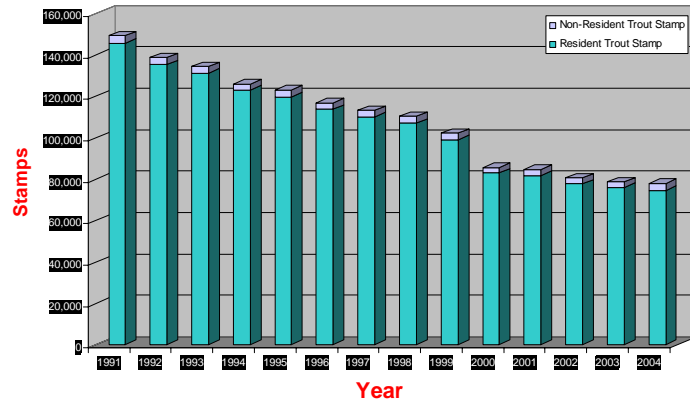


Potential Changes to the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife's Trout Stocking Program for 2005 and 2006

At the December 4th Fisheries Forum, our biologists outlined the disturbing trend that the Division has been facing in New Jersey for some time: the continued decline of fishing licenses and trout stamps for the past ten years. Unfortunately this is a national trend that has state fish and wildlife Directors in other parts of the country quite concerned as well. In 2004 we saw a slight increase in the number of fishing licenses sold but unfortunately trout stamp sales continued to decline. The failure of the current trout program to draw in new anglers or at least maintain current interest in the program is obvious. These trends and the resulting declining revenue base has forced the Division to look at all aspects of its current programs and to propose changes in an effort to increase angler participation.



The overall emphasis of the proposed changes to the trout stocking program is threefold:

- 1) provide more fish earlier in the trout stocking season, while angler interest is still high;
- 2) increase the availability of fish in areas where anglers consistently get higher returns and ;
- 3) add new waters to the program, to attract new anglers.

This information was first presented at the 2004 Fisheries Forum, held December 4, to give anglers and interested parties an early opportunity to provide input regarding potential changes. Angler input has always played a critical role in the development of our successful freshwater fisheries programs. There are five potential changes to the Division's trout program. Only one change, stocking ponds and lakes earlier in the in-season period, is proposed for 2005. The remaining potential changes are proposed for 2006. The removal of a waterbody from the trout stocking program (potential changes #2 & #3) can only be made through the regulatory process that the New Jersey Fish and Game Council undertakes to adopt the annual Fish Code. This process includes a formal sixty day public comment period and a public hearing which will be scheduled sometime in September. This information will also be presented at the Division's upcoming Trout Meeting on February 12, 2005 at 10am at the Pequest Trout hatchery. Anglers are urged to attend to provide comments on all aspects of the proposal. Comments made via e-mail can be directed to Lisa.Barno@dep.state.nj.us.

POTENTIAL CHANGE # 1 – Proposed Spring 2005

Stock 70 ponds and lakes with seasonal trout fisheries earlier during the in-season stocking period following opening day.

	In-Season							
	Pre-Season	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
EXISTING (2004)	Stocked	Not Stocked	Stocked	Stocked	Stocked	Some Stocked	Not Stocked	Not Stocked
PROPOSED (2005)	Stocked	Stocked	Stocked	Stocked	Some Stocked	Not Stocked	Not Stocked	Not Stocked
	32,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	6,000			

PRO'S

- € Provide more opportunities to fish for freshly stocked trout during the week following opening day.
- € Provides more fish earlier in the season while angler interest is still high.
- € Increase angler utilization of trout before trout succumb to effects of warm water.
- € Eliminate or reduce immediate loss of trout due to warm waters.
- € Reduce crowding/improve fish health in hatchery by shipping trout earlier.
- € Increase staff availability later in the spring for other activities.

CON'S

- € Anglers are accustomed to the traditional in-season stocking patterns and may be disappointed if they are not aware of the change.

POTENTIAL CHANGE # 2 – Proposed Spring 2006 (Fish Code Item)

Discontinue stocking trout in seven large lakes greater than 100 acres

Waterbodies	Acres	# Trout
Mountain Lake	122	1430
Cranberry Lake	179	1170
Pompton Lake	204	1420
Canistear Reservoir	350	2460
Manasquan Reservoir	770	3720
Spruce Run Reservoir	1290	5250
Lake Hopatcong	2685	10,440
TOTAL		25,890

∞ Higher return on trout stocked in ponds/small lakes vs large lakes

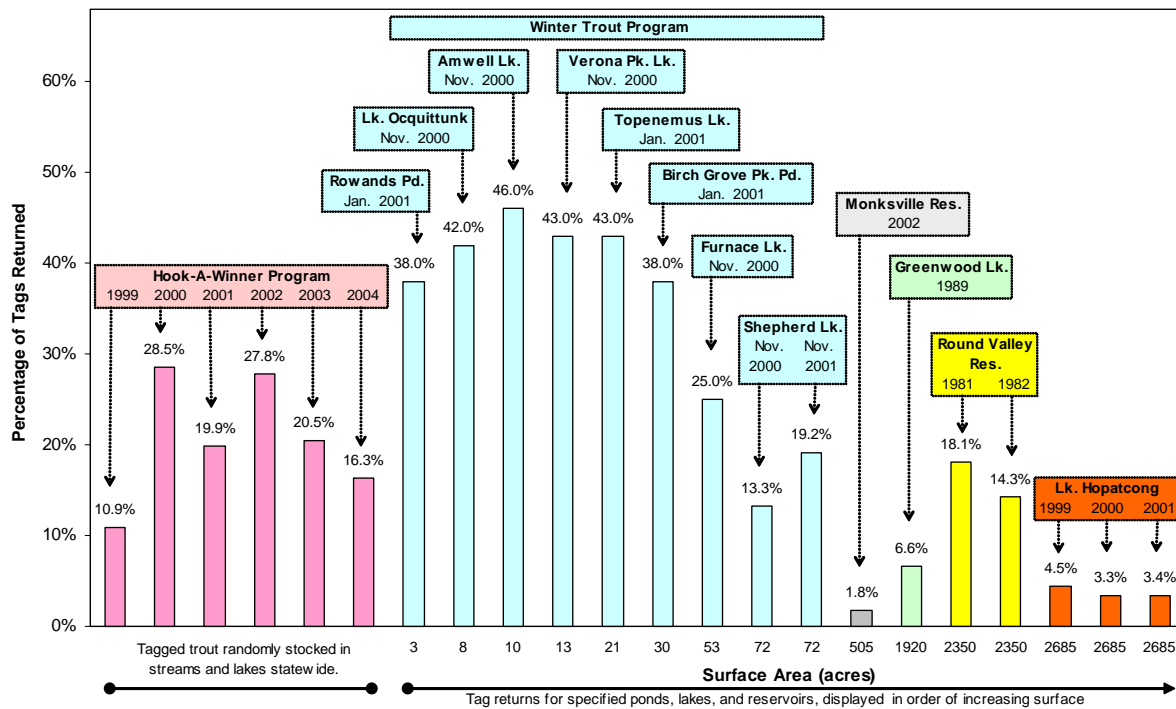


Figure 6. A comparison of tag returns from trout tagging studies conducted during a 21 year period (1981 - 2001) in New Jersey streams, ponds, lakes, and reservoirs. Metal jaw tags were affixed to catchable-sized trout (9-12 inches) stocked in the spring of the year indicated (except as noted under the winter trout program).

* Monksville Reservoir, Greenwood Lake, Shepherd Lake (Winter Trout) have already been dropped from specific Division stocking programs.

- € Trout angler participation on opening day higher on ponds, small lakes, and streams vs. large lakes
- € These lakes are regularly stocked by the Division with other species & have good warmwater fisheries
- € There are many other trout fishing opportunities nearby (10 to 20 in a ten mile radius)
- € Many of these lakes have angler access issues
- € Trout do not survive through the summer months or summer survival is very spotty (none regulated as Trophy or Holdover Trout Lakes)

The 25,860 trout from these seven large waterbodies would be re-allocated to:

- a. increase the pre-season stocking on 16 major trout maintenance streams by 25%

Streams	Pre-season	+ 25 %	Increase
Big Flat Brook - Lower	8,490	9550	1060
Black River	1590	1990	400
Manasquan River	3170	3960	790
Metedeconk River N/B	1330	1660	330
Metedeconk River S/B	1180	1480	300
Musconetcong River - Upper	2850	3560	710
Musconetcong River - Lower	10370	12960	2590
Paulins Kill – Upper	1330	1660	330
Paulins Kill – Middle	760	950	190
Paulins Kill - Lower	6370	7960	1590
Pequest River – Upper	630	790	160
Pequest River – Middle	1680	2100	420
Pequest River – Lower	5470	6840	1370
Pohatcong Creek – Lower	3110	3890	780
Ramapo River	4600	5750	1150
Raritan River N/B	4510	5640	1130
Raritan River S/B – Lower	2840	3550	710
Raritan River S/B – Middle	7270	9090	1820
Rockaway River – Upper	2020	2530	510
Rockaway River – Lower	4290	5360	1070
Toms River	1740	2180	440
Wallkill River – Lower	1010	1260	250
Wanaque River - Upper	1060	1330	270
Wallkill River – Upper	1060	1330	270

18,500 MORE TROUT FOR OPENING DAY WHEN ANGLER INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IS HIGH

b. Add new waters to the trout stocking program in order to increase participation

Daretown Lake
Hunterdon County Park Lake
Echo Lake
East Brunswick Park Lake
Heddon Park Lake
Hopkins Pond
Lake Fred
Wampum Lake

Note: The waters listed above have been recommended as additions to the current program. However, this list has not been finalized. The Division is seeking input from anglers as to waterways/areas which may provide additional trout fishing opportunities.

AND/OR

c. add in-season stockings to some or all of the lakes currently only receiving trout during the pre-season period.

Clarks Pond
Haddon Lake
Lake Papaiani
Mac's Pond
Scarlet Oak Pond
Silver Lake
Spooky Bk. Park Pond
Warinanco Park Pond
West Hudson Co. Park Pond
Westville Pond

Note: The Division is seeking input from anglers on which waterways listed above may benefit anglers through the addition of in-season stockings.

PRO's

- € Trout are relocated to other waters where trout angling activity and return rates are higher or expected to be higher.
- € Additional trout are provided for opening day when angler interest and participation is high.
- € The addition of new waters to the stocking program will increase the number of fishing opportunities and potentially increase license sales.
- € Trout relocated to those streams where trout can survive in the summer could extend fishing beyond the spring.
- € Many established trout fishing opportunities nearby.

CON's

- € Anglers accustomed to fishing for trout in these lakes would have to fish other waters for trout.
- € Anglers that currently fish for trout in waters that are dropped from the stocking program may stop fishing for trout altogether.

POTENTIAL CHANGE # 3 – Proposed Spring 2006 (Fish Code Item)

Discontinue stocking on six small streams having reproducing brook trout populations.

<u>Stream</u>	<u>Miles Stocked</u>	<u># Trout</u>
Barkers Mill Brook	1.0	260
Biers Kill	1.2	480
Roaring Rock Brook	2.2	1020
Roy Spring Brook	1.2	320
Shimers Brook	1.0	320
Tuttle's Corner Brook	1.0	750
	TOTAL	3,150

The 3,150 trout from these six waters would be re-allocated to:

a. Add new waters to the trout stocking program in order to increase participation

Daretown Lake
Hunterdon County Park Lake
Echo Lake
East Brunswick Park Lake
Heddon Park Lake
Hopkins Pond
Lake Fred
Wampum Lake

Note: The waters listed above have been recommended as additions to the current program. However, this list has not been finalized. The Division is seeking input from anglers as to waterways/areas which may provide additional trout fishing opportunities.

AND/OR

b. add in-season stockings to some or all of the lakes currently only receiving trout during the pre-season period.

Clarks Pond
Haddon Lake
Lake Papaiani
Mac's Pond
Scarlet Oak Pond
Silver Lake

Spooky Bk. Park Pond
Warinanco Park Pond
West Hudson Co. Park Pond
Westville Pond

Note: The Division is seeking input from anglers on which waterways listed above may benefit anglers through the addition of in-season stockings.

PRO's

- ∄ Eliminate negative impacts of larger cultured trout on small native brook trout.
- ∄ Small streams can not accommodate large numbers of anglers attracted by stocked trout
- ∄ These streams will still provide anglers with trout fishing opportunities.
- ∄ The harvest of wild trout may be reduced.

CON's

- ∄ Anglers accustomed to fishing for trout in these areas will have to fish other waters for stocked trout.
- ∄ Anglers currently fishing in streams that are dropped from the program may stop fishing for trout altogether.

POTENTIAL CHANGE # 4 – Proposed for Fall 2006

Produce larger, but fewer trout for the fall program.

	# Stocked	Size	Age	Species	Stocking Season
Current	50,000	9"	1 year	Rainbows	3 weeks
Proposed	20,000	12-16"	2 years	Brk, Brn, Rnbws	2 weeks *

- € Stocking season would be reduced to two weeks, since in order to raise the fish to a larger size the surplus trout which are currently distributed week 3 would have to be stocked at the end of August early September.
- € Spring baseline would have to be reduced from 575,000 to 570,000. However, the reduction of 5,000 trout over a ten week stocking period over 200 waterbodies is anticipated to have a negligible impact to anglers.

PRO's

- € Stocking larger trout provides a more attractive fishery for existing anglers.
- € The opportunity to fish for larger trout may attract new trout anglers.
- € Trout not harvested in the fall/winter will be available to anglers on opening day.
- € Surplus trout stocked earlier can provide additional angling opportunities.

CON's

- € Fewer trout will be available for anglers to catch.
- € Anglers preferring to fish for more smaller trout rather than fewer larger trout may chose not to fish for trout.

POTENTIAL CHANGE # 5 – Proposed for Winter 2006

Produce larger, but fewer trout for the winter program.

	# Stocked	Size	Age	Species	Stocking Season
Current	10,000	9"	1 year	Rainbows	3 days
Proposed	5,000	12-16"	2 years	Rainbows	3 days

PRO's

- € Stocking larger trout provides a more attractive fishery for existing anglers.
- € The opportunity to fish for larger trout may attract new trout anglers.
- € Trout not harvested in the fall/winter will be available to anglers on opening day.
- € Surplus trout stocked earlier can provide additional angling opportunities.

CON's

- € Fewer trout will be available for anglers to catch.
- € Anglers preferring to fish for more smaller trout rather than fewer larger trout may chose not to fish for trout.
- € The Winter Trout Program already provides excellent returns

