

# Minutes of the 2010 Southern Division AFS Trout Committee

February 25, 2010

Asheville, NC

## In attendance:

Alan Heft

Lorie Stroup

Matt Sell

Sheryl Bryan

Callie McMunigal

Steve Moore

Jason Henegar

Keith McGilvray

Jim Habera

Michael Shepherd

Larry Mohn

Gary Grossman

Doug Besler

Jeb Wofford

Jake Rash

Ron Brooks

Leigh McDougal

## Call to Order

Alan Heft (MD), trout committee chair, called the annual meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. at the Marriot Renaissance Hotel in Asheville, NC. The 2010 trout committee meeting was held in conjunction with the 2010 Southern Division AFS meeting.

Alan welcomed meeting attendees and committee members and announced that a quorum was present. Attendees introduced themselves and an attendance sheet was passed around the table.

## Old Business

Chair Alan Heft asked for changes to the minutes from the 2009 meeting -- none were suggested. A motion was made to approve the minutes, seconded, and approved unanimously.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Jeff Williams was unable to attend the meeting, but provided a Treasurer's Report document to the committee chair. The document was shared with the committee and a balance of \$2274.16 was noted. The Trout Committee treasury is held in a Bank of America account. Jeff reported the starting balance on the account as of March 31, 2009 was \$2,344.81; and as of February 23rd it was \$2,274.16. Credits to the account during the past year were \$515.00 (Reg. fees 2009 TC mtg.). Disbursements from the account totaled \$585.65 (Reimbursement to Larry Mohn for 2009 mtg. expenditures = \$221.50; Payment to the Inn at Gristmill for 2009 boxed lunches = \$246.15; monthly maintenance fees = \$118.00). A motion was made to approve the treasurer's report, seconded, and passed unanimously.

## **Distinguished Service Committee**

No actions were undertaken by this committee for 2010.

## **AC / DC Electrofishing Gear Comparison and Depletion Efficiencies**

Jim Habera provided an update on the AC/DC electrofishing gear comparison study. The manuscript is still in review at NAJFM but publication is expected to be forthcoming (note: article published in 2010 June issue of NAJFM). The current manuscript largely focuses on three-pass depletion efficiency but still includes information on gear comparisons. Older versions of the manuscript (that include a more thorough discussion of gear comparisons) are available from Jim Habera or Steve Moore. The committee continued its pledge to support publication costs via a \$500.00 contribution when the manuscript is published.

## **EBTJV Update**

Doug Besler, chair of the conservation strategy/habitat subcommittee of EBTJV, provided a review of the latest activities of the venture. The whole body met in November of 2009 at Cacapon State Park in WV. At this meeting, a review the EBTJV goals and conservation strategy occurred. Ultimately, the group decided to compress the current 3 regions that are identified in the conservation strategy into 2 regions. The mid-Atlantic region was dissolved and those states were incorporated into the Northern and Southern regions (New Jersey was

incorporated into the southern region). EBTJV is still pursuing the goal to meet numerical objectives by 2012 in each region and is trying to improve accounting for monies spent.

Callie McMunigal (USFWS) told the group that projects 1-12 would receive full funding this year and that award letters would be going out within a week. Callie's regional office had also provided funds to Callie to support travel for EBTJV members (contact Callie for information). Callie also informed the group that SARP and EBTJV both got \$600k for projects this year. It was noted that a large number of new partnerships were coming online and that future EBTJV funding would depend upon documenting progress to date.

### **New Business**

Chair Alan Heft distributed the Trout Committee membership roster and asked that attendees update their contact information as needed.

### **Distinguished Service Awards**

No action was proposed by the committee for 2010. It was confirmed that this subcommittee was still in existence and that Jim Habera was a participant in this subcommittee.

### **TC Website**

Jim Habera indicated that he could provide updated proceedings for the website. Alan Heft thanked Jim for his continued work on the proceedings.

### **2009 TC Meeting Location**

Alan indicated that MO would be unable to host a meeting in the near future, but continues to be interested in hosting the meeting at a later date. Alan Heft asked if any other person wanted to offer hosting of the 2011 meeting. When no one

replied, Alan offered to support hosting the meeting in Maryland at the Savage River Lodge in April, 2011. Alan indicated that he'll need 10-12 people to commit to the meeting before he could move forward with reserving space at the lodge. It was decided that the committee would be polled later in the year to assess travel budgets and likelihood of attendance to a meeting in MD. Steve Moore proposed the Great Smoky Mountains NP as a potential 2012 meeting site. It was suggested that the 2013 meeting be held in conjunction with the SDAFS meeting (Nashville, TN).

### **Nomination and Election of New Officers**

Alan Heft announced the need for nominations and election of new Trout Committee officers. Jeff Williams, Treasurer, is on a 3-yr term, which lasts through 2011. Jake Rash (NCWRC - and a new trout committee member) was the only nominee for Chair-Elect and was unanimously elected.

### **MicroFish Update**

Alan Heft indicated that an updated excel version of MicroFish was available and that Jack Van Deventer might be sending it out to committee members for review. A stipend will continued to be paid to Jack to attend TC meetings and he plans on providing a demonstration of the updated software at the 2011 meeting. Jack expects to complete the revised version of the software this year.

### **East Coast Wild Trout Conference**

Larry Mohn brought up the East Coast Wild Trout Conference and all agreed that 2012 (in Spring, preferably June) was presumably the next meeting date. Frostburg was proposed as a viable meeting location when students are not on campus. Alan Heft indicated that he would investigate the potential for a 2012 East Coast meeting at Frostburg.

### **Wild Trout**

Doug Besler reminded the group that Wild Trout X will be hosted in West Yellowstone on Sept. 28-30, 2010. Abstract submissions are due by April 1<sup>st</sup>, and a

submission indicates a manuscript commitment to the associated proceedings. Submissions can be made to Doug Besler or Kevin Meyer (IDFG).

## Round Table Discussion

### Tennessee WRA - Jim Habera

1. Despite improved flows in most of TN streams, the widespread drought during the past few years has notably reduced wild trout abundance in Tennessee's mountains streams. Monitoring data from 2009 indicate that biomass is down an average of about 50% from normal. Reproduction continues to be relatively good, thus abundance should recover quickly with a return to more normal stream flows. Monitoring data from sympatric (mixed) brook/rainbow populations continues to indicate that rainbow trout are impacted more substantially by droughts than are brook trout, resulting in increases in brook trout relative abundance in these areas.
2. Jim commented on a meeting he had with other trout managers in TN and their discussions about continuing restoration efforts on Sycamore Creek (trib. to the Tellico). In mid-1990's a barrier was constructed on Sycamore creek and this year they plan on reassessing the barrier (RBT are currently found above it), investigate upstream trout distributions, and eliminate RBT via antimycin treatments.
3. Jim indicated that he will be collecting tissue samples from about 10 streams outside of GRSM NP for Tim King's dataset.
3. TN is in the process of setting up reciprocal agreement with VA to allow TN or VA licensed anglers to fish all waters within the S. Holston Reservoir, which spans the VA/TN border. As part of the agreement, VA is going to take over BRT, RBT, and walleye stocking. Regulation changes will be needed for both states. The additional permit will cost \$20 and will allow a TN angler to fish in VA or vice-versa.

## Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries - Larry Mohn

1. Larry reported that trout recruitment was generally poor in VA compared to past years. Larry believes this might be a result of poor groundwater recharge and that this year's heavy snows might help alleviate that problem.
2. Coursey Springs hatchery renovation is nearing completion and updates will allow for an increase in trout production from 250 k lbs to about 350k lbs.
3. Lake Moomaw steelhead stocking. VDGIF switched from McConaughy strain steelhead to Chamber Creek stock b/c of disease issues. VDGIF has been PIT tagging released Chamber Creek fish to assess performance of the new strain.
4. Larry gave a brief review of the air/water temperature study that Mark Hudy and students are pursuing.

## North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission - Doug Besler and Jake Rash

Report submitted by Jake Rash

### *1. Trout Distribution*

NCWRC has almost completed its initial round of trout resource inventory work. With nearly 30 years of data, the NCWRC plans to finish general efforts to identify trout populations within North Carolina's waters by the end of 2010. Although an effort to locate all trout species, this work was directed at identifying the state's brook trout populations. To date, almost 590 brook trout populations have been identified.

### *2. Brook Trout Genetics*

The NCWRC has been collecting genetic information for the state's brook trout in conjunction with trout distribution efforts. A non-lethal muscle biopsy has been used to obtain tissue for allozyme analysis. To date, 478 populations have been genetically typed: 38% Southern Appalachian origin; 10% northern origin; and 52% mixed genetic origin. An additional 45 populations remain to be tested, but these data should be obtained prior to the end of 2010. In addition, the NCWRC wishes

to enhance the understanding of the genetic variance associated with North Carolina's brook trout. Thus, microsatellite DNA analysis will be employed to help answer questions regarding historic distribution of Southern Appalachian brook trout and to shape restoration efforts.

### *3. Economic Evaluation*

In 2009, a study conducted by Responsive Management and Southwick Associates evaluated the economic impact of trout fishing to North Carolina's economy. This study found that the total economic output of the NCWRC's trout management program in North Carolina exceeded \$174 million. Please see the following link for additional information:

[http://www.ncwildlife.org/NewsReleases/081209\\_North\\_Carolina\\_Trout\\_Anglers\\_Contribute\\_Significantly\\_to\\_Economy.htm](http://www.ncwildlife.org/NewsReleases/081209_North_Carolina_Trout_Anglers_Contribute_Significantly_to_Economy.htm).

### *4. Trout Management Plan*

The NCWRC has started the process of revising its Trout Management Plan. This document serves as the guiding document for how the NCWRC manages trout; however, the current document was first crafted in 1989. During the revision of the plan the NCWRC wishes to utilize an advisory group comprised of members representing various constituency groups to facilitate public involvement. The NCWRC has identified 2011 as a target date for implementation of a new plan.

### USFS NC - Sheryl Bryan and Lorie Stroup

Sheryl and Lorrie provided an overview of more recent restoration efforts on the forest. In the past few years, 7 restoration projects have been implemented via wood additions, riparian vegetation work, and culvert removals (aquatic organism passage (AOP) projects). A EBTJV project to remove a barrier in the Tellico drainage was discussed as well as the closure of the Tellico OHV area. The forest is heavily involved in AOP work in a variety of drainages.

### Great Smoky Mountains National Park - Steve Moore

1. Steve noted that trout populations were depressed across the park, despite relatively good stream flows. Steve suspects that high spring flows in 2009 were detrimental to reproduction.
2. Surveys of Lynn Camp Prong in 2009 indicated that there were 3 problem areas (1 small trib, 1 part of the gorge, and 1 stream section) where RBT were present and/or reproducing despite prior extirpation efforts. The park re-treated these areas and following additional surveys where no RBT were observed, restocked these areas with 2000 BKT (3 different strains). The stocked BKT came from 3 different watersheds and were stocked in Lynn Camp in three different locations according to the elevation where the strain was derived. The park plans to track reproduction and survival of the 3 different strains over the next few years.
3. Steve indicated that there were other restoration opportunities in the park for RBT removal, but that the "easy" projects had been completed.
4. Steve indicated that genetics work to date has indicated a slight reduction in Northern strain alleles in some populations. He noted that Tim King will be conducting further work in the park to assess if northern strain BKT genes are being bred out by southern strain fish.
5. 11 streams in GRSM are listed as impaired by acid deposition. TN is developing a TMDL for acid deposition and the park is involved in TMDL development.

### Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife - Ron Brooks, sitting in for Dave Dreves

1. Ron indicated that a trout stocking management plan has been in development for years, but that it was now a priority for the agency and they were working on it accordingly.
2. Repairs to the dam on Lake Cumberland continue and tailwater fishing below the dam was relatively poor with trout size and numbers down from prior years. Ron indicated that better flows and water temperatures in the future would be needed to improve trout growth and survival in the tailwater.



3. KY will begin stocking BKT in 2011.

#### Shenandoah National Park - Jeb Wofford

1. Extensive fisheries monitoring in Shenandoah did not occur in 2009. However, the park was able to complete electrofishing surveys on numerous unsurveyed small streams at the park boundary and now has surveyed all perennial streams in the park for fish. Several "new" small brook trout populations were discovered.
2. In 2010, park staff will begin cleaning all gear used in aquatic surveys when moving between watersheds. A discussion of which agencies were cleaning gear, appropriate equipment (i.e. good non-felt boots), cleaning methods, etc. ensued.

#### The University of Georgia - Gary Grossman

1. Gary took the opportunity to inform the committee about his research at UGA. He discussed an ongoing study (lab and field work) assessing the effects of stocked RBT on nongame fish habitat use. Results to date revealed that benthic fishes were the least affected by the presence of RBT and water column fishes were most affected. Gary will be writing the study up shortly.

#### Maryland DNR Inland Fisheries Management, Alan Heft

1. Alan gave a review of Didymo infestations in Maryland (Gunpowder, Savage, etc.)
2. The Savage Reservoir was drained in 2009 for dam repairs and a significant associated sediment pulse occurred downstream. Alan feels that the trout fishery in the lower Savage is likely devastated. Flushing flows will occur following dam repairs.
3. The Savage trout fishery above the reservoir is under "no kill" regulations which are relatively new. Monitoring to date indicates variable results associated with this regulation change, some populations have grown while others appear to be

decreasing. Alan did note that more large fish are being observed in the upper fishery. In order to better understand the dynamics of the upper Savage trout population, a mortality and movement (via PIT and radio tags) study is being planned.

4. Whirling disease is still present in the N. Branch Potomac and the hatchery of origin has been shut down, probably for good. Another hatchery with *M. cerebralis* was rehabbed at a tremendous cost, but so far, the rehabilitation appears to be successful as sentinel fish in that hatchery have yet to show infections.

5. Alan discussed the success of an open house meeting for fish regulation changes with an unusual structure where biologists and information posters were spread around a room and the public could freely wander around to pick up information or discuss problem issues. This format eliminated the "grandstanding" and "soap-box speeches" that occurred at prior open houses, allowed biologists to mingle with the public, and was considered a resounding success. Alan strongly recommends this format for contentious public meetings and information sharing.

6. Alan briefly discussed an upper Savage restoration project that would disconnect a tributary from a small pond and convert the pond to a more isolated wetland. The project would occur on private lands and was not EBTJV funded.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30.