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Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum

Topic: : Wild Brown Trout and Special Regs

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A recent call that I received was frustrating enough that I decided to put together a refresher summary of wild brown trout responses to special regulations in Pa. for members of this board. Some have seen this before, and I apologize if this is too repetitive. For others, however, it may be new information.

At the outset let me say to all that this does not refer to wild brown trout streams sections that are also being stocked. We're talking purely wild brown trout here.

Brown trout (BT) responses to special regs were examined from 19 limestoners and 23 freestoners.

In limestoners the legal size (7") and longer BT empirically (means the number got larger, but it may not be anything more than natural variation or sampling error unless the number is statistically significant, ) increased from 826 per mile to 1635 per mile. This was not a statistically significant change (meaning there was substantial variation in the responses of individual stream sections). It was a substantial increase even if it was not caused by the regs. About three quarters of the limestoners showed an empirical increase in 12" and longer BT as well.

In the freestoners legal size (7") brown trout (BT) empirically decreased from 433 per mile to 308 per mile. Again, this decrease was not statistically significant. Few (only 4) freestoners responded favorably, and one of these was Codorus Creek, a tail-race fishery that is fairly fertile....not a typical freestoner. About one third of the freestoners showed an increase in the abundance of 12" and longer BT.

Conclusion: Freestoners are not generally not appropriate for special regulations designed to improve the abundance or size distribution of brown trout populations in Pa. Brown trout abundance, on the other hand, improved substantially in limestoners following special regulation implementation despite the fact that the change was statistically insignificant.

When it comes to special regs on brown trout streams in Pa., a betting man or lady would certainly bet on limestoners rather than freestoners for a positive response. The statewide creel survey on wild trout streams helped shed more light on the impact of harvest on wild brown trout streams. The harvest rate per mile on wild brown trout streams was only 1 per mile on average. With such a low harvest rate, the average brown trout stream (the vast majority of the streams) would never respond to a special regulation.