

Connecticut Anglers:

Fish hatcheries, and the programs they make possible, are again being put at risk due to the state's budget deficit.

In this case, the worst case scenario is not a loss of funding or cuts directed specifically at the hatcheries but the inability of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Bureau of Natural Resources to sufficiently staff the facilities.

The state has instituted a hard hiring freeze and has issued layoff notices to workers. Maintainer positions were part of this layoff and those with the least seniority were the first targeted in this layoff. Unfortunately, this included three of the 14 total staff who operate the hatcheries. In addition, two more positions will be lost, including a supervisor, due to voluntary departures this summer. In 2009, the hatcheries were staffed by 22 people.

These departures would leave fish and wildlife officials with nine total staff to operate three hatcheries - an impossible task. The result could be closure of a hatchery; regardless of how many hatcheries remain open, the number of trout available for stocking could be reduced from 650,000 to as few as 350,000. That's fewer fish stocked for anglers, and a serious risk for programs such as Trout in the Classroom and Salmon in the Schools, which according to DEEP statistics allowed 10,000 to 15,000 Connecticut students to get hands-on, cross-curricular exposure to the environment and fish, and crucially helps create the next generation of anglers and conservationists.

The next generation of anglers is key to the future of fish and fishing in Connecticut. Programs such as the hatcheries are funded by license fees and taxes on hunting and fishing equipment.

The looming cuts put at risk not only current revenues from fishing licenses brought in by resident anglers but another \$40 million, if not more, in revenue to local economies, paid directly by the more than 100,000 anglers from near and far who make 1.5 million trips to Connecticut to fish. The loss of non-resident licenses would be even more devastating, as those anglers pay more to access to the legendary trout rivers of Connecticut in the Housatonic and Farmington river systems.

Whether or not you fish for trout, you need to care about this. Connecticut sportsmen cannot be divided on any of these issues, because the next cuts could hit the pursuit of species of interest to you.

**With the legislature about to return to Hartford to attempt to craft a now-late budget, anglers need to speak now.** Use the attached fact sheet to call or email your state senators and representatives, as well as Gov. Dannel P. Malloy. In your email or letter, state your name and if you belong to an organization, the name of the organization to which you belong. Let them know that the revenue that would be generated by fully staffed hatcheries would more than fund the programs for which sportsmen already foot the bill. The attached fact sheet will outline what to say. Please feel free to send the entire fact sheet to your legislator but please let them know in your own words why this is important to you as a constituent.

Thank you for your time and support.