

**Boardman River fish-shocking surveys reveal a heathy brook trout fishery**

**February 11, 2010** – DNR fish-shocking surveys last summer at two Boardman River sites showed encouraging signs that the brook trout population is continuing to make a comeback.

Electrofishing results at Ranch Rudolph, located about four miles upstream from the former Brown Bridge Dam, and at Brown Bridge Road, less than a mile downstream from the former dam, showed healthy populations of brook trout at both sites, with fish that exceeded the state average for brook trout based on age.

The density of the brook trout population at Ranch Rudolph has steadily risen over the past three years, with 510 brook trout observed during the fish shocking last July and 354 brown trout seen. In 2017, the DNR observed 442 brook trout vs. 181 brown trout, and 2018 saw 408 brook trout and 270 brown trout.

There was one disturbing finding: On Ranch Rudolph’s 1,100-foot stretch, DNR personnel also shocked 49 rainbow trout. The Ranch Rudolph report indicates that no rainbows were shocked in either 2017 or 2018. The report speculates that the juvenile non-native steelhead trout migrated upstream from Boardman Lake or came from ponds located on the Ranch Rudolph property.

The results of the fish shocking at Brown Bridge Road were even more favorable for brook trout. Although the Brown Bridge report revealed slightly more brown trout (288) than brook trout (245), it said there has been a 2,967% increase in brook trout on this section of the river since 2010. During that same period, the report said, the brown trout population decreased by 27%. “The stretch of the river may be better suited to brook trout than brown trout,” the report said.

As fishermen who fish these sections of the Boardman are aware, the brook trout remain mostly small. The Ranch Rudolph report notes that brook trout larger than 8 inches and older than age 1 continue to be rare. None of the brook trout shocked at either location exceeded 9 inches or was older than age 2. In contrast, the largest brown trout the survey found was 17 inches at Age 5.

Although the DNR has pledged that no salmon or steelhead will be passed up the Boardman for 10 years following the construction and initial operation of FishPass, the agency has made it clear that it favors the passage of steelhead. Accordingly, both reports contain this disturbing recommendation: “Passing migratory fish above the Union Street Dam should be considered when the FishPass project begins the optimization phase. Many Lake Michigan species have been denied access to the upper Boardman River for decades and should be allowed to fulfill their life cycle, as well as provide additional nutrients, diversity and angling opportunities to the watershed.”

**NOTE**: Both reports are posted on the BTC’s website below this summary. There is an error in the discussion section (p. 2) of the Ranch Rudolph report. The report says that “brook trout collected were found to be from Age-0 to Age-III (Table 4).” However, Table 4 indicates that the brook trout collected ranged from Age-0 to Age-II. DNR Supervisor Scott Heintzelman said the comment in the discussion section is incorrect.