WHAT YOU CAN DO

YOUR VOICE MATTERS.

You can make a difference by urging state officials to halt fish stocking in Massachusetts.

CONTACT MASSACHUSETTS DEPT. OF FISH AND GAME COMMISSIONER, TOM O'SHEA:

Email: tom.oshea@mass.gov
Phone: 617-626-1550

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL MASSWILDLIFE DISTRICT

Western District: (413) 684-1646
CT Valley District: (413) 323-7632
Central District: (508) 835-3607
Northeast District: (978) 772-2145
Southeast District: (508) 759-3406

ASK THEM TO STOP STOCKING YOUR LOCAL WATERBODY

You can reach out as an individual or on behalf of an organization—every call, email, and letter counts.

THIS APPROACH WORKS

After more than 60 people emailed and wrote to the MassWildlife Board, stocking in the upper Deerfield River ended in early 2025. Public pressure can lead to real science-based changes in how we steward wild fish, their natural habitats, and our native ecosystems.

CONTACT US

Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT)
20 Chapel St, Pittsfield, MA 01201
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(413) 464-9402
thebeatnews.org

JOIN US IN TAKING ACTION!

LEARN MORE

Get information, resources, and template outreach letters on our website:

www.thebeatnews.org/BeatTeam/stop-stocking

BEAT Berkshire Environmental ACTION TEAM

This brochure was created in 2026. Visit the link above or scan the QR code to review the referenced research.

Keep Our Rivers Healthy

STOP FISH STOCKING

THE HARMFUL PRACTICE OF FISH STOCKING IN MASSACHUSETTS RIVERS AND LAKES & WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

WHAT IS FISH STOCKING?

Fish stocking is the practice of raising fish in hatcheries—indoor facilities where fish eggs are gathered, artificially bred and hatched, and the young fish are raised and fed pellets in a controlled environment—and then releasing them into lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. State and local agencies do this to introduce new species for sport and to increase the number of people purchasing fishing licenses.

Routine fish stocking threatens biodiversity and native trout, results in extremely high fish mortality, and continues without adequate ecological impact studies on Massachusetts ecosystems.

RESEARCH SHOWS CLEAR NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Stocked fish, especially non-native species:

- Displace wild fish from their natural habitats
- Introduce diseases and parasites
- Disrupt the natural balance of aquatic ecosystems
- Have high mortality rates

Studies have found mortality rates ranging from 67.5% to over 90% within weeks to months.

Large-scale die-offs can contribute excess nutrients to waterways, degrading water quality and harming aquatic life.

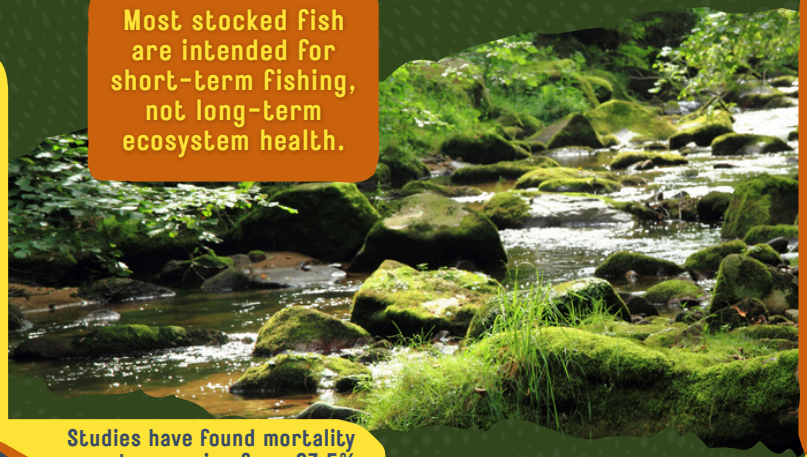
Hatcheries are also notorious greenhouse gas polluters and discharge waste into waterways.

Above: Non-native rainbow trout being raised in a fish hatchery.

FISH STOCKING IN MASSACHUSETTS

In Massachusetts, fish stocking is managed by MassWildlife, a division of the Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

- Operates five state hatcheries
- Nearly 500,000 hatchery-raised fish are released into public waterways every year
- Almost all stocked fish are non-native species
- Stock over 450 lakes, rivers, and streams in 264 towns across the state



Most stocked fish are intended for short-term fishing, not long-term ecosystem health.

Despite the scale and cost of MassWildlife's fish stocking program, Massachusetts lacks comprehensive monitoring of the ecological impacts of stocking. There are no statewide studies demonstrating that routine non-native stocking does not harm native fish or freshwater ecosystems.

ALTERNATIVES TO FISH STOCKING

There are better, science-based ways to support healthy rivers and native fish:

- Restoring natural stream habitat
- Removing dams and reconnecting waterways
- Protecting riparian forests and cold-water streams
- Investing in long-term research and monitoring
- Providing accessible education to the public on the importance of healthy, native ecosystems

BIODIVERSITY & NATIVE BROOK TROUT ARE AT RISK

Massachusetts has committed to protecting biodiversity, yet routine stocking of non-native fish counteracts that goal. Introducing non-native trout increases competition, disrupts food webs, and weakens ecosystems that native species depend on. When non-native fish are repeatedly added to rivers and lakes, biodiversity declines.

Eastern brook trout are:

- The only native trout in Massachusetts
- A key indicator of healthy cold-water ecosystems

Across its native range, brook trout have declined by about 50% in recent decades due to habitat loss, invasive species, and climate change.