



Clinton River Steelhead Program

The Clinton River is located in southeast Michigan, just north of Detroit. The watershed is 763 square miles and is primarily in Oakland and Macomb counties. The river runs 79 miles from its headwaters in north-central Oakland County to the river's mouth where it empties into Lake St. Clair. Michigan DNR Fisheries Management goals vary in different areas of the river, but the lower section of the river, downstream of Yates Dam, is managed for a steelhead fishery.

The steelhead program began with an initial stocking in 1985 and annual stocking has taken place since. The run of steelhead has not been quantified, but development of a fishery has proven this program a success. A creel survey at two sites during March and April in 1996 and 1997 documented 21,000 angler hours each year, targeting steelhead. A more recent survey in 2005 found that fishing effort increased significantly to approximately 30,000 angler hours, and both the catch and catch rates improved. It is estimated that 5,700 steelhead were caught during the 2005 spring fishery. This fishery is estimated to generate \$450,000 to the economy.

Yates Dam is approximately 31 miles upstream from Lake St. Clair and is the first dam encountered when traveling upstream from the mouth. The dam has an approximate head of 6 feet and is a barrier to fish migration for all species except adult steelhead (potamodromous rainbow trout). Steelhead have been confirmed passing over Yates Dam, but it is unclear how efficiently they pass. The pool at the base of the dam is shallow, which likely inhibits steelhead passage. Immediately downstream from this dam is where most of the steelhead fishing effort is concentrated. Parking is available at Yates Park and there is public access available downstream of the dam. The combination of Yates Dam slowing the run of steelhead, coupled with very good public access for a long stretch downstream of the dam, focuses steelhead fishing effort in this location. This fishery is popular because it is accessible to the metro Detroit area, which is home to approximately 40% of the state's population.

Economic Benefits

Each year the Clinton River steelhead fishery generates an estimated \$450,000 to the local economy in the form of fishing tackle sales, gasoline and other transportation costs, restaurant sales, etc.

Challenges to fishery management on the Clinton River

- Stable river flows are critical to trout populations
- Untreated runoff and rapid flooding causes erosion, removes habitat and food that fish need to grow and prosper, adds sediment and raises stream temperatures too high for trout.
- Careful management of in-stream trees and brush (removal of only those logs which cause navigation blockages, for example) will keep habitat in the river for fish, reptiles, amphibians and other wildlife, while allowing canoeing, kayaking and the free flow of water.

