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Subject: : Conservation

Topic: : A Lancaster County Brookie Stream

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I recently experienced something that I would like to share with you guys and get your thoughts on. I am by no means an expert in the field of trout environment and the effects of other species introduced into their cold water habitat and the effects it could have. While I do understand some concepts about some species...this one I'm not sure about.

I will not name the stream name but I'm sure with a little research you could figure out what stream I will be talking about. If you do please keep it off the post or if you would like to discuss it further using the name shoot me a PM.

Yesterday I went and fished one of Lancaster County's brook trout streams. This one in general does get stocked but has a remnant population of wild brook trout. What mostly inhabits the stream are chubs. Hundreds upon thousands of them. I fished a good portion of the creek this day and couldn't buy a wild brook trout. The water had been low and maybe got warm. This stream has a few feeder streams that also have brook trout in them. The one in particular is the stream in question. I decided maybe the brookies ran up into the mouth of that tributary to get cold water.

There is a natural barrier and a man-made barrier (a small dam with a bottom release gate) that block the stocked trout from running up into this precious Lancaster County stream. When I arrived at the mouth about 500 chubs (no exaggeration) were at the mouth of the small tributary. I noticed how the natural barrier is gone now and fish could run up a small ways into the tributary now.

The smaller tributary is very low and the dam will do nothing to avoid fish from running up into it. I thought, what the heck let's see how the brookies are doing. I went upstream anyway and was able to catch 3 nice brookies right off the bat in some riffles. I went a short distance downstream and saw 2 fish in the 11-12 inch range rising at the end of a nice pool. I tied on a blue-winged olive as they were hatching on this day. I caught one of the fish and it was a chub.

My concern is I have never seen a chub in this stream in the years and years that I have been fishing it. With the barriers doing nothing to stop the fish from running upstream I caught about another 10 of those things. Some were large too. What affect is this going to have on the brook trout population if any? Will they eat their eggs this spawn? Will they eat the smaller trout? Am I over thinking this?

Note that farther upstream the stream cascades down a rock cliff and of course above that were no chubs. Should I be worried about the lower half of the creek's brookies? If so, what can be done?