

Elton Creek Trout Habitat Enhancement Survey

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On July 5, 2023, Elton Creek, located in northeastern Cattaraugus County, was sampled by NYSDEC Region 9 Fisheries staff and angler volunteers to evaluate a fish habitat enhancement project in a reclaimed section of the LaFarge gravel pit. In the summer of 2013, in-stream habitat was enhanced, and eroding streambanks were stabilized on a 1,100-foot section of Elton Creek as part of gravel pit reclamation. The work was accomplished utilizing large pieces of conglomerate rock from the active section of the gravel pit installed in strategic locations to provide streambank stability and in-stream fish habitat (Figure 1). This high-quality wild trout stream is managed with Wild-Quality fishing regulations and is on a section with Public Fishing Rights easements.

Trout population sampling in this survey utilized one electrofishing pass. Electrofishing at contiguous three sites (1,085-feet combined) produced 25 yearling-and-older (adult) wild rainbow trout and 21 adult wild brown trout. Substantial rains in the watershed the night before sampling resulted in high, turbid stream flow conditions. This, combined with several inexperienced crew members, likely lead to low sampling efficiency (estimated at 50%) for adult trout.

Based on our catch, the estimated adult wild trout abundance in this survey was 244 wild rainbow trout/mile and 205 wild brown trout/mile; total adult trout abundance was estimated at 449 fish/mile. Estimated total adult trout abundance was comparable to a 2022 survey conducted 0.2 miles downstream that also had habitat enhancement work done (576 fish/mile). While sampling conditions were less than ideal for developing a precise population estimate for this section (time constraints prevented us from redoing sampling at this site in 2023), the majority of the fish we captured were utilizing the fish habitat installed in 2013, indicating that the project has likely increased the carry capacity for trout in this section of Elton Creek.

Figure 1. Large conglomerate rocks used in Elton Creek fish habitat enhancement, 2014.

