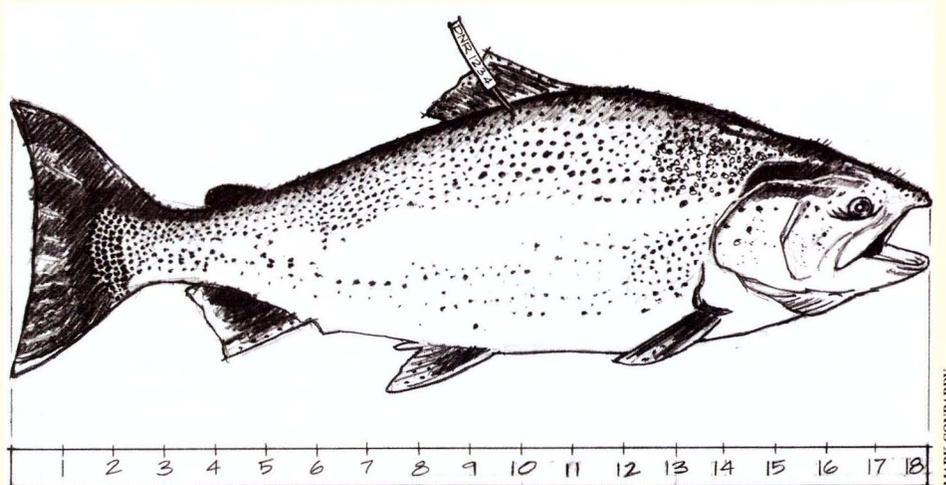


## DNR NEEDS HELP WITH LOWER SALUDA TAGGING STUDY

The waters of the lower Saluda River below the Lake Murray Dam and hydroelectric plant are home to a popular “put-grow-and-take” brown and rainbow trout fishery made possible by a DNR stocking program. Past evidence has suggested very limited *carryover* (survival for more than a year after stocking) of these hatchery-raised trout due to adverse environmental conditions, natural predation and harvesting by anglers. However, improving environmental conditions in the lower Saluda have veteran anglers who regularly fish the river reporting catches of an increasing number of larger-sized carryover trout. (See “Catching a Breather,” beginning on page 28.) These improving habitat conditions have also benefitted other species in the lower Saluda, such as largemouth and smallmouth bass, bream and striped bass.

What’s changed on the river is that during the last three years, the dam’s operator, South Carolina Electric and Gas, has installed turbine venting to help add oxygen to the water released downstream and modified their water release regime to provide more stable, consistent water levels. A trout growth study conducted by SCE&G after the advent of turbine venting demonstrated the growth potential these improvements could have. Using temperature, dissolved oxygen, and food availability as variables, the study indicated that trout growth in the lower Saluda River could — with improved flow rates and aerated discharges — exceed that of many other southeastern tailwaters.

Hoping to learn more, DNR biologists plan to begin additional



Beginning in December of 2012, the DNR is asking that anglers who catch trout in the lower Saluda River with tags that look like the example shown above record the fish’s tip-to-tail length and tag number.

trout growth and mortality studies and creel surveys designed to answer a number of questions related to the improved habitat and its relationship to the management of this important fishery. They need the help of anglers to get the best data possible.

“This will give us an indication of how many stocked trout are surviving, how many are succumbing to natural or angler mortality and what the seasonal growth rates are,” said DNR fisheries biologist Ron Ahle, who is conducting the study.

Results from the study and creel survey will be used to inform management decisions such as adjusting stocking rates, future length limits and creel regulations. It will involve a tagging effort in which a total of 9,000 rainbow trout and 6,000 brown trout will be marked with T-bar anchor tags attached just below the dorsal fin. Each tag will have a unique number. The tagged fish will be helicopter stocked in early December of 2012.

Anglers can assist DNR biologists by reporting their catches of caught-and-released tagged trout, or by

retrieving and mailing in tags from harvested trout. A small reward will be offered to participating anglers, but more importantly, their cooperation will help ensure the future success of this popular fishery. Anglers catching tagged fish should record:

- Tag color and number
- Fish length
- Species (brown, rainbow, or unknown)
- Date and time fish was caught
- General location fish was caught
- Whether fish was kept or released

Anglers who catch trout with legible tags are encouraged to release them after recording the above information. If the tag is not legible or the fish is harvested, clip the tag and mail it to: Ron Ahle, Cohen Campbell Fish Hatchery, 2726 Fish Hatchery Road, West Columbia, SC 29172.

Be sure to include a name, return address, and an e-mail address if you have one. Information on tagged fish catches can also be e-mailed to [ahler@dnr.sc.gov](mailto:ahler@dnr.sc.gov). Contact Ahle by phone at (803) 755-9345. 🐟

— DNR staff