

Vermont Council



February 27, 2019

Governor Phil Scott
109 State Street, Pavilion
Montpelier, Vermont 05609

Governor Scott,

The Vermont Council of Trout Unlimited (VTTU) is not in favor of closing the Salisbury Hatchery at this time. We support finding current and new revenue sources, including a modest increase in fishing and hunting license fees, to delay the closure of the Salisbury Hatchery to lessen the impacts on Vermont fisheries and on our education program, Trout in the Classroom.

Trout Unlimited is a conservation organization whose mission is to protect critical habitat, to reconnect headwater tributaries, to restore degraded waterways, and to sustain cold water fisheries. VTTU is a statewide organization consisting of five chapters of conservationists and anglers with a total of nearly 1,400 members, and part of a national organization of greater than 300,000 members.

The proposal to close the Salisbury Hatchery would have a devastating impact on our Trout in the Classroom (TIC) education program. The TIC program is a partnership between VTTU, the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife, and 97 local schools here in Vermont in which a classroom is responsible for raising the trout from eggs, learning about their lifecycle and then releasing the trout into the wild. TIC is crucial to the "Sustain" mission of TU and helps educate young people as to sensible conservation goals. An important part of the program is the egg source, which currently is provided solely by the Salisbury Hatchery. If the Hatchery closes, it is questionable whether other egg sources, including purchase from out of state, would be available to compensate for the loss of the Salisbury egg production. An abrupt closure of Salisbury will likely result in the suspension of TIC in Vermont schools and may never recover, even when eggs became available from another Vermont Hatchery.

Generally, the closing of Salisbury Hatchery will result in a decrease in the amount of fish stocked in Vermont waters. Although VTTU does not support stocking where a healthy, sustainable population of wild trout currently exists, stocking is appropriate in some waters in Vermont that cannot sustain a healthy population. These waters and their stocked fish attract the young anglers that are so important to expanding a Vermont population that enjoys fishing as recreation and a pastime. Fewer fish could mean fewer anglers, which means fewer license sales to support the Department. Further, in some waters, stocking is appropriate to re-establish populations of species that have historically been resident in our waters, such as Lake Trout and Steelhead. Closing the Hatchery will jeopardize ongoing efforts to re-establish these species in our waters.

Separate from stocking, the long-term viability of the Hatchery is a concern to VTTU due to the degradation of water quality in Halnon Brook resulting from effluent discharge from the Salisbury

Hatchery. Data from the Vermont Department of Conservation Watershed Division monitoring site shows a significant degradation in the health of aquatic biota below the confluence of the intermittent Hatchery discharge stream and Halnon Brook. In the proposed decommissioning plan, the state acknowledges that insufficient treatment of effluent waste necessitates significant upgrades to remedy the impaired waters of both the intermittent Hatchery discharge stream and Halnon Brook.

VTTU asks that the Salisbury Hatchery be kept open, at least in the short-term, to allow the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife to solve this egg production issue. To facilitate this, we support a modest increase in fishing license fees necessary to help with the costs of keeping the Salisbury Hatchery open. We are committed to working with the Department to find creative solutions to solve this dilemma and ensure that TIC program success continues. However, the water quality impacts of current Hatchery operations may ultimately warrant the closure of the Salisbury Hatchery.

VTTU looks forward to working with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife on efforts to protect and restore our native and wild trout through regulation changes, habitat restoration, and protecting native Brook Trout from the impacts of stocking where a healthy and viable native trout population already exists.

Sincerely,



D.G. Hagwood, Chair
Vermont Council of Trout Unlimited



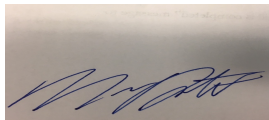
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