



Conserving Maine's wildlife. For everyone.



Volunteer Brook Trout Survey Fishing Practices Guidelines

Thank you for your interest in helping survey remote ponds and coastal streams in Maine for wild brook trout. Because Maine is the last stronghold for wild brook trout in the eastern U.S., it's important to take steps to minimize harm to fish caught during the survey, and we strongly encourage you to follow these fishing practices while conducting your Citizen Science survey. We appreciate your cooperation and hope you enjoy your adventure.

Fishing Tips:

Trout will swallow live bait, including worms, which increases chances of injury or even death. The goal of the survey is non-lethal sampling of brook trout, so in order to minimize injury to fish caught for the purpose of this survey, we recommend the use of artificial lures and flies whenever possible. However, if you are unsuccessful catching trout with artificial lures, before you leave your survey site you may want to try using worms to assess whether brook trout are present. The primary focus of the survey is to detect the presence or absence of brook trout in a pond, which may require multiple method(s).

We recommend you follow these best practices while surveying ponds and streams for brook trout:

- Use single hook, single point, barbless artificial lures or flies whenever possible.
- If using worms, circle hooks may reduce but not eliminate impacts, so only catch one brook trout per pond or stream to document their presence, then move on to another. This will limit any impacts of incidental mortality from fish caught and released on worms.
- When you are done fishing please take all remaining worms home with you. Dumping bait increases the risk of moving potentially invasive species.

Handling and Photographing Fish:

Fish scales are designed to protect a fish in water, but can be easily damaged or rubbed off once out of the water. To minimize injury, we recommend you adopt the following practices for handling a fish after you catch one:

- Keep both the fish and your hands wet at all times.
- Use a net (rubber preferred since it is less abrasive) when possible to minimize handling fish.
- Keep the fish over water or in the water at all times.
- Hold the fish carefully under the belly and around the tail, never by the gills.
- Hold the fish gently in the water and gently move it back and forth to move water over the gills to revive it before releasing.
- Minimize time out of water for photos. Release fish if photos cannot be taken quickly.
- If you are using a smartphone to take pictures, turn off the geo-referencing feature so no one can track the photo back to a specific location.

Harvesting Fish:

We thank you for your efforts in identifying Maine's wild brook trout waters. Given that this effort is motivated by a desire to protect and conserve these these unique fisheries we encourage catch and release, even though harvest is legal in most of our survey waters.