

West Virginia Trout Management Plan: 2020 - 2030

West Virginia Division of Natural
Resources



Why are we doing this?

- Importance of trout fishing throughout WV
 - Stocked trout
 - Native and wild trout
- Some trout anglers dissatisfied
- Need to update trout management program
 - Goals based on public values
 - WVDNR focus on technical aspects of management
- 2-way communication—anglers understand agency constraints, agency understands stakeholder values, desired experiences

Goals of Management Plan

1. Involve stakeholders in the management planning process
2. Understand public perceptions and opinions of fishing for stocked and wild trout
3. Inform the public about trout management through a transparent planning process
4. Set management goals based on stakeholder input
5. Develop strategies to diversify and improve trout management and fishing opportunities for stocked and wild trout

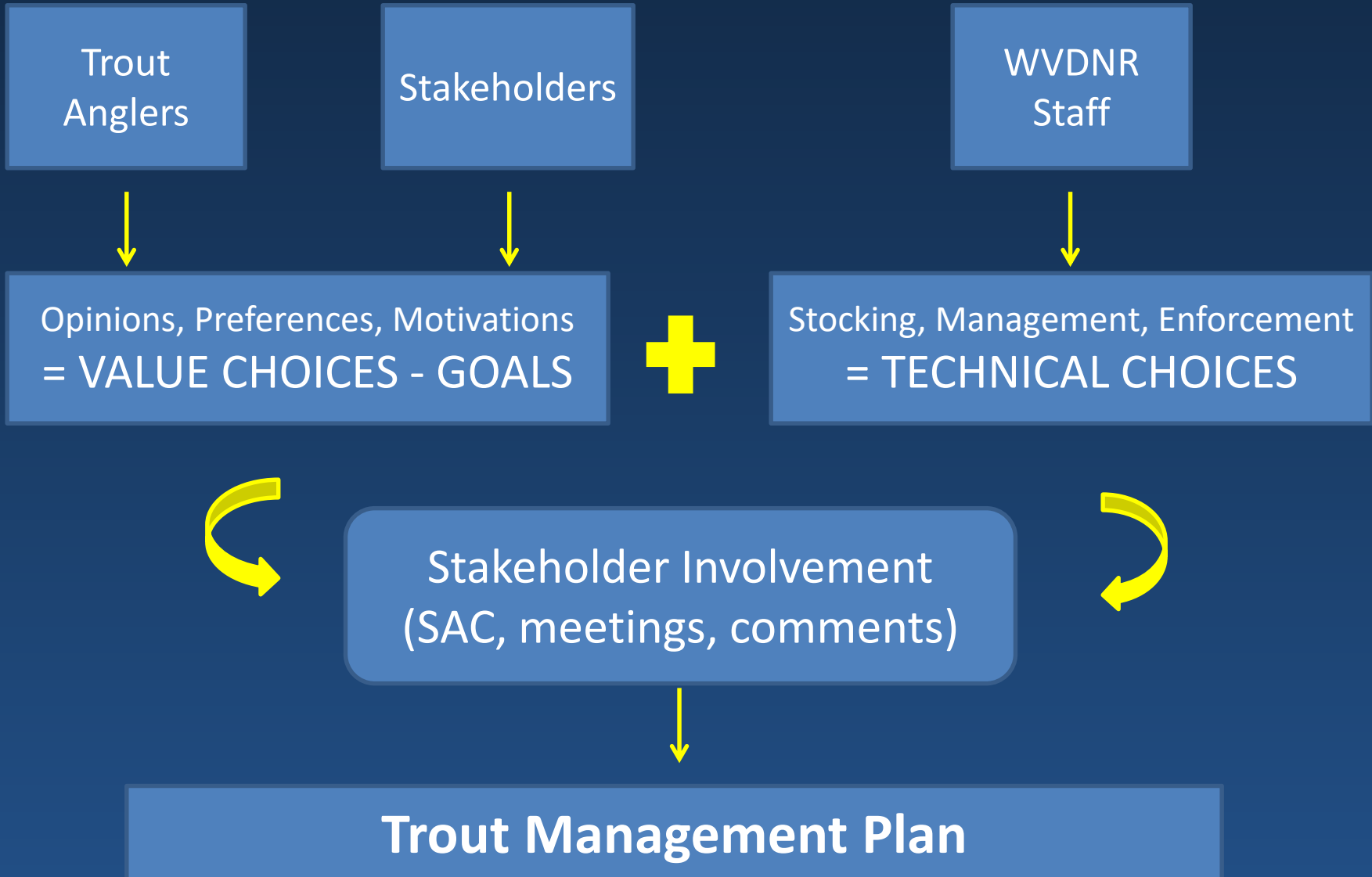
Trout Management in West Virginia (streams and lakes)

- Catchable-size stocked trout
- Fingerling stocking
- Delayed harvest
- Catch and release
- Fly fishing only
- Gold Rush
- Saturday Stocking
- Announced Stockings
- Native/wild trout

Management Plan Development

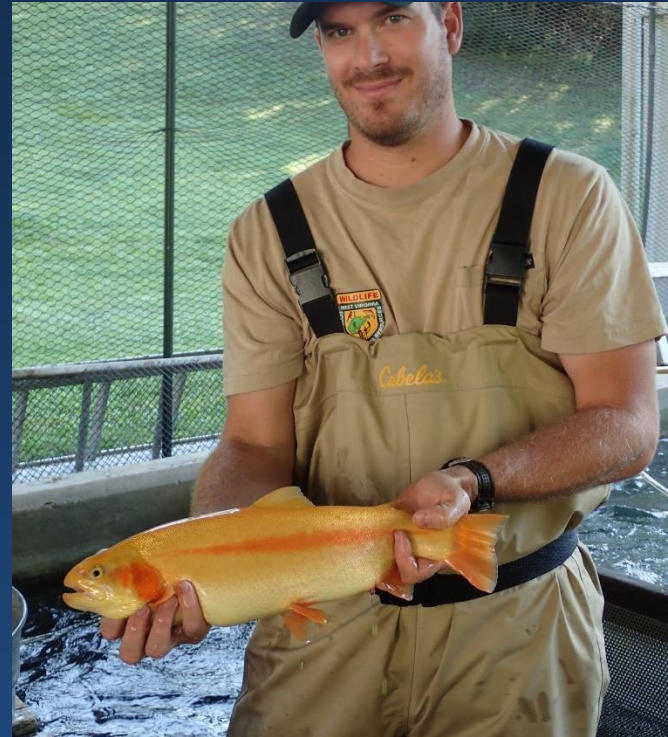
- Input from web survey and public input meetings (winter 2019)
- Creel survey (spring 2019)
- Public meetings (fall 2019)
- Web comments (fall 2019)
- Stakeholder Advisory Committee (to help with development of management plan; 2020)
- Technical Advisory Committee (2019-2020)
- More public meetings to comment on plan (2020)
- Trout Management Plan adopted – January 1, 2021

Planning Process



Benefits of Stocked Trout Program

- Provide quality fishing opportunities in waters that otherwise wouldn't support trout
- Education – importance of clean water and healthy ecosystems
- Outreach events (youth fishing derbies)

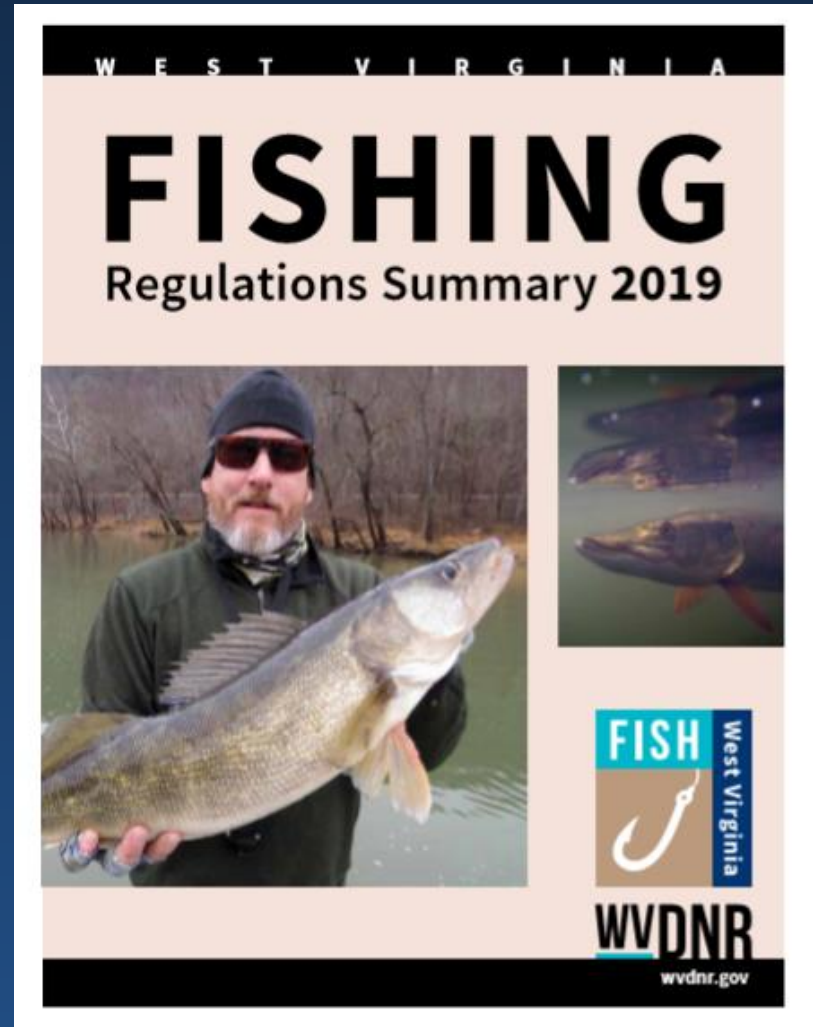


Funding

- Fishing license – January 1 – December 31
 - Most purchase sportsman's package
- Trout stamp helps fund program
- WVDNR can match license money with Sport Fish Restoration Funds
- WVDNR does not use general revenues (taxes)
- \$2.50 - \$3.00 to raise a trout

Statewide Regulations

- 6 trout/day, 12 – possession
- No minimum length
- Two rods/lines/baited hook only
- Unlawful methods:
 - Seining
 - Netting
 - Snagging



History

- 1877 – WV Fish Commission established and conducted first fish stocking
- 1887 – Over 200 Carp ponds were established
- 1897 – Legislature provided a Game and Fish Warden
- 1902 – Federal Hatchery at White Sulphur Springs Opened
- 1907 – Fishing had become so poor that anglers complained to Washington, DC
- 1909 – Peak year for removal of virgin timber
- 1911 - West Virginia Fish and Game Protection Association was formed
- 1921 – West Virginia Game and Fish Commission was formed, established regulations, and fishing licenses were established.
- 1963 – Introduction of the Golden Trout
- 1966 - End of “Opening Day” – Production increased by 25%
- 1971 – Legislature established a Trout Stamp
- 1970’s - Current – Hatchery productions continues to increase.
- 2017 – Current – Hatchery repair and upgrades with intent to increase annual trout production
- 2018 – First annual Gold Rush

Program Components 2019

- Put and take (190 waters total)
 - Gold Rush (55 waters)
- Delayed harvest (3 waters)
- Fly fishing only (8 Waters)
- Catch and release (20+ Water)

Trout Stocking Classifications

- Weekly Water = 16 Stockings
 - 1 January
 - 2 February
 - 13 Weekly from March – May
- Bi-Weekly Water = 8 Stockings
 - 2 February
 - 6 Weekly every other week March – May

Trout Stocking Classifications

- Monthly = 4 Stocking
 - Monthly - February – May
- Monthly (January) = 4 Stocking
 - Monthly - January – April
- Bi-Annual- January and March
- Annual – Once in April
- Class Q and Catch and Release – Varies
- Fall Stocking in select waters (Twice in October)

How are fish allocated?

Fisheries biologists request number to be stocked – based on:

- Stocking area (Acres)
 - Stocking Factor
 - Suitability
 - Fishing Pressure
- Trout are stocked on a pounds per acres basis

Stocking Announcements

- History – Continuous Open Season since 1966
- Unannounced stockings (Monday – Saturday)
- Announced Friday stockings
- Announced/Unannounced Saturday Stocking
- Daily announcements by 3:30 pm
- Delivery – phone line, web page

Stocked Trout in West Virginia Opening Day, Spruce Knob Lake



The Move to a Year-Round Season

- More fishing opportunities (number of days)
 - 8 month season versus 3 months
 - Opening day – missed months with quality flow/temp
- Better for fish and overall hatchery production increased by 25%.
- Trout fishing season ended in 1966
- Stocking large numbers of trout pre-season can have impacts on native fishes.
- Decrease in landowner conflict from crowding/parking
- More efficient use of staff resources
- More efficient for law enforcement staff
- Safer for everyone

What it takes to grow a catchable trout

- Most hatcheries take their own eggs from broodstock (2-3 year old fish)
- Eggs incubated/hatched – 6 months indoors
- “Grow out” > 10 months in raceways
- Fed commercial feed
- Environmental factors
- Continuous fish health monitoring and facility cleaning



Factors Affecting Production and Stocking

- Drought; floods; extreme cold and extreme heat
- Timing in the yearly production cycle for raceway/
rearing space
- Water quality (aeration, oxygen, PH, ammonia,
nitrogen)
- Fish health
- Predation
- Timing/ manpower in the yearly cycle for stocking
while feeding; spawning; and monitoring next
seasons stocking fish

Species Stocked



Can waters be added to program?

- Landowner consent
- Adequate angler access
- Adequate parking
- Biologist inspection / consideration
- Adequate stocking access / safety
- Appropriate water quality parameters
- Consideration of T&E aquatic species
- Fish availability / staff scheduling

Trout Stocking Information

- Website
 - <http://www.wvdnr.gov/fishing/stocking/DailyStock.shtm>
- WVDNR offices and hatcheries
- 304-558-3399 for daily stocking information
- Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat
- Daily stocking info available by 3:30 PM

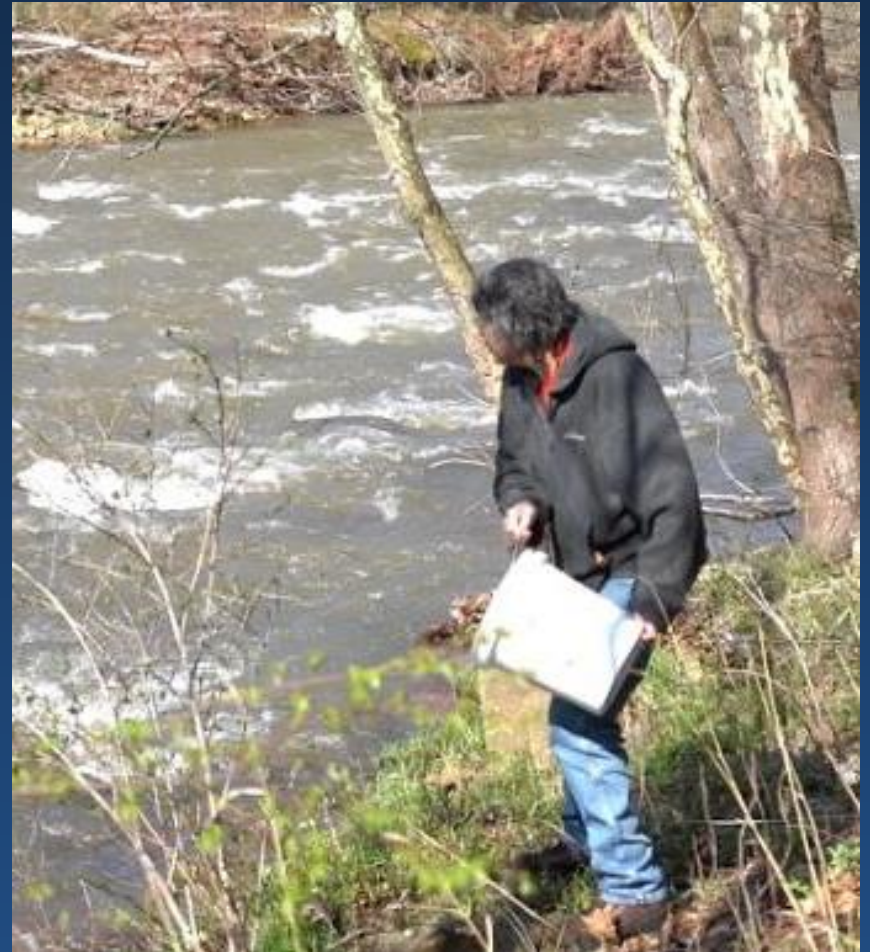


Fingerling Stockings

- Fingerling stockings up to 60 waters per year dependent on trout production
- Brown trout fingerling program in coordination with Trout Unlimited.
- Numerous fingerling stockings by WVDNR
- Provide eggs for trout in the classroom program and fingerlings are stocked by schools.

Some truths about trout stocking

- Trout are not fed 24-48 hours prior to stocking
- No such thing as “no bite”
- Don’t shut off oxygen
- Throwing fish does not kill them



Wild Trout in West Virginia



Wild Trout Program

- Native Brook Trout
- Wild Brown and Rainbow Trout
- General regulations:
 - No length limit
 - 6 fish/day

Fly Fishing Only

- Eight streams
- Daylight only
- Artificial flies and streamers only
- Fly tackle only
- Catch and release – no possession

Catch and Release Trout Streams

- 20 streams
- Day fishing only
- Artificial lures only
- Single hook (barbed) or multi-hook (barbless)
- Catch and release – no possession

Delayed Harvest

- Three streams
- Day fishing only
- Artificial lures only
- Single hook (barbed) or multi-hook (barbless)
- Catch and release – no possession
- October 1 – May 31
- General regulations: June 1 – September 30

Habitat Management

- Habitat evaluations
- Restoration projects:
 - Shavers Fork
 - Holly River State Park
 - Kumbrabow State Forest
 - Spring Run
 - Greenbrier River Drainage (USFS)
- Limestone fines projects

Research

- WVU Trout Fishing Creel Survey
- Trout diet and movement studies in coordination with West Liberty University in southern West Virginia
- Experimentation with captive rearing of wild brook trout
- Statewide genetic evaluation of wild brook trout in coordination with West Virginia University.
- Fish health / disease study and monitoring in coordination with Auburn University.

Partnerships

- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Park Service
- WV State Parks
- WV Department of Environmental Protection
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
- WVDNR Law Enforcement
- West Virginia University
- Trout Unlimited

Why Do We Need This Plan

- To provide a scientifically sound and publicly inclusive framework for the conservation and management of the state's coldwater fisheries, with the goal of enhancing their intrinsic, recreational, and economic benefits to the people of West Virginia.
- This plan will include frameworks for the management of both stocked and wild trout.

Questions and Comments

