

## Cold Stream Forest Gets Custom State Heritage Fish Signs

**Bob Mallard - National Vice Chair, Native Fish Coalition**

Maine is the last best hope for lake- and pond-dwelling [wild native brook trout](#). With over 600 such waters, we have roughly 90% of what is left in the United States. Just over 580 of these have been designated as [State Heritage Fish](#) waters, meaning they have never been stocked or have not been stocked in twenty-five years. Approximately 35 of these are located on state-owned land managed by [Bureau of Parks and Lands](#) (BPL).

The number one threat to Maine's lake- and pond-dwelling wild native brook trout is nonnative fish introductions. This includes gamefish such as bass, pike, and muskies, as well as baitfish such as smelts and golden shiners. Contributing to the nonnative fish problem is the use of live fish as bait. To use bait is to lose bait. Lose enough and it can result in a self-sustaining population. Maine's State Heritage Fish law prohibits this for that reason.

As part of an ongoing [project](#) co-sponsored by [Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife](#) (IFW) and [Sportsman's Alliance of Maine](#), and partially funded by [Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund](#), the [Maine Chapter of Native Fish Coalition](#) (NFC) is posting informational signs on Maine's State Heritage Fish waters. The idea is to let anglers know they are at a State Heritage Fish water, what the threats to wild native brook trout are, and the laws in place to protect them.

Having developed a standard sign and two custom signs for Passamaquoddy and Penobscot tribal lands, NFC approached BPL about a sign for state-owned lands. Working with BPL Director [Andy Cutko](#) and Assistant Director Doug Reed, along with Maine NFC Chair [Emily Bastian](#), we designed a sign that included BPL's logo and utilized colors consistent with BPL branding. We also agreed to mount the signs to wood boards with small overhangs for consistency.

NFC Technologist [Ben Brunt](#) created the sign artwork, Emily Bastian got the signs ordered, and NFC funded the effort. NFC volunteer and columnist for [The Maine Sportsman](#), Bill Sheldon, generously made and donated 12 mounting backboards. And Emily and I painted the backboards and mounted the signs.



We loaded the new BPL signs into a truck along with a large freighter backpack, cordless drill, hardware, and a GPS, and headed to the new [Cold Stream Forest](#). Cold Stream is the finest and most intact wild native brook trout watershed east of Rangeley and south of Greenville. It is home to seven State Heritage Fish waters: Lang, Little Lang, Snake, Durgin, Little Berry, Lone Jack, and Berry Ponds. It also my "Home water," and a place I have fished for roughly 40 years.

Upon arrival, we hiked into Lang Pond where we posted two signs. We paddled across Lang in a canoe I maintain on the pond and walked 100' into Little Lang where we posted another sign. We then drove a few hundred yards, parked at a trailhead, and walked roughly 30 minutes in the rain into Snake Pond where we posted a fourth sign.



The next morning, we met BPL Regional Manager Tim Post at Lone Jack Campsite. Over the next several hours we posted a total of seven signs on Lone Jack, Little Berry, Durgin, and Berry Ponds. While the first three ponds were roadside and close by, Berry required a short ride and a 10 minute hike to reach. When we were done we had a quick tailgate lunch compliments of Emily.



Rarely do I feel such a sense of accomplishment. It makes me proud to see these informational signs on my home waters. Special thanks to Andy, Doug, and Tim from BPL, Emily and Ben from NFC, and volunteer Bill for making this important wild native fish initiative on public land possible. Without their help this never would have happened.

