

South Branch Grass River Special Regulations Evaluation (Survey #622302)

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South Branch Grass River (SL-2-59) is 47.4 miles long. It originates in the Town of Colton and flows in a northwesterly direction to the Town of Russell where it joins the Grass River. The South Branch Grass River is currently classified as a C(T) stream (i.e., suitable for fishing and trout present). Ample public access is available through the Grass River and Cranberry Lake Wild Forests. Special Regulations for trout are catch and release only, artificial lures only, year-round from 0.5 miles downstream of Route 3 upstream to Grass River Flow. Statewide Inland Trout Stream regulations apply to the remainder of the waterbody. In June 2021, a survey conducted to evaluate the Special Regulations section found that the South Branch Grass River was extremely thermally stressed. Water temperatures ranged from 78-80°F at all three sites surveyed, no trout were captured or observed during that survey (Resseguie 2021). In June 2022, we conducted a survey to evaluate the Special Regulations section to further assess the status of the stream and trout population, to determine the necessity of a special trout regulation, and to determine the appropriate management category as outlined in the New York State Trout Stream Management Plan (TSMP; NYSDEC 2020).

On June 10, 2022, we used backpack electrofishing to sample the three sites that were sampled during the 2021 survey. Sampling inside the Special Regulation section (Site 1), in the Statewide Regulation section (Site 3), and at the border of the two (Site 2). During the survey, water temperatures ranged from 68-70°F. Brook trout were captured at Site 2 (n=1) and Site 3 (n=3). No trout were captured or observed in the Special Regulation section. Species common to the area were collected at all three sites (Table 1).

Temperature loggers were placed in the river on May 27, 2022. One temperature logger was placed at Site 1 (Figure 1), and one was placed at Site 3 (Figure 2). Water temperature was 70°F on May 31 and reached highs of 80°F at Site 1 and 81°F at Site 3 on August 8, 2022. More than 70 days reached 70°F or higher and more than 15 days reached 75°F or higher. The temperature loggers were removed on November 8 (Site 1) and October 12 (Site 3).

Figure 1. Hourly water temperatures at South Branch Grass River Catch and Release section (Site 1), May-November 2022.

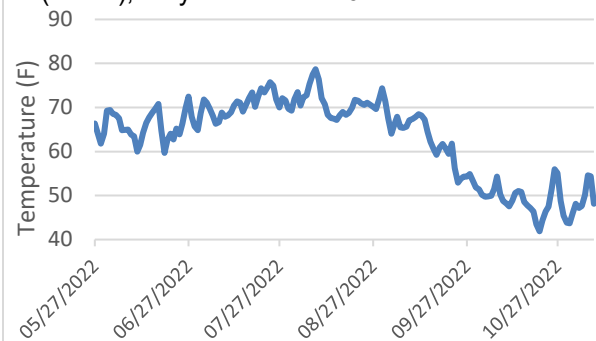
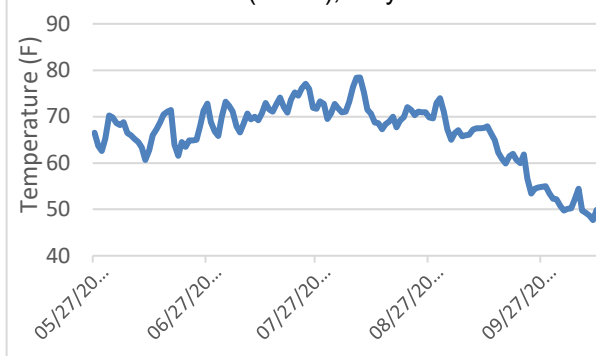


Figure 2. Hourly water temperatures at South Branch Grass River downstream of Catch and Release section (Site 3), May-October 2022.



We recommend removing the catch and release only regulation currently in place and replaced it with the current Statewide Inland Trout Stream Regulations which allows angling for brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, and splake from April 1-October 15, no minimum length, daily limit of 5 with only 2 longer than 12 inches; and catch and release only, artificial lures only, October 16-March 31.

Table 1. Fish Species and number collected during the 2022 South Branch Grass River Special Regulations Evaluation.

| <u>Common Name</u> | <u>Number collected</u> |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Brook Trout | 4 |
| Brown Bullhead | 26 |
| Common Shiner | 3 |
| Creek Chub | 14 |
| Eastern Blacknose Dace | 10 |
| Rock Bass | 2 |
| White Sucker | 1 |
| Yellow Perch | 1 |

Literature Cited

NYSDEC. 2020. New York State Trout Stream Management Plan. Albany, NY: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Resseguie, L. 2021. South Branch Grass River Special Regulations Evaluation Survey. Technical Brief TB621008. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Bureau of Fisheries, Watertown, New York.