

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Ad Hoc Group has received a number of questions that need to be answered so that TU grassroots members can understand and support the above resolution.

1. What constitutes a native trout population?

The answer to this question differs depending on the location of the waters. A native population is one that occurs naturally and within their historical range and may include a population that was eliminated from their historical range but has been reintroduced for conservation purposes. All TU members need to know their native trout, where their populations are located and do their utmost to protect them.

2. Why are hatchery trout stockings harmful to native trout?

Both catchable sized and fingerling trout occupy habitat and consume food sources in competition with the native species. This limits the ability of the native trout to fully realize their full potential in the stream. In some cases the hatchery fish can reproduce and further compete with the native trout. Sometimes they can spawn with the native fish and introduce non-native genes into the population creating a hybridized population. Diseases in native fish populations have been introduced through hatchery stocking. In many areas of the country, stocking of non-native species has resulted in a native trout population being displaced. Stocking tends to attract excessive angling pressure and often results in overharvesting of the native species.

3. What defines a viable population of native trout?

Fisheries biologists define viability as follows: It is a greater than 95% probability that the population will persist over the next 100 years. A population of native fish that persists despite decades of stockings may be considered viable.

4. How do we define a native trout watershed?

Native trout are known to move within their home waters, which is their watershed. There is desirable genetic mixing in such a population, which strengthens the population and increases the viability of those native trout. Trout may live in the large main stem of a watershed and leave to spawn in the tributaries. They may move to spring holes in the main stem or move to tributaries when stream temperatures rise. If trout are confined to small tributaries due to pollution or competition with other fish in the main stem, this will weaken the native population. Trout will use as much of the entire watershed as is necessary to complete their life history cycle. This includes connecting parts of

the watershed for migration purposes. In some circumstances, at lower elevations, as the waters warm, the main stem may no longer be considered a coldwater stream or part of the native trout's necessary habitat.

5. We have no native trout in our State. Does the resolution apply here?

The answer is no

6. Our fish agency stocks over native trout and we just help. Is this OK?

No. If there is a healthy population of native trout in the stream, the resolution would apply here.

7. Our chapter helps stock below a barrier and works to restore native trout about the barrier. Is this covered?

In some States, chapters assist their fisheries agency in stocking below a barrier, where the stocked fish cannot migrate upstream to compete with a viable native trout population. Under this circumstance, the policy would not apply.

8. Does the resolution apply to wild trout waters? What about salmon?

The NLC resolution does not apply to non-native wild trout waters or to salmon.

9. Our streams contain so few native or wild trout that stocking is needed to enhance the fishery.

Our fisheries agencies generally stock to increase angler interest and success, and this resolution is not designed to tell them what to do. However, we might rely on their data and stream surveys to determine whether there is a healthy population of native trout in this watershed. If not, a TU chapter may support such stockings, but perhaps it would be worthwhile to address the problems that make that stream inhospitable for the native trout.

10. What if our members refuse to stop stocking over natives?

If they continue in the name of TU then the resolution is being ignored. Action could be taken to inform the chapter that TU resources (newsletters, websites, equipment, etc.) cannot be used to conduct such stockings. If members elect to continue to help stocking in their individual capacity, then there is nothing that TU could do. We would hope that all TU members would appreciate the core values of TU in protecting native trout, but we do live in a free country.

11. How does this apply to Trout or Salmon in the Classroom?

These programs are crucial to the Sustain mission of TU and for the proper education of young people as to sustainable and sensible conservation goals. An important part of the program is selecting the stream or lake into which the trout or salmon will be placed. So here too chapters doing TIC or SIC should attempt to place the fingerlings in waters where native trout are not threatened. Of importance here is the strain of trout or salmon that is being reared in the classroom, and the assurance of its genetic compatibility and freedom from disease. The importance of not impacting native fish populations with the release of fish raised in the TIC or SIC programs is a good teaching point for the kids.

12. Is the NLC proposing to also remove brown and rainbow trout from streams where they are reproducing?

No, where natural reproduction has occurred such streams now are designated wild and would be protected according to the NCA. We are not proposing to remove such wild populations. It should be recognized that in the right circumstances non-native wild fish have been removed from streams and replaced by native species. The resolution is not calling for this but such activity is clearly consistent with the mission of TU under Restore.

13. What about stocking with native fish?

Some chapters have moved wild, native fish from nearby watersheds as part of a restoration project. In other cases, such native fish are spawned in a hatchery setting and their offspring stocked as part of a restoration project. This is not affected by the resolution, and is part of our Restore mission.