

## Letters to the Editor

Bennington Banner

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### Follow nature's way on the Batten Kill

I am not a fisherman. However, as an amateur naturalist, avid hiker and lover of the great outdoors, I have been following with concern the recent articles about the health of the Batten Kill.

During the last 19 years as a resident of Arlington, I have walked the River Road that borders the Kill. I have kayaked across the New York state line, viewed the Kill from numerous vantage points, and come to delight in its usual calm and its power after a storm. I have walked along its shores to observe mergansers, blue heron and kingfishers. I have observed the fishermen, decked-out in greens and tall rubber boots, enjoying the Kill's tranquility.

As I understand the current dilemma, reduction in habitat has contributed to the demise of the native trout. The question, then, is, "Do we restock or do we assist nature to increase the trout population?"

When we consider the short-term solution to the fish population problem, that of stocking the stream with 99 percent sterile rainbows, we also need to consider the long-term effects such a solution might have. Surely the introduction of additional fish to the stream would reduce the food supply available to the native species we wish to protect. While perhaps the availability of catchable and keepable fish appeals to those who come to Vermont for a visit, I do not believe that such a short-term solution is wise.

If habitat is the main issue for trout populations in the Kill, perhaps extra cover could be planted, left as driftwood, enhanced by environmental awareness signs placed at any one of the "beer hangouts" along the short six-mile stretch in question. I have noticed that Mother Nature herself is aiding the trout. The remarkable storms this summer brought winds that toppled large trees and brush along various sections of the river. If left along the shore these will, in a year's time, provide increased habitat for the fish.

I admit that I may not understand all the intricacies of solving this dilemma. However, I believe that we, as stewards, need to seek the solution that is best for the most delicate of creatures, one that will ensure a slow yet steady growth of the fish population. We need to intervene in a way that will protect and enhance the healing process of the Kill. We need to assist nature by using her own methods for renewal. To do otherwise would destroy a natural resource. Though we have many such areas in Vermont, each is precious and each needs our vigilance to survive. It is our responsibility to help the Earth heal itself.

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