



NATIONAL CONSERVATION AGENDA

Trout Unlimited Canada

BRIEF #1 – POLICY STRUCTURE

The Foundation of Policy and Program Development (Substantive)

September 21, 2006

The National Conservation Agenda will guide the conservation activities of Trout Unlimited Canada. The Agenda is designed to fulfill TUC's mission through a number of avenues including policy and program development.

This brief introduces and articulates the Proposed Policy/Goals and management implications for each substantive Conservation Theme developed for the National Conservation Agenda. The four substantive themes identified by National Resource Board as key areas of interest to Trout Unlimited Canada and its Mission and mandate are:

- **Water Quality**
- **Water Quantity**
- **Habitat Management and Restoration**
- **Fish Community Management and Restoration**

The following Primary Policy Statements are listed below with a preliminary rationale or elaboration for each statement. Each primary policy follows a standard template established by the NRB:

- Policy statement
- Rationale/Principles
- Elaboration (Objectives)
- Implications (National, Provincial, Local)
- Delivery approaches- program aspects

1.0 WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

Policy Statement 1: Conserve and Protect Clean, Cold Water

The policy recognizes an implicit link between water quality and water quantity management. The separation between quantity and quality is discussed under Elaboration, Implications and Delivery approaches as Policy Statement 1.1 and 1.2.

General Principle(s)/Rationale:

All organisms require a reasonable supply of clean water to maintain their life cycles.

Coldwater organisms are extremely sensitive to poor water quality and are therefore good indicators of the relative quality of water for other organisms, including people. This is why trout are often called the aquatic, “canary in the mine”.

General Elaboration/Objectives:

The **quality** and **quantity** of Canada’s aquatic ecosystems is maintained or restored to a level that ensures the health of coldwater species

Policy Statement 1.1- Water Quality- Elaboration/Objectives

Water quality of Canada’s freshwater ecosystems must be maintained or restored to a level that ensures the health and life cycle requirements of aquatic species.

Implications of Policy Statement 1.1- Water Quality

The National office will likely be responsible for developing National Policy related to what specific aspects of water quality are of concern to the organization. Many agencies, organizations and groups are concerned about water quality. The question we as an organization must answer is, “Where do we fit?” Major focus areas will likely occur in education, advocacy and research.

Provincial Councils will be responsible for determining how the National Policies apply to their particular Province. They must have some latitude to interpret National Policies to their Provincial conditions and circumstances. Major areas of input will likely be tailoring National Programs to Provincial circumstances, advocacy, planning input and management

At Provincial and local levels, various human activities such as point source and non-point source pollution will have to be explored by developing better management methods for urban runoff, agricultural runoff, sewage management and disposal and industrial and resource extraction..

Delivery Approaches

This major Policy can be delivered through development of National Programs such as Yellow Fish Road, new programs such as Yellow Fish Lane, 4H Water Quality Modules, Acid Neutralization Programs, Headwater Restoration programs, riparian programs such as “Cows and Fish”. New science and technology can be promoted through our organization advocating and supporting development of National and Federal Water Research Programs as well as involvement with centers of excellence and research initiatives (e.g. Canadian Water Network; Canadian Rivers Institute; Alberta Ingenuity Centre for Water Research).

Provincial Councils can assist with the implementation of National Programs through involvement in point source and non-point source water quality initiatives through Sourcewater Protection Plans, Watershed Plans, Nutrient Management, stormwater management and wastewater management.

Chapter involvement in National Water Quality Programs can occur from basic initiatives such as local clean-up days, to more sophisticated initiatives such as

Yellow Fish Road and by working with local farm associations, local municipalities, professional organizations and government agencies.

Policy Statement 1.2 – Water Quantity - Elaboration/Objectives

Water quantity should be managed in order to balance the need of human society for water while ensuring the integrity of aquatic ecosystems.

Water quantity management should ensure that sufficient volumes of water are maintained in rivers, streams and lakes to ensure living space for aquatic animals, allow them to fulfill all their life cycle requirements, maintain water quality and ensure the ecological integrity of littoral areas, river channels and floodplains. This will necessitate the management of natural flow regime characteristics including lowflow characteristics, flushing flows, channel forming flows and riparian flows.

Implications of Policy Statement 1.2- Water Quantity

The protection of water quantity will include issues related to changes in watershed water budgets, including groundwater recharge and discharge characteristics, groundwater management, surface water flow patterns, environmental flows and discharge locations. We will need to consider Federal and Provincial Water Policies at the National and Provincial levels. We will need to assist or identify the need for development of new science and analytical tools to determine impacts of changing flow patterns on coldwater communities and their food webs and the implications on water quality as well.

At Provincial and local levels, implementation of this policy will include issues related to water abstraction for irrigation, bottle water, groundwater and surface water flow modifications, municipal water supplies, wastewater treatment, hydroelectric dam water management as well as small dam removal and other related issues.

Delivery Approaches

A variety of approaches can be undertaken. National programs should focus on acquiring science in support of water management, groundwater management, flow management from dams, water abstraction, etc. and providing technical tools to professionals that will assist them in designing better programs that balance water supply and management with protection of environmental flows in streams. Other programs can include small dam removal initiatives (e.g. similar to TU USA's guide to small dam removal), improving environmental or instream flow requirements, groundwater abstraction and stream flow, etc.

Provincial programs should target at applying the tools and providing support to Chapters undertaking these initiatives.

2.0 HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Policy Statement 2 - Conserve and Protect Coldwater Habitats

General Principle(s)/Rationale:

Habitat maintenance and restoration ensures the physical health and sustainability of watersheds for coldwater species and their communities. Specific principles to achieve this policy statement include:

- An Ecosystems Approach which includes striving to maintain and rebuild Biological Diversity;
- Use a Watershed Approach with nested watershed related logical and ecological geographic units;
- Habitat protection and rehabilitation based upon both fish community and habitat objectives.

General Elaboration/Objectives:

There is an implicit link between in-stream habitat, the health of the stream channel, its corridor and watershed. In order to ensure that coldwater communities can maintain themselves, we need to ensure the overall physical health and functioning of their habitat at all these scales. As an organization, we must approach habitat management from a watershed-based approach using all the tools at our disposal to protect and restore healthy habitats within healthy watersheds.

Implications of Policy Statement

Meaningful activities should focus on a full range of activities at a range of spatial scales. Historically, the majority of our habitat management approaches occurred at discrete locations and involved in-channel work to resolve a local condition. These projects, while worthwhile often did not address the cause of the problem or understand the cause of the problem, which were often landuse based. We need to broaden our approach to encompass a watershed-based approach to set context for our actions and then use a range of approaches to resolve habitat issues including: policy development, input to landuse decisions, watershed planning, application of the principles of Natural Channel Systems, stream corridor restoration through riparian plantings, education and awareness and advocacy for better land management.

The National role should focus on development of a broad-based watershed program structure, acquisition of good science to inform habitat management approaches, and development of policy and educational materials and programs.

Provincial councils ensure that National policies and programs do address and speak to the issues they face and ensure that these policies and concerns are articulated to Provincial governments, local municipalities and public. Provincial councils would assist chapters with implementing meaningful initiatives at the local and watershed

levels and provide practical technical support for local and watershed planning and restoration activities.

Local chapters would aid in the development of good watershed plans and ensure that they are implemented.

Delivery Approaches

Ultimately, all habitat issues have to be addressed by those that reside in the local watershed and home waters. National and Provincial roles would help to create the tools and support for the resolution of local habitat issues. With this in mind, a National Program is proposed to provide a home for specific habitat oriented management approaches. This overarching program could be entitled “Home Waters Initiatives” and could encompass a set of major program types from a watershed level (e.g. Watershed Renewal Program - Trout R., WeCARE); stream corridor restoration level (e.g. Cows and Fish; Cottonwood program, etc.; or other riparian/educational programs) and local instream work (e.g. Stream Rehabilitation Programs - in-channel, local level work).

3.0 FISH COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

Policy Statement 3 - Protect Existing Coldwater Fish Species

Protection and wise management of existing coldwater fish species is paramount, followed by restoration of coldwater species and communities where they have been lost.

General Principle(s)/Rationale:

Trout and salmon and their habitat are the major interest of Trout Unlimited Canada. We develop specific policy and programs using the following principles:

- Acknowledge limits to the Resource;
- Priority is native, naturally reproducing species within their natural habitats and range.
- Secondly, management of introduced species as naturalized populations where they currently exist.
- Lastly, we support the development of new fisheries using naturalized stocks, where there is evidence that no social and/or ecological conflicts exists between the proposed fishery and existing native or naturalized stocks.
- Restoring or protecting habitat so that fish can reproduce successfully on their own is the most cost effective and ecologically sound approach to fish community management

General Elaboration/Objectives:

Canada has a rich heritage of trout and salmon species. Each region of Canada has a unique mix of species and stocks that since European settlement have been altered, lost or modified. Protecting what is remaining and restoring what has been lost should be a major component of the National Conservation Agenda. Part of this

management should include consideration for the protection and management of other coldwater species that comprise the native coldwater community that are found associated with trout and salmon.

Implications of Policy Statement

At a National level, TUC will pursue policy and advocacy for the protection of native coldwater species. This includes ensuring a balance between use and sustainability of these fish species through program, policy, research and monitoring, education and advocacy.

At a Provincial level, TUC must implement programs to protect and restore native coldwater species and their communities through constructive advocacy, encouragement of proper harvest and angling regulations, research and monitoring and advocacy. Non-native, but naturalized coldwater species will also be a management focus for TUC, as long as these species do not compromise the health and integrity of native fish species, or where they are replacing a native salmonid species that can no longer survive in the particular waterbody.

Local Chapters may work to restore native and naturalized coldwater species through a range of activities including: exotic species management; harvest management; population assessment; restoring connectivity; native species restoration; compliance support; and enhancement.

Delivery Approaches

National should lead with the development of a program that could be called, "Restoring Wild Trout (Bring back the Native; Wild Trout Recovery)". Some areas of National focus could be development of national assessment programs, technical tools for chapters, education and advocacy. A national assessment program under consideration is a digital Angler Diary Program. This program would enable anglers to help assess the status of coldwater fish communities across Canada. This information would be provided, in summary format, to agencies and conservation groups and help inform management decisions necessary to maintain the health and status of fish communities in their area.

Provincial Councils can focus on science development and delivery of specific projects and programs that would help to inform management of Regionally important native fish species and communities. Chapter activities could include specific watershed renewal programs focused on coldwater communities and/or coldwater species of concern, especially those focusing on native fish communities and/or naturalized coldwater species.

Examples of Provincially focused science development are: Coastal Cutthroat/Dolly Varden Life History Study (BC); Westslope Cutthroat/Bull Trout Community Status (BC, Alberta); Coaster Brook Trout (Ontario); Salter Restoration (Maritimes).

Examples of Chapter projects could include: Bring Back the Native; Wild Trout Renewal; Habitat Restoration work for coldwater communities.