

PATU POLICY on TROUT MANAGEMENT

Approved by PATU Executive Committee – 2/9/19

Trout Unlimited was founded as a conservation organization dedicated to ensuring that wild and native trout populations are allowed to thrive as nature intended. The Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited (PATU) is comprised of 49 local chapters representing over 14,000 members. Our mission is, “To conserve, protect, restore, and sustain Pennsylvania’s coldwater fisheries and their watersheds, especially our wild trout resources.” Both PATU and its parent organization, National Trout Unlimited, believe that conservation should be a true partnership between landowners, agencies, municipalities, and all stakeholders. We work to protect critical habitat, to reconnect degraded waterways, and restore populations of coldwater fisheries. We strive to ensure that our decisions and programs reflect the very best information available.

The following statements communicate PATU’s policy on the management of wild trout populations. All Pennsylvania chapters, as well as their individual members, are strongly encouraged to follow these guidelines and to adhere to this policy when representing Trout Unlimited.

PATU strongly favors conservation programs and projects that preserve or enhance existing populations of wild trout and facilitate re-establishment of native brook trout populations in water bodies within their historical range. The goals of these programs are:

- Improvements to water quality
- Habitat improvement
- Re-establishing connectivity within watersheds

PATU strongly believes that conservation efforts should be based on sound science and will support programs and policy decisions that meet these requirements. PATU will make every effort to advance our knowledge of coldwater environs and the trout that reside therein.

In the execution of its mission, PATU will work cooperatively with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, as well as with other agencies of the Commonwealth, other conservation organizations, county conservation districts, landowners, business and industry, local government entities, and elected officials.

PATU will work to educate its members and others regarding the importance of protecting and enhancing wild trout populations. Conversely, it will advocate against measures that will result in adverse impacts on wild trout.

Given the historically deleterious impacts of human activity on the state’s waterways, hatchery trout provide recreational fishing for anglers in a variety of waters. PATU supports the stocking of hatchery trout in waters that cannot support naturally sustaining numbers of wild trout. PATU defines naturally sustaining as a wild trout population that is able to maintain a stable

population in both size and age over an extended period of time, while recognizing the typical year to year variability of wild trout populations.

Further, PATU supports the stocking of fingerlings or advanced fingerlings in waters where this approach would prove successful. Recognizing that not all waters are suitable for sustaining a successful fingerling stocking program, waters possessing the characteristics best suited to this stocking approach could be added to the program and surveys conducted to determine success or failure.

PATU advocates that no hatchery trout be introduced to any waters holding naturally sustaining native brook trout throughout the entire year. Acknowledging the PA Fish & Boat Commission's classification system of Pennsylvania's wild trout waters, we support cessation of all stocking in Class A, Class B, and Class C waters. Instead, we support actions directed at enhancing those populations. We also recommend periodic resurveying of Class B, Class C, and Class D waters to determine if changes or improvements in habitat or water quality may be appropriate to enhance the wild trout population.

PATU also encourages consideration of the stocking of sterile rainbow trout (triploids) as a potential method of reducing or discontinuing the stocking of hatchery brook, brown, and non-sterile rainbow trout species. This will allow for wild populations of both brook and brown trout to be more accurately assessed, and the chance of introducing species specific diseases will be greatly reduced. Waters should be selected for introduction of triploids for a trial period, and data gathered for evaluation of the impacts on those waterways and watersheds.

PATU recommends that streams in watersheds that support migratory populations of wild brook or brown trout be managed on a watershed level for the resource opportunities afforded during all seasons of the year. There are sustaining numbers of wild trout in fisheries that are currently classified as Warm Water Fisheries. Two examples are the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River and Sherman's Creek. PATU believes that wild trout populations existing in entire watersheds such as these are not being documented due to the surveys being conducted only in mid-summer.

These riverine migratory wild trout populations should be identified and then managed on a watershed level to protect these wild trout seeking thermal refuge during the spawning season. This approach could also set the stage and provide an example for managing trout populations on a watershed level rather than by the current method of utilizing stream segments and determining management decisions based on those sections alone.