Inland Fisheries Division Program Notes & Updates (Winter)





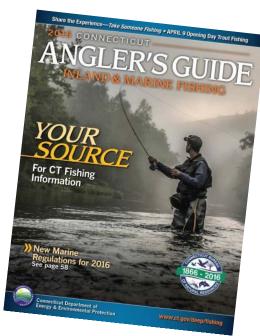
Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
Bureau of Natural Resources
Inland Fisheries Division
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CARE & Constituent Services

SPECIAL REPORT – TROPHY FISH AWARD CEREMONY, ANGLER'S GUIDE PHOTO CONTEST, YOUTH FISHING PASSPORT "FISHING CHALLENGE".

On Saturday, February 13, 2016, the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) hosted the "Eight Annual Trophy Fish Award Ceremony" at the Northeast Fishing and Hunting Show in the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford. A total of 71 inland and marine anglers, including youth, were recognized for their achievement of having caught or landed the largest fish in each species category or for earning awards for the greatest number of different fish species during the year. Forty-eight Inland awards were presented, forty-five awards of which were for the various categories which include male/female, adult/youth and harvest/catch & release. Two adult anglers and one youth were awarded Angler of the Year status, , and one new state record, a 15.25 lb, 34.6 inch Walleye caught by Vincent Deledda at Beach Pond, was recognized in Inland waters.

This year's ceremony included several presentations associated with two of fisheries' newer programs (Angler's Guide Photo contest, Youth Fishing Passport). The grand prize winner of the 2016 Angler's Guide Photo



The cover of the 2016 Connecticut Angler's Guide features a photo submitted by Taylor Kemp of East Hartland, of fly angler Roland Salvatore of East Hartland casting a line to rising trout in the Farmington River.

Contest is Taylor Kemp of East Hartland, who submitted a photo of angler Roland Salvatore of East Hartland casting a line to rising trout in the Farmington River. The other finalists in the 2016 contest were Alivia Brophy (Watertown), Gabby & Mikey Ferraiolo (Clinton), Patrick Finucane (Ledyard), Lucas &Blake Kamoen (Killingworth) and Jim Stearns Jr., (Waterford). Taylor's photo will be on the cover for the 2016 CT Angler's Guide, and the images from the other finalists in the contest will be published inside the Guide.

Five Youth Fishing Passport "Fishing Challenge" Top Angler awards were also presented at the 8th Annual Trophy Fish Awards Program. Participants in this activity try to catch at least one of each of twenty common Connecticut game fish. The 2015 winners are The 2015 winners are Nicholas Bourdoulous (Glastonbury) Xavier Egurbide (Weston) Lucas Johnson (Southport), Evan Kamoen

Cover photo: The Burlington State Fish Hatchery in its early years. Efforts to restore or enhance CT's trout fisheries began in 1871 when the Fish Commission began purchasing brook trout for distribution to applicants wishing to stock them. In 1899, the first public trout hatchery was built in Windsor Locks. Currently there are three state Fish Hatcheries that produce trout, Burlington (1923), Kensington (1930) and Quinebaug Valley (1972). DEEP's Bureau of Natural Resources marks its 150th anniversary in 2016.

(Killingworth) and Lauren Kusinski (Monroe). Each will receive a gift pack of fishing gear, and a gift certificate for a free trip and tackle rental on The Black Hawk II (compliments of Black Hawk fishing charters).



Alison Varian (center) proudly displaying her award for a 5.25 lb, 23.5"Black Sea Bass in the Marine "Harvest" category, with State Representative Melissa H. Ziobron (34th district) (left) and Commissioner Rob Klee (right).



Jacob Rajewski Jr. (left-center) and Nicholas Rajewski (right-center) proudly displaying their awards for Common Carp (each caught their own 36" fish) in the Inland Youth "Catch & Release" category, with State Representative Doug Dubitsky (47th district) (left) and Commissioner Rob Klee (right).

NEW OUTREACH AND EDUCATION TRAILER. Completed the interior renovations to the Inland Fisheries Outreach and Education trailer (see page 4 of the Fall 2015 Quarterly report to see the completed exterior graphics wrap). Some of the interior plywood walls were replaced. Other interior improvements include installation of a LED track lighting system, heavy duty aquarium platform, water cooling circulation and aeration system, and electrical improvements which can be run by AC supply or onboard generator. Once

structural components were completed the trailer was filled with fish taxidermy, a fish tank with live trout, fish info fact sheets, flyers, and posters with different fisheries opportunities and information. The trailer was showcased at the No Child Left Inside® Winter Festival and again at the Hartford Hunting and Fishing show.

Some of the interior displays in the new Outreach & Education trailer used at the 2016 Winter Festival at Burr Pond State Park.



WINTER FESTIVAL The 8th annual *No Child Left Inside®* Winter Festival, a partnership with DEEP's State Parks Division, was held at Burr Pond State Park this past February. For the first time in this event's history, ice conditions were not safe enough to allow ice fishing. The CARE program still attended to interact with public and unveil the new Inland Fisheries Outreach and Education trailer. Our Northwest

CARE Instructor team set up the fish fillet and cooking station and used fish that was caught and frozen by Instructors over the previous few weeks. Instructors demonstrated proper filleting techniques and then fried fish for festival participants to sample.

Families gathered around and inside the IFD Outreach & Education trailer during the No Child Left Inside® Winter Festival where they learned all about Connecticut's fish and fishing opportunities.



ICE FISHING CLASSES...Hosted 13 Family Ice Fishing classes for 223 students in the towns of Ansonia, Bridgeport, Cheshire, Farmington, Glastonbury, Hampton, Hartford, Killingworth, Litchfield, Middlefield,

New Haven and Oxford. Certified CARE instructors taught students about winter pond ecology, ice safety, ice fishing equipment, proper bait and how to rig it, and fish identification & ecology.

Certified CARE Instructors Bob Mangione and John Barr teach students about the different ways of drilling holes in the ice during a Family Ice Fishing Course this past January.



SPRING CLASSES. Scheduled 18 Family Fishing Courses for spring 2016 in Ansonia (2), Ashford, Barkhamsted, Berlin, Bristol, Colchester, East Hartford, Farmington (3), Glastonbury, Killingworth, Litchfield, Newington, Stamford, Wallingford and West Haven. New this spring, the CARE program will be offering two pilot courses; "Mom and Me" and "Women Only!"

CARE CENTER PROGRAMS. Staff has coordinated with Hamden Public Schools to scheduled 18 field trips for Hamden Public School 6th grade students to the CARE Center on Forster Pond for this spring. Hamden 6th grade teachers will incorporate modules from the CARE curriculum into science lessons

prior to the class field trip to the CARE Center on Forster Pond. Every 6th grade student in Hamden will visit the CARE Center for a day of aquatic education and angling.

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING. Recruited, trained, and certified six new instructors at the CARE Center in Killingworth on February 28th. This group of newly certified CARE Instructors is a passionate group of anglers who expressed their commitment to educating the next generation of anglers. The next opportunity for CARE certification training will be June 18th, 2016. Instructor volunteer hours are documented and used as state match for federal funding, which allows CARE to function with little to no state funding. Knowledgeable and passionate candidates interested in joining the program should contact Tom Bourret or Justin Wiggins at 860-663-1656 or thomas.bourret@ct.gov.



The 6 newest certified CARE Instructors: LEFT TO RIGHT. Neal Spencer, Jason Coleman, Mike McKenna, Frank Segaline, Gary Lundin, Sean Kind, Tom Bourret (CARE coordinator)

NORTHEAST FISHING & HUNTING SHOW Developed and staffed an Inland Fisheries display as part of a DEEP exhibit at the Northeast Fishing and hunting show at the Connecticut Convention Center. Other units participating in the DEEP exhibit included Marine Fisheries, Environmental Conservation Police, Forestry and Wildlife and Boating Divisions. Over 8,000 people attended the 2016 show.

Inland Fish Management & Fish Culture

COLDWATER FISHERIES

2016 SPRING TROUT STOCKING. Currently, all areas typically stocked in the spring are scheduled to receive fish by Opening Day. IFD is in its third year of implementing a statewide pre-season stocking schedule, as opposed to separate east and west scheduling. This new scheduling approach is aimed at giving the state hatcheries greater flexibility in choosing which waterbodies to stock on any particular day. The schedule is arranged into weekly and bi-weekly blocks and allows the hatcheries to choose stocking locations, within that block, that get done on any given day. This allows for greater efficiency of hatchery staff and vehicular resources.

On January 7th and 8th, 2016 540 broodstock Seeforellen strain Brown Trout were stocked into Highland (Winchester) and Crystal (Ellington) lakes. These fish were an average weight of 3.5 pounds each.

An ongoing drought that began last fall has caused all three of the state fish hatcheries to experience low water flow/volume issues. These issues have been most pronounced at Kensington and Quinebaug Hatcheries. As a result, a number of lakes and ponds were stocked during January and February to maintain water quality/volume and fish biomass at acceptable levels at the hatcheries. Approximately 39,100 trout were stocked out during this period into 21 lakes.

Approximately **573,200** catchable size trout were produced for preseason and in-season stocking. In addition, 20,000 yearling (7-9") and 3,200 juvenile (4-6") trout have been produced for special programs such as TMA enhancement or sea-run trout fisheries, respectively. Also, 250,000 ("Seeforellen" Brown Trout) fry and 145,000 Kokanee fry are currently in production for stocking into special designated waters. Approximately 372,200 trout are scheduled to be released prior to the new Opening Day (2nd Saturday in April, which is the 9th this year). The following have been produced for stocking this spring:

| Catchable size trout/salmon | | Juvenile/yearling/fry trout & Kokanee | |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---|---------|
| Rainbow Trout (10-12") | 145,000 | | |
| Rainbow Trout (≥12") | 39,000 | | |
| Brook Trout (10-12") | 103,000 | | |
| Brown Trout (10-12") | 261,000 | | |
| Brown Trout (≥12") | 15,000 | | |
| "Seeforellen" Brown Trout (14-16") | 3,500 | "Survivor" Brown Trout yearlings (7-9") | 20,000 |
| Large "Survivor" Brown Trout (14-16") | 1,500 | "Sea-run" Brown Trout yearlings (4-6") | 3,200 |
| Tiger Trout (10-12") | 4,000 | "Seeforellen" Brown Trout fry | 250,000 |
| Surplus Broodstock (1-3 lb fish) | 1,200 | Kokanee fry | 145,000 |
| Totals | 573,200 | | 418,200 |
| | | | |

RAINBOW SMELT. Beginning two years ago, preliminary work was initiated to explore the potential for restoring an historic smelt population into West Hill Pond (New Hartford-Barkhamsted). This once popular recreational fishery, and important forage base for trout, was lost some time back in the early

1990's. In the next several weeks, spawning mats will again be placed into tributaries of an undisclosed private waterbody to collect fertilized Rainbow Smelt eggs during the spring spawn. Fertilized eggs will then be transferred to a tributary of West Hill Pond. This tributary stream will be monitored by visual observation and an underwater camera during April 2016 to document smelt spawning activity, which will useful in our evaluation of the success of this program.

MOHAWK POND ICE ANGLER SURVEY. An angler creel was conducted at Mohawk Pond starting in mid-January when safe ice developed and continued until the pond was closed to fishing at the end of February. This survey assessed angler catch, effort and attitudes/opinions. In particular, the survey at Mohawk Pond gauged angler opinions of designating Mohawk Pond a "Brook Trout Management Lake", which would entail stocking only brook trout at this location. As of mid-February, a total of 50 anglers were counted and interviewed. Over 85% of the interviewed anglers were "in favor" of the proposed "Brook Trout Management" designation.

STREAM SAMPLING and MONITORING

- Statewide stream sampling. Winter activities centered on data proofing, database updating and preparing materials for final reports. A comparison of the fish distributions data from the original stream survey (1988-1994) with our more recent sampling is being developed. Recent sample data reveals evidence that in some Western CT catchments Brook Trout populations have disappeared. The analysis will further quantify these changes and look for similar changes for other species.
- Water Temperatures. Temperature data recorders were uploaded to the Echosheds website for long term storage, public access and to update Brook Trout occupancy models for southeast Connecticut.
- Easter Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV). Division personnel attended an Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (one of 18 official National Fish Habitat Partnerships) Science and Conservation workshop during late February. The committee looked at how Brook Trout population catchments are prioritized, and reviewed the Venture's conservation strategies.

STREAM ANGLER SURVEYS. Calculations were completed for angler effort and catch from stream angler surveys done in 2015. An initial draft of the project's final report is being prepared that reviews all surveys done in the last 5 years. A review of long-term opening day angler counts indicate little change in angler's usage in the last 25 years in small to moderate streams, but some of the larger streams showed declines.

WARMWATER FISHERIES

ICE ANGLER SURVEYS. Ice-fishing angler surveys were scheduled at three lakes: Batterson Park Pond (Farmington), Mohawk Pond (Cornwall) and Mount Tom Pond (Litchfield). Due to the unusually warm winter, there were only brief periods of safe ice at Batterson Park Pond precluding any ice fishing activity or survey work at that site. Mohawk Pond and Mt. Tom Pond had safe ice from January 14 through February 23rd. The survey at Mohawk Pond gauged angler opinions of designating Mohawk Pond a "Brook Trout Management Lake", which entails stocking only brook trout adult size and larger. Eighty three percent of anglers interviewed were in favor of this change. At Mount Tom Pond several broodstock Atlantic salmon ranging in size from 14 – 24 inches were caught.



Mount Tom Pond (Litchfield) during the ice-fishing season of 2016

NORTHERN PIKE. Four pike spawning marshes have been prepped for the 2016 Northern Pike propagation season. Broodstock collection will begin earlier than normal this year due to the early spring.

This is the final year of two Northern Pike stocking/rearing experiments that began in 2013. Beginning on March 1 trap nets will be set in Mansfield Hollow Reservoir to determine the remaining proportion of pike purchased from Zetts Fish Farm (PA) and stocked as yearlings (10-16 inches) among the population the rest of which were stocked as 4-inch fingerlings. This is the fourth year that the State of New Jersey has supplied pike fry to be raised to fingerling size in one of the Wyantenock Marshes. The number of fingerlings produced from each fry stocking will be compared to the Inland Fisheries Division's standard method of production which is to stock a marsh with adult pike and allow them to spawn naturally.

IFD in cooperation with Burlington State Fish Hatchery staff will determine the cost-effectiveness of using a Burlington State Fish Hatchery rearing pond on the Punch Brook property to raise Northern Pike fry to fingerling size. Planning for this undertaking has been completed and pike fry supplied by the State of New Jersey will be stocked into the hatchery pond during March.

CATFISH. Preparations for ordering Channel Catfish to be stocked in May 2016 are being made. This includes a review of past stocking densities and incorporating any changes that may be needed in the coming year. Channel Catfish age-and-growth analysis is ongoing with help from Dr. Eric Shultz's Lab in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UConn.

BASS. IFD is developing a plan involving further experimental transplantations of Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass from unfished water supply reservoirs to public lakes. These experiments are based on the findings of the Bass Supplemental Stocking Study conducted during the last AFA funding segment. This cooperative study conducted by IFD staff and UConn researchers discovered that Largemouth Bass from unfished reservoirs had significantly higher resting metabolisms than bass in public lakes, a difference that is genetic in origin. The higher average metabolic rates of bass in unfished reservoirs suggests that angling has selectively eliminated high metabolism bass that are inherently more vulnerable to angling from public lakes. Initial experiments with transplanting reservoir bass to public lakes revealed that they were highly vulnerable to angling and substantially increased angler catch rates in the months immediately following transplantation; they also successfully spawned, making a significant genetic contribution to that year's age-0 cohort.

Based on these findings, IFD is interested in further exploring the utility of using unfished reservoir bass populations for improving bass populations in public lakes. Transplanting reservoir bass to public lakes is relatively inexpensive, and will at least improve angling quality during the year of transplantation, but may also provide long-term genetic benefits to public lake bass populations. As an initial step toward assessing this management approach, IFD plans to inventory bass populations in some of the larger unfished water supply reservoirs in the state to determine how many reservoirs support large enough bass populations to possibly serve as "donors".

OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION. Justin Davis participated, along with over 90 attendees representing over 30 states, in the 2016 B.A.S.S. Conservation Summit held on March 5-6 in conjunction with the 2016 Bassmaster Classic in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Attendees of the conference included state fish and game agency fishery administrators and managers, Conservation Directors from B.A.S.S. Nation states, and NGO, University and industry partners. The summit focused on ways to help refine and strengthen the B.A.S.S. Conservation Agenda by building better partnerships with agencies and industries, all aimed at improving recreational fishing and enhancing conservation of warmwater fisheries resources. Presentations focused on topics including recruitment and retention of the next

generation of anglers, cooperative habitat enhancement projects conducted by B.A.S.S. Nation members and state agencies, and scientific advances in bass management. Dean Rustic, CT B.A.S.S. Nation Conservation Director, gave a well-received presentation on cooperative IFD-CT B.A.S.S. Nation efforts to enhance fish habitat in the State's Community Fishing Waters.

Gene Gilliland, B.AS.S. Conservation Director (left) and Inland Fisheries Division biologist Justin Davis (right), at the 2016 B.A.S.S. Conservation Summit in Tulsa, OK.



Diadromous Fisheries Restoration

FISH PASSAGE

 Worked with The Nature Conservancy and its contractor on the removal of the Ed Bills Pond Dam on the East Branch Eightmile River in Lyme. This project opened up miles of river habitat for migratory

fish. Activities included consultation of channel design, rock riffle design, placement of boulders, and bank stabilization. Work was completed before the onset of cold weather but seeding and planting will occur in the spring.

The East Branch Eightmile River flows freely where the pond behind the dam used to be. Rocks and log revetments help stabilize the banks and jute fabric holds a sand/gravel bar until vegetation takes hold.



Worked with Save the Sound and its contractor on the removal of the Pond Lily Dam on the West
 River in New Haven. This project opens a mile of river habitat and an upstream pond for migratory

fish. Activities included consultation of channel design, rock riffle design, and placement of boulders. Work was completed before the onset of cold weather but seeding and planting will occur in the spring.

The West River flows freely where the pond behind the Pond Lily Dam used to be. Rocks and log revetments help stabilize the banks and jute fabric holds a sand/gravel bar until vegetation takes hold.



 Worked with NGO partners in preparation of fish passage projects slated for the summer of 2016, including fishways in Clinton and Darien and dam removals in Colchester, Norwalk, Southington, and Meriden. Assistance was provided with finalizing design, permit applications, bidding the projects to contractors, and general planning.

SEA-RUN TROUT

The third year of sea-run brown trout (lijoki strain) eyed egg importation last month went as smoothly as last year. All of the flights from Oulu, Finland through Frankfurt Germany to Boston's Logan Airport remained on-schedule and the 40,000 eggs were in incubation trays at the Burlington State Fish Hatchery (BSFH) after 62 hours in transit. The eggs looked great as they were loaded into incubation trays (Heath Trays) at the BSFH. Since then, the eggs have hatched and the sac fry have been transferred into small aluminum raceways (troughs). To this point, mortality has been negligible.





Left. The 2016 shipment of sea-run Brown Trout eggs during routine disinfection at BSFH. Right. A few of the 40,000 lijoki strain sac fry in rearing troughs at BSTH.

In February, the first of four gill Na+, Ka+-ATP-ase samples were taken by Dr. Steve McCormick (UMASS) and Dr. John Kelly (University of New Haven) from the 2016 smolts (from eggs imported in 2014). These monthly samples will evaluate the saltwater 'readiness' of the lijoki strain reared in

Connecticut. Saltwater 'readiness' peaks sometime in the spring and coincides with downstream emigration. If trout are stocked after their readiness peaks, many fish will remain in freshwater until the following spring. It is critical to release the smolts prior to the peak and these tests will allow us to do that.

During February, a number of this year's smolts had already developed the bright silver coloration indicative of a salmonid that wants to head for saltwater.



• In February, Diadromous staff evaluated fin condition and smolt index for 200 of the 3,200 smolts being reared at BSTH. Results from this 'quality control' check reveal that very few individual fish have fin condition that would hinder survival in saltwater. Furthermore, the majority of smolts were

well on their way to developing the bright silver coloration (see photo above). It is expected that most of the fish will be bright silver by the time they are released in early March.

ATLANTIC SALMON

- Staff transferred 65,000 'eyed' Atlantic salmon eggs from the Burlington State Fish Hatchery to streamside incubators operated by the Tributary Mill Conservancy in Old Lyme. This is a privately-run volunteer hatchery at an old mill that uses brook water to incubate salmon eggs. When these eggs hatch, the fry will be stocked into the Salmon and Farmington River watersheds.
- Salmon-in-Schools In December, IFD staff at the Burlington State Fish Hatchery helped with the distribution of approximately 20,000 salmon eggs to 62 schools. Diadromous program staff delivered eggs to Chester Elementary, Essex Elementary, Great Neck Elementary, and Waterford High School.

Salmon eggs loaded in jugs at the Burlington State Fish Hatchery waiting to be delivered to schools across the state (photo by Melissa Gallo).



RIVER HERRING

 Participated in a follow up meeting to a previously held ASMFC River Herring Data Standardization Meeting. During the meeting the group discussed changes to the final document that will be produced. This document will help guide managers with future decisions about river herring data collection and management.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

- Public presentations were made on the natural resources of the Connecticut River, recent dam removal projects,
- Collaborated with the Connecticut River Watershed Council to host two river herring informational
 meetings. These meeting provided public outreach on the current stock status of river herring in
 Connecticut and efforts to restore or enhance river herring runs in the state. It also served as an
 opportunity to solicit volunteers to participate in a citizen science based river herring observational
 data collection group.

Habitat Conservation and Enhancement

TERRY BROOK, FISH PASSAGE

HCE staff in concert with Department of Transportation (DOT) engineers continue to review a proposed culvert slipline project conveying Terry Brook under Route 190 in Enfield. The perched culvert at this location blocks upstream fish passage for a fairly robust native brook trout population that resides

below the culvert. The provision of fish passage at this location will restore connectivity to over 0.6 miles of stream habitats for native brook trout and other resident fish. The proposed project provide upstream fish passage by installing a concrete fishway at the outlet and a series of weirs within the culvert. Flood management exemptions have to be pursued since fish passage infrastructure may increase the risk of downstream flooding.

Perched Terry Brook culvert that blocks upstream fish passage proposed for rehabilitation.



TRIBUTARY TO SAWMILL BROOK, EEL PASSAGE

Staff are working with DOT engineers to provide eel passage at a concrete outfall that conveys a Tributary to Sawmill Brook under I-91 in Middletown. Design involves the installation of 2

prefabricated broad v-design concrete panels embedded with natural stone of various sizes. One panel is designed for smaller eels; the other for larger eels. Substrates will be wetted and function to provide passage at variable stream discharges. This eel pass will increase aquatic connectivity to over 0.7 miles of stream.

Concrete outfall conveying a tributary to Sawmill Brook that will be retrofitted with embedded stone eel pass.



HILLIARD POND DAM REMOVAL AND STREAM RESTORATION

Staff consulted with Town of Manchester engineers and contractor to select appropriate rock and substrate materials for this project, which involves removal of the remnants of the Hilliard Pond Dam (large concrete slabs), stabilization of eroding stream banks and restoration of over 500 linear feet of stream channel .The project includes several features to enhance/restore

instream fish habitats. The area below the dam currently supports a wild brown trout population as well as a diversity of stream fishes. The proposed project will permanently remove this fish passage barrier and restore stream connectivity to over 1.2 miles of upstream habitats up to the base of the Center Springs Pond Dam. The dam is proposed to be removed in June 2016.

Hilliard Pond Dam remnants scheduled for removal in June 2016



EIGHT MILE BROOK, FISH PASSAGE

Assisted a Connecticut Department of Transportation contractor with the installation of two vortex rock weirs within the channel of an unnamed tributary to the Eight Mile Brook immediately downstream of the Route 118 crossing, Southbury. The weirs are intended to backwater a newly installed corrugated metal culvert with water depths sufficient for the upstream passage of cold water fish species (including trout) along with other obligate stream dwelling aquatic species.

Additional habitat enhancement measures included downstream of the culvert were bank-placed boulders and the restoration of instream habitat similar to that found down- and upstream of the culvert. Final site work includes streambank stabilization that will incorporate the planting of native grasses and shrubs.



Left. One of two vortex rock weirs installed immediately downstream of the Route 118 culvert, Southbury.



Right. Restored stream channel immediately downstream of the Route 118 culvert.

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