



BUREAU OF FRESHWATER FISHERIES MONTHLY REPORT



March 14, 2021 – April 13, 2021

Lisa Barno, Assistant Director
Craig Lemon, Superintendent
Edward Conley, Superintendent
Shawn Crouse, Supervising Biologist

Christopher Smith, Principal Fisheries Biologist

Dominick Mercurio, Crew Supervisor Bldg. Maintenance
Tyler Tresslar, Crew Supervisor, WW

Ross Shramko, Sr. Fisheries Biologist
Scott Collenburg, Sr. Fisheries Biologist
Eric Boehm, Sr. Fisheries Biologist

Thomas Bissonnette, Technician II
Nicholas Healy, Technician II
Ron Jacobsen, Technician II
Charles Sedor, Technician II

Matthew Gadek, Sr. Wildlife Worker
Jonathan Kline, Sr. Wildlife Worker
Shaun Young, Sr. Wildlife Worker
Doug Cutler, Sr. Wildlife Worker
Kyle Civalier, Sr. Wildlife Worker
Nick Ruberto, Sr. Wildlife Worker
Brad Duckworth, Sr. Wildlife Worker

Grace Johnson, Wildlife Worker
Travis Nitko, Wildlife Worker

Steve Jeffries, Repairer

Nancy Geiger, Agency Services Rep
Elizabeth O'Neill, Administrative Analyst

Seasonals: Kate Ayers, Karl Lightner, Jordan Allen, Joseph Citro, Justin Rozema, Nick Cornine, and Christian Nitko.

PEQUEST TROUT HATCHERY (Ed Conley)

Flow

4.25 inches of precipitation fell during the month of March.

Pumping Rate Average for March was 6559 gpm. An average of 9.45 million gallons per day was pumped during the month of March.

The potable well pumped 5,028 gallons for the month of March.

Fish Culture Activities

During Part 1 of the accelerated 2021 Spring Trout Stocking program, which began on March 15th and ended on April 9th, 517,160 trout were loaded and distributed to rivers, lakes, and ponds throughout New Jersey for the scheduled opener on April 10th, 2021. On a normal year at this time, only 183,000 trout are distributed prior to the opening day. To accomplish this feat, on an average day 8-10 trucks were loaded daily with production size Rainbow trout averaging around 11.3 inches, as well as some plus sized broodstock.

The program this year was similar to last year, but we were able to plan ahead which made things a little easier compared to all last year's last-minute changes due to Covid-19. Continued cold early on caused only a couple of minor changes in the stocking list, but weather continued to improve over the four weeks.

Also, once again this year "Catch and Release" fishing was implemented for April 1st until the normal opening day to let the anglers to have a chance at catching some fish before the normal opening day and to reduce crowding on the waters which allows anglers to keep better social distance and to limit the spread of Covid 19. Every waterbody this year was stocked with a portion of its allotment before the opening of the "Catch and Release" on April 1st, 2021.

Many anglers have already shared stories about their angling success during the "Catch and Release" period and the beginning of the "Harvest" period.

Approximately 75,000 production sized trout are being held at the Pequest Trout Hatchery for the second portion of Spring Trout Stocking, which will take place during May 10th – 14th.

Spring sorting of the 2022 production stock (over 800,000) has begun in which smaller fish graded off using metal grader boxes and pools are reset as they come available. This requires the time of several staff and is necessary to keep a closer size range on the trout.

The A, C, D-lines were emptied, cleaned, sterilized, and reset with sorted fish for the 2021 stocking seasons. Also, the F, H and I-lines have been emptied and are awaiting cleaning.

The 2022 production stock from the nursery were inventoried and some were moved outside to alleviate densities in the nursery at this time. All the tanks were reset in the nursery, and trout are being fed by automatic feeder twice every hour for about 10 hours a day. The feeders are being filled daily with 2.0 and 2.5mm feed. All tanks are still being cleaned by all shifts and flows

were adjusted. Outside screens are being cleaned twice daily. Outside trout are being fed 3.0 mm by the feed truck now 4 times a day.

Monthly inventories of the remaining Spring 2021 production stock and the fish for the 2021 Fall Program fish were completed during this time. Some of the 2021 Fall/Winter pools were also reset at this time. Feed quantities have been adjusted to regulate growth rates to reach our final goal for stocking. These fish are being fed by the feed truck 4 times a day with 5.0 mm feed. Screens are being cleaned twice a day and basins weekly.

Approximately 31,000 pounds of feed was fed during this time.

Hatchery flows were adjusted during this period and dissolved oxygen levels are being monitored.

Hygiene

The iodine net/brush dip buckets were changed every 3 days or so to keep up with the hatchery hygiene plan. Weekly catch basin and aerator building cleaning was completed as scheduled.

Head ends as well as lower ends of the raceways were vacuumed and scraped to remove a buildup of algae and moss. The aerator wheel area of the I-line was vacuumed to remove built up fish waste and decomposing algae.

Floor disinfectant baths were changed on a regular weekly schedule or as needed.

Treatment Plant

Submitted monthly discharge reports, filed any applicable paperwork, and met with the treatment plant operator.

Weekly treatment plant checks including, wastewater testing, chlorine levels, and domestic pit flow were performed. Set-up and collected composite sample for pick up on the 3rd Wednesday of the month.

Coordinated the pumping, loading, and spreading of 6500 gallons of fish waste to the Pequest WMA. Total of 6.5 loads spread to Field #5 during March.

Performed preventative maintenance on treatment plant pumps, motors, greased bearings, and gears, and changed oil in blower motors.

Minor Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance

Coordinated and assisted in the maintenance of 6 in-hatchery vehicles, performed minor vehicle maintenance.

Maintained and submitted monthly mileage report for 16 hatchery vehicles.

Set-up and installed new oxygen bottles on Distribution Trucks for Spring Stocking runs.

Scheduled delivery and pick-up of distribution truck oxygen. Also, maintained inventory of useable bottles.

Performed weekly site check of both Gasoline and Diesel fuel levels and ordered as needed.

Staff also repaired any broken equipment or nets that are being used on the stocking trucks daily.

Miscellaneous Activities

Travis Nitko became a full-time staff member to the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries, Pequest Trout Hatchery as a Wildlife Worker on March 27th. It took 15 months after he was offered a conditional offer.

Attended a Domestic Waterline Project meeting. At the meeting it was determined that another section of waterline should be replaced to the well and main building. It was thought that it was copper piping, but it turned out to be the same old PVC as the rest being replaced. Some of the new piping has been laid down and buried from the nursery building to the pond bathrooms, but it is not tied in yet. The contractor is waiting on a change order to continue.

There was a pre-construction Roofing Meeting during this time. Engineering drawings were completed, but it was determined some changes on them may be needed where the power comes in. The contractor is going provide samples to pick out colors for the shingles and siding for the parapet walls. They are hoping to start construction this summer.

Had an issue with Well #1 kicking off, so a contractor was called in to look at it. The cause was determined to be a couple of loose connections in the panel which was throwing a code to shut it down. The well seems to be functioning normal now.

The overhead lines, reflective streamers, propane cannons and scary-men have been put out in anticipation of the arrival of predatory birds, which start showing up around late March or the beginning of April annually. Mostly Great Blue Herons have been seen with an occasional Osprey so far.

There were no reported problems with trespassers by the night watchmen. The Information & Education Unit Building is still closed to the public due to Covid 19.

HACKETTSTOWN STATE FISH HATCHERY (Craig Lemon)

Intensive Culture (Inventory)

<u>Species</u>	<u># Fish</u>	<u>Avg.”</u>
Muskellunge	4,600	11.3”
Landlocked Salmon	3,200	8.9”
Northern Pike	90,000	1.0”

<u>Stocking Totals</u>		(March 15 – April 14)			
<u>Date</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u># Fish</u>	<u>Size (Inches)</u>	<u>Total Pounds</u>
4/12	Np	Connecticut	102,099	fry	5.7

Intensive Culture

Muskellunge - Currently culturing 4,600 Muskellunge in two 2,000-gallon tanks. These fish are averaging 11.3 inches currently. These fish will be grown on forage until stocking in late April.

Northern Pike - Currently culturing 90,000 pike fry in eight round tanks. They make up lots 1, 2, and 3. The Lot 4 fish were surplus, and they were picked up by Connecticut 102,099 fish. The 5 were surplus and they are scheduled to be picked up by Rhode Island on the April 15th. We are still holding some fish for PA and Mass. to trade for Muskies and Landlocks.

Landlocked Salmon - Currently culturing 3,200 fish about 8.9-inches. After last year's fish were stocked, the crew split the 3,000 new fish into two 2,000-gallon tanks. Staff are cleaning and feeding them daily. These fish will be grown intensively until November and stocked when they reach 16-18 inches.

Mosquitofish - Our only tank of Gambusia were moved outside into Pond 64 for grow out and spawning on 4/14.

Extensive Culture

Walleye

The 4-Acre Pond is full and has been fertilized preparing for walleye fry setup. Walleye eggs were picked up at the state line on 4/14 and will begin hatching 4/19.

Largemouth Bass

Ponds 13, 17 and 48 West have been filled to be used as Lmb broodstock spawning ponds. Pond 53 will be harvested next week, and those bass will be split between the three ponds.

Fathead Minnows

Ponds 85 and 5-Acre were filled and treated for weeds in preparation for minnow broodstock stocking. A load of 500 pounds of adult minnows arrived from Arkansas on 4/14. Two holes or 250 pounds of minnows were stocked into each pond.

Broodstock Collection

Hatchery staff set three South Dakota style trapnets in Budd Lake on March 22nd to capture.

Northern Pike broodfish. This was 20 days later than nets were set in 2020 due to late ice out. The nets were checked 4 times during the week capturing 49 pike. The catch was made up of 27 males and 22 females. The largest pike was a female weighing 11.84 pounds and measuring 36.2 inches. Eleven female pike were spawned producing 650,000 eggs. Large numbers of Yellow Perch (6,238), Black Crappie, and Bluegill Sunfish were also captured and returned to the lake. Fourteen different species were captured in all. Lake water temperatures ranged from 42 to 51 degrees. Due to Covid-19 protocols all trapnetting/broodstock collection efforts for Walleye and Muskellunge will not take place in 2021. Two million Walleye eggs were received from the PA fish and Boat Commission on April 14th. Plans are to obtain 15,000 feed trained Muskellunge fry from PA in a few weeks.

Mosquitofish

The first round of Fathead Minnows was distributed to County Mosquito Commissions. The State Mosquito Commission purchased 125 pounds of Fathead Minnows from Arkansas and they were delivered to the hatchery on 4/4. Hatchery staff distributed 60,000 minnows to four South Jersey Counties meeting in Camden. Another four North Jersey counties are scheduled to pick up fish on 4/16. All eight counties will receive 5,000 fish or 15 pounds each.

Trout Stocking

Doug Cutler, Nick Ruberto and hatchery seasonals did five trout stocking runs for the Pequest Trout Hatchery. Because of Covid-19, the stocking schedule went from 10 weeks down to 4 weeks in an effort to get as many fish out of the hatchery as possible.

Budget, Purchasing, PO's

Working on PO's for fish, tree work, and sidewalk repair. Working to finalize quotes on the hatchery alarm system upgrade.

Maintenance of Ponds and Grounds

Added a few tractor buckets of stone to boat ramps into Ponds 85, 5-Acre, and 4-Acre. These will make it easier for carrying nets and buckets of fish out of the ponds, and will also allow the Buffalo truck and ATVs to access the ponds easier for weed control. Spreading ¾" and 2.5" stone on roadways filling potholes around the hatchery.

Pond Filling

A major portion of the ponds have been plugged and filled (16). The Hybrid Striped Bass fry and Grow out Walleye and Largemouth Bass ponds are all that remain. Water levels and flows are being adjusted daily. Dissolved oxygen and temperature data are being collected. Ponds have also started to be fertilized for plankton production.

COVID 19 Prep

All personnel areas have been wiped down and sterilized. Vehicle interiors have been wiped clean. Cleaning supplies have been ordered. A preparedness plan is being developed. All staff have been updated and will continue to be updated as this issue changes. A limited number of seasonal employees have worked to date in an effort to keep employee numbers down at the hatchery and to make social distancing easier.

New Hire

Congrats to Steve Jeffries on his hiring as a Repairer for the Hackettstown and Pequest Fish Hatcheries. Steve has been a seasonal in Hackettstown for many years. He will be a valuable asset to the hatcheries for many years to come. Good Luck with the full-time position.

Hackettstown Maintenance and Repair (Mercurio/Jeffries)

Serviced all UTV's, boats, chainsaws, mowers, and vehicles.

Replaced several teeth on the excavator bucket.

Replaced a burnt photocell light timer on the maintenance garage.

Replaced the backwash pump on the 68-degree recirculation system drum filter.

Repaired aluminum walkway on the hatchery big stocking truck.

Set a large steel plate to cover concrete runway to act as a bridge at the top of pond 56.

Replaced two fuel tank straps on SG28829.

Backfilled two new PVC pipe extensions from ponds 31 and 32 into pond 91 using the excavator.

Removed several downed trees from roadways in the east and west hatcheries using a chainsaw.

Tuned up the tank sprayer for the back of the flathead used for weed treatment and fertilizing.

Dredged netting areas in ponds 85 and 5-acre. Cleaned out the grate and mosquito ditch along pond 78.

Completed a preventative maintenance checklist for everything mechanical in Hackettstown.

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (Shawn Crouse)

2021 Spring Trout

2021 trout stocking schedule was very similar to the 2020 trout stocking schedule. The Division used an accelerated schedule to stock over 90% of the trout at the hatchery in a 4-week period. A total of about 514,000 trout were stocked prior to opening day, April 10, 2021. In a typical spring, 183,000 trout are stocked in the same time period. The remaining 75,000 trout will be stocked in a week beginning on May 10.

Stocking truck drivers, from the Bureau of Lands Management, are provided load sheets for each individual stocking run. The load sheets provide detailed instructions for specific waterbodies, stocking point information, as well as additional information regarding transfer trucks, and meeting locations to stock their assigned waterbodies with appropriate number of fish. Load sheets for the in-season stocking period were developed and provided to the hatchery for distribution.

Each year stocking dates and information is coordinated with volunteers that assist with float stocking certain trout stocked waterbodies. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, volunteers were not utilized to assist with stocking.

Many days were spent answering emails and phone calls from anglers regarding trout stocking. (Shramko)

Division staff also performed two different angler surveys relative to the opening day of the Catch & Release Season and the opening day of the Harvest Season for trout. A 2021 Opening Day Angler Report was completed and submitted to the Fish and Game Council. Highlights below:

- Two different Opening Day Trout Angler Surveys were done by Division Staff. Surveys were performed on April 1, the day the State was opened to Catch and Release fishing only, and on April 10 when harvest was allowed.
- Only Division of Fish and Wildlife Staff performed the surveys.
- No anglers were actually interviewed for safety concerns associated with the global pandemic, therefore no angler catch data could be analyzed.
- Angler surveys were conducted at 41 locations on April 1, the Catch and Release opening day of the spring trout season.
- 247 anglers were observed fishing (an average of ~5.8 anglers per waterbody).
- Most utilized waterbodies during the C&R survey were Lake Ocquittunk (34 anglers), Pohatcong Creek (29 anglers), and the Pequest River (27 anglers).
- Angler surveys were conducted at 51 locations on April 10, the true opening day of the spring trout season (harvest allowed).
- 2002 anglers were observed fishing (an average of ~39.3 anglers per waterbody).
- Most utilized waterbodies on the general opening day were the Pequest River (343 anglers), the Paulins Kill (192 anglers) and the Musconetcong River (185).

- Social Distancing Guidelines appeared to be generally followed, though not as closely as during 2020s surveys. Most groups appeared to be family or traveling together, though some larger groups were observed. (staff)

Fish Kill Investigations

During this month, an increased number of fish kills have occurred within freshwaters across the state. Six descriptions are summarized below:

Lake Musconetcong Fish Kill (Morris / Sussex) - Fisheries Technician Sedor investigated the reported fish kill on Lake Musconetcong around 12:15 pm on March 31. Several different fish species (sunfish, crappie, catfish) were found in severe decay. Many fish were so decomposed that species identification was difficult to ascertain. No dying or distressed fish were found. This information supports that the reason for the fish kill may have occurred some time ago and was not an ongoing problem. In addition, no dead trout were found (trout were stocked on 3/30 in Lake Musconetcong), also potentially indicating that the reason for the fish kill was not ongoing. Water chemistry was not collected at this time. (Shramko)

Oak Pond Fish Kill (Camden) - 1,440 Trout were stocked on Wednesday, March 24 and approximately 200 were reported dead. Biologist Boehm investigated the site on the morning of March 29. Oak Pond (12 acres) is located on the Winslow WMA in the town of Sicklerville. A total of 154 stocked Rainbow Trout were found dead and removed from the perimeter of the pond. Fish were evenly distributed along the shoreline, and amongst the patches of phragmites that line the pond. The fish appeared to have been dead for several days, as most lost their color and were starting to decay. No other fish species were observed to be impacted. Largemouth Bass and Bluegill were seen swimming along the shoreline. No foreign odors, chemical sheens, or other possible sources of toxins were observed. Water chemistry measurements did not appear out of the ordinary and would readily support aquatic life. Water temperature was not in the lethal range for Rainbow Trout, a species that requires coldwater to survive. However, recent high temperatures (following the stocking) last Thursday, Friday, and Saturday (approximately 70, 80 and 70F respectively) may have rapidly increased water temperatures to stressful levels leading to the fish kill. No follow up activities are needed at this time unless additional dead or distressed fish are reported. (Boehm)

Shabbecong Creek Fish Kill (Warren) - On April 9 a minor fish kill was reported in a small stream just east of Rt. 57 and Rt. 31 (a tributary to Pohatcong Creek) known as Shabbecong Creek (FW2-TM (C1)). Shramko observed approximately 50 dead White Suckers, Blacknose Dace, and Creek Chubs. CO Anderson collected fish and brought them to the Division's Pathologist, but due to level of decay, they were of limited value and ultimately a reason for the minor kill was not determined. (Shramko)

Stewart Lake Fish Kills (Gloucester) – A fish kill was reported at Stewart Lake in Woodbury, Gloucester County on March 30. A supplemental field investigation was completed on March 31, to further assess the fish kill. The lake was notably low at approximately 1.5 – 2 feet below normal level. The water level has periodically fluctuated

over the last few years due to a leaking spillway. A dam repair project, permitted by Bureau of Dam Safety, is currently underway. There is currently no valid water lowering permit, nor has one been applied for. The fish kill does not appear to be related to the water level and most likely a seasonal event due to rapidly increasing water temperatures over the last couple weeks. Approximately 50-100 decomposed Bluegill were observed near the boat ramp section of the lake. Three additional locations were visually assessed with no dead fish present. Temperature and dissolved oxygen were determined at three locations consisting of the boat ramp, a small inflow near the boat ramp and the headwater of the pond at the inflow.

Location 1. Boat Ramp	Location 2. Inflow Near Boat Ramp	Location 3. Upstream Inflow
Time: 11:30 am	Time: 11:30 am	Time: 11:15 am
Temperature: 15.3 C	Temperature: 13.9 C	Temperature: 12.7 C
Dissolved Oxygen: 7.46 mg/l	Dissolved Oxygen: 9.69 mg/l	Dissolved Oxygen: 9.35 mg/l
pH: 6.54	pH: 6.53	pH: 6.35

Dissolved oxygen levels may have been lower in the main section of the lake near the boat ramp from an algae bloom and overcast conditions. Fish Kills are common at this location during the early spring with Bluegill, Largemouth Bass, Common Carp, and Gizzard Shad often affected. No further action is required at this time. However, if additional reports are received, consisting of additional species, or actively dying fish, a follow-up investigation is warranted to collect fish for analysis. (Smith)

Unnamed tributary of Merrill Creek Reservoir's outlet stream Fish Kill (Warren) -

On April 13 a minor fish kill was reported in a small stream in Stewartsville NJ. Fisheries Technician Sedor observed approximately 25 dead native Brook Trout, 30 Blacknose Dace, a few Creek Chubs, and a few White Suckers. CO Holmes collected fish and brought them to the Division's Pathologist Lovy for further analysis. It is unknown at this time for the cause of the fish kill, but it was observed that the dead fish began near a pool supply business. It is possible, but not confirmed that chlorine could have spilled into the stream. Division Pathologist Lovy explained that fish are extremely sensitive to chlorine and if any chlorinated water was discharged into the stream (especially a small one like this), then it could certainly cause a rapid die-off of fish. Chlorine toxicity is difficult to determine in the fish based on histology because it kills fish so quickly that there are no tissue/cellular changes to note in histology. It also clears (dissipates) quickly from the stream, so that is always a challenge in trying to detect it after the fact. (Shramko and Lovy)

Wanaque River Fish Kill (Passaic) – A report of dead Brown Trout was received on March 2. The report indicated a half dozen wild Brown Trout were found dead in mid-February and some throughout the summertime. The Brown Trout were found approximately 1 mile downstream of the Wanaque Reservoir, which is a regulated Wild Brown Trout Enhancement area. Potential impacts from the sewage treatment plant, local

township/county, and the Wanaque Reservoir are still being investigated to understand the causative factors associated with the kill and mitigation of the issue in the future. (Collenburg)

Stream Temperature Monitoring – This program was initiated in 2012 to monitor stream temperature in our major rivers that are currently regulated as Trout Maintenance. The continuous temperature monitoring program is designed to closely monitor stream temperature in areas that have marginal thermal habitat for the purpose of trout stocking, understanding thermal regimes in our major river systems, and expand the program to Trout Production streams to gain a deeper understanding of stream temperature's role on the entire life cycle of wild trout in New Jersey and assist in guiding management of these streams. This reporting period effort focused on managing stream temperature data from the Brook Trout Strongholds Project. (Collenburg)

Stormwater Analysis – Analysis of stream temperature data from 2018-2020 continues and preliminary results show that a total of 272 stormwater surge events, defined as a 2°C increase of water temperature, or greater, in a 30-minute period. Analysis will be similar to those performed in 2019 to understand stormwater surge impacts associated with land use and fish populations. (Collenburg)

Warmwater Fisheries Management Plan - Continuing update species management plan sections which will be included within the Warmwater Fisheries Management Plan. A first draft of the Bluegill Management Plan was submitted and reviewed. (Boehm and Smith)

Batsto Lake annual spring fish ladder check - The ladder was inspected on March 31 and blockages and debris were removed. Water chemistry was collected. No river herring were observed, possibly due to cold water temperatures (43.7 F). (Boehm)

Great Fishing Close to Home in NJ App Meeting - Participated in a meeting to discuss the Great Fishing Close to Home in NJ mapping application on April 8. The app is nearing completion and only requires a few minor updates. This tool will provide anglers with the Places to Fish information with a mapping tool. (Staff)

Research and Management Staff Meeting – Participated in a R&M Staff Meeting on April 7 to discuss the Warmwater and Coldwater Fisheries Management Plans, as well as the upcoming Community Lakes Project. (Staff)

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Freshwater Permits - Reviewed Land Management Reviews (LMR's) from a freshwater fisheries perspective to address any foreseeable negative impacts to local fisheries. Reviewed water lowering permits and fish stocking applications and contacted applicants as necessary to obtain required information. Responded to requests from the public for information on general fisheries questions, fish stocking, and water lowering permit programs. (Staff)

WMA Fishing Tournament Permits – The Division started accepting applications for the 2021 fishing tournament season. A total of 150 applications for Wildlife Management Area fishing

tournament permits have been received. All permits have been issued for tournaments in March and April. (Smith)

Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (Steering Committee Meeting) - Took part in a Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV) steering committee meeting. Ross Shramko replaced Lisa Barno as an official member on the Steering Committee. Ross Shramko is also on the EBTJV Science and Data Committee. This meeting discussed the future funding options and procedure for funding Brook Trout conservation projects through the EBTJV's funding program. It also welcomed a new EBTJV coordinator and acknowledge the work of previous coordinators and contributors. Projects New Jersey is currently working on to aid in Brook Trout Conservation such as the Reinhart Brook Brown Trout Removal Project and the Stream Temperature Monitoring work was also discussed with the other EBTJV members. (Shramko)

Invasive Species Management – Participated in the second DEP Invasive Species Workgroup meeting on April 6. General discussions regarding the content of the 2008 DEP Invasive Species Management Plan and possible areas for updates and expansion were discussed. A steering committee, with each organization represented, will be formed, and meet later in April to discuss plan goals. (Smith and Crouse)

Statewide Dam Removal Partnership – Biologists Smith and Boehm participated in two Statewide Dam Removal Partnership meetings on March 16 and 17. The monitoring workgroup is nearing the completion of obtaining information for the partnership workgroup. Website formatting and the creation of additional information/splash pages were reviewed and discussed by the group. NJDFW will provide information regarding invasive species monitoring and concerns regarding dam removal for the website prior to the next meeting. (Smith and Boehm)

Rockaway Creek, North Branch (Hunterdon) – A report of heavy equipment operating in the North Branch of the Rockaway Creek was received on March 23. This was investigated by NJDEP Bureau of Coastal Land Use Compliance and Enforcement. The County Bridge RT-16 project was found to have received a FHAIP – FHA140001 and a FWIPW – FWW130001 under PI#1000-13-0001.1. The original permits have received an extension until 2024 to complete this project. Several inspections were conducted by Compliance and Enforcement due to receiving several complaints, and at this time, the work on site is being conducted in accordance with the approved and extended permits. (Collenburg)

Mason's Run (Camden) - A site visit was conducted on Mason's Run, located in Pine Hill, a stream that supports the state's southernmost reproducing Brook Trout population. The Pine Hill Golf Course, now Trump National Philadelphia was built around Mason's Run in the mid-1990's. A conservation group was established at the time of construction with representatives from NJDEP, Camden County Soil Conservation, Pine Hill Borough, Trout Unlimited, Trump National, and USFWS. The conservation group meets quarterly to discuss current conditions and potential projects to protect the Brook Trout and Swamp Pink (a federally listed threatened plant species). Brian Burns, the Trout Unlimited representative for the conservation group has diligently monitored the site for the past 25 years. In the last two years beavers have taken up residence and significantly altered the habitat and landscape within Mason's Run and surrounding wetlands. A site inspection was completed on March 24, to assess the current

beaver impacts. Biologists Smith and Collenburg met with Brian Burns to assess the damage. The creation of two large dams, two small dams, and a lodge have altered the habitat within the primary trout habitat. Spawning habitat is currently not significantly impacted by the structures which are located upstream of the major spawning areas. Mr. Burns has annually monitored stream temperatures at multiple locations for approximately 20 years. Biologist Collenburg will assist with the placement of additional temperature monitors in 2021 to determine thermal impacts of the beaver structures. The ponding habitat created may benefit the trout population if thermal impacts are minimal, however a decision on further actions will be determined after the temperature monitoring. An inspection of downstream habitat which generally does not support trout was also completed. The conservation group has hired a consultant to complete a feasibility study for a restoration project and expand trout habitat further downstream. The downstream waters (those downstream of the main golf course access road) are impacted by run off, high erosion scour, and elevated temperatures. (Smith and Collenburg)

Chatsworth Lake sink hole (Burlington) - A sink hole was reported at the Chatsworth Lake dam, part of the Franklin Parker Preserve (NJ Conservation Foundation owned in partnership with the Division of Parks and Forestry), located in Woodland Township, Burlington County across the West Branch of Wading River. Dam Safety mandated the lowering. The fishery consists entirely of a native pinelands fish assemblage, with low pH, and does not have much of a recreational fishery. Eric Boehm has been in contact with NJ Conservation Foundation staff to walk them through any permits needed for water lowering and potential fish salvage discussions. (Boehm)

Site visit to Kenco Property - On April 9 Fisheries Biologists Shramko and Collenburg participated in a site visit to the Kenco WMA along the Pequest River to discuss the in-stream phase of this restoration project that will focus on controlling the thalweg control of this highly modified stream that has been historically relocated for agricultural purposes. Additional participants included Land Management, North Jersey RC&D, TU, and project engineers. (Shramko and Collenburg)

Van Campens Brook (Warren) and Brass Castle Creek (Warren) Projects - Significant projects are occurring along both of these waters that may impact the habitat, water quality, and fish populations along these Wild Trout Streams. Concerns are being reported to various DEP programs in an attempt to minimize negative impacts. NJDEP has had several conversations about best management practices that took a little longer than it should have to be put in place with regard to sediment control measures on the Van Campens Brook – Watergate project. The offices of Compliance and Enforcement have been informed and are investigating. (Shramko)



2021 SPRING TROUT STOCKING SUMMARY
Pequest State Fish Hatchery

PART 1 Stocking Due to Covid 3/15/21-4/09/21

	<u>#FISH</u>	<u>#LBS</u>	<u>AVERAGE LENGTH</u>
RBT Production -	509,535	247,649	11.3"
RBT Broodstock -	5745	9766	RBT II – 15.4"
	1880	7520	RBT III – 20.2"

TOTAL RAINBOW TROUT SO FOR SPRING
517,160 FISH

TOTAL LBS. FOR SO FAR FOR SPRING
264,935 LBS.

BUILDING MAINTENANCE PROGRAM (Dominick Mercurio)