

**Fish Creek CROTS Survey (Survey #: 621004)**  
**Les Resseguie, Region 6 Fisheries**

6/9/2022

Fish Creek (ONT-19-70) is a 14-mile-long tributary to the Black River in the Town of Grieg, Lewis County and is classified as C(TS) by NYSDEC Division of Water (i.e., suitable for fishing and trout spawning). Ample public access is available through 5.4 miles of Public Fishing Rights (PFR) easements which include three Fisherman Parking Areas (FPA) along with access to the headwaters within the Independence River State Forest. Current angling effort is unknown, yet a 1999 creel survey estimated 128 angling hours per acre. Fish Creek supports self-sustaining populations of brown trout and brook trout; therefore, no stocking occurs in this stream. In 2020, a Catch Rate Oriented Trout Stocking (CROTS) survey was conducted within the PFR section (NYSDEC 2021) which identified that this stream meets the criteria to be managed as Wild-Quality according to the NYS Trout Stream Management Plan (TSMP, NYSDEC 2020); therefore, we proposed a regulation change from the statewide inland trout stream regulation to the Wild-Quality Special Regulation. The need for additional evaluation of the headwaters of Fish Creek was identified in the 2020 survey to determine the appropriate reach length of the proposed Wild-Quality section. In June 2021, two sites were sampled above the PFR section to evaluate the headwaters section in the Independence River State Forest.

Using backpack electrofishing, five wild brook trout (3.5-6 inches) were collected from the State Forest section along with fish species commonly found in New York streams (Table 1). Using data collected in 2021, the CROTS model estimated a wild trout biomass of 1.61 lbs/acre and wild trout yearling and older density of 16.07 fish/acre (46 fish/mile). These values are well below the Wild-Quality management category standards; therefore, we recommended that the section surveyed upstream of the PFR be managed as Wild according to the TSMP (NYSDEC 2020). Using the data from 2020 and 2021, we recommended the Wild-Quality section of Fish Creek to be defined as "From the confluence with the Black River, upstream to 1.5 miles above North South Road". Effective April 1, 2022, special fishing regulations for Wild-Quality reaches applied to Fish Creek from the confluence with Black River upstream to 1.5 miles upstream of North South Road (i.e., April 1 – October 15, daily limit of three fish with no more than one longer than 12 inches; and an October 16 – March 31 catch and release only and artificial lure only season. The section above that reach (1.5 miles above North South Road to source) will be managed as Wild and statewide Inland Trout Stream regulations apply with an open season of April 1 – October 15, daily creel of five fish with no more than two over 12 inches; and a catch and release, artificial only season of October 16 – March 31.



**Table 1. Fish species and numbers collected during the 2021 Fish Creek CROTS Survey.**

Common Name	Number
Brook Trout	5
Eastern Blacknose Dace	21
Northern Redbelly Dace	2
Creek Chub	43
White Sucker	14
Brown Bullhead	2
Central Mudminnow	10

**Literature Cited**

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

NYSDEC. 2021. Fish Creek CROTS Survey. Bureau of Fisheries Technical Brief #tb620006. Albany, NY: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.