

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

From November 30, 2001 to December 29, 2001, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP) solicited Public Comments on a draft NPDES permit, developed pursuant to an application from Brian Cardinal, Owner, Red Wing Meadow Trout Hatchery, Montague, MA for the Red Wing Meadow Trout Hatchery, Montague, MA. After a review of the comments received, EPA has made the final decision to issue the permit authorizing the discharge. The following response to public comments describes the changes and briefly describes and responds to the comments on the draft permit. A copy of the final permit may be obtained by writing or calling Michele Cobban Barden, United States Environmental Protection Agency, 1 Congress Street, Suite 1100 (CPE), Boston, Massachusetts, 02114-2023; Telephone (617) 918-1539.

A) Comments submitted by Donald Pugh, Trout Unlimited, Deerfield/Millers Chapter

Comment #1: The Sawmill River is classified by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MADEP) as a Class B - Warm Water Fishery. This classification is incorrect.

The fish community in the Sawmill River in the vicinity of Red Wing Trout Hatchery consists of brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*), slimy sculpin (*Cottus cognatus*), longnose dace (*Rhinichthys cataractea*), blacknose dace (*Rhinichthys atratulus*), white sucker (*Catostomus commersoni*), American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) and Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) (authors personal observation). Both brook trout and brown trout naturally reproduce in the Sawmill River. Atlantic salmon fry are stocked as a part of the effort to restore salmon in the Connecticut River basin. They have been stocked in the Sawmill River since 1994.

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MADFW) uses three criteria to determine the cold water status of a river: 1) natural reproduction of any trout species; 2) the presence of slimy sculpins; and 3) stocking of Atlantic salmon fry. Only one criteria is necessary for classification as a coldwater fishery (per com Todd Richards, MADFW). The Sawmill River meets all three criteria. The MADFW currently classifies the Sawmill River as a cold water fishery (per com Todd Richards, MADFW).

Additional evidence for classification of the Sawmill River as a coldwater fishery is found in the "Connecticut River Basin 1998 Water Quality Assessment Report" prepared by the Division of Watershed Management of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. The report recommends that the Sawmill River be classified as a coldwater fishery. It states (pg. 50) "As a result of the 1993 DWM upstream/downstream evaluation of the Red Wing Meadow Trout Hatchery discharge, the classification of this stream as a cold water fishery was recommended. In consultation with DFWELE consider the classification of this stream as a cold water fishery.

While it appears that the "official" classification may be as a warm water fishery the MADFW and the MADEP agree that the Sawmill River is a cold water fishery. It is unclear why, after the MADEP's own evaluation in 1993, the classification was not changed but this should not be cause to disregard the MADFW and MADEP's own recommendations. The NPDES permit should be conditioned to meet cold water fishery standards.

Response: The MA DEP has made the cold water fishery standards for Class B waters a

requirement for state certification of this permit. As such, the dissolved oxygen level shall not be less than 6.0 mg/l and the natural seasonal and daily variations above these levels shall be maintained; levels shall not be lowered below 75% of saturation.

Furthermore, a limitation for temperature shall be required. The temperature shall not exceed 68 degrees Fahrenheit (20° C) and the rise in temperature in the receiving water due to the discharge shall not exceed 3 degrees F (1.7° C). Additionally, the natural seasonal and daily temperature variations shall be maintained. There shall be no changes from background conditions that would impair any use assigned to this Class, including site-specific limits necessary to protect normal species diversity, successful migration, reproductive functions or growth of aquatic organisms. The final permit shall require weekly monitoring of the discharge and the receiving water.

Comments #2: The permit should provide for temperature monitoring of discharge waters. Continuous temperature monitoring is inexpensive and should be recorded on an hourly basis.

Response: Please see response to comment #1.