

# 2015

## Inland Fisheries Division Program Notes & Updates (Winter)



Connecticut Department of Energy &  
Environmental Protection  
Bureau of Natural Resources  
Inland Fisheries Division  
79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106

860-424-3474

[www.ct.gov/deep/fishing](http://www.ct.gov/deep/fishing)

[www.facebook.com/ctfishandwildlife](https://www.facebook.com/ctfishandwildlife)

## CARE & Constituent Services

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

On Saturday, February 14, 2015, the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) hosted the "Seventh Annual Trophy Fish Award Ceremony" at the **Northeast Fishing and Hunting Show** in the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford. A total of 65 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. Thirty-three Inland awards were presented, twenty-nine awards of which were for the various categories which include male/female, adult/youth and harvest/catch & release. Three anglers were awarded Angler of the Year status, one angler received Fish of Merit status, and one new state record, a 19 lb. Brown Trout caught by James M. Lucas II at West Hill Pond, was recognized in Inland waters.

This year's ceremony included several presentations associated with two new programs (Angler's Guide Photo contest, Youth Fishing Passport). The grand prize winner of the 2015 Angler's Guide Photo Contest is a photo of Immanuel "Manny" Smyrnow, age 10, of Ashford holding an Atlantic Salmon that he caught and released on October 30, 2014 from the Shetucket River. The broodstock salmon weighed 6 pounds and was approximately 26" in length. Manny's photo will be on the cover for the 2015 CT Angler's Guide, and the images from other finalists in the contest will be published inside the Guide.

Four Youth Fishing Passport "Fishing Challenge" Top Angler awards were also presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Trophy Fish Awards Program. Participants in this activity try to catch at least one of each of twenty common Connecticut game fish. The 2014 winners are Lauren Kusinski, Max Carney, Eric Hagglund and Nicholas Bourdolous. Each received a gift pack of fishing gear (complements of Pure Fishing and Connecticut Outfitters), and a gift certificate for a free trip and tackle rental on The Black Hawk II (complements of Black Hawk fishing charters).



*The cover of the 2015 Connecticut Angler's Guide features a photo of "Manny" Smyrnow with a broodstock Atlantic salmon he caught and released in the Shetucket River.*



*Lauren Kusinski, one of the 2015 Youth Fishing Passport Fishing Challenge winners holding her award. To her right is Andrea Repko, 2014 Angler's Guide Cover Photo Contest winner.*

**Cover photo:** A happy angler at DEEP's annual No Child Left Inside® **Winter Festival** at Burr Pond State Park being helped with his catch by IFD fisheries biologist Tom Bourret. Introducing the next generation to the many benefits of fishing is a task that Tom has been doing for over 25 years. Since joining the Connecticut Aquatic Resources Education Program (CARE) in the late 1980's Tom has helped over 150,000 students (that is a lot of tangled lines) learn the basics of fishing and experience the joy of catching their first fish. Thank you Tom for your endless supply of patience and enthusiastic approach as you create our future anglers. For more information on the Winter Festival, see page 3.

**WINTER FESTIVAL.** The 7<sup>th</sup> annual *No Child Left Inside*® **Winter Festival**, a partnership with DEEP's State Parks Division, has again set a new CARE record as over 800 participants ventured out onto Burr Pond in Torrington to learn how to ice fish on February 7<sup>th</sup>! This winter's event was especially challenging as several feet of snow had to be cleared for parking and activities. But the ice was thick and the light snow falling created a picturesque winter scene. CARE provided bait, tackle, jigging rods and tip-ups for participants to borrow. Once on the ice, Certified CARE Instructors gave lessons on drilling holes, jigging and setting up tip-ups. The "bite was on" as plenty of fish were caught by first time ice anglers. Some were released but most found their way to the fish fillet and cooking station set up by CARE Instructors. Instructors demonstrated proper filleting techniques and then fried the fish for festival participants to sample.

*Two happy anglers at the Winter Festival with a trophy chain pickerel.*



**ICE FISHING CLASSES.** Hosted 10 Family Ice Fishing classes for over 250 students in the towns of Ansonia, Chester, Farmington (2), Glastonbury, Litchfield, Milford, New Haven, Oxford and Ridgefield. Certified CARE Instructors taught students about winter pond ecology, safety on the ice, ice fishing equipment, proper bait and how to rig it, and fish identification and ecology. Most ice fishing classes were sponsored by municipal park & recreation departments.

*28 Year CARE Instructor Frank Kucharski gives a lesson on freshwater fish identification and ecology at a Chester Family Ice Fishing Class.*



**SPRING CLASSES.** Scheduled 24 Family Fishing Courses for spring 2015 in Ansonia (2), Avon, Bristol, Bridgeport, Chester, Colchester, Farmington(2), Glastonbury, Hampton, Killingworth, Litchfield, Meriden, Milford, New Britain, New Haven, Newington, Norwich, Oxford, Stamford, Trumbull, West Haven and Windsor. Several recent partnerships have formed connecting town recreation departments and CARE resulting in new location offerings for Family Fishing Courses this spring. Dozens more classes are anticipated to be scheduled for the upcoming season.



**INSTRUCTOR TRAINING.** Recruited, trained, and certified 14 new CARE Instructors at Winding Trails Recreation Area in Farmington on February 28<sup>th</sup>. This group of newly certified CARE Instructors are very knowledgeable, social, and skilled anglers. The next opportunity for CARE certification training will be June 20<sup>th</sup>. Instructor volunteer hours are documented and used as State match for federal funding, which allows CARE to function with 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](mailto:thomas.bourret@ct.gov).

*The 14 newest certified CARE Instructors:*  
**BACK ROW; LEFT TO RIGHT:** Colby McMahon, Brian Kirby, Jim Woodworth, Andy Sninsky, Kevin Gallagher, James Parkins, John Lajosz, and Dick Mangione. **MIDDLE ROW; LEFT TO RIGHT:** Eli Cartagena, Nick Mohnkern, and Tom Bourret (CARE coordinator). **FRONT ROW; LEFT TO RIGHT:** Mike Jasensky, Luis Organista, Evan Thompson, Dave Davisson.



**CARE CENTER PROGRAMS.** Staff has once again expanded the Forster Pond Course program where 6<sup>th</sup> grade school teachers incorporate modules from the CARE curriculum into science lessons prior to a class field trip to the CARE Center on Forster Pond. For the fifth year every 6<sup>th</sup> grade student in the Hamden public school system will visit the CARE Center for a day of aquatic education and angling. A total of 15 class field trips have already been scheduled.

**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, Wildlife and Boating Divisions and the DEEP Bookstore. Over 9,000 people attended the 2015 show.

*The "Bite" was on at the Winter Festival at Burr Pond, Here's a happy angler with a Bluegill to go along with his Chain Pickerel (see cover photo).*



# Inland Fish Management & Fish Culture

## WARMWATER FISHERIES

*Similar to last year, the activities that we are able to accomplish in 2015 are dependent on the number of seasonal employee positions allotted to Fish Management programs. Over the past three years this number has been reduced substantially due to fiscal considerations. A smaller than normal anticipated seasonal workforce in 2015 will also limit what can be accomplished this year.*

**ICE ANGLER SURVEYS.** Four lakes were sampled this winter: Mansfield Hollow Reservoir (Mansfield), Pachaug Pond (Griswold), Winchester Lake (Winchester) and West Hill Pond (New Hartford). Safe ice was recorded at these lakes in early January, and may very well continue well into March given the winter we're having. These surveys assess angler catch, effort and attitudes/opinions, providing vital information to help DEEP fisheries biologists make informed management decisions.

**NORTHERN PIKE.** Angler surveys are being conducted this winter at three Northern Pike management lakes (Mansfield Hollow Reservoir, Pachaug Pond and Winchester Lake). Preliminary results from these surveys indicate the majority of angling effort (97% at Mansfield and Pachaug and 64% at Winchester) during the winter ice-fishing season is from anglers seeking Northern Pike. A number of pike have been caught and released this winter at all three lakes, the largest being 41 inches from Winchester Lake.

The five pike spawning marshes are being prepped for the 2015 season and broodstock collection will begin at the weir traps on Bantam Lake and Haddam Meadows marshes on the Connecticut River as soon as the ice melts.

Two experiments that began in 2013, fry stocking at one Wyantenock State Forest marsh and yearling stocking at Mansfield Hollow, will continue in 2015. Approximately 100,000 pike fry will be obtained free of cost from the State of New Jersey during April and raised to fingerling size in one of the Wyantenock marshes. Production at this marsh will be compared to that resulting from our normal procedure of allowing adult broodstock pike to naturally spawn in the marsh. Additionally, the IFD will assess the experimental stocking of northern pike yearlings (10-16 inches at time of stocking) from Zetts Fish Farm (PA) into Mansfield Hollow using trap nets during the springs of 2015 and 2016.



*Ryan Laurentus with a 40-inch Northern Pike from Lake Lillinonah.*

**CATFISH.** Preparations for ordering Channel Catfish to be stocked in May 2015 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.

**LOWER BOLTON ANGLER SURVEY.** Analysis of open water angler surveys conducted between Opening Day and October 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 reveal that Lower Bolton Lake has the most successful and significant channel

catfish fishery to-date among Connecticut's Catfish Management Lakes. A full 19% of total angler effort at the lake in 2014 was directed toward catfish. Moreover, total angler effort (total number of hours spent fishing by all anglers) increased by 46% between 2005 and 2014 (catfish stocking began in 2007). Most of the anglers interviewed were in favor of the catfish stocking program at the pond (70% in favor, 3% opposed, 27% no opinion).

The continued success of the Lower Bolton fishery hangs in the balance pending further discussions with Town of Bolton officials on whether and when stocking will resume there. Due to problems with lake water quality, the town had requested that DEEP not stock the lake with catfish during the last two years (2013-14). The town's request was based on the opinion of a few local residents that catfish were part of the "nutrient loading" problem contributing to poor water quality in the pond. A thorough literature search by IFD staff revealed that it is very unlikely that catfish could be contributing to the problem, and in fact may be helpful to water quality (report available upon request). It is unclear at this time whether the town will request that the moratorium on stocking continue. The fishery will almost certainly be diminished if stocking is not resumed this year because it takes 1-2 years for the stocked 10-inch yearling catfish to recruit to the fishery (grow large enough to be commonly caught).

Other relevant facts: 26% of the shoreline is state or town owned. 31% of anglers fishing for catfish in 2014 were from the towns of Vernon or Bolton.

**WALLEYE.** Beginning in March 2015 Batterson Park Pond, a popular Walleye Management Lake, will be open year round to fishing, for the first time allowing anglers to ice-fish this pond. This regulation change may have a significant impact on the walleye population in Batterson since most walleye harvest typically occurs through the ice. The Inland Fisheries Division will continue to monitor this fishery and make management recommendations based on the data collected.



*Chris Finch (IFD Research Assistant) with a 28-inch channel catfish sampled from Lower Bolton Lake in 2013. This fish was stocked several years earlier as a 9-12 inch yearling (photo by Eric Lundquist).*

## **COLDWATER FISHERIES**

**2015 SPRING TROUT STOCKING.** This year marks the second year of new statewide scheduling for the trout stocking program. Additionally, a new schedule design has been developed to give greater responsibility and flexibility to hatchery managers in terms of day-to-day decisions on specific loads and locations. This is a further development from last years' "LEAN" event and is intended to increase efficiency. Currently, all stocked areas are scheduled to receive fish by Opening Day, but current weather, snow pack and likely spring flooding is certain to hamper stocking efforts. This year's snow storms and record low air temperatures have hampered trout stocking. However, once again the efforts of state fish hatchery staff has risen to the task and along with help from the agency's Field Support

Services and State Parks staff (plowing and clearing state boat launches), over 54,400 Brown and Rainbow Trout (as of March 12) have been stocked into lakes (through the ice) since February 12th.

Approximately **601,400 catchable size trout have been produced for preseason and in-season stocking.**

In addition, 15,000 yearling (7-9") and 3,800 juvenile (4-6") trout have been produced for special programs such as TMA enhancement or sea-run trout fisheries, respectively. Approximately 370,000 trout are scheduled to be released prior to the new Opening Day (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in April, which is the 11<sup>th</sup>). The following have been produced for stocking this spring:

<i><b>Catchable size trout/salmon</b></i>		<i><b>Juvenile/yearling trout</b></i>	
Rainbow Trout (10-12")	108,300		
Rainbow Trout (≥12")	39,300		
Brook Trout (10-12")	111,000		
Brown Trout (10-12")	319,000		
Brown Trout (≥12")	16,000		
"Seeforellen" Brown Trout (14-16")	1,500		
Large "Survivor" Brown Trout (14-16")	1,000		
Tiger Trout (10-12")	3,800	"Survivor" Brown Trout yearlings (7-9")	15,000
Surplus Broodstock (1-3 lb fish)	1,500	"Sea-run" Brown Trout (4-6")	3,800
<b>totals</b>	<b>601,400</b>		<b>18,800</b>

**RAINBOW SMELT.** Preliminary work was initiated to explore the potential for restoring a historic smelt population into West Hill Pond in (New Hartford-Barkhamsted) in 2014. This once popular recreational fishery, and important forage base for trout, was lost some time in the early 1990's. As done last year, spawning mats will be placed into tributaries of a water supply reservoir to collect fertilized Rainbow Smelt eggs during the spring of 2015. Fertilized eggs will then be transferred to a tributary of West Hill Pond.

**HOUSATONIC THERMAL REFUGE ENHANCEMENT.** A meeting with stakeholders was held to discuss possible approaches to conducting additional enhancement work in key refuges in the Housatonic River Trout Management Area (TMA) (Cornwall). Both the Mill Brook and Furnace Brook refuges have been the focus of volunteer manual labor efforts to improve trout survival in the refuges during particularly warm summers. Angler groups are proposing more intensive activities using heavy equipment. There appears to be some potential for making larger and hopefully more durable improvements by going this route. Details remain to be worked out.



## Diadromous Fisheries Restoration

### SEA-RUN BROWN TROUT

- The second year of importing Finnish Iijoki strain sea-run brown trout eyed eggs went smoothly in January. All of the flights from Oulu, Finland through Frankfurt Germany to Boston's Logan Airport remained on-schedule and the eggs were in incubation trays at the Burlington State Trout Hatchery after 60 hours in transit. Results from last year's importation indicate that this strain of brown trout does poorly when overly-crowded so this year staff reduced the number of imported eggs from 56,000 to 37,000 to better fit into the available hatchery space. The eggs looked great as they were loaded into incubation trays (Heath Trays) at the Burlington State Trout Hatchery. 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.

Due to slower than expected growth in the hatchery, the IFD will retain 5,000 sea-run brown trout parr (from the 2014 egg importation) to produce two-year-old smolts, which will be stocked in the spring of 2016. The remaining 3,800 sea-run brown trout from the 2014 importation will be stocked as parr during the spring of 2015.



Left. Hatchery Manager Jamie Hays (left), Supervisor of Hatcheries Rick Van Nostrand (Center), and Supervising Fisheries Biologist Steve Gephart (right) open the egg shipping container at Burlington State Trout Hatchery.



Right. Eyed Iijoki strain sea-run brown trout eggs at Burlington State Trout Hatchery are placed into incubation trays following topical disinfection. There are approximately 5,000 eggs in each tray.

### RIVER HERRING

- Attended a meeting of the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission American Shad and River Herring Subcommittee meeting at the Silvio Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center in Turners Falls MA. Staff briefed the committee on current monitoring efforts in Connecticut, summarizing recent findings. The committee discussed and coordinated plans for river herring work in the watershed for 2015.
- Participated in the Northeast River Herring Working Group meeting. Current and future research was discussed with emphasis put on the need for inter-agency cooperation throughout the seven state region. Protocols for transporting river herring were discussed in an attempt to identify differences among states and determine if there is a need for standardization.



## SEA-RUN ATLANTIC SALMON

- In December, staff assisted in picking and enumerating ‘eyed’ Atlantic salmon eggs at the Kensington State Fish Hatchery.
- **Salmon-in-Schools** – In December, IFD staff at the Kensington State fish Hatchery helped with the distribution of around 20,000 eggs to over 60 schools. Diadromous program staff delivered eggs to the Waterford High and Great Neck Elementary schools.
- Transferred approximately 191,000 ‘eyed’ Atlantic salmon eggs from the Kensington State Fish Hatchery to streamside incubators operated by the Tributary Mill Conservancy in Old Lyme. This is a privately-run volunteer hatchery in an old mill that uses brook water to incubate salmon eggs. When these eggs hatch, the fry will be stocked into the Salmon River watershed.

*Jim and Sandra Tripp pick newly arrived salmon eggs at the Tributary Mill Conservancy in Old Lyme.*



## FISH PASSAGE

- The Karp Family Dam (Stony Brook, Suffield) was removed in a cooperative project involving DEEP (IFD and Engineering and Field Support Services Division), Northern Connecticut Conservation District, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge). This work was funded by a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Fish Passage Grant.
- Participated in pre-permit meetings with federal and state regulators on four fish passage projects. These meetings occur prior to the sponsor (usually a Non-Governmental Organization) formally submitting permit applications to regulatory groups. The event not only streamlines the process to ensure that applicants know what information is required for the various permits, but it also gives IFD staff the opportunity to support and assist these projects that are being undertaken to benefit fisheries resources in Connecticut. Projects included White Rock Dam Removal (Pawcatuck River, Stonington), Norton Dam Removal (Jeremy River, Colchester), Hyde Pond Dam Removal (Whitford Brook, Groton), and Chapman Pond Fishway (Menunketesuck River, Clinton).

## PUBLIC OUTREACH AND MISCELLANEOUS

- Presented two talks on diadromous fishes; one to the Housatonic Fly Fisherman’s Association and one to the East Hampton Parks and Recreation Department (Cabin Fever Series).
- Attended the winter meeting of the Southern New England Chapter of the American Fisheries Society in Kingston RI. Numerous papers on diadromous fishes were presented.
- Attended the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission’s (CRASC) Technical Forum in Westborough, MA. This biennial event offers a series of technical presentations relevant to diadromous fish management and restoration to the Connecticut River. This year’s meeting included papers on American eel, American shad, river herring and river herring by-catch in the ocean, and general fish passage issues.

## Habitat Conservation and Enhancement

### MOOSUP RIVER, GRISWOLD RUBBER DAM REMOVAL

American Rivers, in partnership with the HCE program and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, continue to work on the Moosup River Dam Removal Project. This project, to be implemented over a 10 year period, includes removal of a total of five dams. Moosup River Dam # 1 was removed in June 2014. When completed, the project will reconnect fish habitats along 6.9 miles of the mainstem Moosup River. Planning is now underway for the removal of the Griswold Rubber Dam with the recent completion of a Scope of Work by Princeton Hydro, LLC, the firm that is providing environmental engineering and design services for the project. The Griswold Rubber Dam is expected to be removed by September 2016.

*Collapsed sections of Griswold Rubber Dam proposed for removal.*



### CTDOT CULVERT PROJECTS, FISH PASSAGE AND INSTREAM HABITAT ENHANCEMENTS

HCE staff review all Connecticut Department of Transportation bridge and culvert replacement projects as well as many locally regulated projects. Staff ensure that projects are designed to allow the unrestricted movement of fish upstream and downstream and do not degrade aquatic and riparian habitats. In addition, instream habitat structures are often recommended for installation to restore/enhance instream habitat features or to mitigate unavoidable habitat losses. During this quarter, staff completed review of projects on the following watercourses: Gravelly Brook (Woodstock), Pewterpot Brook (East Hartford), Skungamaug River (Coventry), Willimantic River (Mansfield), Higganum Creek (Haddam), and Terry Brook (Enfield).

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



## CULVERT INVENTORY

Staff is participating in the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC) which is an expansion of the Stream Continuity Project that began at UMass and has expanded from the Northeast to now cover the North Atlantic region. This is a multi-disciplinary group that includes state agency staff and volunteer groups from 13 states and representatives from federal agencies. The group meets through webinars to discuss methodology to properly inventory and evaluate culverts and other stream crossing structures for fish and wildlife passage requirements, and eventually develop culvert design standards. All information and an inventory of culverts are being incorporated into a single database covering the Northeast that can be incorporated into GIS applications and easily be searched. The database can be used to prioritize road crossing structures for upgrade or replacement.

## LYMAN BROOK, MARLBOROUGH, WATER QUALITY ISSUE

Staff discovered extremely high surface water conductivity levels during routine fish sample monitoring of Lyman Brook in 2014. In December, a water quality sample was collected within a stormwater drainage that empties into Lyman Brook. This was done in conjunction with DEEP Water Bureau staff. Results of the water quality test revealed that the high conductivity was the result of high chloride or salt levels. Staff continue to work with staff from the Bureau of Water Protection & Land Reuse, Planning and Standards Division to determine the source(s) of chloride. United States Geological Survey (USGS) has since installed a conductivity meter to monitor chloride or salt levels during winter/spring stormwater runoff events.

*Stormwater culvert conveying runoff containing high chloride levels into Lyman Brook.*



## REVIEW OF COASTAL PROJECTS

Staff reviewed seven applications for activities in coastal waters, including dredging, shorefront stabilization and replacement of bridges and culverts. Measures were recommended, as needed, to avoid interference with river herring spawning migrations and winter flounder reproduction. Staff also reviewed four applications for aquaculture in Long Island Sound. Project proposals included the use of cages to grow oysters and longline systems for growing kelp. The proposals were reviewed to ensure that the gear was not deployed within popular recreational fishing locations.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Staff attended the 17th Annual Northeast Aquatic Plant Management Society (NEAPMS) Meeting in Saratoga Springs, NY. The NEAPMS is a diverse group representing private industry, state and federal agencies, and academia working directly in the aquatic plant research and management fields. This conference is especially useful as management strategies and successes (or failures), emerging issues and new information are discussed. Especially useful to IFD this year were sessions on boat inspections



and boat launch management, water chestnut, grass carp and early response decisions, and the many discussions with lake consultants and firms providing aquatic management services in Connecticut.

Staff attended the annual fall Northeast Arc User Conference (NEARC) which is an independent, volunteer organization dedicated to helping users of Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) Geographic Information Software (GIS) to be more successful. The conference fosters learning through technical training from ESRI, user presentation, and community building events. This three-day conference included a full day of hands on training from representatives of ESRI, presentations from various disciplines including public safety, municipalities, education, emerging technologies, natural resources, mobile technologies, and facilities management and how they are using GIS to translate their work. HCE staff use GIS for a number of tasks, including geo-referencing pond locations, outlet locations, watershed delineation and size, NDDDB reviews for each property, locating and mapping culverts, inputting culvert data and photographs, stream sampling data and locations and correlating the stream sampling data with the culvert data to assist in the prioritization of projects.

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**ARE YOU YEARNING FOR SUMMER?** Ice dams have you down? Still can't find the boat under all that snow? Dreading mud season? Well summer's not that far away, those lazy, comfy days just right for relaxing and fishing – **Enjoy!**



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