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Nonstop Trout... JERSEY FRESH

By Pat Hamilton, Principal Fisheries Biologist
Jeff Matthews, Superintendent Pequest Trout Hatchery

New Jersey's waterways provide an amazing variety of trout fishing opportunities. Hatchery-reared trout are stocked in all 21 counties and wild, stream-bred trout can be found scattered across the northern tier of the state. Jersey-fresh trout can be caught from the shores of lakes, ponds and streams, or anglers can don boots and wade streams to reach a trout's favorite hiding place. Boating is yet another way for anglers to zero in on hotspots for trout. Beginner and seasoned anglers can experience trout fishing during all four seasons thanks to Fish and Wildlife's multifaceted trout program.

Much of the excellent trout fishing anglers enjoy in New Jersey today is the result of a finely-tuned stocking program. The Pequest Trout Hatchery, located in Warren County, consistently produces healthy brook, brown and rainbow trout as a result of modern technology and a high quality water supply. Six production wells in the Pequest Valley continuously supply flowing water — up to seven thousand gallons per minute — at a constant temperature (52°F) year round. Clean, moving cold water is key to the success of this 23-year-old trout rearing facility. Nearby, the Hackettstown Fish Hatchery raises lake trout. Landlocked Atlantic salmon, a recent addition to our repertoire of salmonids, are obtained from a state fish hatchery in Massachusetts. Revenue generated by the sale of trout stamps helps offset the cost of raising and stocking trout.

The spring is undoubtedly Fish and Wildlife's most popular trout stocking program with 570,000 trout and 200 waters stocked during this season. Each spring waters are stocked with catchable-size brook, brown and rainbow trout averaging 10 -11 inches each. Large trout, weighing 3 to 5 pounds apiece known as broodstock or breeders, are also mixed in with the truckloads of trout early in the season. The hatchery trucks are

on the road daily over a ten-week period, from late March through May, delivering trout to designated waters.

New Jersey releases over 180,000 trout for Opening Day!

During the three weeks just prior to opening day, 180,000 fish are stocked. That's over 30 percent of the entire spring trout allocation! Because fishing is prohibited on most trout-stocked waters during this pre-season period, these "untouched" trout aren't fair game until 8 a.m. on Opening Day in April. Many anglers eagerly anticipate this day, considered by many to be a harbinger of spring and one of the best times to catch your limit of trout. The remaining trout (390,000) are distributed during the seven-week in-season period following opening day. Enjoyable and productive trout fishing is still available into May and June, when trout-stocked waters become less crowded as some anglers turn their attention to warmwater fisheries such as bass, sunfish and catfish.

As summer approaches and water temperatures climb above 72°F, most of the spring trout stocked ponds, lakes and many streams become too warm to support trout. Yet a number of lakes and streams remain cold enough to sustain trout during the summer and provide good fishing year-round. Most of the 16 major rivers (those closed to fishing until 5 p.m. on spring stocking dates) harbor trout throughout the summer over all or portions of their length. For a sure bet, try fishing those sections covered by special regulations for these waters designated

(continued from page 31)

as Trout Conservation Areas or Fly Fishing Areas. Anglers can also catch trout during the summer in the Trophy Trout Lakes and Holdover Trout Lakes, provided they target deeper, colder water. These special regulation areas are described on pages 18 and 19.

Impressive trout stocked for fall and winter fishing

As summer comes to a close and cooler temperatures again prevail, the fall and winter trout stocking programs kick in. In 2006, the Pequest Trout Hatchery began turning out larger trout (two-year olds, averaging 14 – 16 inches) for these two late-season stocking programs. The odds of hooking a big trout are in your favor!

In early October during the two-week stocking period, 20,000 trout are stocked into 16 rivers in northern and central Jersey, and 16 ponds in the central and southern portions of the state. Fall is an incredible time to fish for these large salmonids! Anglers can also make the most of the holiday season, as 24 additional lake are stocked immediately prior to Thanksgiving as part of the winter program. As winter descends and ice appears, fishing for trout heats up. Those big trout that elude anglers all winter will be awaiting anglers next spring.

Lakers run deep in New Jersey reservoirs

New Jersey has several unique trout fishing opportunities which years ago were only available to those making the long trek to more northerly states or Canada. Lake trout, a deep dwelling salmonid, have been introduced into several reservoirs having suitable, deep-water habitat. Both Round Valley and Merrill Creek reservoirs provide endless hours of fishing for these deepdwelling giants! Lakers up to 32 pounds grace the waters of Round Valley, where natural reproduction supports the fishery.

Monksville Reservoir was recently added to this stocking program; but only time will tell of the fishery that ultimately develops. Learn how to fish for these trophy specimens on page 43.

Catch monster sea-run brown trout

The sea-run brown trout program, initiated in 1997 on the Manasquan River, has yielded some big browns up to nine pounds. Surplus 8-inch brown trout from the Pequest Trout Hatchery are stocked annually each October in the river's tidal freshwater and brackish waters. These small fish migrate into the estuary where they may spend several years before returning to freshwater. Although these fish do not return in large numbers, but rather more individually or in small groups, they are big fish. Anglers have reported catching sea run browns up to 13 pounds! The prime time for fishing for these silvery brutes is during the fall and winter, particularly following a rain event when they are attracted by a surge of freshwater.

Landlocked salmon offer unique opportunity

In May 2006, Fish and Wildlife expanded its trout stocking program by adding a new and exciting fish species into two deep-water Sussex County lakes (Lake Aeroflex and Lake Wawayanda) the hard-fighting landlocked salmon. This landlocked form of the Atlantic salmon does not migrate out to sea to complete their life cycle. When they reach maturity (several years after being stocked) the salmon may attempt to spawn in the tributaries and outlet streams of these lakes. However, it is unlikely that any resulting natural reproduction will be sufficient to maintain the fishery, so annual stockings of 7-inch yearlings are planned. This fishery will begin to take off in 2007 as the stocked salmon gorge on alewives (herring) and put on weight.

Jersey anglers will soon experience a thrill formerly reserved for those traveling out-of-state.

(continued on page 34)



Kelly Davis / NJ Div. Fish and Wildlife



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(continued from page 32)

Rich colors saturate wild trout

The popular stocking programs run by Fish and Wildlife tend to overshadow a lesser-known opportunity available to trout anglers in New Jersey – wild trout fishing. Few anglers are aware of the many small brooks tumbling down the hills and mountains of north Jersey that contain naturally reproducing, wild trout populations. Wild trout are typically smaller and far less abundant than their hatchery-reared counterpart, but their coloration and beauty are unmatched. Fishing on a small stream which one can practically jump across, can be quite challenging, even for experienced anglers. Although wild trout are a renewable resource, intense fishing pressure on small populations could jeopardize their long-term survival. The small contingent of anglers who delight in fishing for wild trout typically release their catch, even when a legal-size trout is caught.

Are you surprised by New Jersey's incredible variety of trout fishing opportunities? It is exciting to know that our small, densely populated state can provide anglers with nonstop opportunities to catch five different trout species in nearly 200 streams and lakes both in rustic and urban settings. Our trout waters are within easy reach of millions of people. Fishing for trout is easy! For those new to the sport, the trout fishing tips on page 42 will get you started. Come experience the pleasures of fishing, being outdoors and the companionship of family or friends. 🎣

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P. Jeremy Garnish

Spring Trout Stocking

Season opens April 7. See Trout Stocked Waters page 14 and Trout Regulations page 18.

Fall Trout-Stocked Rivers and Lakes

Fall stocking will occur in the weeks beginning Oct. 2 and Oct. 8, 2007.

- Atlantic County**—Hammonton Lake
- Bergen County**—Ramapo River
- Burlington County**—Crystal Lake, Sylvan Lake
- Camden County**—Oak Pond, Grenloch Lake
- Cumberland County**—Giampetro Park Pond, Mary Elmer Lake, Maurice River
- Gloucester County**—Grenloch Lake, Greenwich Lake, Iona Lake, Swedesboro Lake
- Hunterdon County**—Musconetcong River, S/Br. Raritan River
- Mercer County**—Colonial Lake, Rosedale Lake
- Middlesex County**—Farrington Lake, Roosevelt Park Pond
- Monmouth County**—Manasquan River
- Morris County**—Black River, Musconetcong River, S/Br. Raritan River, Rockaway River
- Ocean County**—N/Br. & S/Br. Metedeconk River, Toms River
- Passaic County**—Wanaque River
- Salem County**—Schadlers Sand Wash Pond
- Somerset County**—N/Br. & S/Br. Raritan River
- Sussex County**—Big Flat Brook, Paulinskill River, Pequest River, Walkkill River, Musconetcong River
- Warren County**—Musconetcong River, Paulinskill River, Pequest River, Pohatcong Creek

Winter Trout-Stocked Lakes

Stocking dates are Nov. 19 – 21, 2007.

- Atlantic County**—Birch Grove Park Pond
- Bergen County**—Mill Pond
- Camden County**—Haddon Lake, Rowands Pond
- Cumberland County**—Shaws Mill Pond
- Essex County**—Verona Park Pond
- Gloucester County**—Mullica Hill Pond
- Hudson County**—Woodcliff Lake
- Hunterdon County**—Amwell Lake
- Middlesex County**—Hook's Creek Lake
- Monmouth County**—Spring Lake, Topenemus Lake
- Morris County**—Mt. Hope Pond, Speedwell Lake
- Ocean County**—Lake Shenandoah
- Passaic County**—Barbours Pond, Green Turtle Pond
- Salem County**—Riverview Beach Pond
- Sussex County**—Lake Aeroflex, Lake Ocquittunk, Little Swartswood Lake, Silver Lake
- Union County**—Lower Echo Lake
- Warren County**—Furnace Lake

TROUT STOCKING HOTLINE: (609) 633-6765

The stocking schedule will be posted on Fish and Wildlife's Web site and the Trout Stocking Hotline.

Teen Anglers

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