

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Lanesboro Area Fisheries Office

FAQ sheet

- 1) Can you fish with minnows in designated trout streams?

Possessing live minnows or using them for bait on designated stream trout lakes is prohibited. You can use live minnows for bait on designated trout streams. Sylvan Park ponds in Lanesboro are designated as trout streams and therefore minnows are allowed.

- 2) There is something new in the fishing regulations booklet (2009) that states that I can no longer take my dog fishing with me on an Easement Aquatic Management Area. What is this about?

Easement Aquatic Management Areas represent our trout stream angling easements in southeast Minnesota. You **MUST** get permission from the landowner to take a dog with you on these easements.

We have received several calls in the past few years from landowners reporting dogs brought in by anglers were chasing cattle, harassing calves, chasing deer, and attacking the landowner's dogs. We have also had complaints from anglers stating that dogs owned by other anglers were ruining their fishing experience (splashing in the water, running along the stream bank scaring the fish, etc.).

This could very easily and quickly affect our ability to obtain additional angling easements on our trout streams. If landowners with potential easement corridors believe that anglers are allowed to bring dogs on easements they may be discouraged to sell. Dogs must be on a leash from April 16th through July 14th (2009 Fishing Regulations booklet).

- 3) How does the MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries Office collect information on the trout populations in southeast Minnesota?

We primarily use electrofishing as a means to sample the trout population. This method became a serious development for fishery science after World War II and was first researched extensively in the 1950's and 1960's. Research is still being conducted today to help us understand how fish react in controlled electrical fields and how this method can be best used to reduce injury to fish.

We use a boom shocker on large streams or lakes and use a barge shocker on medium to small-sized streams. We also use a backpack shocker on small waters. We routinely provide a number of electrofishing demonstrations throughout the year to school and angler groups.

- 4) How many streams are electrofished annually by the MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries Office?

Spring assessments begin around the 3rd or 4th week of March and continue through May. Depending on certain activities we usually electrofish around 25 to 35 stream stations in the spring and a similar number in the fall of each year (September 1st to October 15th). Some streams are in our Long-term Monitoring program while others are being assessed to update the management plan, evaluate a habitat improvement project, stocking or regulation.

We also do some electrofishing in the summer months. These are usually natural reproduction checks, special assessments in small stream or for reconnaissance purposes.

- 5) What is the rationale for the protected slot limits on southeast Minnesota trout streams, why are those sizes chosen (12-16 inches), and what would the MNDNR like to see anglers do on a "slot limit" trout stream?

Southeast Minnesota trout streams have five tiers of regulations. These are the general southeast Minnesota trout stream regulation of 5 trout (any species) in possession with only one of those >16 inches plus four special regulations. The four special regulations include catch-and-release (artificial lures and flies only), a 12-16 inch protected slot limit (no gear restriction), a 12-16 inch protected slot limit (artificial lures and flies only), and a brook trout regulation (12 inch minimum, possession limit of one, artificial lures and flies only). Objectives for these special regulations are to increase the size of trout in the angler catch.

A 12-16 inch protected slot limit (no gear restriction) was implemented on 28.3 miles of trout streams in southeast Minnesota on April 16th, 2005. These streams include sections or all of East Beaver Creek, Forestville Creek, Mahoods Creek, South Branch Root River, Spring Valley Creek, West Indian Creek, and Wisel Creek.

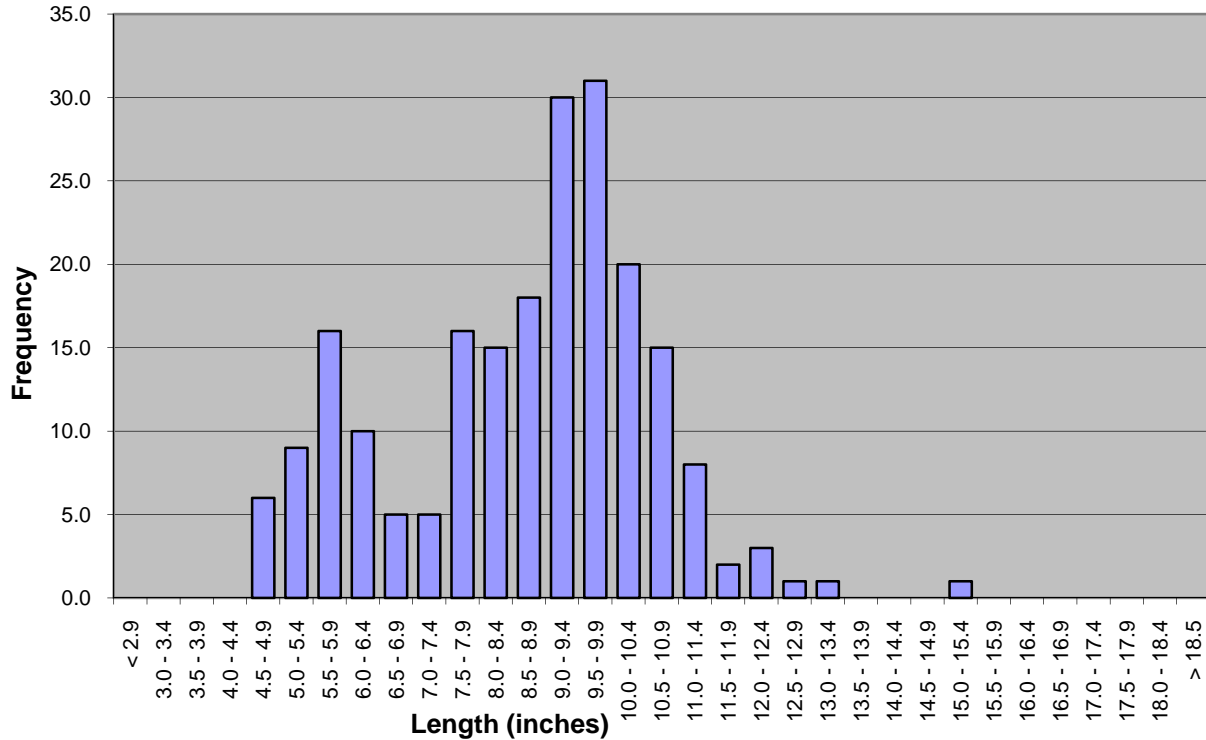
A 12-16 inch protected slot limit (artificial lures and flies only) was implemented on 40.8 miles of trout streams in southeast Minnesota on April 16th, 2005. These streams include sections or all of Canfield Creek, Garvin Brook, Gribben Creek, Hay Creek, Logan Creek, Trout Run Creek, and North Branch Whitewater River.

Protected slots are used to protect a limited size category (in this case 12-16 inches) and allow these trout to return to the catch multiple times while at the same time allow harvest of those not in limited size categories (<12 inches). Harvest of one trout >16 inches allows one to take home a trophy which is important for many anglers. As you can see below in a graph example from Trout Run (Kleven's 2005), those trout in the 12-16 inch category are less abundant than any other size category. This is typical of most southeast Minnesota trout streams as well.

When too many trout occupy a given stream with a specific amount of habitat it may result in a lack of growth or survival for those present. This is what is called density dependence. It is suggested that harvesting trout below the protected slot (<12 inches) may release those not harvested from density dependent effects (growth, survival, etc.). This may be the case with those streams placed under a protected slot regulation and was a major part of the impetus for the implementation of this regulation. It has been demonstrated for many fish populations, including trout, that a more balanced size structure is important in maintaining a healthy fish community.

Natural variation in trout abundance tends to confound interpretation of regulation effects. Therefore it is important to understand that identifying regulation success (increased size of trout in the catch) is difficult. Because angler catch rates and/or size of fish in the catch relate directly to the angling experience it may be appropriate to evaluate angler satisfaction via a creel survey to determine regulation success.

BNT Length Frequency



- 6) What is the MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries objective for completing habitat improvement work in southeast Minnesota?

Several MNDNR Fisheries Research projects have documented limiting factors for large trout production in southeast Minnesota.

MNDNR Fisheries Investigational Report 395,

http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/fisheries/investigational_reports/395.pdf

MNDNR Fisheries Investigational report 428,

http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/fisheries/investigational_reports/428.pdf

Overhead cover and depth (>60 cm) are important limiting habitat types for large trout that are created during the habitat improvement process. Objectives for habitat improvement projects on specific streams may also include such things as reducing the amount of sediment coming from the stream banks, giving the stream access to its flood plain, clearing invasive vegetation, providing habitat for non-game species both terrestrial and aquatic, etc.

- 7) How are the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council grants recently awarded to Trout Unlimited being administered by MNDNR Fisheries?

MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries is strongly suggesting all cooperative partners follow the “Checklist for Southeast Minnesota Habitat Improvement Projects” that can be found here:

http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/areas/fisheries/lanesboro/se_mn_habitatimp_proj.pdf

As you can see there is an extensive review and communication process. MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries staff monitors progress of these projects and initiates communication with landowners. Habitat Improvement Projects using this funding source are only allowed on permanent conservation easements such as MNDNR angling easement corridors. Specific project details can be found on the Trout Unlimited website (<http://www.mntu.org/lessard-sams.html>).

- 8) What is the MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries office doing to improve the methods and understanding of trout stream habitat improvement in southeast Minnesota?

The MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries staff has recently received over 600 hours of training in several areas to improve the understanding of the science and methods of trout stream habitat improvement.

The Fisheries Supervisor, Assistant Fisheries Supervisor, and Habitat Improvement Specialist have received training and certification as Erosion and Sediment Control Specialist in Spring 2009. Construction sites, municipalities, and industrial facilities are subject to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulations. This training is required for all those responsible for managing storm water in construction areas in the State of Minnesota. The training involved three classes and centered on the installation of erosion and sediment control devices, supervising construction site operations, and the design of Construction Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP’s).

The Assistant Fisheries Supervisor received training in October 2009 in applied fluvial geomorphology. The two Fisheries Management Specialists have also been included in this training in October 2010. The two one-week classes consisted of lectures and field work on basic fluvial geomorphological principles, stream channel classification, and applying those principles to stream and river channel restoration. This class was taught by David Rosgen of Wildland Hydrology Inc.

All of the MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries staff has received training with MNDNR Division of Waters & Ecological Resources in fluvial geomorphology and stream classification. These classes each involved a week of lectures and field work on Minnesota stream and rivers.

MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries staff has attended several seminars with Wisconsin DNR Fisheries staff on trout and non-game fish habitat improvement. Critical discussions took place that helped both agencies improve their methods and techniques.

MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries staff will continue to receive training and attend specific seminars to improve trout stream habitat improvement in southeast Minnesota.

9) How are angling easements acquired and what can I do as an angler to encourage landowners to sell an easement?

Angling easements are part of the MNDNR Fisheries Aquatic Management Area (AMA) program. Some of the first angling easements sold in southeast Minnesota date back to the early 1960's. Currently, MNDNR Lanesboro and Lake City Fisheries offices manage approximately 250 miles of trout stream angling easements in the southeast. There are also several miles of warmwater angling easements.

Lanesboro Area Fisheries maintains an angling easement acquisition list of those streams where angling easements should be pursued when funds and willing sellers become available. This list is created using information contained in stream management plans and fisheries assessment reports.

Once we have a willing landowner, the person responsible for angling easement acquisition in the MNDNR Lanesboro or Lake City Fisheries office, measures stream footage and acreage. These measurements are used to give the landowner an estimate of the easement value. Values are calculated at \$5/stream foot plus an additional amount per acre for the easement corridor. This value varies by township and is set annually by the MN Department of Revenue. On average, a 132 ft wide easement corridor (this is standard corridor size) is approximately \$15/stream foot.

When the landowner(s) determine that this is something they would like to proceed with, we forward a copy of the deed to MNDNR Division of Lands & Minerals staff for acreage verification. Meanwhile the landowner is given a Landowner Bill of Rights letter for signature and completes a Landowner Disclosure form.

All paperwork is submitted for review and approval by the Area Fisheries Supervisor, Regional Fisheries Manager, and the Regional Management Team. The acquisition materials are then sent to a Real Estate Specialist in MNDNR Division of Lands & Minerals where the remaining documentation is completed. The entire process typically requires 6 to 9 months.

Notification is sent to the Fisheries office once the landowner has been paid and the state owns the angling easement. Signs are posted immediately with the addition of any stiles needed. The easement is given a final inspection as to its condition where photos and GPS are used to document the details.

Some of the important points we make clear to the landowner are:

- There is a high payment per acre because it is based on acreage plus stream footage.
- Landowner maintains control of property regarding everything but angling. Hunting, trapping, hiking, camping, etc. are not allowed via the angling easement unless by permission.
- The angling public is restricted to the easement area (typically a 132 ft wide corridor centered on the stream channel).
- MNDNR has access via existing roads for fisheries management work. If no road is available, a mutually agreed upon location is determined.
- Angling easements open up the possibility of habitat improvement being completed in the specific area.
- MNDNR angling easements are perpetual and remain with the property forever.
- Payments for the angling easement are considered taxable income.
- Angling easement area may be fenced with livestock water access and crossing areas if final easement language provides for this.

- All existing tillage must be set back in accordance with the county shoreland standards and no new tillage will be allowed in the easement corridor.

We would prefer anglers notify the Area Fisheries Office if they are made aware of a landowner that may be interested in selling an angling easement.

10) What factors does MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries Office consider in selecting stream reaches for habitat improvement priority?

The trout stream habitat improvement program in southeast Minnesota began in 1946. Today MNDNR trout stream habitat improvement continues with a dedicated crew, heavy equipment purchased specifically for stream work, and a list of cooperative partners that include Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Natural Resource Conservation Service, watershed groups, and Trout Unlimited. Over this history, habitat improvement methods and objectives have evolved when new information regarding trout habitat requirements, watershed science, and fluvial geomorphology is discovered. With the addition of new methods and understanding, objectives for trout stream habitat improvement projects become more targeted to better perform a specific fisheries management action (see Figure 1.)

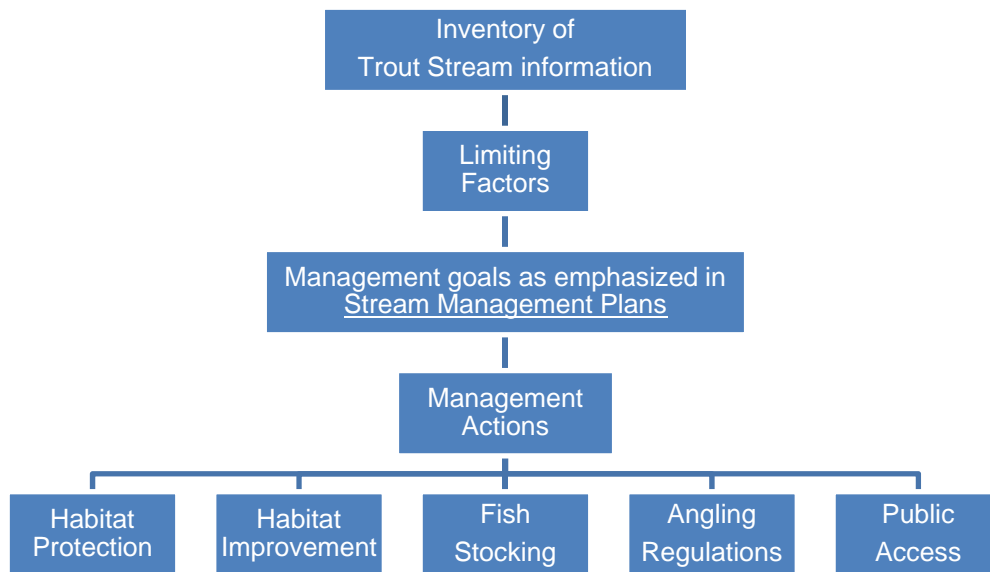


Figure 1. Hierarchical process of southeast Minnesota trout stream management.

Development of a priority list of stream reaches for habitat improvement begins with the identification that habitat is a limiting factor. Habitat is not always the primary limiting factor. As can be seen in Figure 1, this is determined from the wealth of information contained in each stream file (Inventory of Trout Stream information). This is where experience and education of fisheries staff can pull necessary details out from the copious amount of information gathered and contained in MNDNR files.

The next filter requires the project to be on MNDNR public angling easements. After this the details become very diverse. Questions are asked such as: 1) will the project have a positive impact on stream process and function, 2) will the project have a positive impact on the recreational value of the reach, 3)

is the project technically feasible, 4) is there potential for wild trout management, 5) will the project require a large amount of maintenance after completion, 6) what is the level of previous investment in the stream and watershed, 7) can funding be secured through various sources, 8) how well does the project fit into the current strategy of providing a range of angling opportunities within southeast Minnesota, 9) how compatible is the project with other important MNDNR resource management objectives within southeast Minnesota, 10) will there be any community interest generated by the project, 11) will the project generate any controversy and opposition, 12) how does the project fit within the context of future resource management trends within southeast Minnesota and other MNDNR disciplinary goals.

The MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries office periodically updates our habitat improvement priority list as activities and focus shift during the year. Each year this office has provided Trout Unlimited with a list of projects best fitted for this cooperative project venue. The MNDNR Lanesboro Fisheries Habitat Improvement crew, one of only two dedicated fisheries construction crews in the state, completes projects from this list in addition to projects for other divisions (Forestry, Parks, Trails & Waterways, etc.) in southeast Minnesota each year.