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Subject: : Conservation

Topic: : Opinion needed sanctuary solution

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I asked the question about the protection for cold water refuges as a baited question. I wanted to see what others felt on the subject. I have been sitting on and protecting such an area for three decades now. I have seen trout population trends due to many factors. With the focus being protection of these areas, I will not go into the importance of the different factors effecting overall trout population. I will explain how I have been protecting a vital refuge area. I am not saying that what I am doing is right or wrong. I am open to ideas. The trout are what I am protecting, not my ego. This is my un-official appeal to likeminded anglers for advice. The discovery came after witnessing an influx of larger trout up a small trout stream that I called home at thirteen years of age. I didn't tell anyone at first. I had already realized this error on another of my favorite streams. I cherry picked the stacked trout for a week or two every year when they first came in. Their arrival coincided with a flying ant hatch that was over by six a.m. I was young and sixty trout mornings were difficult to resist. Then one year the water heated more rapidly and a twenty incher fought to exhaustion and became difficult to revive.

Rule number one. Don't fish over the trout. The short term enjoyment comes at a price. Another factor is that someone may see you catching trout thus drawing unwanted attention.

Rule number two. Don't give it away by simply offering up information. If anyone happens to discover it and comes back more than once or discovers it and has loose lips, get to know them, talk to them and find out what they know and go from there. I might not do anything or I might make them my best friend. Depending on what they say. I usually don't have to ask many pointed questions. Most fishermen are more than happy to offer up their wisdom or lack of it. Basically I gauge the threat that they impose to the fishery. Of course there is an art to this as much as there is to fishing. The last thing you want is to put your quarry down and make him uncatchable. Over the years with this policy I have built a network of friends through education who understand the importance of protection and the value of the fishery. This network of friends is the eyes and ears in the community and has proven very effective.

I have chosen not to involve any organizations for fear of fishing pressure. My biggest fear is some short minded egotist finding this fishery who would sell it out for his own glory and admiration (to make a name for him) in spite of the fishery. This may be the strongest reason for not involving a so called protection group because I believe there is always one of these so called fishermen waiting in the wings.

I have read that a stream without friends is a stream without protection. These words echo for me and at times even haunt me. However the fishery is still there and thriving. BUT.... Every year I worry. When am I going to be forced to the last resort, push for some official protection? Right now I don't even like "No Fishing" signs.

Anything that draws attention to this area is a potential threat. The effects of fishing pressure are huge here. A fisherman who doesn't have any understanding of wild trout will approach too close. The wild trout will scatter, in an attempt to stir up enough silt or sediment to conceal them beneath the cloud. The ill afforded energy scrubbing movement looks a lot like red building. The trout may be much stressed and may have been holding for 3 to 4 months. These trout will avoid the threat of a fisherman by holding in the eighty five degree water until the threat leaves. Without spelling it out, I think it's easy to see how one fisherman can have a large effect over an entire spawning run of fish here. I can't over emphasize the importance of protection. To understand the

effects of fishing pressure, I believe you must first see the fishery with zero fishing pressure or near to it and I believe that in my youth I had seen a good example of this. I feel nervous even writing this. I am afraid that you can only keep your thumb in the dike for so long. More people in recent years have been learning of this fishery. I am finding it more difficult to stay up with. The most recent fellow, I bribed away from the refuge area. I have been fishing with him. I am showing him the rest of the puzzle. He now has a better understanding of what we are protecting. Friends are made and lost. Promises are made for the protection of the fishery. These promises can be difficult to keep.

Some of the promises are. You do not tell anyone the details. You do not take anyone here. We keep an open line of communication so we do not over pressure an area and don't fish behind one another. In short, we share it as friends not as opposition.

The knowledge we gain as fisherman is ours to keep or share and with knowledge comes responsibility, a responsibility to protect and conserve that which you love. I could not live with myself if I were to outlive this fishery. I believe that discovering a fishery is better than having it given to you. I don't believe that people appreciate what is given as much as what is earned. Discovery is precisely what drives me as a fisherman and possibly the biggest reason for why I fly fish. I may someday thru silence be gifting another generation of anglers with the same opportunity of discovery that I had as a young man. I can't think of a bigger gift.

To sum up anyone who discovers the cold water refuge of summer gets a lot of our attention and maybe a free in. The cold water refuge is the piece of this otherwise strong and viable fishery puzzle where the trout are most vulnerable. We currently protect it first by silence and secondly by education. I believe I have just discovered the reason for s future book, to change this order to education first and silence second. Maybe the biggest gift to future anglers would be the knowledge of how to discover such fisheries and keep them. I need a title.