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NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. Department of Environmental Conservation

Cohocton River Trout Population Evaluation (Survey #: 819021)

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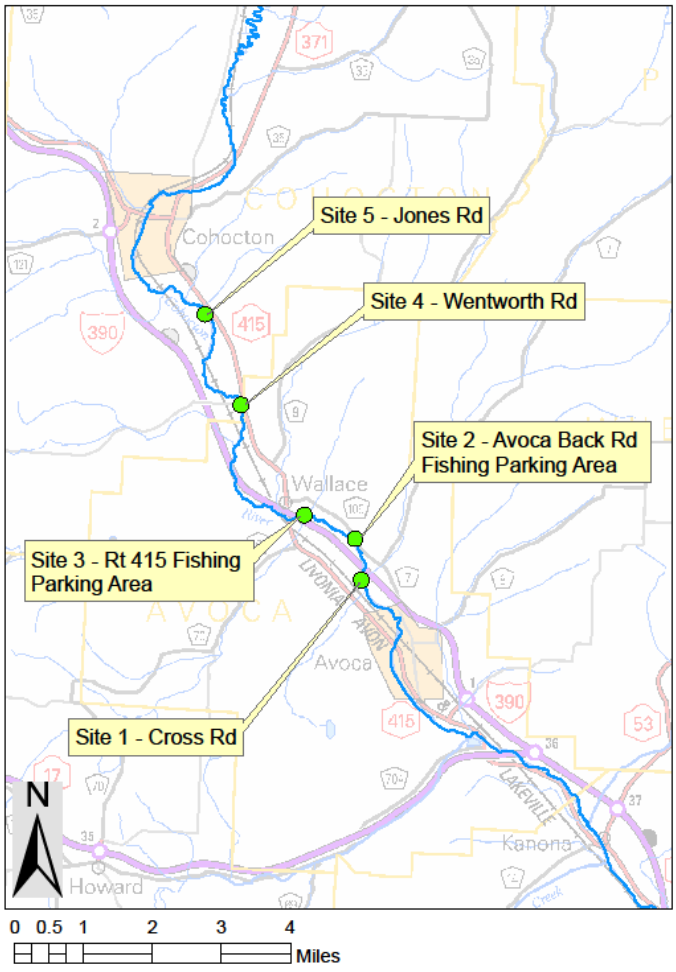
Cohocton River flows over 58 miles through southern Livingston County and Steuben County before joining the Tioga River to form the Chemung River. There are over 19 miles of public fishing rights easement which provide fishing access. Wild brook and brown trout provide a quality fishery upstream of Atlanta. The section of river between Atlanta and Bath is mostly a stocked trout fishery with over 10,000 brown trout stocked, annually. The stocked sections currently have a 5 trout/day creel limit in which no more than 2 of the 5 can be over 12 inches. Some higher quality areas within the stocked section contain significant numbers of wild trout. One area between the mouth of Neil Creek and the Village of Avoca is not stocked and is managed as a wild trout fishery (although brown trout are stocked immediately upstream and downstream of this section). This un-stocked section has a 2 trout/day creel limit with a minimum size of 12 inches. In August 2019, the Cohocton River was sampled by electrofishing at two sites (sites 1 and 2) within the un-stocked section and just upstream at three sites (sites 3 through 5) within the stocked section (Figure 1). This sampling was intended to determine if our current management strategies are appropriate for these sections of river.

Figure 1. Electrofishing sampling locations on Cochocton River, 2019.



We captured 107 brown trout and 16 brook trout at the five sites combined. Brown trout ranged in length from 2 to 15 inches (Figure 2), with an average of 9.5 inches. Brook trout ranged in length from 6 to 8 inches, with an average of 7.4 inches. Estimated trout biomass at the 5 sample sites ranged from 12 to 55 pounds/acre and averaged 29 pounds/acre (Figure 3). As expected, most of the trout captured in the un-stocked stream section were wild, although a few stocked trout were found at both sites (Sites 1 and 2). There were also significant numbers of wild trout at the three sites sampled within the stocked section (Sites 3, 4, and 5). The un-

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stocked section of stream needs some habitat improvement to increase wild trout biomass to levels (~ 40 pounds/acre) that provide a quality fishery without stocking. The entire section of river that we sampled has the potential to be managed as a wild trout fishery if habitat can be improved enough to provide a modest increase in wild trout biomass. The area between the villages of Cohocton and Avoca should be a priority for habitat improvement projects. Stocking should continue where it currently takes place, but this should be re-assessed as any habitat changes occur. Fishing regulations could be simplified to become consistent throughout this entire section.