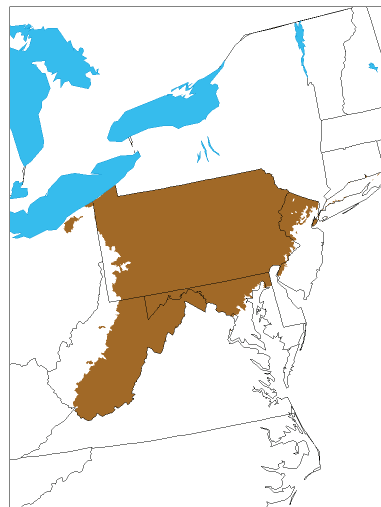


The Eastern Brook Trout Newsletter: Mid-Atlantic Division

*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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Maryland

Report by Alan Heft, DNR - Md

The Aaron Run stream restoration project, a multi-party/agency project funded in part by an EBTJV grant, has started on-the-ground work. Construction of SAP cells and an artificial wetland has begun at the second of the two major acid mine drainage inputs. The engineering and design plans have been completed for the limestone doser construction and installation at the other AMD input location, on the ground work is planned to begin this fall with construction of the access road and site preparation. Depending on weather the doser will be installed late this fall or early spring of 2009. Once the doser is online and water chemistry improved and stabilized, brook trout reintroduction could occur as early as fall 2009. Work is also planned to begin this fall on the streambank restoration portion of this project, which includes reforestation of strip mined lands. Approximately 4 miles of native brook trout stream will be restored once the project is completed, and improved water quality from Aaron Run into the Savage River will improve conditions for native brook trout in that stream also.

Monitoring efforts for summer 2008 have been completed for the Upper Savage River Catch and Release brook trout management area. This area, comprised of over 120+ miles of interconnected brook trout streams, was placed under catch and release, no bait fishing rules January 1 2007. A five year monitoring program is being conducted to determine the impact of the regulation on the brook trout population. Twenty-four sampling sites throughout the management area are being sampled annually and the data is being analyzed with the assistance of Dr. Bob Hilderbrand with the University of Maryland's Appalachian Laboratory.

Field work has been completed for the State Wildlife Grant funded investigation into the genetically effective population sizes for Maryland brook trout populations. Fragmentation and isola-

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tion of brook trout streams in Maryland, particularly in the eastern, more densely populated portion of the state, has raised concerns as to the long term genetic viability of these streams. The results of this investigation will be available in late winter of 2008.

A joint effort of Maryland DNR Fisheries, Maryland Bureau of Mines, and the Canaan Valley Institute to investigate, identify, and mediate the impact of acid mine drainage and acid rain on native brook trout streams in the Casselman river drainage in Western Maryland is continuing. Existing native brook trout populations sampled in 2007 and 2008 were all considered depressed or severely depressed due to AMD and acid rain impacts. A ranking criteria including parameters such as drainage area, land ownership, and AMD inputs was developed to prioritize stream restoration efforts. As a result five native brook trout streams will be treated with limestone sand dumping in their headwaters to attempt to improve water quality and reduce acid impacts. This is the first large scale limestone sand remediation effort for brook trout in Maryland. Monitoring of the brook trout populations and water quality will continue annually.

Brook trout tissue samples (adipose fin clips) were obtained from native brook trout populations in the Susquehanna River drainage in Maryland. This was the last area in Maryland from which genetic analysis had not been completed. Dr. Ray Morgan of the University of Maryland's Appalachian Laboratory has been spearheading this long term genetic investigation of Maryland's brook trout populations.

New Jersey

By Pat Hamilton, NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife

For the 2008 summer field season, NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife gave high priority to assessing the status and distribution of wild brook trout in subwatersheds where fisheries data was lacking or absent. Streams targeted for survey were primarily headwater areas and tributaries of larger streams in northern New Jersey. A total of 47 streams were inspected and, if stream conditions were suitable, electrofished.

The results of these surveys held few surprises. Twenty-five streams were not electrofished because they were either dry (or had too little water) or had high water temperatures (in excess of 25°C). Of the 22 streams electrofished, wild brook trout populations were present in only 7. Four of these were tributaries to the Flat Brook, a major trout stream in northwestern Jersey and a stronghold for wild brook trout. Two others were small streams which flow directly into the Delaware River. A pleasant surprise was the discovery of wild brook trout in a small tributary to the Black River, in the Raritan River watershed. A majority of the streams assessed this summer (33) were tributaries to the Wallkill River (9) and Paulinskill River (24), and none of these surveys yielded brook trout.

Though only a few new brook trout populations were found this summer, the surveys documenting the absence of brook trout are equally important. Collectively they provide much needed documentation that will fill the information gaps in a number of New Jersey's subwatersheds.

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New York

Reported by John Braico, NYSCTU Brook Trout Coordinator

In consideration of manpower & fiscal constraints hampering work on brook trout “Status & Threats in NY,” the DEC & TU have been collaborating since January on a program for TU volunteers to survey first “unknown” (never surveyed), then “qualitative presence” HUCs in a large area of northeastern NY. On June 23rd, Jim Daley (DEC Coldwater Unlit Leader), Norman McBride (DEC Region 4 Fisheries Manager), Rich Preall (DEC Region 5 Senior Aquatic Biologist) & John Braico (NYSCTU Brook Trout Coordinator) released the “Status & Threats Assessment for Brook Trout Populations in New York State” paper (downloadable). This document reviews recent and ongoing Agency status and threats work in DEC regions 4&7, while establishing guidelines & methodology for an NGO (Trout Unlimited) to conduct surveys in Region 5 on behalf of DEC.

Using Agency protocol, three NY TU chapters (Clearwater, Adirondack & Champlain Valley) began their work in early July. For this collaboration, DEC also supplies: subwatershed site identifiers, mapping & landowner information on an unknown HUC level 5 subwatershed, along with the 8 needed standardized recording forms. TU volunteers working in teams of 2-3 gather data. In lieu of electro-fishing, TU has been successfully using angling, minnow traps and visual means to document the presence or absence of brook trout at the assigned sites -- recording fish caught & observed on the Bulk Fish form. A new “Site Threats Assessment” form, developed by DEC, provides the means to capture key threats as listed by the EBTJV. QA is assured by using trained volunteers, explicit protocols/ forms, and data review by the supervising Biologist prior to inclusion in the State fisheries database.

Thus far Art Coleman of the Clearwater Chapter TU reports that his crews have completed work on 2 HUCs covering 145 square miles, visiting over 34 sites (@ 2hrs/site) to find & document 41% of streams harboring wild brook trout with another 26% strongly suspected, but unable to be confirmed without electro-fishing. They also documented the full range of threats -- migration barriers (multiple), channel, riparian, land use, water condition/chemistry, predation, competing invasive species -- finding only 3 instances of competition (rainbow, brown) & a single instance of elevated temps (70.0-75.0).

The enthusiasm of TU crews is definitely buoyed whenever a brookie is found, knowing that this previously unprotected water, will soon be shifted to a highly protected category. With two other TU Chapters also busy in the field, we hope to have completed the field work on the lion’s share of the “Unknowns” in this large under studied area of NY by year’s end.

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Pennsylvania

Report from Jack Williams, BTB Chair & NLC

Education and Outreach

The PA Back the Brookies power point continues to be requested. This past spring and summer we have presented to several PATU Chapters, elementary and high school classes involved in the Trout in the Classroom program, the PA Rivers Conservation and Fly Fishing Youth Camp and a group of participants in the PA Conservation Corps.

EBTJV informational displays were also scheduled at The Allegheny Watershed Improvement Needs Rendezvous in northwest PA and The West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Symposium IV in State College, PA.

Conservation

The Allegheny Watershed Improvement Needs Coalition (WINs), reported in an earlier newsletter, is now just over one year old. In that time WINs has generated over one million dollars in grants and in-kind services to address watershed problems on the Allegheny National Forest. Much of the work will benefit native brook trout on the Forest.

Work is continuing to develop an organizational structure aimed at improving the conservation of wild brook trout populations in PA. This effort was reported in an earlier newsletter. While progress has been slow we are moving forward and hopefully will have something substantive to report in the near future

Brook trout conservation projects are reported from at least three PATU Regions. Extensive angler surveys are being conducted by PATU chapters on streams suspected of having the potential to support populations of wild brook trout in the southeast region of PATU. Results of the survey will be reported to the PA Fish and Boat Commission for follow-up.

The Pa Fish and Boat Commission formally added naturally reproducing eastern brook trout to the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan. This document prescribes conservation measures for species and their critical habitats before they become more costly to protect and restore.

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West Virginia

West Virginia Back the Brookie August 2008 Report

Kanawa Valley Chapter

Reported by Ernie Nester

Kanawa Valley Chapter TU members moved about 6 tons of limestone sand into a tributary of the Middle Fork of the Williams River on June 28, 2008. The limestone sand placed in this tributary along with the limestone sand that is dumped along the Highland Scenic Highway will eventually improve the water chemistry of the Middle Fork of the Williams enough for the natives to return. The natives have basically been absent from the Middle Fork since the mid to late 1950's.

The first project of the KVCTU was a chemistry study on the Middle Fork of the Williams in 1973-74 where we learned that acid precipitation was the reason for the demise of the natives in the main stream and in some of the tributaries. The KVCTU has maintained a strong interest in restoring the Middle Fork and we contribute \$2500 each year to help DNR pay for the limestone sand.

Thanks to Phil Smith and Lee Orr (WVCTU Back The Brookie Committee) for initiating this project to help John Rebinski move more limestone sand into this tributary. John and his helpers had already moved about 7 tons of limestone sand into this tributary. Many thanks to John and the other folks in DNR who are doing great work in restoring and improving native brook trout streams in WV.

P. Pendleton Kennedy Chapter

- Participated in all 4 Potomac Headwaters tree plantings (Thorne Creek and Big Run)
- Set temperature monitors in six brook trout stream to monitor summer daily temps. Data submitted to WVDNR.
- Had two chapter members evaluate the flows/pools/general structure of Scotts Run in the Coopers Rock State Forest.
- Worked with WVU and WVDNR personnel to open the channel at the Little Laurel run liming site, and opened the channel across an entire powerline.



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Blennerhasset Chapter TU

Donated \$1,200 to the WV DNR limestone fines project in order to secure limestone cobble for road repair into the headwaters of Upper Meadow Creek. Once the road is established the stream will be added to the limestone fines treatment list.

Mountaineer Chapter TU

Holly River log dam maintenance and repairs.

Potomac Home Rivers Initiative:

Highlights of the summer:

- PHI has hired a temporary restoration technician to assist in the delivery of on the ground services. Kirby Stout started full time employment on the 1st of August. He is a graduate in Fish and Wildlife Management from WVU and has been a farmer since childhood. He is a welcome addition which will extend the ability of PHI to implement jobs.
- PHI staff has 9 new conservation agreements with landowners in the Thorn Creek, Deer Creek, Smith Creek, South Branch and North Branch watersheds.
- PHI staff has tentative agreements to sign up 5 additional landowners using Farm Bill programs and foundation money.
- This spring/summer PHI planted 24 acres of riparian forest.
- Fence Crew operations saw a monthly record of 23000 feet of fencing installed in June 2008.
- Chris Byrd, TU volunteer extraordinaire, has accepted the chairmanship of the PHI volunteer committee. He succeeds Bill Thorne who did a great job with initiating and supporting the PHI during its start up years. Bill will be missed, but hopefully not too far away.
- Work load for 2009, under agreement: 56000+ feet of fencing, 7 well/spring developments, 10000 feet of water line, 15 water facilities, 30 instream structures, 1160 feet of bank stabilization, 10000 plants (most with animal protection), and 7 road crossings.