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Title: **Trout Stream Classification**

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WRD-T-002

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**Purpose:**

To define the Wildlife Resources Division, Fisheries Management Section process for listing or de-listing trout streams in Rule 391-4-3-.03.

At its August 1998 meeting, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Board passed a resolution to establish an advisory committee to develop a formal process for designating trout waters. The advisory committee developed process recommendations, which were adopted by the Wildlife Resources Division, Fisheries Management Section in October 2000, to designate trout waters for fishing regulations. The advisory committee also recommended that the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) adopt the recommendations to designate trout streams for water quality regulations.

The advisory committee concluded that water temperature was the single most important factor for determining whether a stream could support trout year round, but also agreed that temperature data alone is not sufficient to justify de-listing a trout stream reach and developed a process to verify the absence of trout when measured temperature appears to be too high.

**Policy:**

A. Trout Stream Temperature Basis

The seven-day moving average of 72 °F (22.2° C) water temperature should be used as the initial basis to list or de-list trout streams.

B. Trout Stream Temperature Monitoring

1. Trout stream temperature data should be collected using underwater temperature data loggers set to record temperature at no greater than 30-minute intervals.
2. Data loggers should be deployed continuously between June 1 and September 15 and located at the top and bottom ends of the reach in question for a minimum of three consecutive years.
3. If meteorological or flow records indicate that the three periods sampled were significantly outside average conditions, additional sampling may be prescribed.

C. Trout Population Sampling

1. If the first season's temperature data indicate a likelihood of de-listing, fish population sampling should be scheduled for the late summer or early fall of the following year to determine if trout are living in the reach in question.
2. Trout stocking should not occur at the reach in question after March of the year trout population sampling is scheduled to avoid potential of collecting trout that may have been recently stocked.

3. If trout are collected in significant numbers during population samples at the reach in question for two years in a row, the reach should not be de-listed, even though temperature data might indicate otherwise.
4. Locations and methods of sampling should be at the discretion of WRD Fisheries Management Section biologists, but Environmental Protection Agency personnel charged with oversight of EPD's water use classifications should be consulted.
5. Summary reports should be prepared and include sample dates, exact sample locations, a description of each reach sampled and the number of fish of each species collected at each site.

D. Trout Stream Watershed Analysis

1. If temperature and fish population data indicate possibly de-listing a trout stream, a watershed analysis should be completed.
2. The watershed analysis should be of sufficient rigor to determine whether stream temperatures may have been degraded due to human impacts and could be restored or alternatively, never supported trout and the original listing was unwarranted.
3. At minimum, the watershed analysis should assess changes in the amount of stream canopy (shade), land use and impervious surface in the watershed.
4. For a small watershed, a walking survey should be conducted to visually document changes based on the age of developed structures and stream canopy vegetation.

E. Listing and De-listing Trout Stream Reaches

1. An overall analysis and report detailing the results of the appropriate actions above (B through D) and recommendations for listing or de-listing the subject reach should be developed.
2. For listed streams:
  - a. If the analyses conclude that a stream no longer supports trout due to human impacts, but has potential for trout management through restoration efforts, then restoration efforts should be initiated and de-listing should **not** be recommended.
  - b. If the analyses conclude that a reach was mistakenly listed, or the reach or its watershed is extensively impaired, with no significant potential for sustaining trout populations year-round, de-listing should be recommended and EPD should be notified of the unattainable use.
3. Only the actions described in Item B above are required to support a recommendation to add a reach to the trout stream list.