



February 11, 2015

Representative David L. Deen
Chairman
House Committee on Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources
Vermont State House
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Dear Chairman Deen:

The Vermont Council of Trout Unlimited writes in support of the funding for the state's fish hatcheries proposed by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Dept. The state hatcheries have broad support among our members and a much broader positive impact on the state than one would first realize. Hatcheries and the fish stocked in our rivers, ponds, and lakes play an outsized role in outdoor recreation, including drawing nonresident recreationists, and result in impressive economic benefits for the annual state investment in our hatcheries.

The Vermont Council of Trout Unlimited consists of five chapters touching all parts of the state with a total of nearly 1,400 conservationist members. There are about 150,000 TU members nationwide, most of whom travel the country in search of new angling opportunities. And when Vermont members travel and visit members in other states, Vermont is always mentioned as a dream destination for fishing.

Cutting funding for Vermont fish hatcheries is short sighted for several reasons. First, the facilities play an integral role in maintaining our fish stocks, particularly bolstering populations that are not yet sustainable. Second, fishing for these stocked populations is a major source of outdoor recreation, ranging from organized fishing derbies to families spending time on the river fishing on a summer afternoon. Finally, the stocking program is a major boost to the state's economy, particularly from nonresidents that travel from out of state to enjoy our rivers.

The hatchery system is key for sustaining fish populations in some areas. While some people believe reducing hatcheries is a way to support wild fish populations, the two are not mutually exclusive. Instead, hatchery stocking is often needed to bolster fish populations, and without this support, some populations would be in danger of collapse. In turn, sustainable fish populations of wild fish provide countless recreational opportunities for generations of conservationists.

Simply put, raising and stocking fish in state waters makes money for the state. Unlike many other budget expenditures, this one pays dividends on the state investment. The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, and the Vermont Angler Survey, all indicate that \$31.6 million per year is generated in economic benefit for the state. This equates to a ten to one return on the state and federal \$3.3 million annual investment. In consideration of this unrivaled rate of return, in conjunction with the critical role that tourism plays in the state's economy, a decision to cut state funding would prove disastrous.

Trout Unlimited members like to say that we are conservationists first and anglers second. Our fish hatcheries bolster healthy fish populations, which is key to supporting a healthy aquatic ecosystem. This, in turn, provides countless recreation opportunities for Vermonters. Anglers come to the state to fish our rivers in the shadows of the Green Mountains. If they don't catch fish, they don't come back, and they tell their friends to go spend their money someplace where they will catch fish. We ask that the funding for our state hatcheries be maintained to allow our great Vermont tradition, and great economic revenue stream for the state, to continue.

Sincerely,



Clark Amadon, Chair
Vermont Council of Trout Unlimited

The Vermont Council comprises of the:

Central Vermont Chapter, representing members in Chittenden, Addison, Orleans and Franklin Counties.

Connecticut River Valley Chapter, representing members in Windam and Windsor Counties.

MadDog Chapter, representing members in Washington, Lamoille, Caledonia and Essex Counties.

Southwest Chapter, representing members in Bennington and Rutland Counties.

Upper Valley Chapter, representing members in Windsor, Orange, and Caledonia Counties.