

The Hatch

Tuesday July 25th Meeting – 7:00 PM at the American Museum of Fly Fishing (Route 7A in Manchester, immediately south of the Orvis Flagship Store) Batten Kill update and a Night of Fishing

IMPORTANT BATTEN KILL UPDATE

As most of you may know, the state has proposed a plan to stock 1,000 triploid (sterile) rainbow trout in the lower Batten Kill in 2007. At our meeting, Tuesday, July 25th, we'll have an open discussion about what this means for the river and its wild trout; the reasons why many of us stand opposed to this plan; what our chapter has done thus far to voice our concerns; and to listen to input and to take a vote on an official chapter stance going forward. Some of the major points of disagreement with the state's proposal are:

1) The state's own 5-year study (at the cost of nearly \$1,000,000) determined that the decline of the browns in the Batten Kill was most likely due to a "chronic loss of trout cover." To stock 1,000 trout, any trout, over the wild trout will result in competition for the lack of cover and for food. Some of that cover is the cover the state and TU have spent a great deal of time, energy, and money putting into place.

2) The reason for the state's decision to manage a wild trout fishery in this manner is not based on their own scientific findings, but rather to provide a few anglers of the Batten Kill with the "option" to keep trout from the Kill. Since the wild numbers, though rebounding, are not strong enough yet to allow this, the state believes stocking for "recreation" is a viable compromise. Many in our chapter believe it *is far too great a compromise*. To base the management of a wild trout river on the public outcry, *of the few or of the many*, is in itself a flawed premise for management, as it does not put the concern for the health of the river, or of its wild trout population first.

3) The state's reasoning that anglers who want to keep fish somehow need the Batten Kill, a wild river, to offer the same numbers of trout as a stocked fishery and to be an "option" for catch and keep even when the river itself can't presently support those regulations, is simply unsound. The Batten Kill is one of just five rivers in Vermont that remain designated as wild trout fisheries and are managed as such. To stock the Batten Kill is to lose 20% of our wild trout rivers, and reverse 30 years of wild trout management on the Kill. As well,

for those who wish to keep trout, more than 20 options, including wild trout on the Mettawee River, exist within 20 minutes of the Batten Kill to catch and keep trout. I take advantage of them myself.

There is no shortage of this type of angling option in Vermont or locally. There is however, a great shortage of truly wild trout angling opportunities in the state. The state currently stocks more than 650,000 trout in more than 350 locations throughout Vermont each year.

There is far more to be lost in stocking the Batten Kill and losing 20% of our wild trout rivers to the hatchery truck, than there is to lose by stocking and to continue doing the good, effective, if hard and, yes, expensive, work that has already been done on the Kill and is beginning to show dividends.

4) Any stocked trout, sterile or otherwise, may introduce diseases that can be devastating to the resident wild fish. Stocked trout may migrate into tributaries such as the Roaring Branch and Green River; and they may indeed spawn (it is known that 1-2% of triploid rainbows may not be sterile) and introduce a permanent population that competes directly with the trout that the state and TU have been trying to help with all our efforts. The Batten Kill needs a chance to

have cover restoration implemented, now that the main study is done, without the unknown variable of stocked trout to disrupt and undermine the 5 years of costly study. The FWD's plan states that there are more 20-23" brown trout in the river now than in the past 25 years. Anecdotally, many anglers are catching and seeing far more wild browns in the 6-10-inch range (the "missing" size) than in previous years. The state needs to stick to their commitment to truly manage the Batten Kill as a wild river. It may take longer, but if we take care of the river, the river will take care of itself and we will all enjoy the greater numbers of wild trout we want in the Batten Kill.

In the fall, the state F&W Dept. will hold two public meetings regarding the management of the Batten Kill. Whether we agree or not with the premise of allowing public opinion to steer their wild trout management policies, it has been made clear that public opinion will indeed weigh heavily in their decision to stock or not. It is crucial that each and every one of us attend these local public meetings and voice our concern. It is our most important venue to be heard and to have a real impact.

Tee-shirts that say "The Batten Kill -- Keep It Wild", have been printed to wear to this meeting, so we will be quickly identified. We will keep you posted and make you fully aware of the dates for these public meetings when we learn of them.

Please attend them and our next chapter meeting, Tuesday, July 25th at 7 PM at the American Museum of Fly Fishing, in Manchester, VT. **Following the 7/25 chapter meeting, we plan to fish the river**

and enjoy it, rain or shine. So, bring your rod if it isn't already in your vehicle.

— Eric Rickstad, President

THANKS

Many thanks are due to a number of folks for their volunteer efforts since early this spring. These members, and their families, helped with the Opening Day Pancake Breakfast, tree plantings, and assisting in getting the word out on the Batten Kill stocking issue. There are far too many to mention them all. But, in particular, I'd like to thank Alan and Judy Edmunds, owners of the Batten Kill Inn, for the use of their barn for the Pancake Breakfast, and for their involvement and help with the river. They funded (and TU volunteered muscle) the planting of dozens of trees along the river on their property, where a field had previously grown right to the edge with just a bit of understory and brush to support the banks. Special thanks to Ed Valerie for his help with his backhoe and to Donald Kinney for his generosity with donations & time. Other volunteers include the students who drove down from St. Michael's College to plant trees over a weekend; as well as David Carmona, Steve Hemkens, Barry Mayer, Joe Phillips, Doug Larson, Bill Bullock, Peter Bellamy, Scott McEnaney, Don Benesich, Frank Nelson, and many others. Their help is invaluable. Please, **keep up the great work!**

WWW.TUSWVT.ORG

Better than ever

Our chapter website is looking fantastic. On it, you can find information on the chapter, the issues that face our local waters, a petition to sign for the Batten Kill,

local water conditions and hatch charts, links to TU National, and of course, photos of trout and happy anglers. Without this site, we would be far less a voice to those beyond our area and have far less impact on the issues. If you have not yet visited the site, we encourage you to do so. All are encouraged to submit ideas, articles, comments, etc. for inclusion on the website. Thanks to Peter Bellamy for his design and ongoing support of our chapter site.

Habitat Project

Trees, roots wads, and other woody debris are staged along the banks of the lower Vermont stretch of the Kill, ready to be put in place come September. This project will be the largest cover restoration project the state has ever undertaken.

Volunteers are needed to help with this worthwhile project. Please contact any of us to learn how you can help, and about specific dates and details on the work.

Doug Lyons - VP@tuswvt.org
Eric Rickstad - President @tuswvt.org
Peter Bellamy - Secretary@tuswvt.org
Bill Bullock - amff1@amff.com

Pictures For Website / Newsletter

Have any great pics of local scenery or fishing trips? Submit them to the chapter for the newsletter and website. Pictures that include a S.A.S.E. will be returned or they can be returned at a chapter meeting. Email any pictures to Peter Bellamy (Secretary@tuswvt.org).

We Need Your Email Addresses

Help us save chapter resources by signing up for the electronic version of our newsletter. Please email your contact info. We'll save paper and mailing costs by emailing our newsletter to you.