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August 16, 2011

Scott Craig
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Maine Fishery Resources Office
306 Hatchery Rd.
East Orland, Maine 04431

Mr. Craig:

I am writing in strong support of the grant application from the Georges River Chapter of Trout Unlimited to the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV) for funding the project titled ***Jam Black Brook Culvert Replacement. Searsmont ME-EBTJV-NFHAP***.

MDIFW and the EBTJV have identified fish passage and constraints on stream connectivity as major threats to wild brook trout. We are actively pursuing connectivity improvements as a long term strategy toward habitat conservation in light of climate change. We are already detecting changes in hydrology and thermal patterns, presumably due to climate change. Projects such as this that expand access to coldwater refugia for salmonids are high priority efforts in Maine. Jam Black Brook supports a healthy population of wild brook trout in the central Maine area. This part of the state has some of our most degraded habitats, developed watersheds and temperature is always an issue. When an opportunity to improve access to coldwater habitat is found in existing brook trout habitat in central Maine, we have to pursue remediation in a timely fashion. This project also has the added benefit of not only being beneficial for brook trout, but is also a system where improvements at this site can also go a long way toward diadromous species, such as Atlantic salmon, alewife, and American eel, restoration.

This project has a broad coalition of partners and adding the EBTJV as an additional partner would greatly assist with sending the message that fish passage is indeed a pertinent topic and restoration strategy for brook trout conservation also. To date, fish passage projects on Maine's coastal plane have largely been driven by diadromous species concerns. This has given some the false impression that fish passage constraints are only a concern in coastal regions or in areas designated for diadromous species restoration efforts. In reality, fish passage constraints are a statewide problem and just as detrimental to brook trout and other native species management and conservation.

If you have any further questions regarding this project, please do not hesitate to contact us further.

Best regards,

Merry Gallagher
Research Fishery Biologist
Maine Coordinator for the EBTJV