

Merrimack River Valley Chapter Trout Unlimited

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President's Message

NH Fish and Game helps restore wild trout habitat, enforces regulations that manage fish populations, raises and stocks fish that take angling pressure off of wild fish and provides an angling experience for all NH anglers. By now you have heard about the funding problems Fish and Game has encountered. They have been mandated to implement new programs and continue to incur costs on under-funded programs, such as search and rescue efforts, while revenue continues to decline on their primary source of funds, hunting and fishing licenses. The recently elected legislature will soon be dealing with this issue. Please take 5 minutes to find your local rep and senator and send an email voicing your support for NH Fish and Game. We have made it easy for you by creating a web page with links to contact information for your local reps, senator and the governor. There is also information about the funding crisis, and a sample message that you can personalize. <http://www.merrimacktu.org/support-fish-game-department.htm>

Do you have a neighbor or relative that would like to learn how to fly fish, but you don't have the time or patience to teach them? Do you know a fly fisher who would like to improve their skills? This March and April we will be running a series of beginner and intermediate fly fishing classes in Pelham, Manchester and Nashua. We will be presenting these classes in conjunction with the NH Fish and Game "Let's Go Fishing" program. Here is a link with more information: <http://www.merrimacktu.org/Learn-to-FF/LGFF-2007.htm>

The "Fishing Show Season" is about to begin. Our chapter will have a booth at the Rockingham Hunting and Fishing Expo in Salem, January 12-14. We will also once again be co-sponsoring the Fly Fish New Hampshire Show at Pelham Fish and Game Club. If you want to help out at either event, contact Ron Peimer (flytyr@hotmail.com). Participating in these shows is part of our community out-reach effort to educate the public on the TU mission, recruit new members, and to support our fund raising efforts. Other parts of the community education initiative include placement of the TU interpretive poster at various local libraries; fly tying and other support for the Nashua Library Fishing Seminars in January; speaking engagements at local libraries about fishing in NH and coldwater ecology issues; and active support for the Adopt-a-Salmon program. We continue to expand these efforts and welcome your feedback and participation.

Happy New Year!

Gerry

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EDITORS NOTE: IF YOU
HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS OR
COMMENTS ON THE
NEWSLETTER SEND THEM TO:
MRTUNews@comcast.net

THANKS

REMINDER: All meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at the Sweeny American Post, 251 Maple St., Manchester. Meeting Timeline:

6:30 pm Fly Tying

7:30 pm Chapter Business

7:45pm Speaker

NEXT MEETING OF THE SEASON: JAN 9TH

SPEAKER: Jim MacCartney – Nash Stream Restoration Project

Jim is employed by Trout Unlimited and the White Mountain National Forest as a River Restoration Specialist. Along with John Magee, habitat biologist for NH Fish and Game, Jim is a driving force behind the restoration effort on Nash Stream in north central New Hampshire.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/SPEAKERS

FEBRUARY 13 – Speaker Dianne Emerson – Wild Brook Trout Study in Northern NH

Dianne is a fishery biologist with New Hampshire Fish and Game in northern New Hampshire. Dianne has been conducting a radio telemetry study of wild brook trout in the Diamond/Magalloway River system. Our TU chapter, along with other organizations, contributed money for equipment used in this study.

MARCH 13 – Speaker Mark Prout – Wild Brook Trout Habitat Restoration in White Mountain National Forest

Mark is a fishery biologist with the White Mountain National Forest. He will discuss the brook trout habitat in the WMNF and ongoing survey and restoration efforts.

APRIL 10 – Annual Dinner and Auction-no speaker

MAY 8 – **MEETING AT AMOSKEAG FISHWAY** – Hosted by Wendy Schorr – Wendy will conduct a tour of the fishway and give a presentation and answer questions about the role of the Amoskeag Fishway in the restoration of anadromous fish to the Merrimack River system.

ITEMS OF INTEREST:

Treasurer's Report – December 29, 2006 (Stan Jodziewicz, Treasurer)

The Chapter files two financial reports each year, one with the NH Charitable Trusts Unit and the other with TU National.

The Charitable Trusts Unit report covers the period from April 1 to March 31. Major elements of this past year's report filed in July 2006 showed:

Gross Revenue	\$ 13,393.91
Direct Expenses	9,720.14
Net Income	3,673.77

Program Services:

Back-the-Brookie Donation	\$ 350.00
NH F&G Stocking Truck	1,090.00
Adopt-A-Salmon Program	659.43

NH F&G Telemetry Donation 1,000.00

The TU National Report covers the period from Oct 1 to Sept. Major elements of this report filed in November 2006 showed:

Total Revenues	\$ 13,224.01
Total Expenses	12,788.29
Net Inflow	440.72

Programs:

Habitat Projects	\$ 659.43
NH F&G Stocking Truck	1,090.00
Back-the-Brookie DVD	350.00

Total Volunteer Hours	1,362
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The complete reports are available from Stan Jodziewicz, Chapter Treasurer at each meeting. Our current status is: checking account \$9,094.25 and a \$5,000.00 CD, both at St. Mary's Bank.

Merrimack River Valley Trout Unlimited (DON MCINLEY)

2006 Adopt-A-Biologist Program

Despite 2006 being a very difficult year, we together accomplished much, including a new effort in support NH Fish & Game (NHF&G) with wild brook trout radio tagging. This was in addition to our traditional support of NHF&G and the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) with the Merrimack Anadromous Fish Restoration Program. During the year, we supported the agencies on **13 days** with **33 volunteers** contributing a solid **409 hours of assistance**. Our contributions would have been significantly more, except for the closure of the Essex Dam Fish Lift due to the spring flooding and the exorbitant gasoline prices which surely kept many from volunteering "up North". All in all, we had another pretty good year.

This season, our volunteer headcount hit a new high of 66. We received support from several members of two sister TU chapters, Basil Woods and Monadnock. The more TU Chapters that get involved in the AAB Program, the closer we will get to become a statewide program. Additionally, we had six NH Wildlife Federation members sign up as AAB volunteers. Hopefully, our headcount will continue to grow in 2007 with even better participation.

The biologists we assisted this year included:

- Jon Greenwood of NH Fish & Game for Atlantic salmon fry stocking and parr sampling
- Caleb Slater of Mass Fish & Wildlife for Atlantic salmon and American shad counting and trapping at the Essex dam in Lawrence.
- Dianne Emerson of NH Fish & Game for wild brook trout radio tagging.

The activities we supported this year with **409 volunteer hours** included:

- Atlantic salmon fry stocking on the following rivers: Souhegan, Piscataquog, Smith (& tributaries), Mad, Beebe, East Branch Pemi, and the Pemi main stem.
- Wild Atlantic salmon and American shad counting/trapping at the Essex Dam (Lawrence)
- Wild brook trout capture for radio tagging on the Dead Diamond River.
- Atlantic salmon parr electro shocking surveys on the Souhegan and Piscataquog Rivers.

Again, 2007 was a challenge, given the spring floods that effectively closed the Essex dam fish lift on the Merrimack River for most of the season. Several family efforts had to be canceled due to closure of the Lift from mid-May through the end of the season, including the McDaniels and Heberts; we could certainly benefit with more such family volunteer efforts going forward.

On a very positive note, Mike Miller and Tom Weller of Keene traveled the width of the state to count salmon, shad and herring in early May. These fellows from our sister Monadnock TU Chapter deserve a big hand for their extended efforts.

In 2007, we will have an opportunity to do much more good work in support of coldwater conservation. A big new potential effort will be to assist on the Nash Stream restoration project that we will hear more about over the upcoming months. My old friend Archie Noyes of Danforth, ME often pointed out that the world has many "Setters" but few "Doers". I sincerely ask each of you to consider being a strong "Doer" in 2007 and also try to bring along a friend or two to help on volunteer days. If you know of new people who might like to help, please have them contact Don McGinley any day after 7:00PM at **603-487-5075** or Email me at **donmcg44@aol.com**. The only requirements to volunteer are an Email account and a desire to help our coldwater fisheries and habitat while having fun and learning much from our biologists.

Dianne Emerson DNA sampling wild brook trout caught by volunteers



KUDOS TO DON FROM LEE PERRY (NH WILDLIFE)

"Thanks to you Don for coordinating the Program through another successful year and thanks to every one who contributed on one or more of the activities - the support and personal contributions to making the fisheries program a success is greatly appreciated - Happy New Year to all"

ROCKINGHAM SPORTS SHOW

The annual sports show at Rockingham Race Track (Salem NH) will be held FRI/SAT/SUN 1/12-14/07. The show features vendors and seminars relating to fishing, hunting, boating, and other outdoor sports. The chapter will have a table at the show, please stop by to say "HI".

ALL MEETINGS HELD THE SECOND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH (SEPT-MAY) AT THE SWEENEY AMERICAN LEGION POST, 251 MAPLE STREET MANCHESTER NH DIRECTIONS: ELM STREET TO VALLEY STREET TO MAPLE STREET (1ST LEFT AFTER STADIUM)

~ Visit our Web site! ~

<http://www.merrimacktu.org>

Meeting Schedules, Pictures and Articles about Adopt-a-biologist program, Stream Restoration Projects, Chapter Outings, Fly Patterns, and a "Links Page" with links to interesting web sites

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Interesting piece from the *NY Times* (business section) on fish farming:

Free or Farmed, When Is a Fish Really Organic?

By ANDREW MARTIN

Published: November 28, 2006

Buying a pork chop labeled "organic" is relatively straightforward: it comes from a pig that ate only organic food, roamed outdoors from time to time and was left free of antibiotics.

But what makes a fish organic?

That is a question troubling the Agriculture Department, which decides such things. The answer could determine whether Americans will be able to add fish to the growing list of organic foods they are buying, and whether fish farmers will be able to tap into that trend and the profits that go with it.

Organic foods, which many people believe to be more healthful (though others scoff), are grown on farms that shun chemicals and synthetic fertilizers and that meet certain government standards for safeguarding the environment and animals.

An organic tomato must flourish without conventional pesticides; an organic chicken cannot be fed antibiotics. Food marketers can use terms like "natural" and "free range" with some wiggle room, but only the Agriculture Department can sanction the "organic" label.

To the dismay of some fishermen -- including many in the Alaskan salmon industry -- this means that wild fish, whose living conditions are not controlled, are not likely to make the grade. And that has led to a lot of bafflement, since wild fish tend to swim in pristine waters and are favored by fish lovers.

"If you can't call a wild Alaska salmon true and organic," asked Senator Lisa Murkowski, a Republican from Alaska, "what can you call organic?"

Instead, it appears that only farm-raised salmon may pass muster, as may a good number of other farm-raised fish -- much to the delight of fish farmers.

But a proposed guideline at the Agriculture Department for calling certain farmed fish "organic" is controversial on all sides. Environmentalists argue that many farm-raised fish live in cramped nets in conditions that can pollute the water, and that calling them organic is a perversion of the label. Those who catch and sell wild fish say that their products should be called organic and worry that if they are not, fish farmers will gain a huge leg up.

Even among people who favor the designation of farmed fish as organic, there are disputes over which types of fish should be included.

Trying to define what makes a fish organic "is a strange concept," said George H. Leonard, science manager for the Seafood Watch Program at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, which offers a consumer guide to picking seafood. "I think the more you look at it, particularly for particular kinds of fish, it gets even stranger."

The issue comes down largely to what a fish eats, and whether the fish can be fed an organic diet. There is broad agreement that the organic label is no problem for fish that are primarily vegetarians, like catfish and tilapia, because organic feed is available (though expensive).

Fish that are carnivores -- salmon, for instance -- are a different matter because they eat other fish, which cannot now be labeled organic.

The Agriculture Department panel that recommended adding farmed fish to the organic roster was willing to work around the issue, and offered various ways that fish-eating fish could qualify.

But those work-arounds have infuriated some environmentalists, who take issue with the idea that a fish could be called organic if it ate meal made from wild non-organic fish. This constituency complains, among other things, that demand for fish meal is depleting wild fisheries.

"When it comes to carnivorous fish, it seems to be a complete deception of what organic means," said Andrea Kavanagh, director of the Pure Salmon Campaign, an advocacy group working to improve conditions for farm-raised fish. "Organic is supposed to be on 100 percent organic feed."

As the purists balk, the market for organic foods grows. Consumer sales reached \$13.8 billion in 2005 compared with \$3.6 billion in 1997, according to the Organic Trade Association. What started as a farming technique for crops has

expanded into everything from processed foods to flowers and cosmetics. There was even a federal task force to evaluate organic pet food.

Fish farmers and retailers are painfully aware of what they are missing, and some of them are taking matters into their own hands. As things stand, a limited amount of seafood is being sold as organic at stores in the United States, usually because it was certified by other countries or by third-party accreditation agencies.

A company in Florida called OceanBoy Farms is selling what it says are organic shrimp to Wal-Mart, Costco and some other retailers. And at the Lobster Place, a seafood store in Manhattan, "organic" king salmon from New Zealand is offered for \$13.50 a pound, compared with \$22.95 for wild king salmon and \$9.95 for farm-raised salmon.

"People will go for organic salmon when wild king salmon isn't available," said Todd Harding, director of wholesale operations for the Lobster Place. He said that the taste of organic salmon was more consistent, but that he generally preferred wild salmon.

While most consumers say they prefer wild-caught fish, 72 percent would buy organic fish at least some of the time, according to a recent survey by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and Rutgers.

If the Agriculture Department ultimately approves organic fish, it would certainly complicate the debate about what types of seafood are best in terms of taste, nutrition, price and environmental impact. Farm-raised? Wild-caught? Or farm-raised organic?

There is plenty of history to the debate. In 2000, when the Agriculture Department sought to weed out some of the food industry's murkier organic claims, it named a task force to evaluate requests from fish farmers for organic eligibility.

The farmers argued, then as now, that with demand for seafood growing and many wild fisheries being depleted, farm-raised seafood should have a competitive edge. On farms, they said, the number of fish remains stable, and the quality of water and feed are controlled.

One thing the task force did was rule out the possibility that wild fish could be labeled organic.

"It takes some thinking about," said Rebecca J. Goldberg, a senior scientist at the advocacy group Environmental Defense, who was on the advisory panel. "What it comes down to is organic is about agriculture, and catching wild animals isn't agriculture."

The task force recommended that farm-raised fish could be labeled organic as long as their diets were almost entirely organic plant feed.

The Agriculture Department shelved those recommendations and let the issue lie fallow. In 2005 a second task force was convened -- this time, with more members affiliated with the aquaculture industry.

This year, the group recommended far less stringent rules, including three options for what organic fish could eat: an entirely organic diet; non-organic fish during a seven-year transition period while fish farms shift to organic fish meal; or non-organic fish meal from "sustainable" fisheries. Sustainable fisheries are those that ensure that their fish stocks do not become depleted.

Even if the recommendations are adopted, it will still take several years before U.S.D.A.-certified organic fish appears in stores or restaurants. But domestic fish farmers say that new rules cannot come soon enough. While the aquaculture industry has experienced rapid growth, the vast majority of it has been overseas -- mainly in China -- and much of the growth in seafood sales in the United States, which had a wholesale value of \$29.2 billion in 2004, has come from imports.

Rodger May, a Seattle businessman who sells wild and farm-raised salmon, is preparing for the day when he can sell his fish as organic. For now he refers to some of his farm-raised salmon -- which live in ocean pens, as opposed to man-made ponds -- as "natural," a designation that does not carry the same marketing punch as would "organic."

Mr. May says he believes that he has created the perfect environment for organic fish. His "natural" fish are raised in pens that hold fewer fish than those for his regular farm-raised salmon, and they live in a body of water where fast-moving currents constantly provide fresh water and flush away waste.

His fish eat a mixture of oily brown pellets that resemble dog food and contain protein in the form of ground-up fish; other farm-raised salmon are fed protein from chicken and other land animals, he said.

"How can a wild fish be cleaner than one of these?" he asked. "What can be more organic than something that comes out of the sea, that has no chemicals near it, no antibiotics and is fed fish?"

The Agriculture Department may ultimately agree with Mr. May. But even if it does, it could then face another round of difficult questions. For instance, what is an organic clam? An oyster? A scallop?

"How do you make conventional mollusk production different from organic mollusk production?" asked Ms. Goldberg, the Agriculture Department panelist, who noted that mollusks filter water for food. "They are all just sucking up water. Is it cleaner water?"

FLY FISHING WEBSITES OF INTEREST:

Good article on fly line taper can be found at
http://www.flyfishinginsider.com/aArticle_display.asp?id=78
The Monadnock chapter of TU has their newsletter online at

<http://www.monadnocktu.org/newsletters/2006%2012%20Newsletter.pdf>