

EcoTips for Trout Fishermen

By Glenn Sapir, Member

Putnam Valley Commission for the Conservation of the Environment

Trout fishing season opened on April 1. Its arrival is much anticipated in any given year, but in 2020 in particular, with so many limitations on what we can do, sportsmen especially welcomed the signal for legal angling. Though trout fishing is a wholesome, traditional pastime, is also an activity where the angler must show respect for the fish he is after and the environment in which he is recreating.

Here are a few reminders:

- First, of course, if you are 16 or older, you must purchase your fishing license, which can be done at tackle shops like Big Wave in Mahopac, at Walmart or at Putnam Valley Town Hall. Not only does purchasing your license entitle you to legally fish, but it also goes toward funding the fisheries management that allows for stream and other habitat improvement, public access points, law enforcement and fish stocking, among other functions of the state Department of Environmental Conservation.
- If you choose to keep any trout that you catch, be sure to limit your take to no more than the permitted legal number—5.
- If the weather is warm, dress your fish while you are still streamside or lakeside to prevent spoilage. Place the innards in a bag to be deposited in a garbage receptacle.
- If you decide to release your fish, try to keep it in the water while you remove the hook. Avoid touching its gills—a fragile part of its respiratory system—and its skin, as much as possible, as you might remove a protective film on the fish. If the fish is “played out,” wet your hands and gently hold the fish around its middle, moving it back and forth in the water. That pushes water through its gills, which removes oxygen from the water and helps to revive the tired fish.
- If you choose to release a fish that has swallowed your bait and thus the hook, do not try to remove the hook. Instead, cut the line as close to the hook as you can. The metal hook will eventually corrode from the acidic digestive juices produced by the fish.
- If you have to cut your line while fishing because of a twist, a knot or a snag, coil the discarded line and place it in a pocket. Dispose of it when you get home. Line left in or along a stream or lake can wind up tangled around a bird’s legs, for example, leading to a slow, agonizing death. Take the extra measure of picking up trash you might come across. One angler from Westchester who fishes Kensico Reservoir has started a campaign for shore and boat fishermen to bring with them an empty garbage bag and fill it with rubbish they might encounter. Might you do the same?
- Be aware of where you are walking along a stream and respect the fragile banks and vegetation that might grow along the bank.

●If you come across newborn wildlife, leave it alone. While you might think it is abandoned or orphaned, its parent is most likely nearby. Taking a wild animal into your possession is probably a death sentence to the animal and a wildlife-law violation as well.

Please do all you can to respect your quarry, the environment and conservation laws. Good luck this trout season.

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