

Eastern Brook Trout JOINT VENTURE



THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE EBTJV

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Mid-Atlantic Division



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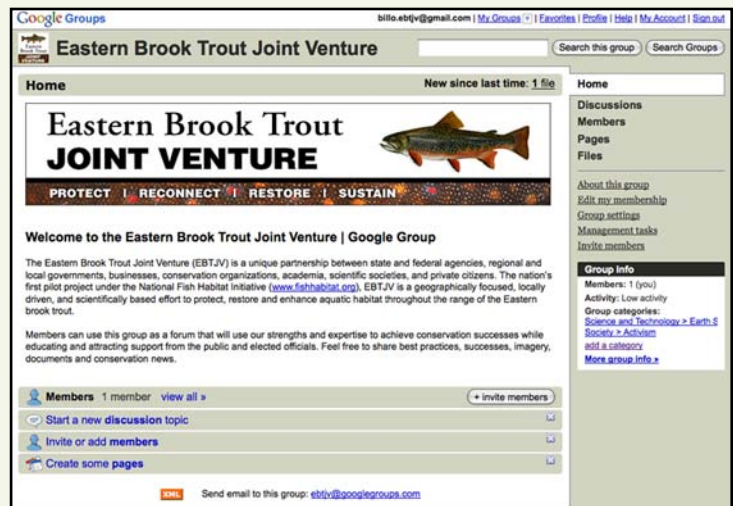
Editor's Notes

Welcome to our Spring edition of the EBTJV newsletter. Our local biologists and TU chapters are proceeding with this year's efforts. This newsletter outlines the great work planned for 2010 and reviews our 2009 brook trout endeavors.

Please keep me informed of new interested parties for my mailing list and also keep me updated on changes of positions within councils and chapters. Our distribution list is now at 154. There are quite a few folks that are interested in our native brookies so please take the time to submit articles.

I've continued to add links to all the url's and email addresses contained in the newsletter. You just need to click on them to send an email or visit a website. As always, I'm open to suggestions and new ideas so feel free to send them to me at williamo@maine.rr.com.

Our EBTJV Google Group membership continues to grow, but only in small increments. It's a site where we have a forum for discussions, a place to upload and post files/documents/newsletters and send reminders to the entire group. Hopefully this opens up broader lines of communication throughout the EBTJV. You can easily join by clicking the tab on the right side of <http://groups.google.com/group/ebtjv>. I urge you to visit it often... It's a very useful tool for the EBTJV and a place where you can download newsletters from all EBTJV regions.



Please Note that we've opened up discussions on Google Group, so if you're interested in commenting or have great ideas, feel free to share them with us. Enjoy the Newsletter and our Google Group — Tight Lines!

by Bill Oleszczuk

Eastern Brook Trout JOINT VENTURE



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New Jersey

Musconetcong Home Rivers Initiative

The Garden State's native brook trout are alive and well, in part thanks to the many conservation projects ongoing to improve brook trout habitat and to remove barriers to fish passage. One exciting project is TU's East Jersey chapter engagement with a landowner in Bergen County, a scant three miles from downtown Manhattan, on Cresskill Brook. The landowner owns a swimming pool that is actually a part of the stream that runs through their property. The pool itself acts like a dam, preventing fish passage and warming up the stream. This brook has been electro fished routinely by NJ Fish & Wildlife biologists and has what very well may be the most urban population of brook trout in the East. It is nice to know that a population of brook trout exists only miles from the most bustling city on the planet!

TU's Musconetcong Home Rivers Initiative has focused on brook trout habitat restoration on five tributaries of that river. Each tributary of the "Musky" has been chosen for restoration based upon its uniqueness as a restoration project. Kurtenbachs Brook is a high quality brook trout stream with excellent populations in its upper reaches. However, the lower third of this stream was channelized and armored with stone when interstate 80 was built to redirect it into the Musconetcong River. In this stretch, trout populations are less than 1/3 of the upstream populations due to the loss of habitat. Plans are to remove the hard armoring in stream and build plunge pools, remove a culvert, add woody debris and meanders all in an effort to restore habitat and grow populations to better mimic those in the pristine upper stream. Turkey Hill Brook is in need of major riparian buffer plantings, and plans are underway to begin that work in fall of 2010 by our E. Schwiebert chapter. South of Schooley's Mountain tributary will undergo a culvert removal or day-lighting project to meaningfully reconnect a population of native brookies to the main river. Mine Brook is now funded to remove three obsolete dams on one of the Musky's better brook trout tributaries to reconnect fragmented habitat and populations in 2011. And our Hacklebarney chapter has plans to study impacts to Wills Brook which is devoid of brook trout to better

understand restoration needs and to plan a strategy to restore this major tributary and reintroduce brook trout from a nearby heritage strain population once restoration efforts are completed. In addition to these tributaries, the Home Rivers Initiative continues its focus on river channel restoration as well as riparian buffer plantings and dam removals on the main river to improve brook trout populations and to reconnect fragmented populations of New Jersey's state fish.

The Fred S Burroughs/North Jersey chapter is planning for a major undertaking on the Big Flatbrook River in the northwestern corner of the state. Like the Musky, the Flatbrook is a Delaware River tributary with a native population of brook trout. Plans are in the works to place into year round conservation a one and a half mile stretch of the river into a Trout Conservation Area (TCA) with a one fish creel limit beginning in 2012. Efforts are underway to identify areas of this river in need of riparian buffer plantings, river restoration and habitat enhancements ahead of the new TCA.

Article by Brian Cowden – TU's Musconetcong Home Rivers Initiative Coordinator



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Pennsylvania

Roadmap To Restoration

A document entitled Eastern Brook Trout of Pennsylvania: Roadmap to Restoration was compiled to summarize the situation of the eastern brook trout of Pennsylvania, the reasons for its decline, and guidelines for restoration. It will be circulated among the various state (PFBC, PGC, DCNR, DEP) and federal agencies and NGOs throughout the Commonwealth with an interest in preserving and protecting existing native brook trout populations and restoring, to the extent possible, those that have been lost or severely degraded by human encroachment and disturbances. It will soon be available on our Website at www.patROUT.org.

Trouble in The Headwaters

I photographed the brookie below in the headwaters of Trout Run in West-Central PA last fall during spawning season.



(This photo is on the cover of the Roadmap to Restoration).

Salvelinus Fontinalis

Over the years, Trout Run has suffered from acid deposition. It was taken off the PFBC stocking schedule in the mid-1980's because hatchery brookies died soon after they hit the acidified water. However, the natives survived and have actually come back over the last 25 or so years. Trout Run now holds a respectable population of native brookies throughout much of its length. This is probably related to the positive effects of the Clean Water Act which has reduced the acidity of the rainfall to some degree. However, this stream is still seriously degraded by acid deposition, especially in the headwaters where pH can drop below 5 during snowmelt and rainstorms. One bright note, brown trout have disappeared from this stream,

probably because of their reduced resistance to acidification. Halting stocking has reduced fishing pressure (harvesting) on the stream as well and that has also helped the natives to recover. Unfortunately, now that water quality is improving, local sportsmen's groups are resuming stocking in the lower reaches of what is probably the best native brook trout stream in Clearfield County.

Trout Run is a typical example of a lot of streams throughout the Appalachian Plateau. The latest threat is the rampant Marcellus Gas drilling efforts that are going on all over the Commonwealth. Alex Branch, a major tributary of the stream where the above photo was taken, was contaminated last August by fracking fluid from a Marcellus well in its headwaters. Alex Branch is already very much degraded by acid deposition, consequently few if any brookies were lost as a result of the spill. Apparently, the contaminated water was diluted enough by the time it reached Trout Run (several miles below the spill) to save the brookies there from disaster. I caught several nice brookies below the Alex Branch confluence last fall, including the one in the photo. The contamination has been eliminated and the water quality in Alex Branch this spring is back to levels observed before the spill.

But the potential of the Marcellus drilling effort to do serious harm to our native brook trout streams is very real. There are plans to drill all thru the headwaters of the best brook trout streams on the Appalachian Plateau.

DCNR Brook Trout Management Plan

PA Council is involved with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry in developing a Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) Management Plan for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). A draft management plan has been written and covers about all the threats facing brook trout in Pennsylvania one can think of: poor land management (habitat degradation), increasing water temperatures, invasive and competitive species (including brown trout), Marcellus activity, genetic alteration, sedimentation and erosion (roads), abandoned mine drainage, acidic deposition, heavy angling activity (as a result of stocking) and many others.

Article by Ken Undercoffer

