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Subject: : Conservation

Topic: : Stocking Trout Over Wild Fish

Re: Stocking Trout Over Wild Fish

Author: : JackM

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URL:

Here's my take:

A stream with a healthy wild trout population does not need to be stocked to provide a recreational fishery. A stream that cannot sustain a sufficient recreational level of wild trout may be stocked to create such a fishery where a need for such is perceived.

There are waters that have plenty of food, but poor habitat and spawning conditions, so that the wild trout population is depressed, despite sufficient food to support more trout. These are the types of waters that supplemental stockings can help. In these cases, once that decision has been made, it really doesn't matter whether the planted fish are adults or fingerlings as far as the wild fish are concerned. Just as an example/estimate, in order to achieve a recreational level of fish, probably 10 fingerlings must be stocked to 1 adult in order to create the type of fishery that would satisfy angler desires. Those 10 fingerlings will have the same impact as the one adult, so it is a wash in terms of impact.

There are two factors that favor fingerlings in these situations: first, the cost is lower because the PFBC doesn't need to grow the trout in a hatchery for quite so long, and second, fingerlings that survive are adapted better to the environment and have a better chance of holding over from year to year. If it turns out that fingerlings are not holding over in such a case, then they are not providing the desired boost to the "catchable" fish population and adult plantings would be more desirable.

The PFBC does recognize that some weak wild trout populations are worth maintaining as such without supplementation. You can see in the Wilderness Trout Stream list many such waters. However, the utilization of such waters by the angling public is not strong.

I do not agree that there is anything qualitatively inferior about planted trout, whether adults or fingerlings, such as sal suggests. I suspect that for a short period of time, perhaps two or three months, the hatchery raised trout will exhibit behaviors that streambred trout will not, such as expenditure of energy in feeding or competing for abode that is out of proportion with the advantages gained thereby. However, in stupid creatures like fish, instinctual behavior is more important than learned behavior and within a short time, they will revert to a wild mentality if they don't commit involuntary suicide in the meantime.