

Joe Conklin, Inland Fisheries Volunteer

The Inland Fisheries Division has been graced with a long tradition of support from volunteers. Whether the task is untangling a lake trout from a gill net at a nighttime spawning reef in November or inventorying hellgrammites in a small mountain stream, it is reassuring to know that you have dedicated people willing to provide another set of hands.

Experienced volunteers also play a key role in the protection of New Hampshire's fisheries by participating in local conservation and restoration efforts. One volunteer who personified the ability to spark grassroots interest is Joe Conklin, recently of Kittery, Maine. Joe's unparalleled love for wild brook trout extended to every stream where they swam. He was consistently with us in the streams, assessing new wild brook trout populations and noting what could be done to make streams more suitable for brook trout. He always made it a point to report back to us on new areas in which he found wild brook trout on his own.

Joe was particularly drawn toward finding or re-creating a salter brook trout population in the Great Bay area. His opportunity came when the Winnicut River Dam was removed in 2009. The lowest tributary above the head-of-tide contained wild brook trout. Joe knew that, with some habitat improvement, the wild

brook trout might begin to make journeys to and from the saltwater, growing to larger sizes.

Joe went to work on this dream, becoming the project manager of the restoration of Thompson Brook for the Great Bay Trout Unlimited Chapter. He was an active leader in fundraising, land-owner relations, survey work and a liaison with town officials. He laid the groundwork for a successful stream restoration by planning in-stream wood additions and data collection.

One stubborn obstacle was the removal of a "perched" road crossing that prevents wild brook trout from reaching cooler areas in the headwaters of this stream. While the engineering designs for a more suitable fish-friendly crossing have been developed, funds for the overall cost to purchase and install the new crossing have not yet been completely raised.

Sadly, Joe passed away unexpectedly in November of 2013. Many of us within the Inland Fisheries Division miss Joe's passion and love for wild brook trout and his inspiring enthusiasm for protecting and building awareness of the species. A fund has been established in his memory to raise the remaining funds to replace the perched crossing on Thompson Brook. Please consider contributing to this worthwhile project at greatbaytu.org.



NH FG STAFF PHOTO

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