

Healthy Hemlocks Keep Trout Happy

All trout enthusiasts know trout require continuously flowing streams with cold, oxygen-rich water, adequate cover, and plentiful food to survive. They also need streams with clean gravel bottoms for spawning. In the approximately 5,400 miles of designated trout water in the north Georgia mountains, hemlock trees have historically been singularly significant with their dense overhanging canopy providing cooling shade and their extensive root system mitigating stream bank erosion and sedimentation.

BAD NEWS. If you've walked along a trout stream lately, you've probably noticed something sad. In many places the beautiful hemlocks that once wrapped the waterways in lush green ribbons threading through the forests are dying or already dead. A tiny invasive insect, the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) that has been in the Southeast for more than a dozen years now, is killing them by the hundreds of thousands, leaving behind great gray swaths of death and destruction.



The resulting conditions, especially in the summer, can cause severe stress for trout, which are very sensitive to even subtle environmental changes. Loss of streamside hemlocks causes the water to become warmer and hold less oxygen, opens the waterway up to more light penetration and fewer shady hiding places, increases the number of fallen hemlock logs (which decompose very slowly) in and around streams, and – perhaps the greatest threat to successful trout reproduction – allows more erosion, storm runoff, and sedimentation to settle over the eggs and suffocate them from lack of oxygen.

GOOD NEWS. If you have hemlocks on your own property, especially if they border a trout stream, please treat and protect them. It's safe, easy enough for most people to do themselves, highly effective, lasts for an average of 5 years, and very economical, especially compared to the cost of losing your beautiful evergreens. Or you can hire a qualified professional to treat them.



On public lands, the U. S. Forest Service and the Department of Natural Resources have implemented integrated pest management plans using a combination of chemical treatments and biological agents (primarily predator beetles) to control HWA in designated hemlock conservation areas throughout north Georgia, preserve a genetically diverse population of hemlocks, and prepare for future hemlock forest regeneration. And these agencies allow volunteers working under a special agreement with Georgia-based nonprofit Save Georgia's Hemlocks (SGH) to help with these efforts.



YOU CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. If you want to keep the trout happy, help keep the hemlocks healthy. To learn how to save your own trees, help treat trees on your public lands, or participate in a new joint initiative of SGH and Trout Unlimited to replant hemlocks along trout streams, please contact Save Georgia's Hemlocks on the Hemlock Help Line 706-429-8010 or visit www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org.

BIG DADDY BROOKIE IS BEGGING FOR YOUR HELP!



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