

THE SPORTSMAN'S CHOICE FOR NEWS AND INFORMATION

NEW YORK



Outdoor News

www.nyoutdoornews.com[Print Page](#)

News

Vt. stocks 'bows in Battenkill

Thursday, June 15, 2006 8:48 AM CDT

By **Don Lehman** Contributing Writer

Eagleville, N.Y. - When fishing the Battenkill next spring, don't be surprised if you catch a rainbow trout or two.

While 'bows have not been found in "The 'Kill" for 50 years, Vermont fisheries biologists have decided to begin stocking sterile rainbows in Green Mountain State stretches of the river beginning next spring.

The idea is to create a put-and-take fishery to satisfy those who want to catch and keep trout in the river, which Vermont has managed as a wild, no-kill stream brook and brown trout stream since 2000. It has not been stocked since the 1970s.

Ken Cox, a Vermont fisheries biologist spearheading the state's look into why the Battenkill's wild brown and brook trout populations have dropped the past 15 years, said the stocking would be lessened or discontinued if the wild trout numbers pick back up.

Cox is to release a report later this year that identifies what Vermont biologists have concluded about the river's trout woes, a document that will point to habitat troubles as the main culprit behind the population drops.

In particular, removal of bankside tree cover and in-stream structure has hurt, he said. The state is going to propose a public and private rehabilitation program to rectify the habitat issues that it hopes will bring the wild brown and brook trout back to normal levels, Cox said.

Until then, Cox said Vermont plans to stock 1,000 yearling, sterile rainbows in the lower 6.5 miles in Vermont beginning next spring. They'd be about 10 inches long, and anglers would be able to keep them if they catch them.

This way, those who want to keep fish will have some to target, but the wild brook and brown trout numbers won't be affected.

"The (Vermont Fish & Wildlife) department doesn't want to lose sight of the overall goal of managing the Battenkill's wild fish populations," Cox said.

"Biologically, this shouldn't have an impact."

To the casual fisherman, adding another trout species to the river may not seem like a big deal.

But to avid anglers who know the ins and outs of each of the three river-borne species common to New York's streams, the appearance of rainbows in The Kill is a significant move.

That's partly because there have been examples in the Northeast and elsewhere in the country where reproducing rainbow trout have overrun native brook trout populations.

Rainbows, browns and brookies all favor different types of habitat, browns liking pools and deeper stretches, brookies liking rapids and runs and rainbows a combination of pools, rapids and runs.

Bill Schoch, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation fisheries manager for the region that includes Washington County, said the species' habitat can overlap, but rainbows that reproduce well can push brookies out of the way.

"They do compete some, but not directly," he said. "There are some cases where rainbows start naturally reproducing and they can do a job on the brookies, but it's not a common thing."

Schoch said he doesn't see the rainbow stocking in Vermont as having much impact in New York.

"I don't have any issues with it," he said. "It's really a very conservative, cautious way to go ... it could be a neat spicing up of the fishery."

Cox said Vermont stocked rainbows in the Battenkill in the 1940s and 1950s, but they never took hold as a wild or holdover population.