



Test Water
Designation

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department

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STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 10 V.S.A. SECTION 4142

Dog River

Pursuant to the provisions of 10 V.S.A. § 4142, the Dog River, as described below are hereby designated as Test Waters from April 9, 2016 through Dec 31, 2018.

1. Findings

- A. The Dog River has long been considered one of Vermont's best wild trout streams with a reputation for abundant wild rainbow trout and large brown trout. Electrofishing surveys and angler creel surveys conducted through the 1990's confirmed this reputation observing high trout densities, excellent natural reproduction, good growth rates and angler catch rates. Rainbow trout have not been stocked in the Dog River since 1961 and all stocking in the Dog River and its tributaries was discontinued in 1992
- B. The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VFW) have been conducting annual trout population surveys on the lower Dog River since 1991. Consistently high wild trout densities were observed for much of the first 9 years. A decline in adult wild trout densities was initially observed in 2000. The population rebounded slightly in 2001, only to decline further in 2002 through 2004. Another slight rebound was noted in 2005 followed by four years of very low densities.
- C. During the same time period that VDFW measured population declines and observed reduced fishing activity, anglers expressed concerns regarding fishing quality. Reports of large wild rainbow and brown trout being harvested annually, particularly in the spring, were still being received from anglers and field wardens.
- D. A catch and release or "no-kill" Test Water Designation was implemented in 2010 to reduce the limited harvest presently occurring in an attempt to bolster or stabilize fish population densities. The restriction of fishing to the use of artificial flies and lures is based upon extensive studies which have shown that trout caught with natural baits have a much higher mortality rate after being released
- E. Some anglers raised concerns that the restriction of natural baits would reduce the ability for young children to participate in fishing on the Dog River. Angler creel surveys in 1991, 1996 and 2000 indicate that while children (<15 years old) accounted for 10.7% of the anglers interviewed, they only accounted for 8.5% of the time fished and less than 2% of the trout caught. This information suggests that allowing children to fish on the Dog River with bait will have a negligible impact on trout populations.
- F. While improved wild trout populations were observed following the first year of the Test Water Designation, adverse impacts to aquatic habitat and the wild trout population from flooding following Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 have confounded the evaluation of the true effect of the Test Water designation. To enable VDFW to develop fishing regulation proposal for deliberation by the Fish and Wildlife Board, an extension of the current Test Water Designation is warranted through 2018.

2. Statutory Determination

- A. Pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4142, the VFW Commissioner may, for the purpose of securing data relative to the propagation of fish, designate streams and ponds as test waters within the state.
- B. The Commissioner has determined that the designated Test Water is critical to the conservation and propagation of the species in those waters. (See Findings 1.A.-F.)

3. Conditions of the Test Waters

During the specified period, fishing in the Dog River (Northfield, Berlin, Montpelier) beginning at the downstream edge of the Junction Road Bridge in Berlin/Montpelier upstream to the top of the Northfield Falls Dam in Northfield, shall be in accordance with the following:

- A. During the above specified period, from the 2nd Saturday in April through October 31, all dates inclusive, fishing shall be in accordance with the following:
 - a. Minimum lengths, daily limits, and possession limits are as follows:
 - i. All brook, brown and rainbow trout must be released immediately.
 - b. Gear restrictions are as follows for anglers 15 years of age and older:
 - i. Fishing may only be done with artificial flies and lures.

Authorized by: _____ Date: _____
Louis Porter, Commissioner