

**Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture
Southern Work Group
Cacapon Resort State Park, WV
11 November 2009**

Attendance:

Mark Hudy (USFS), Doug Besler (NCWRC), Lisa Barno (NJDFW), Mike Shingleton (WVDNR), Gary Berti (TU), Alan Heft (MDNR), Seth Coffman (TU), Callie McMunigal (USFWS), Bob Curry (NCWRC), Larry Mohn (VGDIF), among others.

1. Dissolvement of Mid-Atlantic regional work group.

Maryland, West Virginia, and New Jersey were added to Southern work group. With the exception on New Jersey, the Southern work group now reflects the SDAFS member states and should make communication easier. Alan Heft (MDNR), Lisa Barno (NJDFW), and Mike Shingleton (WVDNR) will provide regional habitat objective numbers (#s 2, 3, 4, & 5) for their states to Doug Besler (NCWRC). Mark Hudy (USFS) will rework numbers for objectives 1, 6, and 7.

2. Assessment Scale Discussion.

Mark Hudy discussed issues of watershed scale and the difficulties that many biologists had relating to the 6th level HUCs (subwatersheds). Mark explained the differences between the 6th level HUCs (approximately 8,900 ha) used for the initial EBTJV habitat assessment surveys and “catchments” (approximately 237 ha) hydrology layers that are now available. Contiguous catchments of genetically isolated brook trout are “patches.” There are approximately 21,000 patches (average, 4-5 catchments) of brook trout in the eastern United States. Patches offer a better scale because managers typically act at the patch/catchment scale. In addition, progress at this scale can be seen (i.e. change color) before changes are evident at the larger subwatershed scale. Generally consensus among group was that the catchment/patch scale is better suited to report progress of the EBTJV range-wide, regional, and state level objectives. Data collected and reported at the patch/catchment scale can still be rolled up into the subwatershed scale for reporting purposes.

Mark plans to run population assessment models previously done at subwatershed scale at the catchment/patch scale to determine if the metrics that predicted brook trout presence absence at subwatershed scale are the same at the catchment and patch scale. Mark has assessed approximately 190,000 catchments (PA to GA) to date. Potential research question: What patch size is ideal for long term brook trout population viability?

3. Reporting Habitat Objective Progress.

Discussion then moved to how and when would we report progress being made toward meeting the 2012 EBTJV range-wide, regional, and state-level objectives. General consensus was that the Southern and Northern work group chairs (i.e. Steve Moore & Jim Daley) would be responsible to get annual progress reports from each state (which would have a point person) to the Habitat/Conservation Strategy subcommittee chair (i.e. Doug Besler) for compilation and reporting. The Habitat/Conservation Strategy subcommittee

chair would track overall annual progress and report back to the work groups, subcommittee, and steering committee. There is the possibility to use the EBTJV portal website to enter data from each state annually, but QA/QC issues could be problematic and would need to be resolved prior to implementation.

4. Project Reporting Metrics.

The following project reporting metrics were discussed:

Project name

Type of project

Date

Regional objective addressed

Lat/Lon coordinates (or central point of patch/catchment)

Agency/group responsible for project

Project Cost

Funding source (EBTJV, FED, STATE, NGO, PRIVATE FUNDS)

Stream name

USGS 1:24K quad

Catchment number

6th level HUC

The group agreed that those metrics are essential to being able to accurately track progress. A concern was raised that field crews may not always record catchment numbers when reporting, so we need to make sure that USGS 1:24K quad sheet and stream name are included.

5. Marcellus Shale Natural Gas Development.

Gary Berti (TU) initiated a brief discussion on how we meet regional objective one “Protecting and Maintaining Status of Intact Healthy Subwatersheds.” What can we do to maintain and protect intact brook trout populations? Agency oversight, permitting, routine monitoring were all listed as activities for meeting this objective.

Marcellus Shale natural gas development could be a significant threat to healthy brook trout populations across much of the eastern brook trout range. Gary gave a quick overview of Marcellus Shale and mining extraction practices, which require a lot of water (often taken from headwater streams) that is injected, with the addition of other chemicals, into the wells to fracture the shale deposits and release the natural gas. This injected water returns to the surface, penetrates wells, or is released into other surface waters. The areas generally targeted for Marcellus Shale (PA, WV, and NY) natural gas development are often located in those states best brook trout watersheds.

Should EBTJV be doing more to protect watersheds? Advocacy or Outreach? The group discussed methods to demonstrate to the public the threats Marcellus shale drilling poses to brook trout populations. Ideas included demonstrating that the best of the best brook trout populations could be threatened by Marcellus Shale mining by overlaying Marcellus Shale data on brook trout HUCs. Additionally, we could provide Outreach and

Education subcommittee with data on brook trout HUCs in the Marcellus Shale development areas.

6. Southern Work Group Habitat Objectives:

The group added an 8th regional habitat objective: Determine the Status of Unknowns. This objective was previously listed in earlier drafts, but was missing on the current list of regional objectives.

The group discussed the perception of numbered regional objectives as prioritized objectives, which is not the case. It was agreed by consensus to change numbered objectives (1-8) to letters (A-H) to show no real priority. Individual states should determine where to focus their efforts.

7. Meeting Regional Objectives.

Discussion then focused on identifying specific projects so we can begin to systematically document progress made towards the short-term (2012) regional habitat objectives. All projects, funded by EBTJV or any other source, would be eligible to towards meeting those objectives. Projects that count towards meeting objectives can date back to 2005.

Larry Mohn (VDGIF) suggested Doug Besler develop and send out an EBTJV tracking sheet for projects to states in the EBTJV southern work group to report completed projects dating back to 2005. The goal is for partners to ID and report projects by the spring 2010 Southern Division AFS meeting. An EBTJV southern work group meeting will be held on 25 February 2010, in Asheville, NC in conjunction with the SDAFS meeting. Doug will receive the info prior to that EBTJV meeting, compile the data, and report progress being made toward the objectives at the EBTJV southern work group meeting.

EBTJV Southern Work Group Action Items:

- Change numbers on regional habitat objectives to letters (Doug Besler).**
- Incorporate former Mid-Atlantic regional objectives 2-5 into the southern regional habitat objectives (Mark Hudy and Doug Besler).**
- Develop and send out an Excel progress tracking form to each state (Doug Besler). Tracking sheets will be due back to Doug by 19 February 2010.**
- Add an 8th regional habitat objective of Determining Status of Subwatersheds Classified as Unknown (Doug Besler).**
- Overlay Marcellus shale GIS layer on intact healthy subwatersheds in the Marcellus Shale areas (Mark Hudy).**

Notes reported by Doug Besler and Seth Coffman. (6 January 2010)