



Winter Trout Stocking in Community Fishing Program Ponds in Cabarrus and Mecklenburg Counties

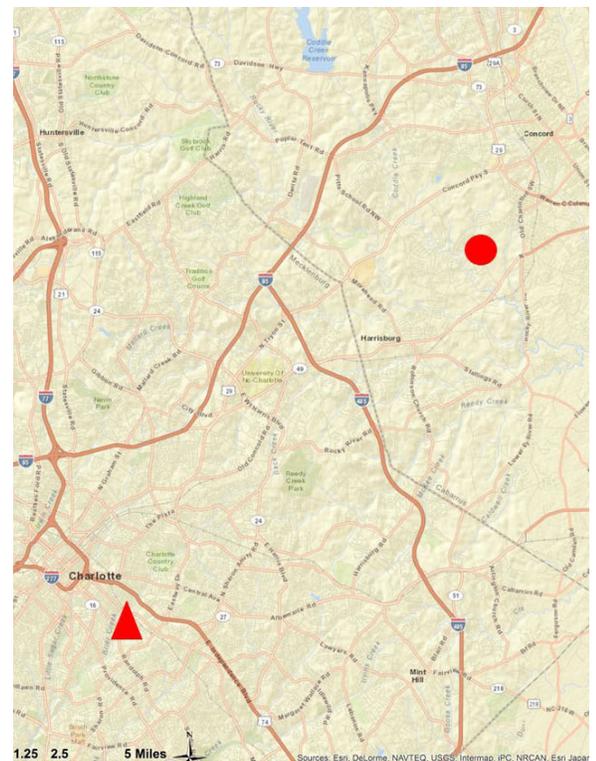
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The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) stocks over 880,000 Brook Trout, Rainbow Trout, and Brown Trout annually. These fish are stocked into streams, rivers, and reservoirs across 26 counties in western North Carolina. Throughout the history of this program, stockings have been limited to waters that could support the physical habitat requirements of trout for enough time to maintain fishing opportunities during designated fishing seasons. Trout typically require waters that maintain temperatures of 70° F or less. These conditions are readily available in many western North Carolina streams and rivers for most of the year. In contrast, water temperatures in the range that support trout are only found in December through March in Piedmont streams, lakes, and ponds.

In the fall 2016, trout were stocked into selected ponds in or adjacent to the traditional 26 county region of the existing trout stocking program; several of these ponds were also in the Community Fishing Program (CFP). The CFP is a statewide program that uses annual stockings of Channel Catfish in spring and summer months to provide fishing opportunities in small waterbodies across North Carolina. The CFP is managed as a put-and-take fishery and angling opportunities in colder weather months are more limited than during the warmer months of the stocking season. By using hatchery-reared trout, biologists wanted to provide late fall and winter fishing opportunities, which would create year-round fishing opportunities at these sites. In 2017, two lakes were added in the Piedmont Region: Frank Liske Park in Cabarrus County and McAlpine Park in Mecklenburg County. These lakes were selected because they already were incorporated into the CFP and were located near high-density population centers.

Project Objectives:

- To provide additional winter fishing opportunities in selected CFP ponds in the Piedmont Region of North Carolina using hatchery-reared Brook Trout, Rainbow Trout, and Brown Trout.



Map of trout stocking locations in Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties. The red triangle indicates McAlpine Park and the red circle indicates Frank Liske Park.



Methods:

- Rainbow Trout, Brook Trout, and Brown Trout were reared at the Bobby Setzer State Fish Hatchery near Brevard, NC.
- The locations for stocking were: McAlpine Creek Park Lake, a 5-acre lake located at 8711 Monroe Rd, Charlotte, and Frank Liske Park Lake, an 8-acre lake located at 4001 Stough Rd in Concord.
- Approximately 800 fish were stocked in McAlpine Park, and 1,200 fish were stocked in Frank Liske Park. Most stocked trout were between 10–12 inches total length with approximately three percent greater than 14 inches total length.
- Park staff at Frank Liske Park measured angler participation post stocking via the sale of fishing permits for those 13 years old and older and through visual estimations by onsite staff.

Results:

- Trout were stocked on Dec. 21, 2017 at both locations. Initial post-release survival appeared to be high and trout were caught by anglers in both locations shortly after stocking.
- Cabarrus County Parks staff reported that between Dec. 21, 2017 and Dec. 30, 2017 (10-day period), 312 one-day fishing passes were sold at Frank Liske Park. Staff reported that they normally sell 50 one-day fishing passes during the entire month of December on average. Staff at Frank Liske Park have also estimated at least 500 individual angler visits during this period, which include adult anglers who have purchased a fishing pass and youth anglers who are not required to purchase a fishing permit.
- Fishing passes are not required by Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation therefore no metrics exist of angler visits during this time and McAlpine Park is not intensively managed by onsite staff. However, anecdotal reports from park managers and wildlife enforcement officers indicate anglers have been successful at catching trout at McAlpine Park.

What's next?:

- Staff at Frank Liske Park will continue to monitor use for the remainder of first quarter of 2018 via visual estimation of angler use and through sales of fishing permits.
- If trout are available in subsequent years, the Commission intends to continue stocking a small number of selected waters in the Piedmont during the winter months.
- Fisheries staff will be evaluating other potential stocking sites to provide increased opportunity and awareness of this program.



Two young anglers show off their catch from McAlpine Park Lake. (Photo: Ryan Spidel)



Wildlife Enforcement Officer T. C. Stacy stocking trout in McAlpine Creek Park Lake (Photo: Lawrence Dorsey)

For more information, contact:

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