



Vermont Council Trout Unlimited

The Vermont Council of TU is made up of five chapters, Central Vermont, Southwest, Greater Upper Valley, Connecticut River and MadDog representing 1500 members across Vermont. The Vermont Council of TU's mission is to advocate for statewide policies to protect and restore cold-water fisheries, while providing support and guidance to the state's chapters in working to fulfill the greater TU mission. The 150,000 members of Trout Unlimited's mission is to conserve, protect and restore North America's cold-water fisheries and their watersheds.

In 2016 the all volunteer members of Vermont TU contributed 9957 hours to cold water conservation efforts. Activities and projects taken on by VT TU include conservation projects like riparian zone tree plantings, dam removal, and culvert upgrades. VT TU also sponsors education programs from fly tying classes to the Vermont Trout Camp for Teens. VT TU also advocates for wise and insightful conservation policies. Sometimes we find time to fish...

Comments on H. 61 "An act relating to the designation of heritage trout waters"

February 22, 2017

H.61 is an attempt to highlight Vermont waters that have native and wild trout and to assign those water with a unique status. This attempt has grown out of the awareness of the designation available to some Vermont waters called "Outstanding Resource Waters" or "ORW".

Groups can propose certain water for an ORW designation. The description is below for what factors can to be considered for ORW. Recreation is one of the factors that can be considered. H.61 attempts to branch off this designation. The intent of this legislation is not to increase the productivity or availability of the brook trout. Due to the relative infertility of many brook trout streams the catch and release regime required by H. 61 is unlikely to change the number or size of the trout in these streams. I will address the main reasons to pass this bill below.

The main points for why Vermont Trout Unlimited supports H. 61 is because it celebrates a unique Vermont natural resource, adds little cost to the state for its management, is consistent with Vermont F&W policies and management practices, serves to better inform anglers of this unique trouts habitat and what it has meant to generations of Vermonters, enhances and focuses on a viable and accepted angling method that of catch and release fishing, and would not significantly effect the number of streams where taking fish is permitted.

Here are these points expanded:

1. Vermont should do better to serve anglers and to inform the public by showcasing the state cold water fish and its unique place in the state's history and heritage. The State of Vermont highlights many of its treasures, natural, cultural and otherwise. The state usually

seeks to preserve our heritage by limiting its demise. By designating certain waters as "heritage waters" Vermont would seek the "ultimate protection" for the brook trout in those streams, namely to release it once caught.

2. Vermont manages its many waters with a variety of methods. One of the most popular are the so-called, trophy stretches that are stocked with larger trout. Living near Waterbury I see the many anglers who pursue these generous sized stocked trout. This program has seen expansion and has significant support by anglers and the Vermont Department of F&W and Vermont Trout Unlimited. Vermont TU also believes that the designation of waters unique to wild brook trout only carries this trend slightly further and relatively painlessly and with little cost. Namely H.61 offers and acknowledges another type of angling experience. There are anglers who contact Vermont Trout Unlimited and ask where to go to catch wild and native fish. These are common requests. When the State creates heritage waters and maps their existence we'll have a resource to point them to for their angling pleasure. These anglers prize the chance to fish for wild and native trout in places where all who fish there accept the requirement to release them once caught.

3. Vermont Fish and Wildlife supports and takes action not to stock over wild trout. This management method is applauded by Vermont TU! There are hundreds and probably thousands of miles of non-stocked cold water streams in Vermont. The Heritage Waters proposal is a means of providing further momentum to that practice and another useful tool for Vermont anglers. It's very easy to search the VT F&W web site and find the stocking schedules. Heritage Waters would be an easy searchable data base, too, once developed. Also, what a great way to increase the knowledge and awareness of anglers and the public by highlighting wild trout as unique natural resource.

4. Lastly, the total miles of designated streams can be modest to ambitious. H. 61 is not a request for dozens of miles of "protected water". Rather an attempt to show off our prized state cold water fish. There could be small sections of upland head-water streams designated with or without the tributaries of those streams so listed. Also, we suppose if the groups so chosen were to choose a larger stream or river as heritage waters then that could be within the scope of this bill.

In conclusion, H.61, highlights a unique Vermont natural resource, adds little cost to management, is consistent with Vermont F&W policies and management practices serves to better inform anglers of this unique trouts habitat and what it has meant to generations of Vermonters, enhances and focuses on a viable and accepted angling method that of catch and release fishing, and would not significantly effect the number of streams where taking fish is permitted.

Vermont Trout Unlimited supports H.61 as a celebratory, useful and practical proposal.



Clark Amadon
Moretown, VT Chair, Vermont Council Trout Unlimited.

“A citizen group can propose Outstanding Resource Waters designations under 10 V.S.A. §1424a or assist the Agency in designating existing uses. DEC will work closely with local entities in pursuing ORW designation. Possible waters to consider for ORW designation could include waters that: demonstrate significant fisheries spawning and habitat areas; gorges, rapids and waterfall areas; scenic areas; rare and irreplaceable natural areas; historic resources and archeological sites; aquifer protection; habitat for threatened and endangered plants; areas having recreational, educational, and research values”.