

Oatka Creek Trout Survey (Survey #: 823021)

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Oatka Creek is a 60-mile-long tributary to the Genesee River which flows through Wyoming County in NYSDEC Region 9 and Genesee and Monroe Counties in Region 8. Public access within the Monroe County section is mostly within Oatka Creek County Park and DEC parking areas in Scottsville and Mumford. However, between these access points, and between Bowerman Rd and Union Street lies a 1.5-mile stretch of private water with the north side owned entirely by the Phillip Garbutt Rod and Gun Club (Club). The Club has also leased additional waterfront property from many of the landowners along the south side of the creek to give members additional access to fish. In 2020, the New York State Trout Stream Management Plan was implemented (NYSDEC 2020), and it was determined Oatka Creek would be managed as

'Wild Quality' (WQ) from Bowerman Road upstream to the confluence with Spring Creek. This designation included the private waters owned and leased by the Club.

Previous surveys to determine trout abundance were conducted within Club waters during 1999 and 2000 at S6 while S3 and S4 were sampled during 2022 (Figure 1). Additionally, S2 was previously sampled from 1998 through 2003. The Oatka Creek County Park section of the creek has an extensive survey history and was also surveyed during 2023 with results presented in Technical Brief #823027 (DiSarno 2023). This 2023 survey was conducted to further assess whether the management designation of WQ is appropriate from Bowerman Rd upstream to the confluence of Spring Creek. Four sites were sampled within Club waters while an additional two sites were sampled near Mumford (Figure 1). Site lengths ranged from 300 to 543 feet in length (Table 1) with a barge electrofishing unit used at each site. Two passes were made at each site, and all trout collected were measured to the nearest millimeter. No blocking seines were used during this survey, and all trout were held in containment after the first pass to avoid recapture during the subsequent pass.

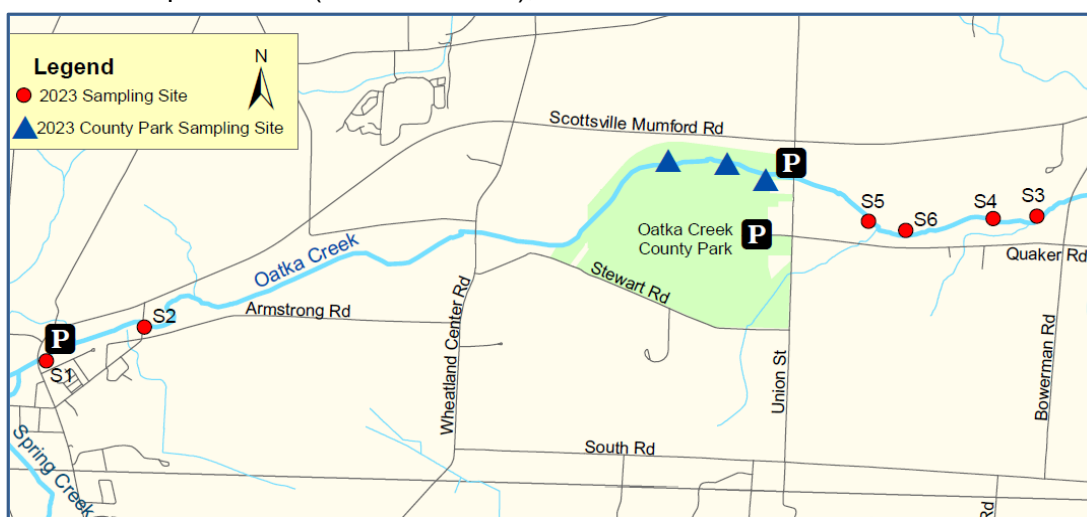


Figure 1. 2023 sampling sites on Oatka Creek.

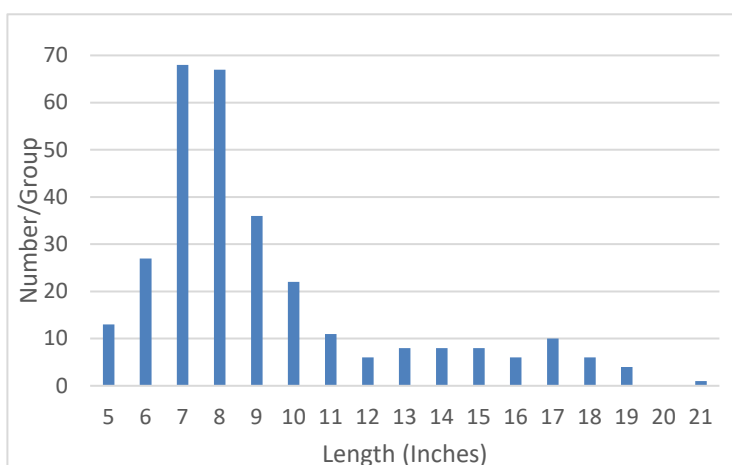


Figure 2. Length distribution of wild, yearling and older brown trout caught during 2023.

A total of 545 wild brown trout were caught during this survey with 244 determined to be young of year and 301 determined to be yearling and older. Two stocked brown trout were caught with one at each S1 and S2. Yearling and older wild brown trout lengths ranged from five to 21 inches with most (45%) at seven to nine inches long (Figure 2). The combined estimate for all sites for yearling and older wild trout per mile (trout/mile) was 729 and the pounds/acre was 49.9. The total trout/mile and pounds/acre for the Garbutt Club sites (sites 3-6) were 360 and 36.6, respectively. These estimates were well above the 2022 estimates of 244 trout/mile and 24.7 pounds/acre (Figure 3). The total trout/mile and pounds/acre for the Mumford sites (S1 and S2) were 1,563 and 69.6, respectively. These were well above the 1998 through 2003 average at S2 for trout/mile (931) and pounds/acre (40.3). Trout abundance was sampled during a separate 2023 survey (Survey #823027) at three sites within Oatka Creek County Park, and trout/mile and pounds/acre were estimated at 530 and 20.3, respectively.

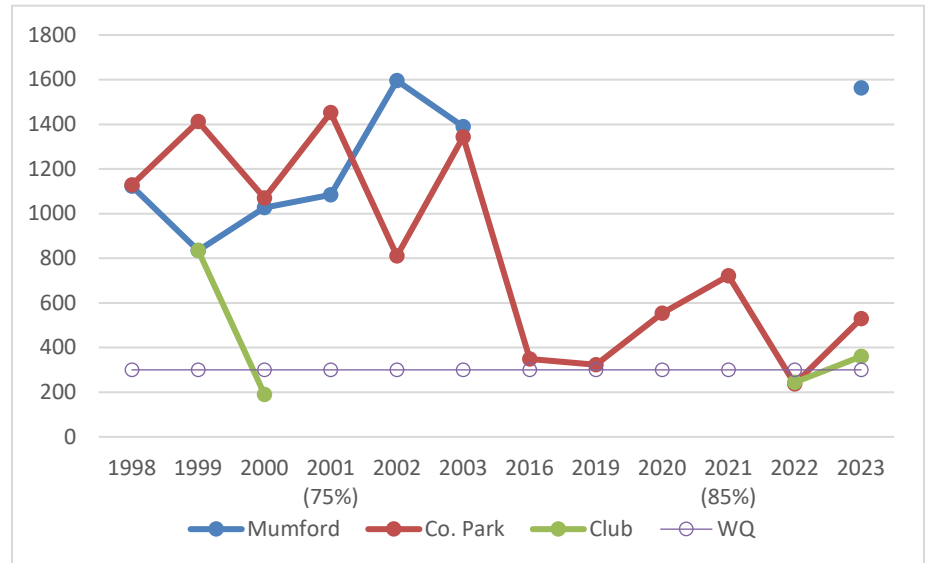


Figure 3. Estimated wild, yearling and older trout/mile caught during surveys since 1998. Surveys conducted prior to 2021 were a single pass survey with an 80% efficiency applied unless specified in parenthesis. The 2022 and 2023 surveys were depletion estimates.

Overall, 2023 appeared to be a good year for trout abundance within this WQ reach with estimates near or above recent survey results. The minimum thresholds for the WQ category are 300 trout/mile or 40 pounds/acre. The total pounds/acre (including results from survey #823027) was slightly below the minimum threshold for WQ at 36.8, while the total trout/mile was 669, which is well above the minimum threshold of 300. Similarly, results from within the Club section for pounds/acre were slightly below the WQ threshold at 36.6, while the trout/mile estimate was above at 360. Therefore, it is recommended the Club reach and the remainder of the WQ reach continue to be managed under the WQ category, and no management change is proposed at this time.

Table 1. 2023 site lengths, total wild brown trout caught, estimated pounds/acre and yearling and older trout per mile at each site sampled.

Site	Site Length (ft.)	BT Age 1+	BT Young of Year	Est. Pounds/Acre	Est. Num/Mile
1	339	43	30	49.8	939
2	420	149	162	96.9	2122
3	377	38	10	40.6	589
4	360	12	4	34.1	176
5	543	36	16	42.0	359
6	300	23	22	29.9	414
Totals	2339	301	244	49.9	729

Literature Cited:

- NYSDEC. 2020. New York State Trout Stream Management Plan. Albany: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.
- DiSarno, Michael A. Technical Brief #823027. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Avon, NY.