

TROUT MANAGEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

In some ways the American fishery is similar to that in Portugal, and therefore an interesting model. Most trout streams are publicly owned and open to anyone who buys the necessary license. Management is by fish and game commissions, not cooperatives. One major difference, however, is that most streams are managed by the States, not the national (federal) government. There are some federally-managed waters, however, and national laws impose certain requirements on states.

National Laws

- The sale of all sport fish has been rigorously prohibited since early in this century. (This is extremely important because access to streams is seldom restricted by private ownership.)
- A number of rivers throughout the country have been designated by law as "wild rivers". These rivers are distinguished by high scenic and ecological value. They are given special protection.
- There is a very large area in national parks, national forests, and wilderness areas. Yellowstone National Park, for example, has approximately 9,000 square kilometers.

It attracts many tens of thousands of fishermen every year for high-quality trout fishing. All trout are wild, and the take is restricted so as to maintain a maximum number of trout of spawning age. In rivers which produce only small fish, five a day may be killed. In others the limits are two, one, or even none (all fish caught must be released). These limits are popular because they allow anglers to catch large fish. On one river, the minimum size is 16" (40cm).

STATE LAWS

- Most states run scientific surveys of all rivers, classifying them according to environmental quality. Grade A fisheries have good natural reproduction and are managed so as to avoid all stocking, with restrictive limits and protection of stream quality. Only artificial flies and (sometimes) lures are permitted. Grade B rivers have limited natural reproduction but carry trout all year; they are heavily stocked. Grade C rivers sustain fish only in winter and spring but are sometimes stocked for children and bait fishermen.
- "Fish-for-fun" rivers are becoming extremely popular. Artificial flies with single barbless hooks are used,

and all fish are released. Sometimes one fish of large ("trophy") size may be kept. Bait and floats (Buldos) are of course prohibited.

- In some states, there are provisions for restricting access to rivers, as by public reserves or private clubs.
- Trout fishing is considered a major tourist attraction. States advertise it heavily in their tourist brochures and magazines. Many millions of tourist licenses are sold, usually at a higher price than resident licenses. Many hotels, motels, restaurants, and resorts depend on tourist fishermen.
- Money from licenses goes to State Fish and Game Commissions. They use the fees to pay wardens and biologists, and to protect or restore fish habitat in rivers. Some money is spent on hatcheries, but there is a widespread tendency to reduce stocking and use funds for protecting wild fish.