



Erie Pennsylvania Sport Fishing Association

“Dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of all sport fish species in Lake Erie through education and association”

January 24th, 2008

Mr. Concilla; Fish Commissioner
11854 Cole Road
North East, PA 16428

Re: Lake Erie-Brown Trout Stocking Program

Dear Sam,

The E.P.S.F.A. is seeking your support and guidance concerning one of our Association goals. That goal is to increase the current stocking levels of Brown Trout in our Pennsylvania Waters of Lake Erie.

We recognize the importance, success and economic impact of the existing PAFBC Steelhead Program. This program's success combined with the large annual stocking numbers of Steelhead Smolt is unparalleled in the Great Lakes Region. The PAFBC has done a great job with this fishery but we have little diversity with our cold water fishery program since they eliminated the Salmon program.

We recognize the desires and hear the voice of many anglers. They agree with the fact that we have a great Steelhead Fishery but seek some variety. Coho and King Salmon are not really a good option even though we often hear a “wish” for the Salmon to be reintroduced. However, you and I were aware of the problems associated with raising these fish, keeping them from disease and the poor returns. The current lake Trout restoration program has value but not great value and has fallen on hard times as of late. That leaves us with a great second player to the Steelhead and that is the Brown Trout.

Brown Trout are a quality fish that can provide the following benefits to our existing fishery.

1. Home body: Browns have a tendency to stay local and will not roam into Canada much like the Steelhead. Our Steelhead often leave PA Waters and are caught, netted or enter foreign water tributaries. Brown Trout have a tendency to stay in the same area that they were planted as long as forage and ideal water is available. This equates to a higher percentage of fish being caught by PA Anglers. Also, these fish will mix in or be close to our schools of Walleye which will provide the Walleye anglers with that bonus fish from time to time.

Our Steelhead can be far offshore in the summer months and in Canadian waters while Browns may stay close and provide some action for the anglers.

2. Food source: Browns are better tasting than Steelhead and are a more desirable fish to creel.
3. Habitat: the waters off the PA shoreline are ideal for Brown Trout habitat. Browns like structure and access to cool waters. The spring/fall will find these fish inhabiting our great shoreline structure, much like the Smallmouth and the summer periods will find them relating to cool water and structure. We have both.
4. Forage: Browns will consume most if not all of our forage fish. They are not choosy when they go to dine. They will eat Round Gobies and may help control their numbers. In Lake Ontario, Browns are consuming Gobies and should do so here.
5. Angler desire: anglers just love to catch Browns. They are excited and often, just that one fish creates a memory for them. Unfortunately, the Steelhead fishing for some has turned into a numbers game. It's not did you catch any? but HOW MANY?. When talking to anglers on the tributaries, marine radio, viewing fishing reports on websites or just general conversation, they "always" mention that "one" Brown Trout that was caught and are excited when they do. They are not as excited to mention that they also landed 12 Steelhead, which is quite common.
6. Economics: Browns will provide another trout species to catch and may attract more anglers or keep anglers from traveling to Lake Ontario/tributaries to pursue Browns. If the Browns do well and a sustainable fishery is established in the future, the charter fishing fleet may be the beneficiary of some of this success and the ensuing economic spin off will benefit many.
7. Trophy fish: big Browns are truly a trophy fish. They are very attractive and put up a formidable fight. A fall colored male fish is spectacular in appearance. Catching a big Brown occasionally will do nothing but enhance our fishery and give it more diversity.

I have had open discussions with Mr. Bob Hetz; 3-C-U, Mr. Ron Dombrowiak; Wesleyville Conservation Club and Mr. Charles Murray; PAFBC regarding our desire to increase the Lake Erie Brown Trout stocking levels. All were in favor but the key ingredient was cooperation from the PAFBC for obtaining the fry and the overall management of the program.

The main concerns for the 3-C-U and W.C.C were having enough money to feed the fish and having raceway space. Between both groups, it appears there is enough space to raise 25,000-35,000 Browns. If the PAFBC would provide space in some of their cold water raceway facilities, this stocking level could be further increased. We would like to see a commitment for 50,000 Browns to start this program. The E.P.S.F.A. proposed to the 3-C-U to provide annual monies to them specifically to feed these fish or a large part of them. We would try to do the same for the W.C.C. if they would raise some of these fish. However, the balance of the funding may have to come in part from the clubs themselves or the PAFBC.

The E.P.S.F.A. is seeking to open communication with the PAFBC and find a way to have them commit to a bona-fide Brown Trout stocking program. One that is much more aggressive than the plan currently in place. We will assist in any way that is necessary and are willing to try and provide some of the funds to help support the local co-ops.

I have attached the results of a couple threads posted recently on a popular fish reporting site. In just days, the brown Trout topics had a huge number oh views and a fair number of responses in just a brief time. This is just a sample of the Pennsylvania Anglers desire to seek more Brown trout.

Sam, we would appreciate that you investigate and evaluate our proposal and respond in a timely manner. We thank you in advance for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Pete Alex,
President,
E.P.S.F.A.

Enc.

