

East Fork Salmon River CROTS Survey (Survey #: 621009)

Les Resseguie, Region 6 Fisheries

6/8/2022

East Fork Salmon River (ONT-53-42) is a 10.2-mile-long tributary to the Salmon River in the Towns of Lewis and Osceola, Lewis County. This stream is classified as C(TS) by NYSDEC Division of Water (i.e., suitable for fishing and trout spawning). Public access is available through the 22,200-acre East Branch Fish Creek South Conservation Easement which includes an accessible fishing platform on the East Fork Salmon River. The statewide fishing regulations for inland trout streams with an open season of April 1 – October 15, a daily creel of five trout with no more than two over 12 inches; and an October 16 – March 31 catch and release only season, artificial lures only. Current angling effort is unknown yet is likely low. This stream reach is not stocked. Public comments provided in Tug Hill East Unit Management Plan scoping session indicated poor fishing at the fishing platform and a desire for stocking. A search of the historic and modern Statewide Fisheries Database (1930-2021) resulted in no fisheries data in this area. In June 2021, a Catch Rate Oriented Trout Stocking (CROTS) survey was conducted at the accessible platform to evaluate the current status of the stream and trout population, and to determine the appropriate management category for current conditions as outlined in the New York State Trout Stream Management Plan (TSMP; NYSDEC 2020).

Using backpack electrofishing, a single 333-foot site was sampled including the pool directly in front of the accessible platform. A total of 6 wild brook trout (5" - 8") along with other fish species common to NYS trout streams were collected (Table 1). No brook trout were collected directly in front of the accessible platform as there is zero overhead cover and little in-water shelter; however, trout were readily found just downstream near woody debris. Using data collected in 2021, the CROTS model estimated the East Fork Salmon River to currently have a wild trout biomass of 4.95 lbs./acre and a wild trout yearling and older density of 54.35 fish/acre (129 fish/mile). A very robust number of pumpkinseed sunfish were sampled within this small section which likely compete with the brook trout and are negatively affecting the population. Given stream characteristics and biological data collected in 2021, East Fork Salmon River meets the Wild management category criteria as outlined in the TSMP (NYSDEC 2020). A stream must have a minimum of 75 angler hours/acre/year to meet the criteria for the Stocked Management Category according to the TSMP. Angling effort would need to be verified that this criterion is met to begin stocking, until then we recommend the East Fork Salmon River continue to be managed as a Wild trout stream.



Table 1. Fish species and numbers collected during the 2021 East Fork Salmon River CROTS Survey.

Common Name	Number
Brook Trout	6
Brown Bullhead	3
Common Shiner	3
Creek Chub	34
Eastern Blacknose Dace	20
Fantail Darter	16
Fathead Minnow	1
Pumpkinseed	105
White Sucker	4

Literature Cited

NYSDEC. 2020. *New York State Trout Stream Management Plan*. Albany, NY: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.