

A Catch-and-Release Fishery for Stocked Adult Trout in the Huron River, Proud Lake Recreation Area, Oakland County, Michigan

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Abstract.—A portion of the Huron River in the Proud Lake Recreation Area, Oakland County, has been stocked yearly with legal-size trout since 1974. Special regulations provide a catch-and-release flies-only season prior to the regular statewide trout season. A creel census was conducted in 1975 and again in 1987 to evaluate the program. Total angler hours in 1987 were equal to those of 1975, but were concentrated in fewer angling days (21 and 30 days, respectively). Anglers had a higher catch per effort and stock utilization in 1987 than in 1975. Economic return generated by anglers' expenses resulted in a benefit/cost ratio of 2.78:1. In 1987, the value of the program to the anglers in terms of dollars was \$174,632. The program cost was \$8,686. The benefit to the angler/cost ratio for 1987 was 20.1:1. In 1975, this benefit/cost ratio was 10.1:1.

Stocked trout were efficiently recycled during the catch-and-release season. Catch data indicated stocked trout were caught an average of 3.45 times. Catch per effort over the study period was 0.82 fish per hour. During the regular season an intense harvest occurs over a short period of time. The program is successful because it provides a substantial amount of stream fly fishing for big trout at a time when anglers are anxious to fish but have few opportunities. Under such conditions a relatively few adult trout support heavy angling effort yet provide high success rates due to the catch-and-release feature. The program is highly valued by the anglers and is economically beneficial. The Huron River trout program fills a void with quality trout angling in lower Michigan.

Few streams in southeast Michigan are capable of supporting trout populations year-round. This is primarily due to high water temperatures in the mid- to late summer. Angler desire for stream trout fishing near the metropolitan area has always been very strong. In 1974, an early season catch-and-release trout program was initiated in cooperation

with the Michigan Fly Fishing Club on a section of the Huron River located in the Proud Lake Recreation Area, 18 miles northwest of Detroit. Special regulations limited the angling to "flies only" during the months of April and May.

Due to the popularity of the initial stocking, the Michigan Department of Natural

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