

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Trout Committee Members

FROM: Jeff Durniak, Chairman

DATE: February 25, 1992

SUBJECT: 1991 Meeting Minutes

The 1991 AFS Southern Division Trout Committee Meeting was held on May 7 at the Will-O-Wisp Resort on Deep Creek Lake, Maryland. Many thanks to Bob Bachman, Ken Pavol, and their Maryland DNR associates for excellent meeting arrangements and a productive Trout and Timber Workshop which followed. Please see the enclosed summary of workshop presentations. Highlights of our committee meeting are summarized below.

After the introduction of members and guests, there was the traditional (and unabbreviated) round table discussion of ongoing projects. The following agency representatives reported on their current work efforts.

Great Smoky Mtns. National Park (Steve Moore): New genetic evidence from brook trout populations with no history of stocking strongly suggests the existence of a distinct strain. Interestingly, brook trout biomass in those streams appears to be double that for brook trout streams that have been stocked in the past.

Large natural variation in rainbow and brown trout populations has been documented through an annual monitoring program. The effects of natural stressors (droughts and floods) versus fishing regulation changes were discussed.

Tennessee (Rick Bivens): Rick was recently promoted to the Coldwater Biologist position for Northeast Tennessee. Rick replaced Price Wilkins, who retired last year. TWRA plans more extensive data collection on wild trout streams and is developing tailwater trout management plans. Through TWRA funding, Jim Habera has been hired as a coldwater research coordinator at the University of Tennessee.

North Carolina (Chris Goudreau): Trout fishing regulations have been changed to place more emphasis on wild trout management. Brook trout distributions are being entered into the state GIS database. A long term trout population monitoring plan is presently being developed, and the MICROFISH software program is being adapted to meet that project's needs.

West Virginia Coop Unit (Dr. Sue Perry): The unit is expanding research to now include coldwater systems. Planned work will include assessing effects of acid rain, gypsy moth infestation and treatment, and global warming on national forest brook trout populations. Other projects are planned for threatened and endangered species on national forests. Hydropower effects on smallmouth bass habitat quality are being assessed using the Fort Collins habitat evaluation procedures. The aquatic databases will probably be incorporated into a GIS in the near future.

George Washington National Forest (Mark Hudy): Mark filled Rich Standage's position three months ago. The low-budget stream liming project to mitigate low stream pH still appears to be working 19 months after the lime application. In a tailwater project, huge boulders were moved into place to improve trout habitat. Mark also plans to assess gypsy moth defoliation impacts to brook trout streams in watersheds with 80-90% loss of oaks.

Daniel Boone National Forest (Vicki Bishop): A stream monitoring system using the IBI method is being established. To improve catchable trout fisheries in some streams, a switch from the Wytheville rainbow trout strain to the McConaughy strain will be tried.

West Virginia (Don Phares): Limestone drum stations are being established on the two most acidic tributaries to the Cranberry River. One system was established and fish species in that tributary increased from zero to five. The two systems will cost \$1 million to build and \$100,000 to maintain annually. Anglers are willing to pay extra for acid stream mitigation. Don wants to propose a special use stamp, fees from which would then fund the liming work.

Heavy equipment was used to drastically narrow the channel and add huge boulders to three larger trout streams. Trout habitat appeared to be greatly improved. Delayed harvest regulations were attempted for the first time on several other streams this year.

There is a Wild and Scenic Rivers push by environmental groups in that state. A lively discussion on what management activity is and is not permitted on designated W&S rivers then followed. Don then graciously conceded the floor to the next speaker.

Kentucky (Doug Stephens): Brown trout stockings are still being evaluated in about fifteen streams in Daniel Boone N.F. Holdover has been found in all streams and natural reproduction has been found in four. Water temperatures appeared to be a common limiting factor.

Brook trout have been stocked above barrier falls in three fairly low elevation streams in the Big South Fork area.

Trout fishing regulations are quite varied and are still being evaluated.

Missouri (Spence Turner): In a state with no native trout and only 200 miles of public trout water, three of four streams designated as Trophy Trout Waters in 1978 have developed naturalized rainbow populations. Other naturalized populations have been found in several small spring branches.

Brown trout have been stocked in Lake Taneycomo since 1980 to add a trophy aspect to the catchable fishery, maintained by stocking a million rainbows annually. Browns disappeared from samples by the time they reached 16 inches, the minimum size limit. The limit was increased to 20 inches in 1986 and appears to be helping; the current state record is more than 23 pounds.

The Taneycomo forage base appears to be reduced and is changing from almost exclusively Gammarus to an even mix of Gammarus and isopods. Water quality problems, including low DO effects, are being investigated.

Maryland (Bob Bachman and Ken Pavol): There is increasing emphasis on wild trout management in those waters capable of sustaining good wild trout populations. Population data are being collected in order to define "good" populations. The wild trout regulation of two fish per day is now the statewide general regulation, while the higher creel limits for catchable trout fisheries are now "special" regulations. Delayed harvest regulations have been tried with success on several streams including the Casselman River, where a wild brook trout population has also developed. The catchable trout program is actually being increased, but is directed away from good wild trout waters.

A project is underway to test the conventional wisdom that hooking mortality from artificial lures is not significantly different from that from flies. First year data from the Savage River study showed 11% mortality from spinners and 1.5% from flies. Fish were held up to 96 hours, but no delayed mortality was seen in this test.

Two lime dosers are to be installed in the upper North Branch of the Potomac, impacted by acid mine drainage. Net pen production in the stilling basin below the dam has increased, but mortality from suspected gas supersaturation has been seen.

US Forest Service (Monte Seehorn): The southeast region now has about 15 fisheries biologists employed, and monitoring programs are being established on most forests. Increasing emphasis on environmental analyses, baseline data collection on invertebrates, and endangered species management will allow less time for more traditional fisheries management activities.

Monte felt strongly that the Forest Service was going in the wrong direction by abandoning clearcutting for other group selection methods, in response to increasing pressures. He was concerned that increased roading and more frequent entry would have greater impact on stream systems.

A bank stabilization and instream habitat improvement project on Sarahs Creek, Georgia was discussed. A late evening slide show highlighted the advantages of using heavy equipment for larger stream improvement projects like this one.

The Forest Service is promoting angler access projects, especially for the handicapped, through its Challenge Grant cost-share program with other agencies and with private groups like Trout Unlimited.

Virginia Tech Experiment Station (Andy Dolloff): Colleague Pat Flebbe is beginning a study of biodiversity within an entire watershed. One

of her students is also assessing sedimentation effects on a Jefferson N.F. brook trout population. Andy is to begin a study on the relationship between large woody debris, accumulated sediments, and brook trout spawning site choice. He is looking to incorporate fish community assessment with acid deposition monitoring by Rick Webb (U. Virginia).

In the King Creek (SC) study, all but one of the twenty-eight VI-tagged fingerling rainbow trout recaptured in November had lost weight since their September stocking, but many regained the weight by the February sample. Most fish stayed in the exact location where they had been originally stocked.

Virginia (Larry Mohn): In its first year of public access after long legal battles, the Jackson River looks like a very good developing tailwater trout fishery. So far rainbows have had better growth than browns. Invertebrate populations are abundant but forage fish populations are sparse.

In the upstream reservoir, Lake Moomaw, reservoir managers managed to discharge the entire layer of trout water from the impoundment. A Virginia Tech study is evaluating the fishery.

Delayed harvest regulations appear to be working well on several streams. Habitat improvement, catchable stocking, and delayed harvest regulations have improved the North River fishery, but it was adversely affected by low summer flows.

A strain evaluation of Nashua and Crawford brown trout indicated that they performed about equally well.

Georgia (Jeff Durniak): Failure to release cold water through the Lake Lanier dam for a period during summer 1989 adversely affected the Chattahoochee tailwater trout fishery. A study of the effects of three brown trout fingerling stocking rates on angler success was somewhat compromised, since none of the 150,000 brown trout stocked in 1989 has been sampled. A report comparing the remaining stocking rates (50K, 100K) is nearing completion.

The Game and Fish Division became involved in reviewing SCS pond applications on designated trout streams, and suggested design modifications such as deep releases, bypasses, or offstream storage for SCS engineers to incorporate into their plans.

A strengthened state erosion control law discouraged land disturbing activity within 100 feet of trout streams. State fisheries biologists became involved in this permit process, reviewing any exceptions to the 100 foot rule and recommending steps needed to protect trout streams from proposed development.

OLD BUSINESS

Jeff Durniak updated the Committee on sales of the 1988 Brown Trout Workshop Proceedings. After initial distribution by Jim Borawa, another 112 copies have been sold from Georgia. After the \$250 publishing loan from North Carolina Trout Unlimited was repaid, the account remained at nearly a thousand dollars. Southern Division AFS committees have not yet been reimbursed.

Steve Moore gave a report on the status of the proposed 1992 East Coast Trout Conference. Mailings for the first call for papers were

behind schedule, which alarmed the cooperating Northeast Division representatives. Since our meeting, Steve has resolved the issue over the first call mailings (the main office had provided the mailing list for the Southern and Northcentral divisions). Duane Harrell, through Duke Power, is paying for the mailings and Chris Goudreau and Jim Habera have offered to stuff envelopes. Members did vote to allow Brown Trout Workshop funds to be used for essential conference startup costs other than the call for papers mailings, with the understanding that the account would be reimbursed through 1992 conference registration fees.

NEW BUSINESS

Monte Seehorn felt that the Trout Committee should take a position supporting forest management practices (see his comments above). He was to develop a draft position statement for the committee to comment on. Sue Perry and Jeff Durniak offered to review Monte's original document and then distribute to members.

University of Virginia researcher Rick Webb gave an excellent overview of his work on acidification trends in Virginia brook trout streams. Abstracts from a few of Rick's published articles are included in this package. Many thanks to Rick and colleague Art Bulger for making a special trip north to address our committee. There appears to be the potential for cooperative efforts between Rick's stream water quality monitoring programs and some of our trout population monitoring work.

Time ran out before the committee had a chance to discuss the concept of standardized trout stream sampling. I asked Steve Moore to head a subcommittee to look into the subject. The draft document will be sent to committee members for comment.

The meeting finally adjourned and attendees were treated to a fine buffet dinner, courtesy of Mr. Bachman. Watershed management discussions appeared to give way to tall angling tales in several circles.

Our group has grown quite a bit recently and has taken on extra challenges in a very professional manner. Now only time appears to be our limiting factor. To expedite the meeting process next time, I am thinking about limiting round table presentations to 5-10 minutes per person. Elaboration of any issues raised can follow afterward.

Thanks to those of you in attendance for a very productive meeting, and to all members participating in committee projects. Any and all comments on the meeting minutes or Trout Committee activities in general are welcome.