

MAINE COUNCIL OF TROUT UNLIMITED

Coordination, information, and action. This newsletter represents just some of the Council activities this past year. Interested in learning more? Or getting more involved? Contact any Council member. Thanks for all you do!

Kathy Scott, Chair



Maine DIFW Explores Strategy to Enhance Protection for Brook Trout and Arctic Charr

“Maine’s native and wild brook trout, ponds, and flowing waters represent a unique and abundant resource, uncommon anywhere else in the United States. . . . [T]he Department places a high priority on the conservation of these resources.” That’s beginning of the first

2018 Council

Kathy Scott - Council Chair

Mac McGinley- Vice Chair

David Huntress- Secretary

Don Abbott - Treasurer

David VanBurgel- NLC Representative

Georges River: Mark Brown, Dan Daly, Doug Crossley, Steve Hirshberg, Bruce Sigsbee, Terry Young

Kennebec: Joe Albuit, Dave Allen, Philip Allen, Steve Brooke, Gerry Cates, Carl Cote, Dave Hedrick, Dan Marra, Greg Ponte

Merrymeeting: Orman Hines, Jim Hynson, Courtney Nickerson, Brad Swanson

Mollyockett: Bob Harkins, Scott Stone, Steve Wight, Dick Walthers

Sebago: David Bowie, Matt Streeter, Zach Whitener, Louisa Hanney

FERC Volunteer: Steve Heinz

TU National: Jeff Reardon

paragraph of a press release (<https://www.maine.gov/ifw/news-events/single-release.html?id=815944>) from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife about a new strategy to better protect wild brook trout from introductions of live bait fish. The concept would also maintain existing opportunities for use of live fish as bait where it already occurs. This is the culmination of almost two years of work by the “Heritage Fish Working Group”, which was convened to address issues raised in two bills that had hearings in the Legislature in 2016. Their full report can be found here: <https://www.maine.gov/ifw/docs/Final%20Progress%20Report%20F-W%20Legislative%20Committee%20LD%201236%2009-27-18.pdf>

The concept would be a change in Maine’s fishing rules for the northern zone—Franklin, Somerset, Piscataquis, Aroostook and the northern parts of Oxford and Penobscot Counties. If adopted, the strategy would change “General Law” rules in the northern zone to “No Live Fish as Bait”, with exceptions listed in the rule book to account for lakes and ponds currently open to ice fishing with live fish as bait and other waters where live bait is commonly used. This would (1) reduce the risk of live fish introductions into flowing waters, dead-waters, small ponds, bogs, and tributaries and outlet of State Heritage Fish Waters; (2) continue to allow use of live fish as bait in places where use is common; and (3) simplify the fishing rule book.

MDIFW will host meetings about a conservation strategy of improved fishing rules to protect wild brook trout in northern Maine. Please attend one of the two Public Information Meetings in December and support more protection for wild brook trout.

- December 12, from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM, at the Sportsman’s Alliance of Maine office at 205 Church Hill Road in Augusta
- December 19, from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM, at the MDIFW’s Ashland Regional Headquarters at 63 Station Street in Ashland



New Maine Council FERC Volunteer

Steve Heinz comes to Maine Council after ten years with Sebago Chapter where he devoted most of his time to habitat restoration projects. These included three small dam removals, multiple culvert upgrades, and the 5in5 Pond Reclamation Project. With an inordinate number of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) dam relicensings coming up in the next decade (licenses’ effective terms are 30 to 50 years) Steve hopes to work to optimize Maine TU’s interaction with other organizations. This should improve our overall effectiveness in dealing with the FERC process to get the best outcomes for Maine’s trout and salmon. If you have questions or want to discuss the status of any of Maine’s dams, please contact Steve at 781-4762 or heinz@maine.rr.com.

eDNA Sampling for Maine's Landlocked Arctic Charr

In 2017 TU volunteer citizen scientists collected surface water eDNA samples from remote ponds with known landlocked arctic charr populations. Because Maine's Arctic Charr live deep below the thermocline, we collected samples as close to ice out as possible when the waters "turn over". With ice out comes mud season and closed roads into many of these waters. By the time we could get there, stratification had begun to isolate the charr eDNA below the surface film so we needed a different approach in 2018 for consistent success.

In early 2018 we were shown a homemade deep water sampling device built by the head of the Orono eDNA lab, Dr. Mike Kinneson. It was for student use which required a solid and heavy set of components. Most of Maine's charr waters are remote, hike-in sites, so the Charr Working Group developed their own light weight design. It was late July before the thermoclines were well established and the two prototypes could be tested at Floods Pond. By mid-August Steve Brooke had refined the best prototype and built seven field kits in his basement shop. Our Working Group held a training session for volunteers at a local lake before the Charr Committee lead teams to take samples with the new devices on waters. While there, some teams collected "swipe eDNA" samples from fish caught after the water samples were collected. We will get the results as the season's work is published by the science team at Orono, likely this spring.

Watch for information about how you can join the all-volunteer citizen science Charr team collecting eDNA samples next summer.



Maine TU Trout Camp 2019:

June 23 - 28 Application postmarked by April 15

For more information: <http://www.troutcamp.org>

Five Chapters, One TU: Highlights

Grassroots at its best, our five chapters all offer conservation events, youth services, and more.

- Georges River has been working with volunteers Downeast to establish a new Chapter
- Kennebec Valley installed temperature monitors at key sites in the new Cold Stream Public Reserve
- Merrymeeting Bay has been documenting sea run brook trout, "Salters"
- Mollycokett offers the Western Maine Fly Fishing Show with an exhibit hall plus conservation and fly fishing speakers
- Sebago is the birthplace of the Maine Women Fly Fishers

More news from the Chapters is found on their web pages, Facebook, sites, newsletters, or by contacting the representatives listed on the previous page.

<http://tumaine.org/chapters.htm>



Council Intervenes in 145 mile long CMP Corridor Through Maine

CMP has filed permit applications for what it has been named the New England Clean Energy Connect Project (NECEC), an energy corridor from Quebec to Massachusetts.

A preliminary review of CMP's application by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife highlighted concerns regarding impacts on habitat for both fish and wildlife, especially in the proposed new corridor across Franklin and Somerset Counties where it will pass close to at least three designated Heritage Brook Trout Ponds, cross through or near three Public Reserved Lands, cross at least 180 brooks and streams containing critical brook trout habitat, and impact countless vernal pools and wetlands. DIFW provided a detailed list of recommendations on how CMP should mitigate or reduce adverse impacts.

Recognizing that the proposed NECEC corridor passed through some of the most important Brook Trout habitat in Maine and in consideration of DIFW's preliminary findings on the adequacy of CMP's plans as stated in their DEP permit application, the Maine Council of Trout Unlimited sought leave to intervene in the case before both the Public Utility Commission and the combined review of the Department of Environmental Protection and Land Use Planning Commission. Jeff Reardon, Trout Unlimited Brook Trout Program Director, and David Hedrick, KVCTU delegate to Maine Council, volunteered to represent Maine TU in the proceedings. Preliminary conferences are happening now. Hearings are expected to commence in January and perhaps extend until March. Because of the number of intervenors, over 40, in its case, the DEP asked that those with common interests and issues combine into teams. Maine TU has combined with the Natural Resources Council of Maine and Appalachian Mountain Club as the environmental group of intervenors.

