

3/11/2010 FAC MEETING: INLAND FISHERIES UPDATE

Inland Fish Management & Fish Culture

- Produced approximately **665,000 catchable size trout for preseason and inseason spring stocking**. In addition, 21,800 yearling (7-9") trout have been produced for special programs such as TMA enhancement or sea-run trout fisheries. Stocking began in early March. Approximately 387,000 trout will be released prior to Opening Day (April 17th). The following have been produced for stocking this spring.

102,000	brook trout (10-12")	151,000	rainbow trout (10-12")
346,000	brown trout (10-12")	10,000	tiger trout (10 -12")
15,000	brown trout (≥12")	2,900	"sea-run" tiger trout (7-9")
36,000	rainbow trout (≥12")	4,000	surplus broodstock (3-10 lbs)
3,900	"sea-run" brown trout (4-6")	1,000	large "survivor" brown trout (12-16")
		15,000	"survivor" brown trout yearlings (7-9")

- **Completed preseason trout stocking schedules.** All areas are planned for stocking as usual, but an additional preseason stocking run was added to the three Fairfield County seasonal TMAs (Mill River TMA in Fairfield, Saugatuck River Fly Area, Mianus River TMA) to provide better fishing through Opening Day.
- **The Annual Fish Distribution Report** for hatchery trout and other fish species stocked by The Inland Fisheries Division throughout CT in 2009 was completed and is available on the DEP website.
- Completed ice fishing angler surveys on Mansfield Hollow Reservoir, Coventry Lake and Gardner Lake. This ice-fishing season was the best in years with safe ice at all three lakes from December 23rd through the end of February.

Mansfield Hollow Reservoir – Preliminary results indicate that northern pike fishing was excellent this winter. The largest pike measured during the angler survey was 40 inches.



Northern pike (20 and 21 pounds) caught while ice fishing at Mansfield Hollow Reservoir during the 2009-10 season.

Coventry and Gardner Lakes – Preliminary results indicate that walleye fishing was good to excellent at these lakes. The largest walleyes measured during the angler survey were 20 inches from Coventry Lake and 24 inches from Gardner Lake. However, there were numerous anecdotal reports of larger walleyes being caught.

“An eleven pound (29 inch) walleye caught while ice fishing at Coventry Lake in 2010. This catch was reported on a recently submitted “Trophy fish Award” affidavit.



- Prepared a presentation on preliminary data from the **Candlewood Lake Creel and Boating Survey** to present at a “Science at Night” Seminar at Western Connecticut State University on March 11. Besides gaining valuable insights into Candlewood’s fisheries resources, data from this study are being used to better understand and address recreational boating issues on Candlewood Lake. Recent legislation required the DEP (Boating and IFD) to work with the Candlewood Lake Authority (CLA) and local representatives from the towns bordering Candlewood Lake to develop workable solutions to area concerns of boat overcrowding. Analysis of survey data indicates that boating activity by anglers accounted for 21% (42,516 Boating Hours (BH)) of the total annual boating effort (199,000 BH) on Candlewood. More importantly, boating activity by anglers only accounted for 11% (14,400 BH) of the summer seasonal boating activity (136,000 BH) – the busiest boating season of the year on Candlewood.
- Continued wild trout conservation and management activities. Data compiled and assessed for 50 of Connecticut’s best wild trout streams showed that a general decrease in native brook trout occurred statewide beginning in the early to mid 2000’s. Presentations on these findings were given to the Mianus and Hammonasset chapters of Trout Unlimited. Also continued to work with the Shepaug River Coalition to monitor potential changes in trout populations resulting from the recent implementation of augmented flows from the Shepaug Reservoir.

Habitat Conservation and Enhancement

- Partnered with the Farmington River Anglers Association, Farmington River Coordinating Committee, Metropolitan District Commission and DEP Wildlife Division to relocate and expand a trail along the West Branch Farmington River within the Greenwoods property owned by the Metropolitan District Commission.

The river reach within the Greenwoods property is part of the West Branch Farmington River Trout Management Area (TMA). Since its creation in 1988, the TMA has developed notoriety for excellent trout fishing on both a state and regional level. This section of the TMA is heavily used with an estimated 3,500 angler trips occurring annually, with anglers willing to walk long distances from parking areas to some of the popular fishing sites, resulting in uncontrolled foot traffic along the river that caused considerable erosion. Development of a clearly defined trail set back from the river bank with formal access points to the river was warranted, as it would allow for safe river access for all user groups, prevent further bank erosion, and facilitate access to the river in case of emergency. After meeting with the partners noted above to delineate the route of the “Anglers Trail”, Wildlife Division staff cleared the route of the 5-foot wide, 2,000[±] foot long trail with low ground pressure cutting machinery.



The recently created “Anglers Trail” and machinery used to create it.

- Assisted a ConnDOT contractor with the installation of two rock reefs in the Farmington River at the Route 4 crossing, Farmington. The existing bridge is being replaced, which necessitated removal of two in-river piers. The reefs were constructed atop the “footprint” of the removed piers, and were recommended as habitat enhancement for a variety of fish, including smallmouth bass. The reefs were constructed within a containment structure by machinery operating from a temporary work trestle.

Installation of a rock reef atop the location of the removed pier in the Farmington River.



- Completed review of a water diversion permit involving the excavation of 1.3 million cubic yards of sand and gravel from Miller Pond, Waterford. Proposed activities will occur over a

projected 10 year timeframe with future plans for utilizing the pond as a regional water supply. Various recommendations were provided to protect water quality and water quantity standards and mitigation measures will be required along the pond shoreline in the form of boulder clusters, cabled tree drops, brush shelters, rootwads, etc. to restore the diversity of lake cover and structure for the resident fish community.

- Submitted a report to the Connecticut Environmental Review Team regarding the proposed Chatham Forest Subdivision in East Hampton. The proposed conservation subdivision will be located on a 42 acre parcel containing a tributary of Flat Brook, located within the Salmon River watershed. Staff provided recommendations to protect fish habitats and fish passage along with suggestions to incorporate Low Impact Development (LID) measures into development design to minimize land grading and disturbance.
- Participated on a panel discussion concerning “Eurasian Watermilfoil Management at Candlewood Lake” at Western Connecticut State University’s (WCSU), which was part of WCSU’s “Science at Night” series. The public event was cosponsored by WCSU and the Candlewood Lake Authority (CLA).
- Continued review of two significant infrastructure projects that in the planning phase. One is a proposed 2,000 MW cable system that would bring electricity generated in Canada to New York and Connecticut. The proposed route includes western Long Island Sound from Greenwich to a converter station in Bridgeport Harbor. Staff attended a meeting hosted by the Office of Long Island Sound Programs and discussed potential fisheries issues associated with the project. The other project is the maintenance dredging of the Federal Navigation Project in Bridgeport Harbor. This is a complicated project involving dredging 1.8 million CY of sediment, disposal of contaminated material, and proposed use of the Morris Cove borrow pit (New Haven Harbor) to sequester some of the contaminated material. During the planning phase the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has consulted with staff about the need to mitigate impacts to fisheries resources. The Corps recently released a Public Notice for the project. Questions about these projects as they relate to fisheries resources can be directed to Senior Fisheries Biologist Mark Johnson at 860-434-6043.
- Assisted the Bantam Lake Protective Association and their consultant in development of a control plan for fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*), a highly invasive non-native aquatic plant that has become established in the north end of Bantam Lake near the inlet of the Bantam River. DEP has allocated \$78,000 from the Invasive Plant - Supplemental Environmental Project Fund to support suction harvesting, hand removal and the use of benthic barriers to remove the fanwort. Work is planned to start in June 2010. The immediate goal is to prevent the spread of fanwort to other parts of the lake, while the long term goal is to eradicate the species from the lake.
- CT DEP Invasive Plant Program - In 2003, the state legislature established the Invasive Plant Council (IPC) to develop strategies regarding public education, control methods, and prevention in order to address the adverse consequences of invasive plants. In 2007, the legislature provided funding to establish an Invasive Plant Program, to be administered by DEP. Major components of the Invasive Plant Program include establishing a Cooperative Agreement with the University of CT-Plant Science Department to hire an Invasive Plant Coordinator, conducting invasive plant control work and providing educational information. Program accomplishments for 2009 can be viewed at:
<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg/pdfs/2009Minutes/2009IPCAnnualReport.pdf>

Diadromous Fisheries Restoration

- Worked with the Parks Division, Support Services Division, Save the Sound, and other partners to oversee the construction of a new connection for Bride Brook with Long Island Sound at Rocky Neck State Park. The brook used to flow through two undersized, rusty pipes that were on the verge of failure. This project created a large open channel with a properly sized culvert to allow people to pass from one side to the other. In addition to protecting the migratory path of one of the most important alewife runs in the state, the new configuration will promote full tidal flushing and salt marsh restoration north of the Amtrak line. Alewives should begin using the new connection any day. A dedication ceremony is scheduled for April 19.



Cofferdams were used to keep the water out of the construction site as workers dug the trench and lined it with rocks. Natural sand dunes were recreated on top of the culvert. Bride Brook is now flowing through the completed channel.

- Distributed 207,000 ‘eyed’ Atlantic salmon eggs. Each year, the Kensington State Fish Hatchery incubates more eggs than they can successfully hatch. Surplus ‘eyed’ eggs are transferred to other regional hatcheries to complete their incubation. This year, 67,000 eggs were shipped to the White River National Fish Hatchery in Bethel, VT and 140,000 were shipped to the Tripp Streamside Incubation Facility in Old Lyme. This is a privately-run volunteer hatchery operating off of brook water in an old mill. When these salmon hatch, they will be stocked into the Eightmile and Salmon Rivers.
- Each year, thousands of hatchery-reared salmon smolts from federal hatcheries are stocked into the Farmington River. Return rates have been linked to good fin condition and each year prior to stocking, fin condition evaluations are performed on the fish to provide important program projections. Division staff assisted with these evaluations at both the Eisenhower National Fish Hatchery (formerly the Pittsford National Fish Hatchery) in Pittsford, VT and the Berkshire National Fish Hatchery in Hartsville, MA. Data will be forwarded to the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission for analysis.
- Assisted with the distribution of nearly 20,000 eyed Atlantic salmon eggs to classrooms throughout the state as part of the “Fish Friends” program sponsored by the Connecticut River Salmon Association. The eggs were transferred from the White River National Fish Hatchery (Bethel, VT) to the Burlington State Fish Hatchery in mid-January. Burlington staff cared for the eggs during a short residency and then loaded them into insulated containers on the days when volunteers and other staff delivered them to the schools. This year, the eggs

were distributed to 90 tanks in 77 different schools in 56 towns across Connecticut (decrease of 4 tanks, 3 schools, and 3 towns relative to 2008-2009).

- Closed the last of the fishways along the shoreline for the 2009 season just before Christmas. As some sea-run brown trout spawn much later than their inland cohorts, leaving these fishways open into December may allow them to access upstream spawning habitat. As part of the fishway closings, a winter drain was installed in the upper portion of the Bunnells Pond Fishway in Bridgeport. In the past, small amounts of water leaked down the closed fishway all winter and in very cold weather it froze and created a risk to the structure. The drain allows the water to fall out of the fishway and avoid freezing.

The Bunnells Pond Fishway was not designed to support as much weight as this ice in February of 2009. The new winter drain has helped avoid such ice this winter.



- Worked with staff from the Department of Public Works to interview and select a consultant to design a fishlift at the Rainbow Dam on the Farmington River in Windsor. This facility is intended to replace the existing fishway at the dam that does not effectively pass American shad and river herring. Design is expected to take about one year.

CARE and constituent Services

- Introduced an additional 400 participants to ice fishing at the **2010 No Child Left Inside – Winterfest**. This year, the annual *Winterfest* was held at the aesthetically inviting Burr Pond State Park in Torrington. All who attended were invited to join Certified CARE Instructors on the ice for instructions on jigging and setting up a tip-up! Many who roughed the cold conditions were rewarded as black crappie, largemouth bass, chain pickerel, bluegills, perch, and pumpkinseeds were all pulled through the ice by anglers. A ‘fish-fry’ tent, set up on the ice by CARE Instructors, provided an opportunity for lucky anglers who caught fish to have their catch filleted and fried.

Just one of the many happy anglers putting their newly acquired knowledge to work at the 2010 No Child Left Inside Winterfest.



- Conducted 13 Family Ice Fishing classes in the towns of Bristol, Derby, Ellington, Farmington, Glastonbury, Guilford, Hartford, Killingworth, Litchfield, New Haven, Tolland and Wallingford. Certified CARE Instructors taught 344 students about winter pond ecology, safety on the ice, ice fishing equipment, proper bait and how to rig it, and fish identification and ecology.



CARE Instructor ED RUEL explains the differences between a smallmouth and largemouth bass at a recent Family Ice Fishing class in Glastonbury. This was the first year an Ice Fishing class was held in Glastonbury. The class was a great success, with 28 students in attendance.



CARE Instructor JEAN RIES is shown with ice picks, insulated boots and bibs. Instructors always stress to students that proper clothing and preparation for ice fishing is essential in having a safe, fun experience.

- Recruited and trained 16 new CARE Instructors at DEP Marine Headquarters in Old Lyme. The newest class of CARE Instructors is a diverse group coming from Hamden Public schools, UCONN Chapter of AFS, Stamford Public schools, TAKE A VET fishing program, Trumbull Public schools, Trout Unlimited, and “The Learning Center” of New London. Instructors are now trained, ready, and expected to initiate Family Fishing courses in their communities.
- Scheduled 8 Family Fishing courses for spring 2010 in Bristol, Derby, Enfield, Farmington, Guilford, New Britain, Stamford and Wallingford.
- Developed an “Introduction to Salt Water Fishing” course with a CARE Chief Instructor. The four hour course will focus on Long Island Sound ecology and different game species. This course will be held in Derby with partnership from the Kellogg Environmental Center staff.
- Created an Inland Fisheries Division display at the Connecticut Marine Trades Association’s Boat and Fishing Show at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford. The display was a partnership with the Marine Fisheries Division, DEP Store, LI Sound Program and Boating Division and reached nearly 5,000 people.
- Conducted a Trophy Fish Awards Ceremony at the Northeast Hunting and Fishing Expo at the Convention Center in Hartford. Marine and Inland Fisheries staff convened the event that recognized dozens of anglers that had submitted trophy fish awards in 2009. In addition, IFD and MFD staff contributed to the DEP display on the Show floor in cooperation with the Law Enforcement and Wildlife Divisions.
- Reviewed and updated CARE Center health and safety plans. Constructed barrier wall on balcony of CARE Center to maintain compliance with OSHA regulations.



Sixteen new CARE instructors were certified at the 2010 New Instructor Training session held at DEP’s Marine Headquarters. This group of 16 joins the now 600 plus Instructors that have been certified by the DEP since 1986. Over 200 Instructors still remain active every year.