



PROTECT CONSERVE ENHANCE

Stocked Trout Cost Study Supports Popular Program



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The Commission has a long history of culturing and stocking trout. The program has changed many times and is currently producing approximately 3.5 million 11-inch adult trout annually. We are often asked about the cost of this program and now we know.

Results from a recently completed cost study show that we spend about \$2.73 to raise and stock an average adult trout. This cost includes everything from trout food to the salary of a Waterways Conservation Officer as he guides volunteers. That's good news for us and good news for anglers. Our costs are in line with commercial hatcheries and demonstrate we are operating efficiently. It's good for you because trout fishing remains extremely popular. Knowing the true costs of the trout program helps us to better manage the resource, so you continue to have enjoyable angling experiences.

This is the first comprehensive examination of the trout program, with the analysis examining expenditures from fiscal years 2006-08. It takes various staff to successfully stock a fishery, with biologists having the central role. Engineers design and make improvements to hatcheries. Indirect costs like accounting and public relations play key roles too.

We determined that the total program costs to produce and manage put-grow-take (PGT) fingerlings, cooperative nursery fingerlings and adult trout were \$0.65, \$0.94 and \$2.73, respectively. Overall, we spend \$12.4 million annually to provide 6 million fingerlings and adults. Approximately \$9.3 million is spent on adult trout. We produce another 2 million to 4 million fingerlings for the PGT fishery at a cost of about \$1.5 million, and 1.2 million roughly 5-inch fingerlings for coop nurseries at about \$1.6 million.

What will we do with the data? Anglers clearly enjoy fishing for trout in Pennsylvania. According to a 2008 survey, the majority (84 percent) were satisfied with their trout fishing experiences. Nearly 20 percent said trout fishing has improved over the last five years and half said the quality has remained the same. Twenty-five percent said it has declined.

This last figure shows we have room to improve, which we have known and acknowledged. It's important to remember that stocked trout is only one component of our total trout program. Managing wild trout streams and implementing habitat improvements is one of our fundamental and expanding efforts. If we can improve a Class B trout fishery and make it Class A, we can remove it from our stocking list and use those valuable stocked fish elsewhere. What a victory that would be for us all.

The numbers also allow us to better understand how to allocate limited resources. At \$2.73 per fish, we want fish placed in waters where they will create the greatest recreational benefit. As waters get cleaned up from mine drainage, we are frequently asked to put streams back on stocking lists. It's kind of a victory celebration over the ravages of our polluted past. These fish have to come from somewhere and making those allocation decisions will be improved with these cost numbers.

There is still much to learn and there are many questions to ask. Trout anglers are more frequently practicing catch and release which makes the stocked fish go farther. Will this continue to expand? Answers to these questions along with the next stocking cost estimates will be critical as we rewrite our statewide trout management plan.

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