Fisheries Strategic Plan
Draft Species Goals

Francis Brautigam, Joe Overlock, Matt Lubejko

Today's Agenda

Fisheries Strategic Plan Steering Committee Meeting

March 3, 2020 Meeting Agenda

1pm–4pm, Maine Forest Products Council, Augusta

I. Overview of the technical work group meetings and process used to develop draft goals, objectives, and strategies

II. Review of draft goals, objectives, and strategies for each species group

III. Next steps

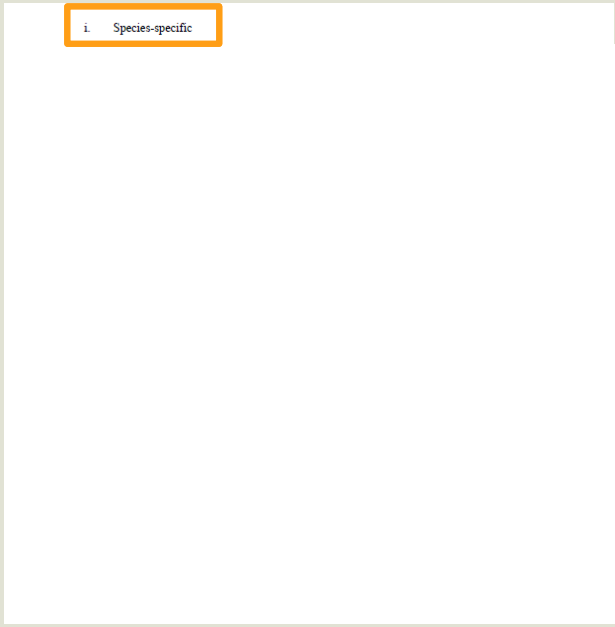
Role of the Steering Committee

- Serve as a sounding board
- Review and provide input on drafts
- Broad-level review
- *The Department has the final authority to accept and/or modify recommendations*

Role of the Steering Committee

V. STATEWIDE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT GOALS

i. Species-specific



Goal Development Process

1. Identify species for technical work group consideration
   - Presented the list of species to the Steering Committee (August 2019)

Rank of Combined Open and Ice Fishing Species Targeted (2015)

1. Brook trout (59%)
2. Smallmouth bass (30%)
3. Largemouth bass (28%)
4. Landlocked salmon (24%)
5. Brown trout (14%)
6. Lake trout (13%)
7. Anything/no particular species (9%)
8. Rainbow trout (8%)
9. White perch (8%)
10. Pickerel (7%)
11. Northern pike (3%)
12. Yellow perch (3%)
13. Crappie (3%)
14. Sunfish (1%)
15. Smelt (1%)
16. Splake (1%)
17. Don't know what species fished (1%)
18. Cusk (1%)
19. Arctic char (1%)
20. Muskellunge (0.2%)

Sportfishes | Sport/Bait | NN/Stocked | Sport/SGCN

-No responses for bullhead, lake whitefish, or round whitefish

Goal Development Process

2. Contacted ~50 stakeholders, 37 were able to participate
   - Each group consists of 1 MDIFW Facilitator, 1 MDIFW Species Author, and 3–6 stakeholders

Arctic Charr
Francis Brautigam - MDIFW Facilitator
Frank Frost - MDIFW Species Author
Mike Kinnison - UMO
Scott Craig - USFWS
Sally Stockwell - MA
Bob Mallard - NFC

Bass
Joe Overlock - MDIFW Facilitator
Jason Seiders - MDIFW Species Author
Mark Desjardin - B.A.S.S
Jim Lacadie - Central Maine Bassers
JR Mabee - Downeast Fishing Guide
Pete Kallin - Lake Association/Angler

Lake Whitefish
Francis Brautigam - MDIFW Facilitator
Jeremiah Wood - MDIFW Species Author
Steve Coghlan - UMO
Dave Courtemanch - TNC
Tom Pelletier - Angler

Brook Trout
Francis Brautigam - MDIFW Facilitator
Tim Obrey - MDIFW Species Author
Merry Gallagher - MDIFW Biologist
Jeff Reardon - TU
Wayne Plummer - MPG
Jonathan Robbins - BHA
Joe Zydlewski - UMO
Gary Corson - Angler

Baitfish & Rainbow Smelt
Joe Overlock - MDIFW Facilitator
Kevin Dunham - MDIFW Species Author
Jerrod Parker – MDIFW Biologist
Steve Brooke - Angler
Darin Hammond - Bait harvester/dealer
Verne Keith - Bait harvester/dealer
Bruce Steeves - Bait harvester/dealer
Will Shuman - MWS
Dwayne Rioux - Bait harvester/dealer

Lake Trout
Matt Lubejko - MDIFW Facilitator
Greg Burr - MDIFW Species Author
Stephen Cole - Guide/Angler
Dave Chabot - MWS/Angler
Ben Naumann - Angler

Landlocked Salmon
Matt Lubejko - MDIFW Facilitator
Liz Thorndike - MDIFW Species Author
Dennis Bolduc - Angler
Dale Tobey - MPG
Jim Fickett - Guide/Angler
Brooke Hidell - Guide/Angler

Nonative Salmonids
Joe Overlock - MDIFW Facilitator
Jim Pellerin - MDIFW Species Author
Steve Day - SAM
Chris Russell - MPG
Joel Anderson – Angler
Richie Rhoads - Angler
Gary Massucco - Angler

Role of the Technical Work Groups

- Identify specific management concerns, needs, and resource threats for consideration to assist the Department with developing species-specific management goals

- Balance angling opportunities and conservation
  - For all recreational and commercial species, the Plan will strive to enhance public use benefits
  - This planning process will incorporate components of the SWAP to ensure the Plan advances both management and conservation needs

Goal Development Process

3. November 19-20: full day meeting: orientation, species overviews, and brainstorming session to hear from stakeholders about the most important needs for each species

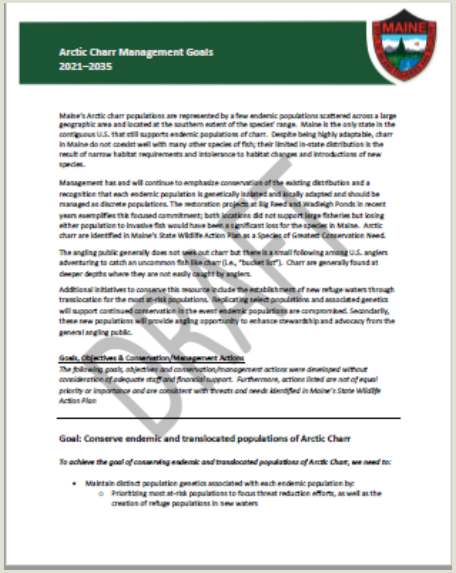
"What are the most important things we need to be thinking about for the next 15 years?"

Goal Development Process

4. Late November–December: TWG Facilitators used input from the TWG discussions, SWAP, angler survey, staff comments, and other previously identified management needs to develop draft goals/objectives/strategies

Goal Development Process

4. January 2020: Reconvene TWGs to share draft goals and provide additional input
5. Late January-February: Incorporate final TWG thoughts and developed the existing drafts that are before you today



Arctic Charr Management Goals
2021–2035

Maine's Arctic charr populations are represented by a few endemic populations scattered across a large geographic area and located at the southern extent of the species' range. Maine is the only state in the contiguous U.S. that still supports endemic populations of charr. Despite being highly adaptable, charr in Maine do not coexist well with many other species of fish; their limited in-state distribution is the result of narrow habitat requirements and intolerance to habitat changes and introductions of new species.

Management has and will continue to emphasize conservation of the existing distribution and a recognition that each endemic population is genetically isolated and locally adapted and should be managed as discrete populations. The restoration projects at Big Reed and Wadleigh Ponds in recent years exemplifies this focused commitment; both locations did not support large fisheries but losing either population to invasive fish would have been a significant loss for the species in Maine. Arctic charr are identified in Maine's State Wildlife Action Plan as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

The angling public generally does not seek out charr but there is a small following among U.S. anglers adventuring to catch an uncommon fish like charr (i.e., "bucket list"). Charr are generally found at deeper depths where they are not easily caught by anglers.

Additional initiatives to conserve this resource include the establishment of new refuge waters through translocation for the most at-risk populations. Replicating select populations and associated genetics will support continued conservation in the event endemic populations are compromised. Secondarily, these new populations will provide angling opportunity to enhance stewardship and advocacy from the general angling public.

Goals, Objectives & Conservation/Management Actions

The following goals, objectives and conservation/management actions were developed without consideration of adequate staff and financial support. Furthermore, actions listed are not of equal priority or importance and are consistent with threats and needs identified in Maine's State Wildlife Action Plan

Goal: Conserve endemic and translocated populations of Arctic Charr

To achieve the goal of conserving endemic and translocated populations of Arctic Char, we need to:

- Maintain distinct population genetics associated with each endemic population by:
  - Prioritizing most at-risk populations to focus threat reduction efforts, as well as the creation of refuge populations in new waters

DRAFT

Format of Management Goals

Goal: Major accomplishments, no time limit

-Conserve existing populations

Objectives: Steps needed to reach goal

-Monitor populations

Strategies: How an Objective is accomplished

-Develop a monitoring plan

The Goals and Objectives that follow are not prioritized

Arctic Charr

Arctic Charr

- Native to Maine, limited distribution
- Conservation-focused management
- SWAP Species of Greatest Conservation Need
- Not targeted by most anglers

Goal: Conserve endemic and translocated populations of Arctic Charr

- Maintain distinct population genetics associated with each endemic population
- Monitor the status and health of charr populations
- Monitor, review, and implement strategies to protect charr habitat
- Monitor for and reduce threats to charr populations
- Increase our understanding of critical habitat preference
- Increase public awareness and stewardship
- Identify any remaining undiscovered populations of Charr

Brook Trout

Brook Trout

- Maine supports the most extensive distribution and abundance of native BKT in the US
- Experiencing declines throughout their native range
- SWAP Species of Greatest Conservation Need
- #1 species targeted in open water and ice fishing seasons

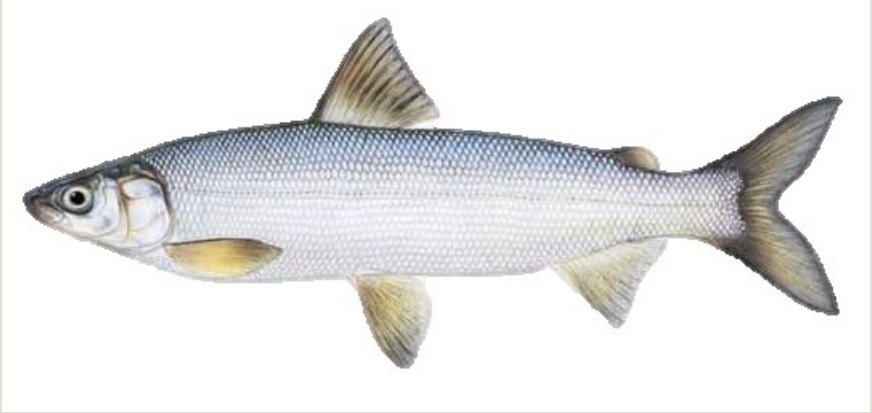
Goal: Maintain healthy self-sustaining Brook Trout populations

- Conserve habitats
- Monitor for and reduce threats from invasive species
- Examine hatchery stocking practices to reduce potential negative interactions with wild Brook Trout
- Increase public awareness and stewardship of Maine's Brook Trout resource
- Complete the Department's inventory and mapping of statewide occurrence for stream and pond/lake populations

Goal: Monitor, enhance, and create desirable Brook Trout fisheries

- Monitor Maine's wild and stocked Brook Trout waters to enhance angling opportunities
- Manage wild self-sustaining and multiage class stocked fisheries considerate of public use and harvest practices
- Secure permanent public access over private lands (and perhaps some restricted state lands) to flowing waters and smaller ponds by purchase, negotiation, easement, or gift
- Develop additional catchable stocked fisheries to increase opportunity for the public to catch legal size Brook Trout

Lake Whitefish



Lake Whitefish

- Native to Maine
- Experiencing declines throughout Maine
- SWAP Species of Greatest Conservation Need
- Popular sport fisheries exist in waters where LWF are abundant

Goal: Conserve native populations of Lake Whitefish

- Assess the status and health of all known populations of Lake Whitefish in Maine
- Monitor Lake Whitefish populations
- Identify and implement strategies to reduce threats and protect Lake Whitefish
- Create new refuge populations where restoration is not viable
- Support research
- Increase public awareness and stewardship

Lake Trout

Lake Trout

- Native to Maine
- SWAP Species of Greatest Conservation Need
- One of the 5 most targeted sportfish in Maine
- Maine's largest native freshwater fish
- Some wild populations have become overabundant

Goal: Manage for healthy and sustainable Lake Trout fisheries

- Maintain or enhance existing populations
- Identify effective approaches (regulatory/nonregulatory) to reduce overabundant wild populations, particularly in multi-species sport fisheries
- Identify and monitor the status and health of the state's native Lake Trout populations and manage these populations considerate of their conservation status
- Maintain broodstock and reduce annual production shortfalls

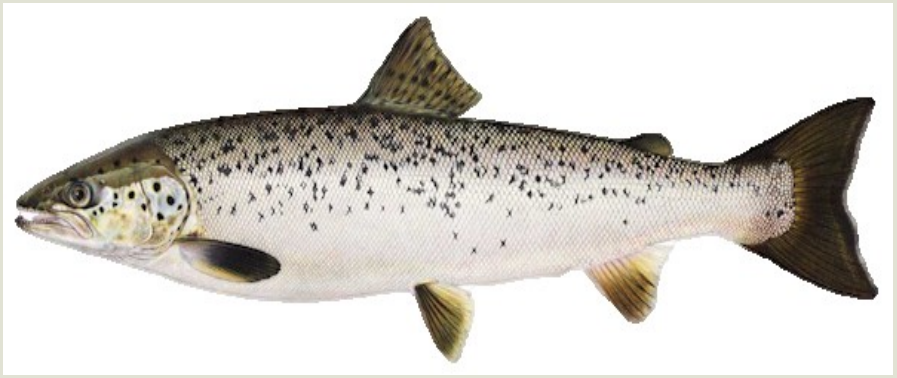
Goal: Provide opportunities for anglers to catch trophy-sized (i.e., ≥26”) Lake Trout

- Identify factors that lead to the production of trophy-sized Lake Trout
- Explore regulatory options that would encourage the production of trophy-sized Lake Trout while also maintaining a healthy population of sub-trophy sized Lake Trout
- Monitor populations capable of producing trophy-sized Lake Trout
- Reduce post-release mortality of Lake Trout

Goal: Increase the public's awareness of and opportunity to utilize Maine's Lake Trout resource

- Create digital media products that help to increase participation, catch rates, and harvest opportunities
- Explore opportunities to open waters currently closed to ice fishing
- Maintain and increase access opportunities
- Review and simplify existing laws and rules

Landlocked Salmon



Landlocked Salmon

- Native to Maine
- 4th most targeted in open water, 2nd most targeted during the ice fishing season
- Some wild populations have become overabundant
- Hatcheries rely on two native strains for production

Goal: Maintain healthy and sustainable landlocked salmon fisheries

- Maintain or enhance existing populations
- Improve fish condition in overabundant wild salmon populations

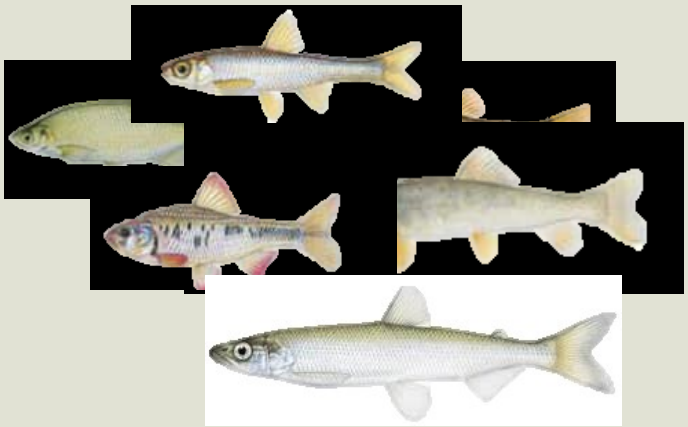
Goal: Increase the public's awareness of and ability to utilize Maine's landlocked salmon resources

- Create increased public awareness of Maine's status as one of the world's top landlocked salmon fishing destinations
- Maintain and secure long-term access to waters that support landlocked salmon fisheries
- Explore opportunities to simplify fishing laws
- Explore opportunities to expand the use of legal size fall yearling salmon and retired brood to create fisheries where water quality and smelt abundance are marginal

Goal: Conserve and protect the West Grand and Sebago strains of landlocked salmon

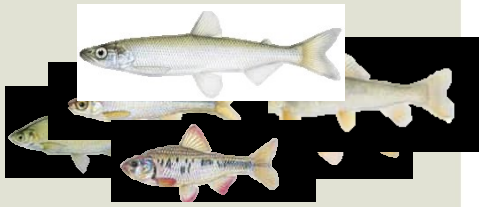
- Maintain the genetic integrity of our West Grand Strain brood
- Evaluate the necessity and biosecurity concerns with continued collection of stocked feral fish at the Casco Hatchery
- Improve captive brood production and resulting egg quality
- Reduce pathogen risks from wild-sourced gametes
- Maintain a pathogen free captive brood
- Evaluate new brood lines from alternative egg sources

Baitfish and Rainbow Smelt



Baitfish and Rainbow Smelt

- Long history and tradition of using live baitfish/smelt in Maine
- Most live bait use occurs during the winter months
- 16 species of baitfish are defined in Law
- Certain species can compete with and threaten some of Maine's native sportfish
- Commercial fishery associated with the harvest and sale of legal baits contributes to the state's economy
- Smelt management is complex due to a variety of interest/ user groups (source of bait, primary forage for some sportfish, and targeted as a game fish)

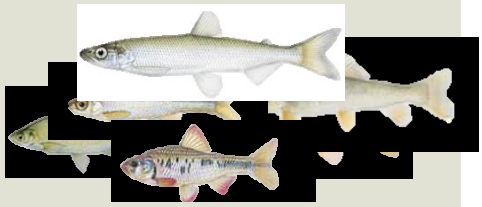


Goal: Manage social and biological concerns associated with the use of live fish as bait to minimize risks to native fish species

- Explore opportunities/strategies for targeted removal of unauthorized introductions of baitfish and smelt in waters containing native fishery resources, while not creating incentives for unauthorized introductions

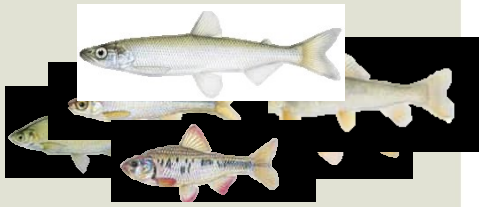
- Increase education/outreach efforts related to proper identification, responsible use, and risks associated with the use of live fish as bait

- Continue to conduct compliance inspections of licensed bait and smelt dealers



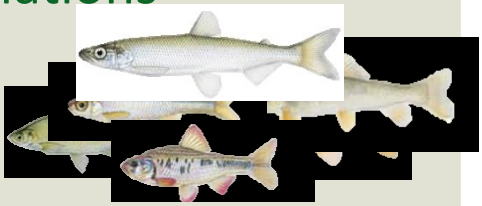
Goal: Sustainably manage baitfish populations

- Periodically monitor the status of baitfish populations
- Gain a better understanding of the amount of baitfish being recreationally harvested and the number of recreational harvesters
- Work to reconcile social and enforcement challenges surrounding overlap between recreational and commercial baitfish harvest activities



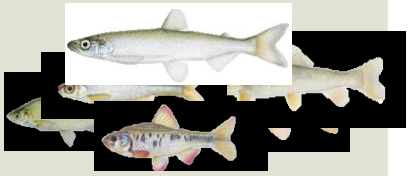
Goal: Maintain or enhance existing Rainbow Smelt populations

- Develop methods to better assess and monitor smelt condition, abundance, and population trends
- Develop a better understanding of the effects of inter- and intra-specific competition on smelt abundance
- Explore opportunities to enhance and protect smelt spawning habitat
- Evaluate the effectiveness, feasibility, and risks associated with smelt egg and live smelt transfers to better understand how these methods could be used to temporarily augment depressed populations



Goal: Review and update current laws and rules related to commercial and recreational harvest of baitfish and Rainbow Smelt

- Implement a comprehensive review of baitfish and smelt rules and laws to address deficiencies, improve compliance, and reduce risks to native fish associated with the collection, transport, distribution, and storage of fish that may or may not be legal bait
- Utilize stakeholders to contribute to the development of revised inland commercial and recreational regulations
- Improve efficiency and consistency in the structure and administration of commercial licenses and permits for commercial species
- Review current legal baitfish species and update as needed
- Improve efficiency, compliance, accuracy, and utility of the commercial harvest reporting system (e.g., online/electronic reporting, use of log book, etc.)



Goal: Maintain opportunities to harvest baitfish and Rainbow Smelt for the retail market

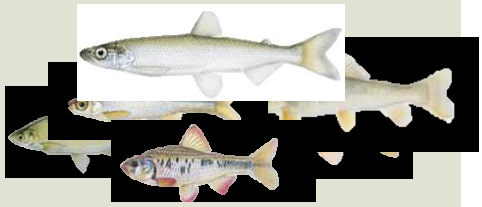
- Explore regulatory and licensing options to regulate harvest on individual waters, create incentives for resource conservation, and strive to manage participation and harvest for increased sustainability

- Explore opportunities to establish new self-sustaining smelt populations designated for commercial harvest

- Support partnership opportunities for the development of cost-effective smelt and baitfish culture techniques for the private aquaculture industry to provide a reliable source of bait for the retail market

Goal: Manage user conflicts related to Rainbow Smelt

- Manage public use opportunities consistently
- Gain a better understanding of the impacts of recreational and commercial harvest on smelt population structure and health
- Work to reconcile social and enforcement challenges surrounding overlap between recreational and commercial smelt harvest activities



Black Bass

Black Bass

- For the purpose of this plan: Black bass = Smallmouth and Largemouth
- Bass are not native to Maine, first introduced in the late 1800's
- Occur throughout the state, particularly well established in the South Zone
- Less abundant in the North Zone where they are generally regarded as an invasive species
- Currently rank as the second most highly sought after sport fish in Maine and rank number one among out of state anglers
- Popularity of bass tournament angling is growing rapidly in Maine and across New England

Goal: Sustainably manage bass populations in the South Zone where they do not adversely impact native fish or existing management programs for other sport fish

- Explore opportunities to improve bass size quality in some waters
- Address management and tournament related questions and concerns
- Provide adequate public access sites for the most noteworthy bass fisheries

Goal: Manage social and biological concerns associated with the active management of a non-native species (bass) in the South Zone

- Enhance the public's awareness and understanding of the threats and risks associated with the unauthorized introductions of bass, the transfer of aquatic invasive plants and other organisms, and the proper use and disposal of soft plastic fishing lures

- Manage social, biological, and administrative concerns as they arise

Goal: Review and update current laws and rules related to tournament bass angling

- Review and update existing bass tournament permit conditions
- Streamline the process of administering bass tournaments and reporting requirements

Goal: “Manage” bass populations in the North Zone as invasive to protect native fish

- Regulate bass waters in the North Zone to discourage illegal introductions
- Reconcile current inconsistencies with North Zone bass management
- Clearly message the reason that bass are managed as an invasive in the North Zone

Non-native Salmonids

Non-native Salmonids (Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout, & Splake)

- Rainbow Trout first introduced in early 1930's; Brown Trout first stocked in 1885; Splake first stocked in 1958
- Managed to provide recreational angling opportunities where native trout and salmon typically do not thrive
- Generally more capable of tolerating marginal water quality and heavy competition than native salmonid species
- All three are cultured in Maine's hatchery system and most fisheries are sustained by annual stocking programs
- Populations are found predominantly in southern and central Maine, with a few Brown Trout and Splake waters in the north

Goal: Expand the Rainbow Trout stocking program to provide popular and productive fishing in waters not well suited for successful management of native sportfish

- Improve rearing capabilities
- Identify opportunities for expansion of the program that minimize the potential for interactions with wild native salmonids
- Gain a better understanding of the factors that lead to the establishment of wild populations
- Develop strategies to enhance post-stocking performance

Goal: Manage existing wild populations of Rainbow Trout in the Bingham area of the Kennebec River drainage and the Upper Androscoggin River drainage

- Ensure the sustainability of these populations

Goal: Restructure the Brown Trout stocking program to more successfully meet management objectives

- Clearly define the management need and role of Brown Trout
- Monitor and assess post-stocking performance and angler returns
- Increase the overall success of the Brown Trout stocking program

Goal: Provide quality fishing opportunities for splake in waters not well suited for Brook Trout or non-native salmonids

- Monitor and assess post-stocking performance and angler returns

Next Steps

- Address any significant deficiencies to existing drafts with MDIFW staff and technical work groups if necessary
  - Prioritize
  - Develop General (i.e., not species-specific) management goals
  - Continue developing other Plan components
- Develop a final draft of the species goals, objectives, and strategies section of the Plan

Implementation Schedule

- ✓ Fall/Winter 2019/20- Species authors draft G/O/S and meet with subcommittees; continue drafting/revising sections identified in the outline
- ✓ Winter 2020- Steering Committee meets to discuss subcommittee progress and receive updates on the Plan
- Spring 2020- Finalize species-specific G/O/S; Steering Committee meets to review final and discuss other plan components
- Summer 2020- “Final” Plan submitted to Steering Committee for review
- Jan 1, 2021- Plan published

Our Mission

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife protects and manages Maine's fish and wildlife and their habitats, promotes Maine's outdoor heritage, and safely connects people with nature through responsible recreation, sport, and science.