

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Dept. (VTFWD) is considering closing down the Salisbury hatchery to meet fiscal goals for 2025. This decision would have a significant impact on our fishing community, as it would result in a halt to statewide fish stocking until new broodstock mature and can produce eggs. This means no catchable sized brook trout stocking for the 2027 and 2028 seasons, and no brown or rainbow trout stocking from 2027 through the end of 2029 season. Fishing is not just a sport in Vermont; it's part of our culture, contributing significantly to our economy and tourism industry. We urge VTFWD to reconsider this decision, find alternative ways to meet their fiscal goals without compromising our fishing heritage.

The hatchery in question is not just a piece of our national history, but also a vital part of Vermont's ecosystem. As a National Historic Site, it requires proper maintenance and curation to preserve its historical significance. Furthermore, it serves as Vermont's "broodstock station," producing approximately nine million trout eggs annually. This function is crucial for maintaining the biodiversity of our waters. We don't want to use outsourced eggs. Why are we getting rid of our "seeds" if you will. Majority of Vermonters do not want genetically engineered seeds and they definitely don't want eggs from out of state when we have a rich tradition of "seeds" that will grow into our shared bounty at our tables.

The hatchery also raises and spawns five different trout species for Vermont's lakes and streams, contributing significantly to the local aquatic life. Moreover, it rears and maintains the oldest and largest fish of the hatchery program which is an essential part of our state's natural heritage.

We must ensure that this important institution continues to operate effectively while preserving its historical value. It's not just about protecting our past; it's about safeguarding our future too. We call on relevant authorities to allocate sufficient resources towards maintaining this historic site while ensuring its continued operation as an essential broodstock station.

The economic impact of fishing in Vermont is significant and growing. In 2018, fishing contributed approximately \$141 million to the state's annual economic activity, a notable increase from \$131.2 million in 2012. A substantial portion of this contribution is attributed to stocking - \$35.4 million in 2018, assuming a stable percentage from its \$31.6 million contribution in 2012. Moreover, participation has seen further growth and should be promoted as a reason to visit our state.

These figures underscore the importance of decisions related to fishing and their impact on local communities' economies across Vermont. It is crucial that we recognize and protect this valuable industry for the sake of our state's economy and local livelihoods. We urge decision-makers to consider these facts when making policies affecting fishing activities within our state boundaries. Call your local State Representative, State Senator or the Governor if you stand for protecting and promoting Vermont's economically significant fishing industry.

Sincerely,
Jeremy Ayotte
Fletcher, Vt