of the 3 managed heritage strains in the ADK's (Little Tupper, Windfall, Horn Lake). Tight clustering was evident for ADK samples, as well as for region 9 samples. Connetquot plots among the Massachussets (Cape Cod) cluster. At this point it is unclear in NYS what degree of genetic separation is significant enough to warrant "recognition" & active special management.

IV. Outreach (combined region 5 & state wide)

Spread the message to improve the public appreciation of wild BT as an indicator species meriting special concern. The Wild Center: Bill Wellman to re contact Betsy, relay that we will provide 1000 NY BT Status & Threats pamphlets. Bill Schoch to consider developing a version of his BT Management in ADK's power point for use at the Wild Center.

Expanded TIC, but limiting the risks of fish disease transmission & keeping the

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message clear – the value of this is in the classroom, not in the stream.
Other points as indicated under “protect, restore & enhance” section.

Recreation: promotion & creation of Special BT management waters for streams & ponds (not discussed)

State Wide

John Braico reported that in his report to NYS Council TU on 3/3, he provided a version of today’s agenda, asking that this be taken back to each DEC region for the respective TU Chapters to use as talking points with Regional Fisheries Managers to enable the development of locally specific action plans. Regions 5,6,4,3 are currently DEC’s highest priority for BT, followed by Regions 9 &

TU comment in follow up: this is surprising for Region 7 given the preponderance of BT presence in most watersheds (9 of good to intact) along with the absence of Extirpated & Never Occurred classifications in this region. Apparently it currently reflects Regional DEC Fisheries priorities. Hopefully TU can have an impact in this region as well.

VERMONT

Reported by John Hall

New Poster and Webpage Provide Information on Vermont’s Hidden Treasure – The Wild Brook Trout

WATERBURY, VT -- Does your daily commute or trip to the grocery store take you across a small mountain brook? Chances are you cross paths daily with one of Vermont’s hidden treasures – the wild brook trout.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department announced today the release of a new poster and accompanying webpage - www.vtfishandwildlife.com/brooktrout.cfm - that provide information on Vermont’s wild brook trout.

The poster and webpage maintain a “treasure map” theme. Viewers follow the path of a brook that takes them downstream, passing key messages about the biology, habitat requirements, and other benefits of wild brook trout, such as angling opportunities. In the webpage, more in-depth information on each point is available at the click of a mouse. Links to more technical information as well as several organizations whose goals are to promote and protect wild brook trout are also available.

“We hope the new poster and website help increase public knowledge and appreciation of our wild, native brook trout,” said Vermont Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Wayne Laroche. “The information should help boost awareness of brook trout habitat requirements and lead to continued healthy populations of wild brook trout for future generations of Vermonters.”

Posters can be picked up, free of charge, at any of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife offices in St Johnsbury, Barre, Springfield, Rutland, Waterbury, Roxbury, and Essex Junction. Media Contact: Rich Kirn 802-485-7567, Eric Palmer 802-241-3700