

Salisbury Fish Culture Station Decommissioning Analysis

This analysis is being provided to outline the financial and programmatic impacts of decommissioning the Salisbury Fish Culture Station in the midst of Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) budget discussions. This analysis is preliminary and further investigation and discussion would be highly encouraged with Department and fish culture staff.

Why decommission the Salisbury Fish Culture Station?

The Salisbury Fish Culture Station is one of the VTFWD's most expensive fish culture stations in terms of dollars per pound of the fish produced. On top of this, the facility is in need of significant infrastructure upgrades to meet modern discharge codes and standards regarding the Vermont Water Quality Standards and the Clean Water Act. Preliminary estimates for long term infrastructure upgrades total upwards of \$12M and will most likely result in a future capital bill request.

What are the annual costs associated with the Salisbury Fish Culture Station?

The annual cost for the Salisbury Fish Culture Station is approximately \$520,000. This includes \$370,000 in personal services and \$150,000 in operating. If this fish culture station is closed the net savings for FY20 would be \$250,000. For additional information on this calculation, please see below.

How many employees work at the fish culture station?

The fish culture station has four full-time employees.

Position #	Position Title	FY2018 Expended
640065	Fish Culture Specialist V	\$92,265
640029	Fish Culture Specialist III	\$120,020
640030	Fish Culture Specialist II	\$75,584
640033	Fish Culture Specialist II	\$81,644

What are the costs associated with decommissioning the fish culture station?

At this time the costs of decommissioning the fish culture station are unknown; further investigation will be done to develop a cost estimate. Costs will include payout of annual leave for staff, stocking or disposal of fish at the facility, etc. Further, some amount of on-going maintenance and upkeep will be needed after decommissioning in order to ensure the facility does not become derelict while in the state's possession.

How would this closure impact operations and what other problems would it cause?

The Salisbury Fish Culture Station, located in Addison County, is Vermont's only broodstock station, mating male and female fish to produce approximately 5 million trout eggs annually for all the other Vermont fish culture stations. Species raised and eggs produced at the facility include brook, brown, and rainbow trout, steelhead, and lake trout. Additionally, the Salisbury hatchery has the ability to utilize a light controlled room to stimulate fish to produce eggs earlier. By providing eggs to the other



hatcheries earlier in the year, the young hatched fish have more time to grow; thus allowing the fish hatcheries to grow fish to the needed size that they were not originally capable of doing.

Decommissioning of the Salisbury Fish Culture Station in FY20 would have the following programmatic impacts:

- **The need to move broodstock to other state fish culture facilities to provide eggs for the VT fish culture program** - Given the fact that Salisbury Fish Culture Station has a prevalence of having the fish disease furunculosis, the only way that a full swap of broodstock could occur would be with the distribution of eggs to be grown out for broodstock for other hatcheries. This would result in one of two scenarios:
 - VTFWD would need to forgo stocking fish statewide until the new broodstock grow to the point that they reach sexual maturity and can produce eggs for statewide stocking. Gaps between stocking would be as follows.
 - Brook trout – no catchable sized trout stocking for 2022 and 2023 seasons.
 - Brown and rainbow trout – no catchable sized trout stocking for 2022 – 2024 seasons.
 - Steelhead – no yearling steelhead stockings for 2022 - 2025 seasons.
 - Lake trout – no yearling lake trout stockings for 2022 – 2027 seasons.
 - Eggs would need to be purchased or secured from out of state sources.
 - Brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, and steelhead – most likely purchased from a private corporation (i.e. Troutlodge); however eggs would not be of the right genetic strain and would have the potential to significantly impact the wild trout population in VT. This would be an environmentally risky and financially costly endeavor and result in the discontinuation of “strain critical” stockings (i.e. the Willoughby River steelhead program), as well as other concerns with availability, biosecurity, etc.
 - Lake trout - would need to be secured from the White River National Fish Hatchery pending availability.
- **Relieving three VTFWD staff.** – It is anticipated that broodstock management in the state hatchery system will continue to require at least 1 FTE of support regardless of the option selected above; as such, closing the hatchery would result in RIF’ing three positions. This would provide the majority of annual savings, but at the loss of three dedicated and experienced staff.
- **A \$100,000 capital request to create a “lighthouse”**– Because Salisbury FCS utilizes photoperiod manipulation through a light controlled room (i.e. “lighthouse”), construction of a lighthouse at another Fish Culture Station would be necessary to produce eggs for brook trout and brown trout. This would cost approximately \$100,000 to build.
- **A significant reduction in statewide stocking** – The need to house broodstock in the other four fish culture stations would result in a production space shortage that wouldn’t be able to be mitigated by expansion (primarily due to discharge permit restrictions). Therefore, space constraints would result in reduction in fish stocking in Vermont of about 20-25%.
 - Using the 2011 US Fish and Wildlife Service National Survey of Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation coupled with the 2010 Vermont Angler Survey VTFWD estimates the economic impact of fish stocking in Vermont to total around



\$31.6M. A secondary consequence of reducing fish stocking could be a diminished economic impact to the state of Vermont due to less people fishing and spending money on fishing.

- **Social impacts** – The Salisbury Fish Culture Station is listed on the National Historic Register (coming into operation in 1931). Additionally, it is Vermont’s most visited fish culture station (over 6,600 visitors in FY18). A decommissioning of the Salisbury Fish Culture Station would mean the loss of a key tourist destination and public access to a critical piece of Vermont’s fish culture history.

What would be the decommissioning plan for the Salisbury Fish Culture Station?

Decommissioning would be implemented on a phased approach based on getting fish eggs to the surrounding fish culture stations for grow-out to become broodstock. Once eggs would be shipped out of the facility, that species specific broodstock program would be discontinued at Salisbury Fish Culture Station. Phase out of species-specific broodstock programs would be:

- Brown trout (summer spawn) – mid-July 2019
- Brook trout (summer spawn) – mid-August 2019
- Rainbow trout – early September 2019
- Lake trout – late October 2019
- Brook trout (fall spawn) – mid-November 2019
- Steelhead (Chambers Creek strain) – early January 2020
- Steelhead (Willoughby River strain) – mid January 2020

Once all programs were phased out, staff would be relieved of duty or reassigned to any other position vacancies, as appropriate.

What would be the net financial impact in FY20 of decommissioning the Salisbury Fish Culture Station?

Overall savings of decommissioning Salisbury Fish Culture Station:	\$520,000
Ongoing broodstock management costs:	(\$130,000)
Additional staff costs to remain and spawn fish through mid-November 2019*:	(\$103,000)
<u>Fish rearing costs to get them to spawn:</u>	<u>(\$37,000)</u>
FY20 Net savings of decommissioning Salisbury Fish Culture Station:	\$250,000

**Staff would be held on station until mid-November to account for spawning of all fish species except for steelhead. Spawning of steelhead would be accomplished by minimal fish culture staff from other facilities.*

For questions regarding this analysis please contact Adam Miller at 802-777-2852 or by email at Adam.Miller@vermont.gov.

