

Minutes of the
AFS Southern Division Trout Committee Meeting
University of Arkansas Center for Continuing Education
Hilton Hotel, Fayetteville, Arkansas
April 23, 1998

The 1998 Southern Division AFS Trout Committee meeting was held following the 11th International Trout Habitat Improvement Workshop in Fayetteville, Arkansas. As Committee Chair, John Stark (AR) called the meeting to order at 9:47 a.m. Given the official members and proxies in attendance, it was decided that a quorum was present. A motion was made by Mike Kruse (MO) and approved to proceed with the meeting. John reported that the Committee treasury had a balance of \$2,818 and would increase by about \$1,900 depending upon the final net income from the Workshop (~65 people registered). The minutes from the previous meeting at Hungry Mother State Park, VA (April 9, 1997) were distributed, reviewed, and approved by the Committee.

Old Business:

Pat Flebbe (USFS) has the Trout Committee on-line with a list server; please provide her with an e-mail address if you have not already done so. Pat's address is patfle@vt.edu and she can also be reached by phone at (540) 231-7202.

Darrell Bowman (standing in for Larry Mohn) reported that Larry is head of the Program Committee for the East Coast Trout Culture and Management Workshop III. Bob Bachman and Ray Morgan (MD) are in charge of arrangements at the University of Maryland, Frostburg (moving the Workshop somewhere south of Penn State was discussed at the last Trout Committee meeting). Apparently, there is no longer a Northeast Division Trout Committee, thus aside from Marty Marcinko's (PA) help, East Coast III will be our responsibility. Discussion ensued regarding the timing of the meeting (June 1-3, 1999 as proposed by the Program Committee) and its proximity to and potential conflict with (for papers) the Annual AFS meeting in Charlotte, NC during August 1999 (and others). Several Committee members from NC are committed to assisting with preparations for the AFS meeting in Charlotte and would not be available for East Coast III. Also, several members mentioned that deadlines have passed for requesting or budgeting travel funds for early June 1999. A motion was made by Mike Kruse to propose to Larry, Bob, and Ray that East Coast III be postponed to June 2000 and that the Trout Committee not organize or sponsor any symposium or workshop in Charlotte (Andy Dolloff's suggestion from 1997). The motion was seconded and passed. For now, Committee members are encouraged to provide Larry with input on section topics or other program items, etc.

New Business:

Although there are currently no particular problems in other states, the electrofishing controversy continues in Arkansas. John Stark related that his agency is being asked by fishing guides and fly fishermen to stop electrofishing during the brown trout spawning season. Concerns about electrofishing in general are also being expressed. John suggested that an article be prepared for *Trout* magazine (TU's publication) that compares and contrasts potential effects of electrofishing

and angling on trout fisheries and also documents *instances where information obtained by electrofishing has facilitated better management, thus benefitting trout fisheries and the anglers that use them*. Jim Habera (TN) has been studying electrofishing effects on wild trout in Tennessee streams and will follow up with Steve Moore (GSMNP), who has also been involved in electrofishing impact studies and has a contact with *Trout*. Please send Jim any examples (italicized information) from your agency.

A resolution developed by John Stark to communicate Trout Committee support for efforts to legislatively redress historical challenges (reservoir water levels and tailwater flow regimes) to the White River system in AR and MO was discussed and revised. A motion was made and approved to support the revised resolution, which will appear on the list server.

Frank Fiss (TN) introduced a draft resolution for support by the Trout Committee requesting that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers implement a comprehensive tailwater restoration program to deal with problems caused by low dissolved oxygen (DO) levels, erratic flows, etc., in the Caney Fork River (Center Hill tailwater). After some discussion, a motion to support the resolution was made and approved.

The 1999 Trout Committee meeting was briefly discussed. The Tennessee representatives in attendance (J. Habera and F. Fiss) agreed to be responsible for making arrangements to hold the meeting in conjunction with the AFS Southern Division Midyear Meeting in Chattanooga in February 1999. Additional details will be provided later.

Elections:

Steve Reeser (KY) was elected secretary/treasurer in 1997, but has since moved on to another job in Virginia and is no longer a Trout Committee member. Therefore, it was necessary to replace Steve (who would have been the in-coming vice-Chair) and elect a new secretary/treasurer to enter the line of succession to the Chair. Frank Fiss was nominated and elected to fill the vice-Chair opening and Jarrad Kosa, who was a Program Co-Chairman for the Southern Division Midyear Meeting in Lexington and is now Kentucky's representative on the Committee, was nominated and elected secretary/treasurer. Jim Habera is the Chair for 1998-99.

Round Table:

Jim Habera (TN): Jim will be employed as a biologist by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency beginning May 1, 1998 and will continue working with the State's wild trout. A few papers from the UT/TWRA Wild Trout Project are in various stages of publication (including brook trout distribution changes and electrofishing injury of large brown trout). Work is ongoing to determine brown trout ages using otoliths. Preliminary results indicate that a sample of 227 fish from 11 populations includes specimens up to age 12 (scales indicate ages up to 8). Scale/otolith age differences can be 3 or 4 years. Because of the apparent discrepancies, rainbow trout otoliths will be collected and compared with scales beginning in 1998. The 1997 Annual Report (UT/TWRA Wild Trout Project) is complete and will be distributed soon.

Frank Fiss (TN): The attempt at delayed harvest in TN (run by the City of Gatlinburg)

seems to have been successful. Dr. Phil Bettoli's tailwater investigations are continuing; trout movement is now being studied to see if having trophy zones makes sense. The Watauga tailwater will be intensively evaluated next. Funding for research projects is decreasing, thus TWRA will try to do more research in-house. The impacts of trout stocking on T&E species may require additional study and could affect stocking in some cases.

Jarrad Kosa (KY): Kentucky's Commission is considering a proposal for delayed-harvest regulations on 5 small streams (3 on Daniel Boone National Forest). The Cumberland River trout movement study revealed that most brown trout are caught within 5 mi. of stocking sites and rainbows within ~3 mi. There are 75 mi. of tailwater, so it was decided to increase the number of stocking sites for rainbow trout. A telephone survey of anglers for attitudes about management of the Cumberland River indicated that anglers were generally supportive of the restrictive regulations for brown trout. The contribution of fingerling brown trout vs. stocked catchables is also being studied in the Cumberland tailwater. The restrictive angling regulations for brown trout seem to have increased abundance.

Paul Balkenbush (OK): Paul is Oklahoma's new stream biologist for the eastern part of the State (includes some tailwater trout fisheries). A stream management plan is being developed and Paul is visiting with other state agencies for input. Stocking of rainbow trout in streams supporting historic smallmouth bass/sunfish fisheries is being reconsidered and may be discontinued (emphasis will be placed on tailwaters).

John Stark (AR): Minimum flow battles have been underway for the past couple of years with respect to Arkansas' tailwaters. Studies are being planned for the entire White River system. The Game and Fish Commission is trying to diversify angling opportunities using catch-and-release areas (target is ~20% of tailwaters). Four of the 5 catch-and-release areas established so far have been biologically successful (e.g., rainbows over 10 lbs. have been produced). A large, comprehensive study of the trout fishery in the Bull Shoals tailwater is also being planned.

Scott Loftis (NC): Examination of brook trout otoliths is underway; several age-3 and age-4 fish have been identified, along with an age-7 specimen.

Kevin Pavol (MD): Maryland has 3 delayed-harvest streams and is looking to add more. The delayed-harvest regulations were changed to extend the season (October, November, and December were added). A relicensing agreement was pursued on the Youghiogheny River to enhance temperature and DO levels and facilitate management as a put-grow-and-take fishery for brown and rainbow trout. The relative abundance of brook trout has substantially declined in the Savage River (there was a total year class failure in 1996). Angler perception of fishing quality has declined as they find the brown trout harder to catch. Trout production has been increased by several thousand pounds through a partnership with a deep-mining company in which fish are raised in net pens in an effluent treatment pond (the fish have good coloration and fins).

Mike Kruse (MO): Missouri's Fisheries Division has been re-organized and there is a new Chief. The new divisions are based on watershed boundaries. New regulations are in effect on

Lake Taneycomo (12-20" protected size-range on rainbow trout; artificial lures only) and there have been 7-32% increases in fish >13". A 41¾" brown trout was recently found dead in Lake Taneycomo. The fish weighed 37.1 lbs, but was longer than the current world record fish from AR, thus it could have been a world record at some point in its life. A new gear restriction on the Current River (artificial lures only) went into effect on March 1, 1998 to try to improve survival of stocked brown trout. Wild brown trout populations have not developed in MO, possibly because of water temperatures that are too warm during the spawning/egg incubation period (should be below 50° F) as the result of spring flows. Contact Mike if you have any ideas about this. A new trout fishing guide has been produced incorporating a fold-out map arrangement. This will be less expensive to produce and easier to update.

Lee Keefer (GA): Delayed-harvest regulations have been worked out with SC on a portion of the Chattooga River. Other delayed-harvest sites are also being considered. The distribution of stocked trout has been found to correspond poorly with the distribution of trout anglers. Stocked streams on private lands get too many fish for the number of anglers, thus re-allocation is being considered. A trout angler survey based on trout stamp purchasers is proceeding, as is an evaluation of impacts of stocked trout on T&E species. Water quality problems are being addressed at a hatchery and the facility at Summerville has been completed. Negotiations are underway with the Corps regarding minimum flows on the Chattahoochee and Savannah rivers.

Monte Seehorn (USFS): The biggest management obstacle on National Forests may be the USFS's sensitive species lists. These voluntarily-produced lists are used by organizations such as the Sierra Club in various litigations, such as those to block timber sales. Timber sales are the current funding source for habitat restoration/improvement work.

Mickey Clemmons (NC): Trout map booklets are now complete (contact Jim Borawa). Information regarding processing and reading wild trout otoliths is being sought (NC is now working with brook trout). Please contact Mickey if you can help. A evaluation of bait fishing in wild trout waters revealed no drastic effects. Pressure did not really change much except for the initial month and bait anglers represented ~50%; monitoring will continue. As the result of a low-intensity feeding project using TU volunteers, abundance of wild rainbow trout >10" was increased from 0 to 110/km in 6 months and 315/km in 18 months with some >17" (cost was \$3.40/fish >10"). The delayed-harvest program has been expanded to 10 streams and the season has been expanded to 8 months (October -May). Pressure has increased substantially on these streams and the management goal is a 4 fish/hr catch rate. Brook trout genetics work will be completed in 1998. Over 150 populations have been typed (at Auburn, UT, and Western Carolina) and many are southern Appalachian. Brook trout range in the mountain districts is being mapped and placed on a GIS layer. A stream mitigation/restoration agreement with NC DOT is in place regarding I-26 construction.