

2025 Coon Creek Watershed Survey

Kirk Olson, Tommy Hill and Ryan Olson

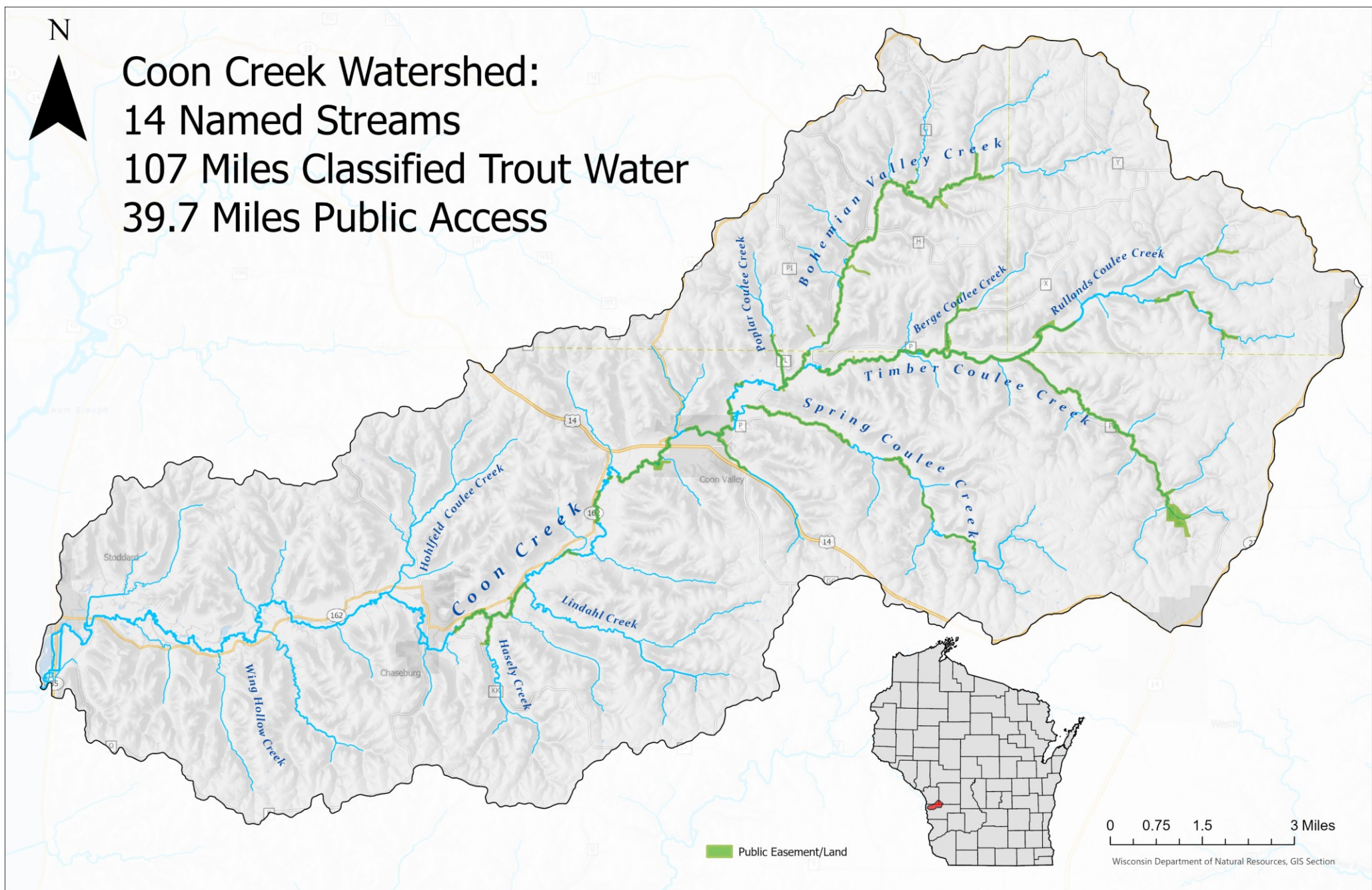
WI DNR Fisheries Management

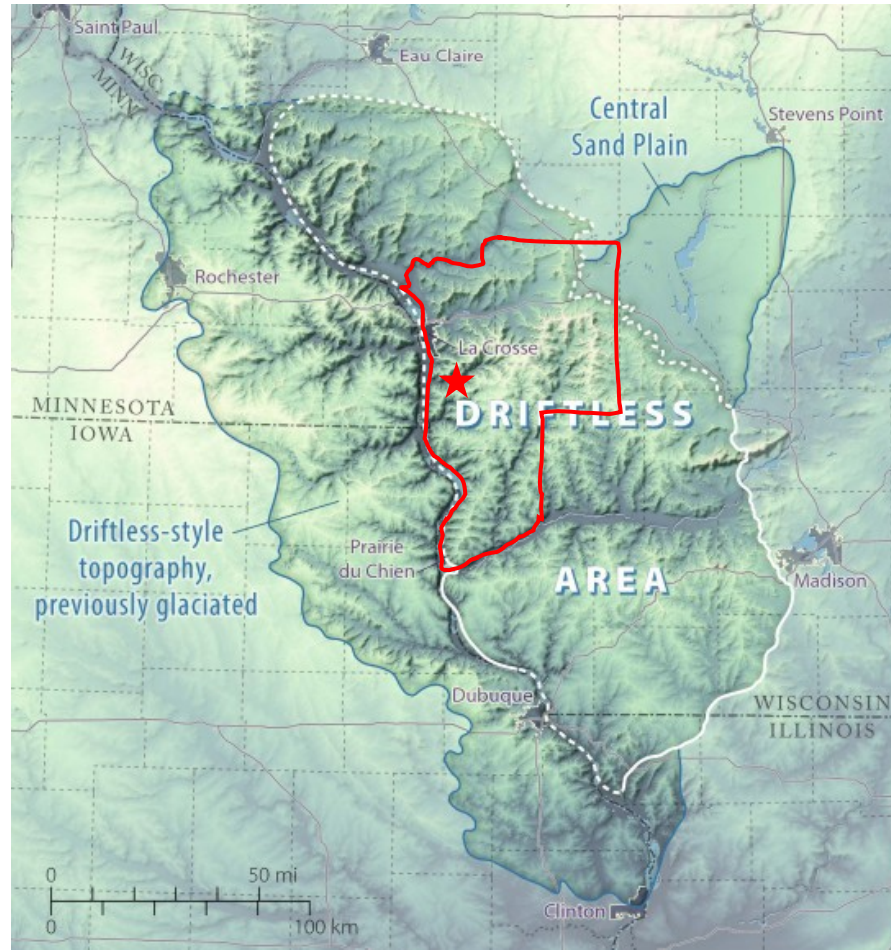
La Crosse, WI

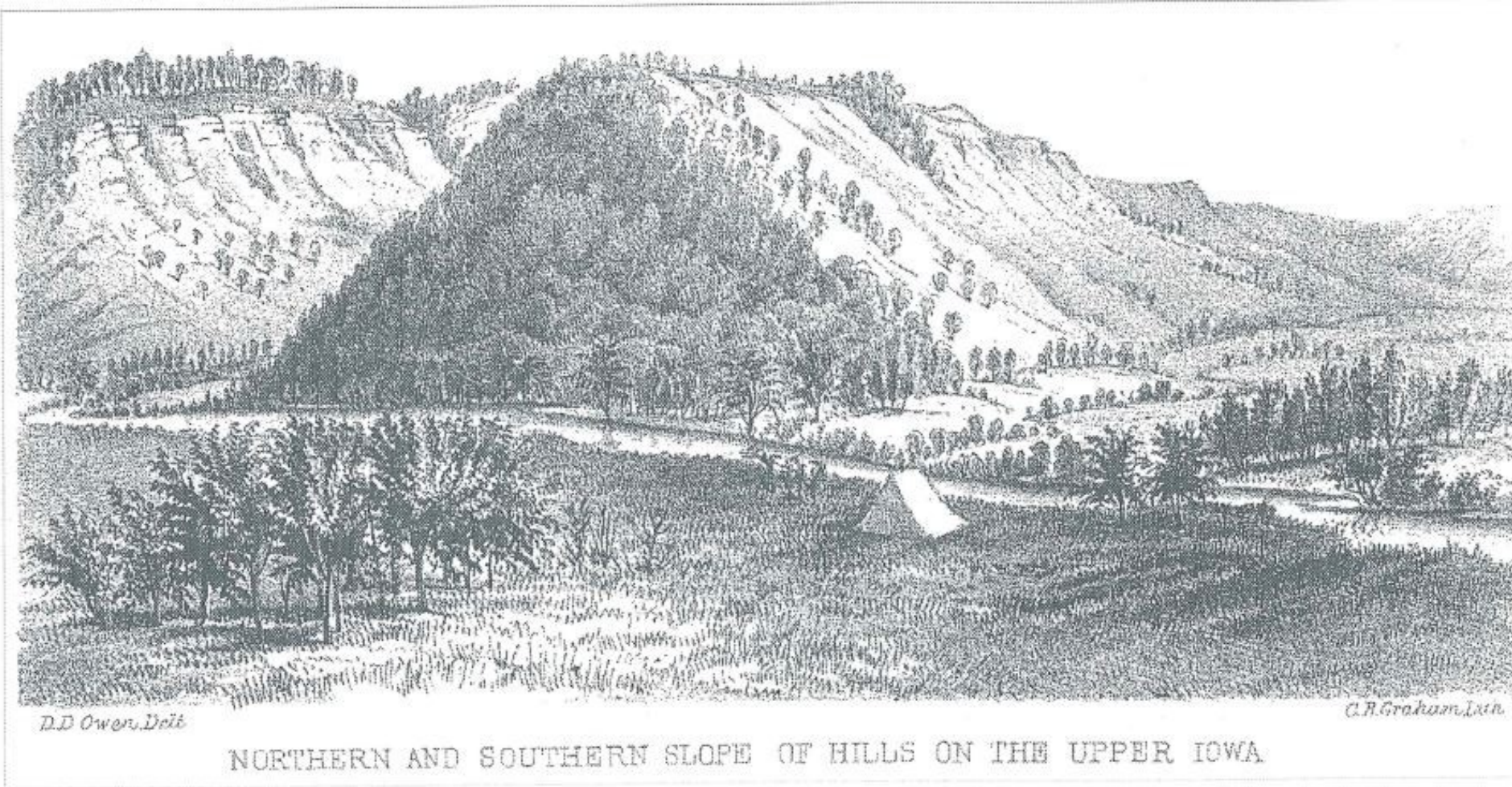




Coon Creek Watershed:
14 Named Streams
107 Miles Classified Trout Water
39.7 Miles Public Access







1846

**Original Survey Notes
Coon Township**

“The only 1st rate land in this township is in the valley of Raccoon Creek, mostly prairie bottom, watered by a most beautiful stream...There are many very fine springs of pure water, and plenty of deer and grouse.”

1846

**Original Survey Notes
Washington Township**

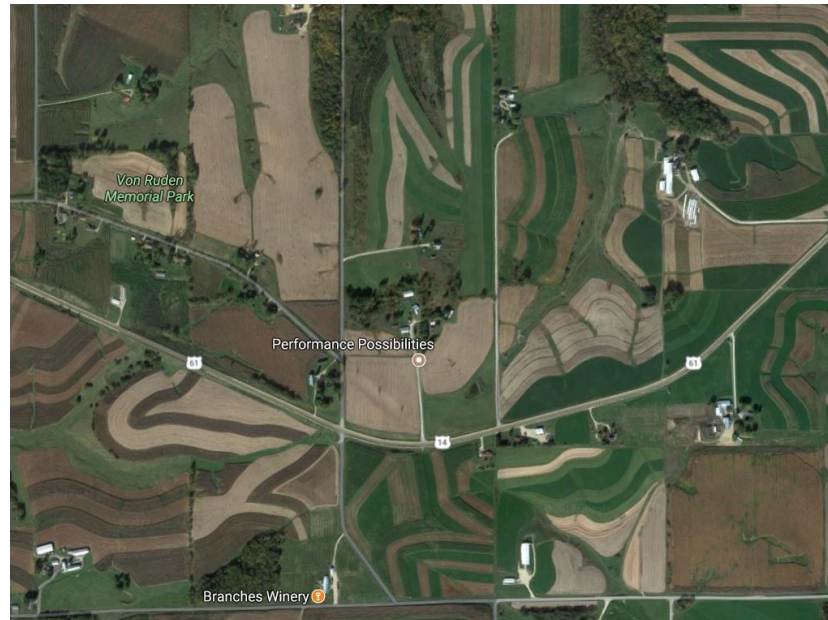
“There are trout in all the streams and we have found a great many deer and grouse.”



Trimble (2013)

“Every rain pours off the ridges as from a roof. The ravines of the grazed slopes are the gutters. In their pastured condition they cannot resist the abrasion of the silt-laden torrents. Great gashing gullies...”

Leopold 1935

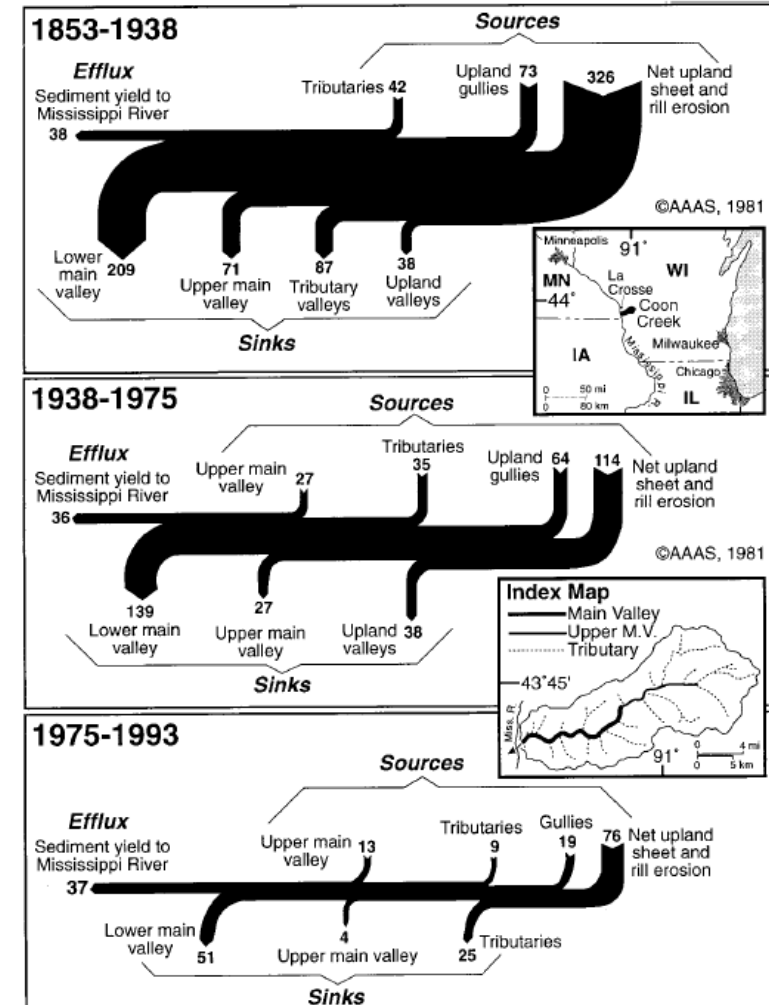
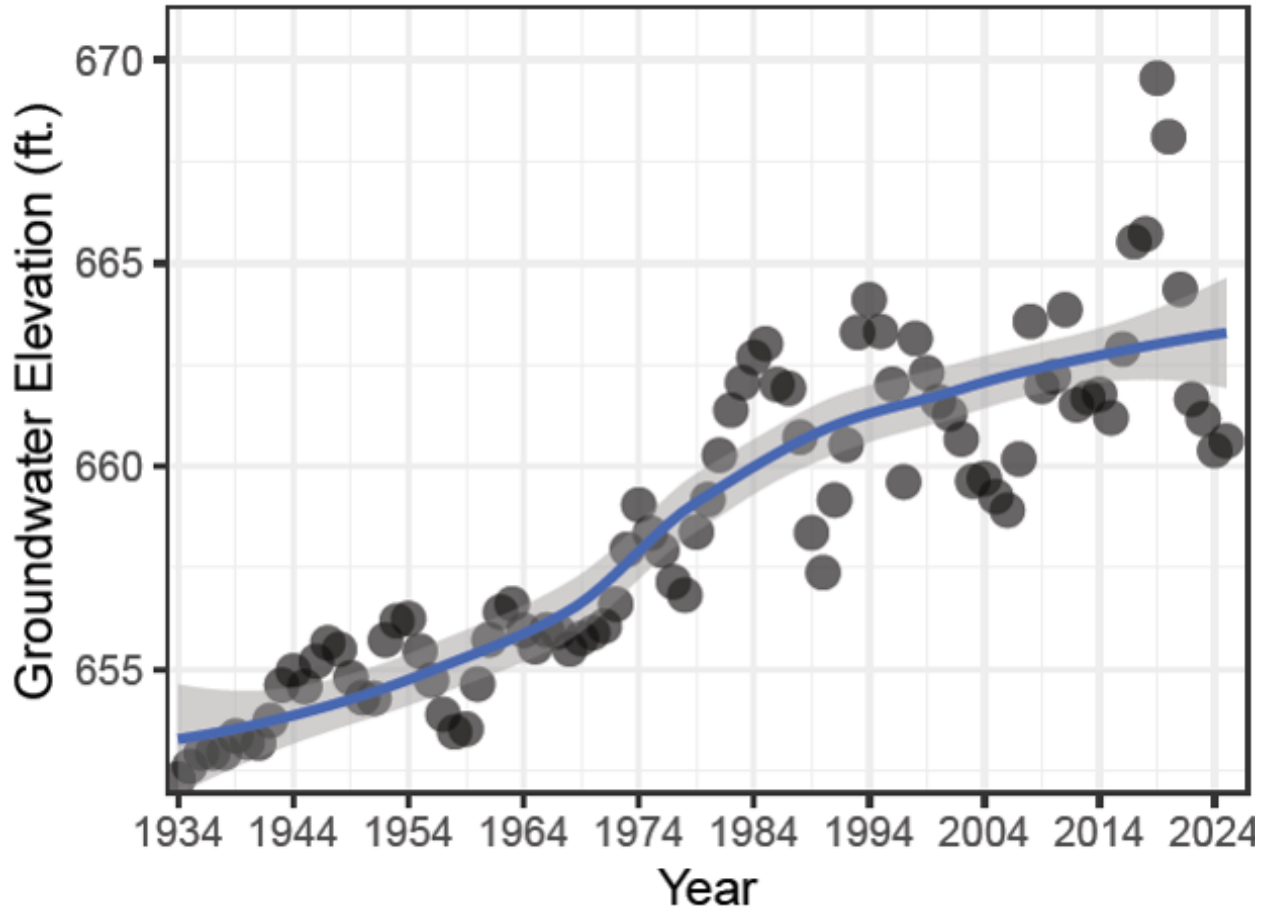


Rainwater infiltration rates of forested hillsides in the CCW declined from **7.46 in. per hour** to **0.05 in. per hour** after intensive cattle grazing.

Stoeckeler 1959

Less erosion and deposition!

Less runoff and more groundwater!



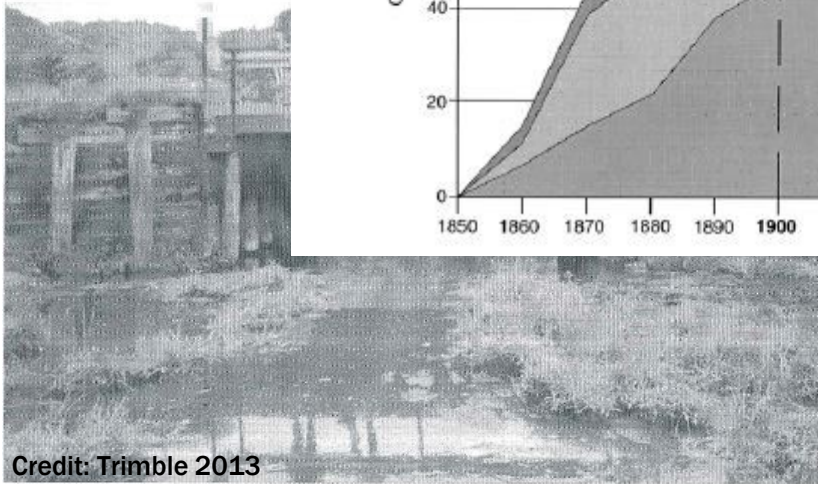
Trimble, 1999

Tributary to Coon Creek 1975



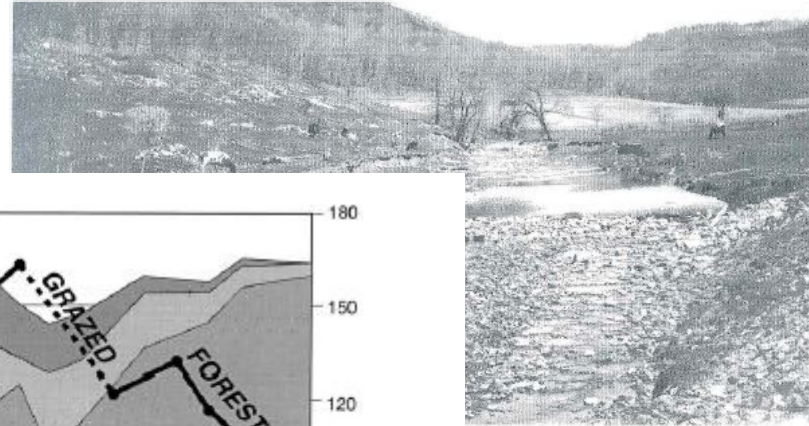
Credit: Trimble 2013

Tributary to Coon Creek

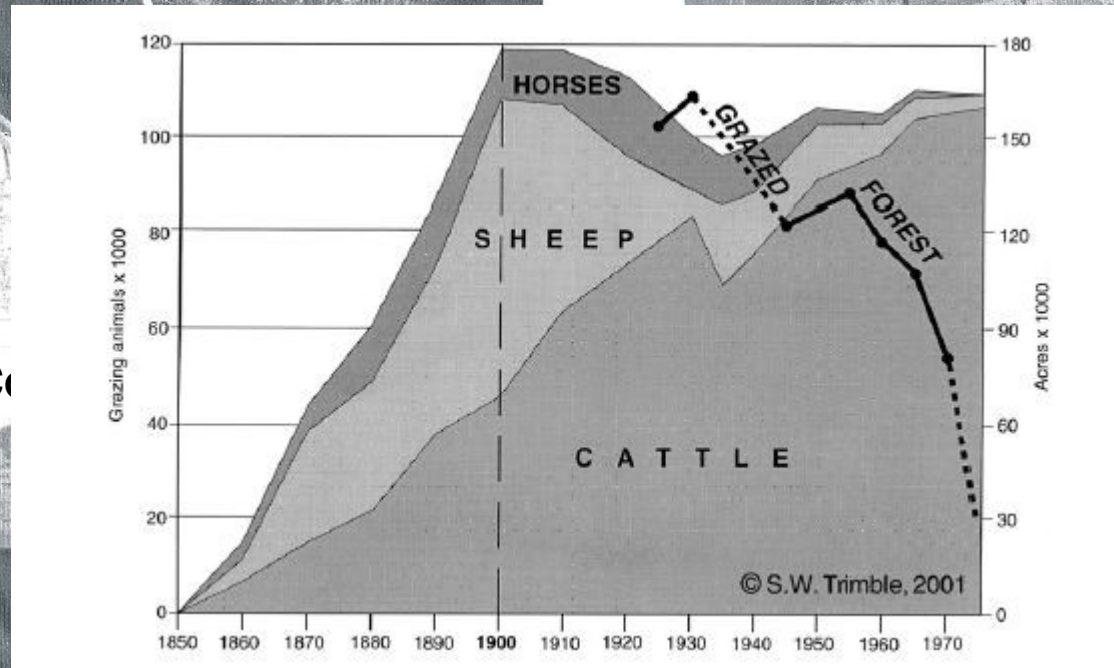
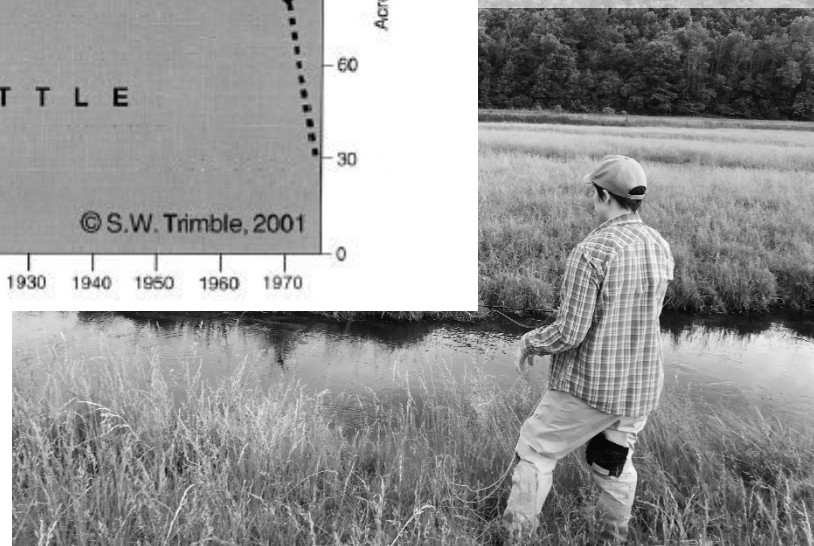


Credit: Trimble 2013

Timber Coulee Near Lars Hill Rd. 1919



Lars Hill Rd. 2018



Trout Habitat

- Within the context of these gradual watershed scale improvements, fisheries management efforts took place
- Habitat efforts dating back to the mid 1950s
- Habitat work completed on nearly all DNR easement/lands (~37 miles)





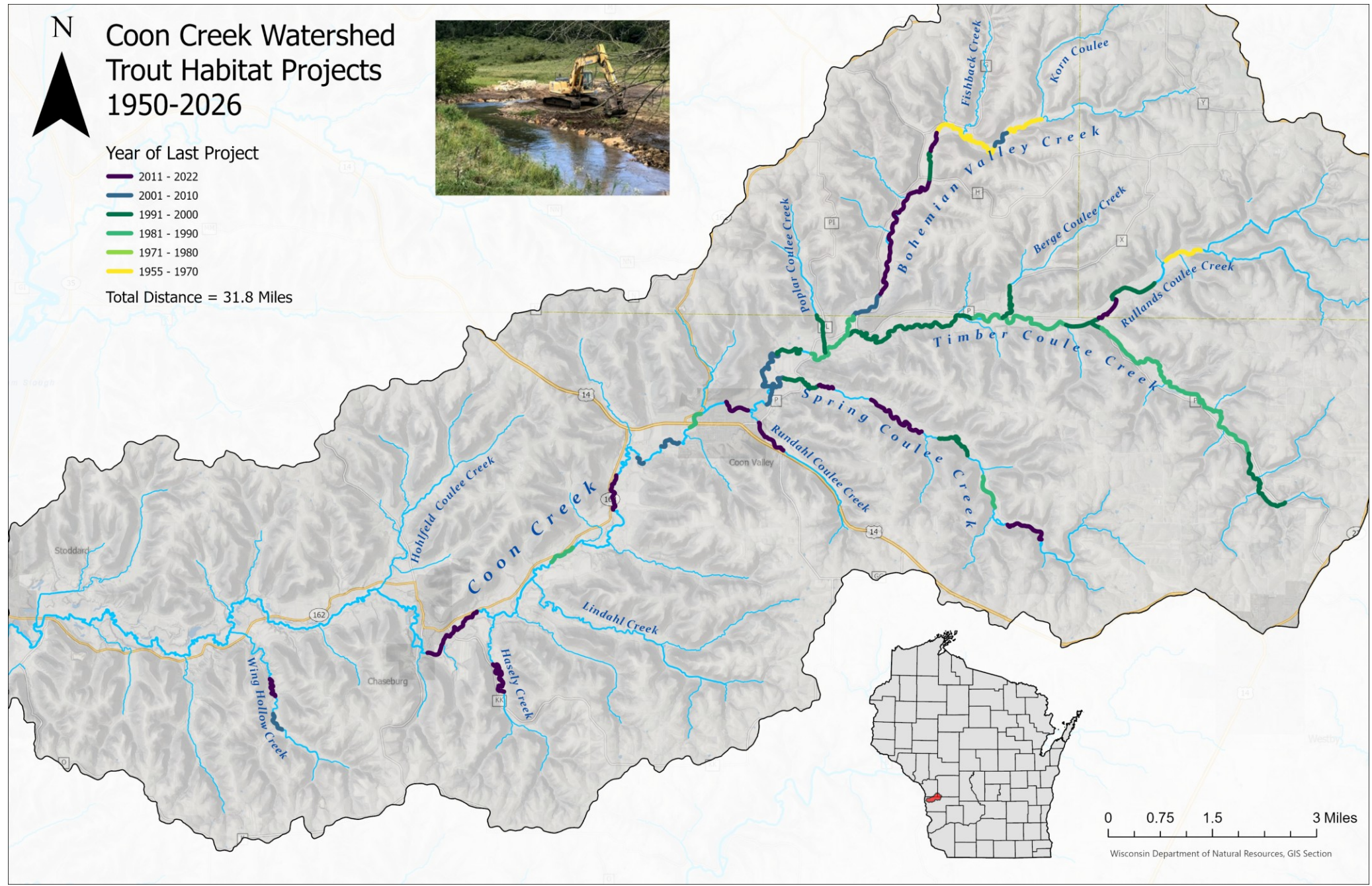
Coon Creek Watershed Trout Habitat Projects 1950-2026



Year of Last Project

- 2011 - 2022
- 2001 - 2010
- 1991 - 2000
- 1981 - 1990
- 1971 - 1980
- 1955 - 1970

Total Distance = 31.8 Miles



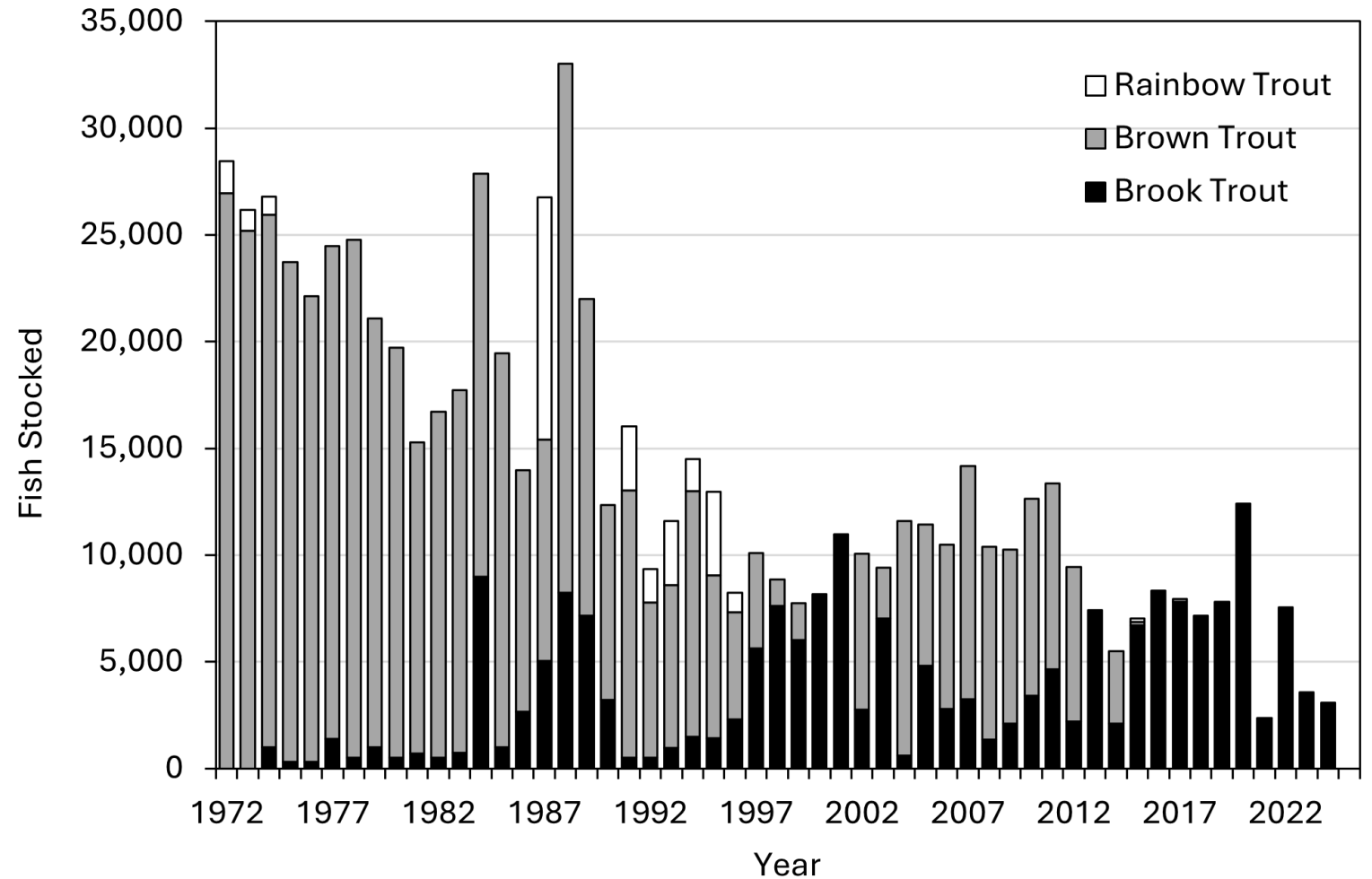
Trout Propagation

- **1989:** Rullands Coulee Creek first brood source for feral Brown Trout stocking in WI
- **1991- Present:** Timber Coulee Creek brood source for all WI feral Brown Trout stocking



Trout Stocking

- **<1972 – 1998:** Domestic Brown and Brook Trout
- **1998 – 2014 :** Feral Brown and Brook Trout
- **2014 – 2024:** Feral Brook Trout
- **2025 and after:** None



Watershed Survey Methods

- **2025**
 - 45 surveys
 - 19 temp loggers
 - 7 angler vehicle counts
- **1954 – 2025**
 - 531 standardized fish surveys
 - Qualitative review of office files and notes



Trends



Timber Coulee 1957

“...good in its ability to support stocked trout but poor as a producer of self-sustained population.”

Timber Coulee 1977

“Very few naturally produced fingerling brown trout were found during the survey.”



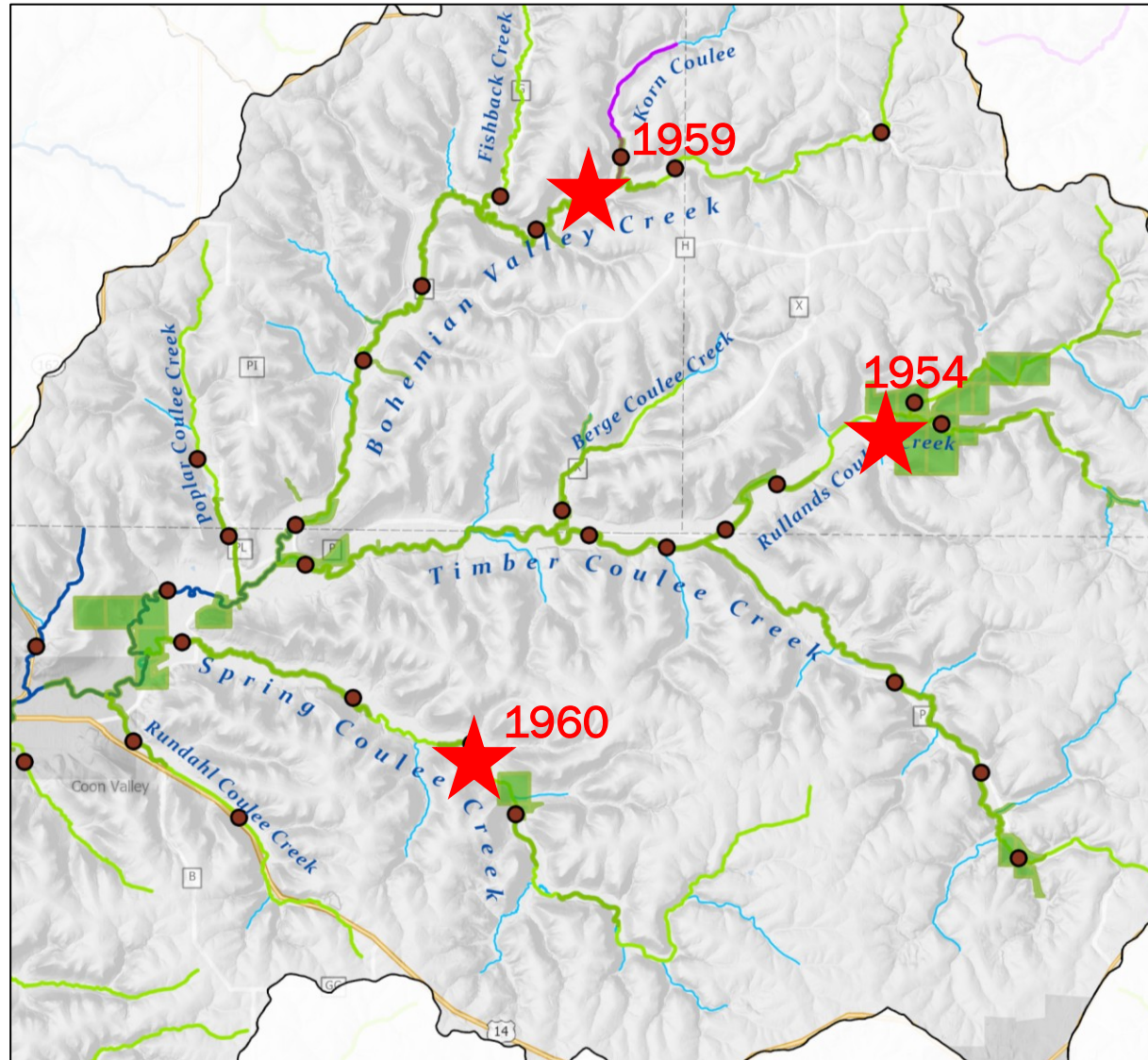
TROUT FOR TIMBER COULEE CREEK

Elmer Simonson, (on truck), Black River Falls, supervisor of Wisconsin's cooperative trout rearing pond program, is assisted by Erling Hovde, next to truck, and Alf Barstad, in stocking trout in Timber Coulee Creek near Westby. The project was carried out recently by the Westby Rod and Gun Club of which Hovde is president and Barstad a member.

Stocking was done for the coming trout season which opens May 9. Related stories on the stream, rearing pond and opening of fishing season in the Wisconsin-Minnesota Mississippi River boundary waters are carried on pages 15 and 16.—Tribune Colorphoto by Harry Larsson.

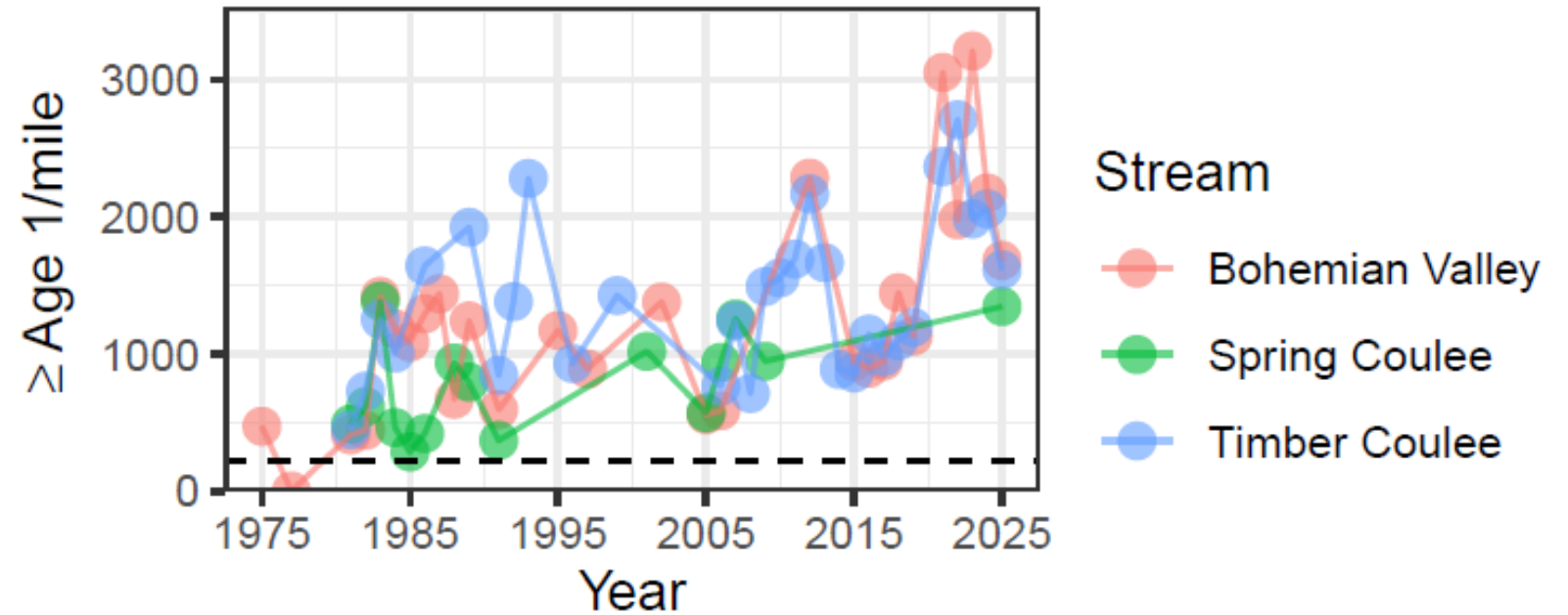
Trends

- 1950 ~1980:
- Isolated NR near springs
- Stocked fishery elsewhere

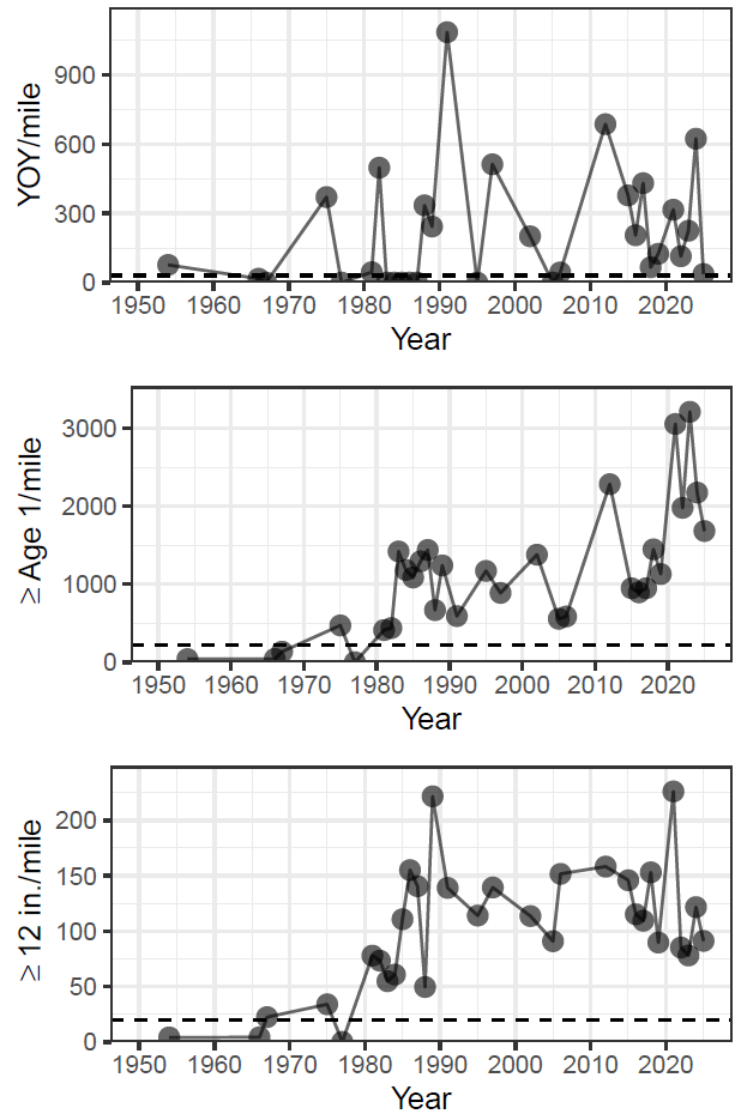


Trends

- **~1980 – present:** Brown Trout increasing and expanding
- **1974:** RC Class I
- **1977:** TC Class I and II
- **1990:** SC Class I



Trends



Bohemian Valley Creek



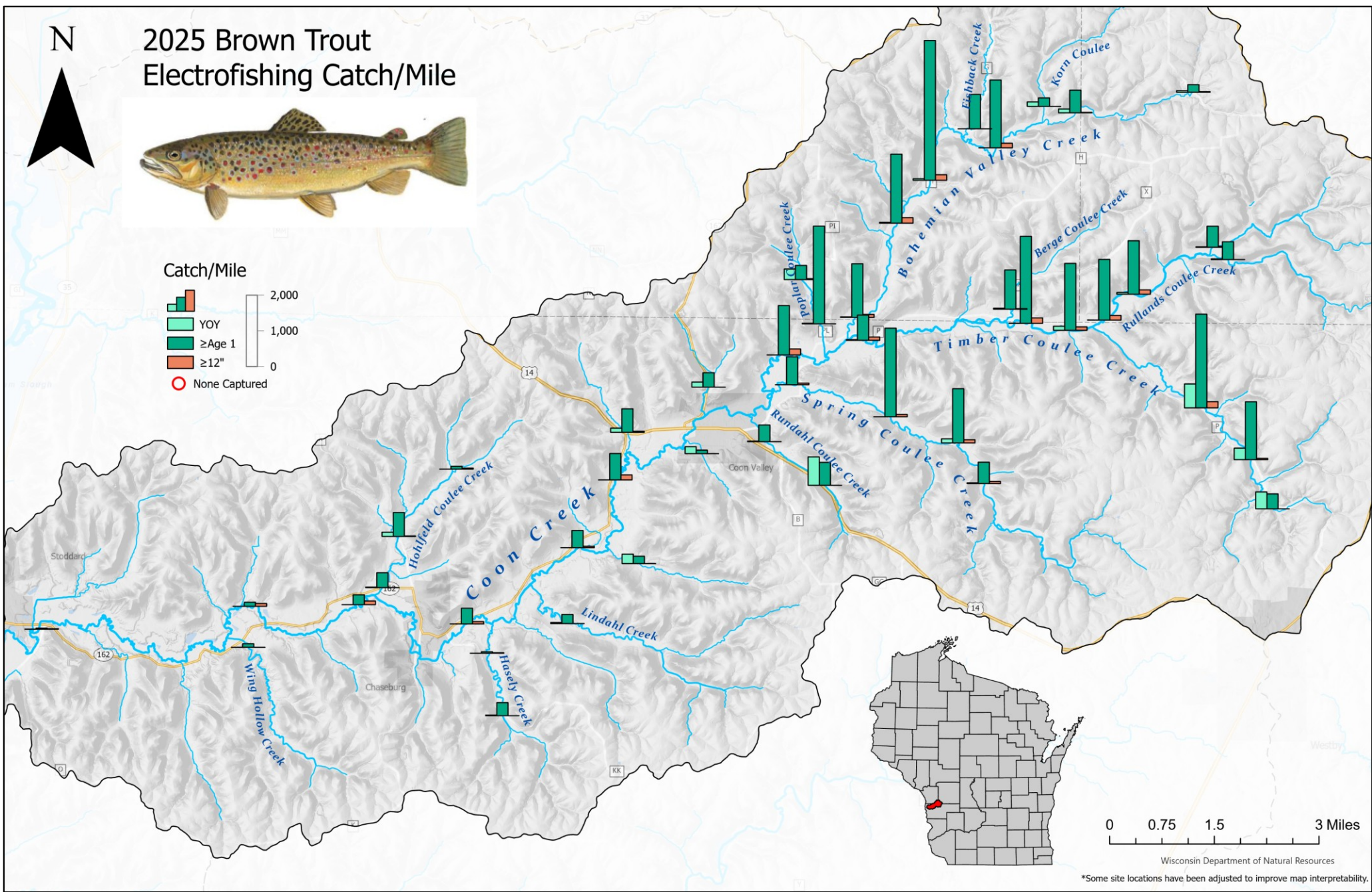
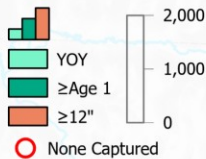
2025



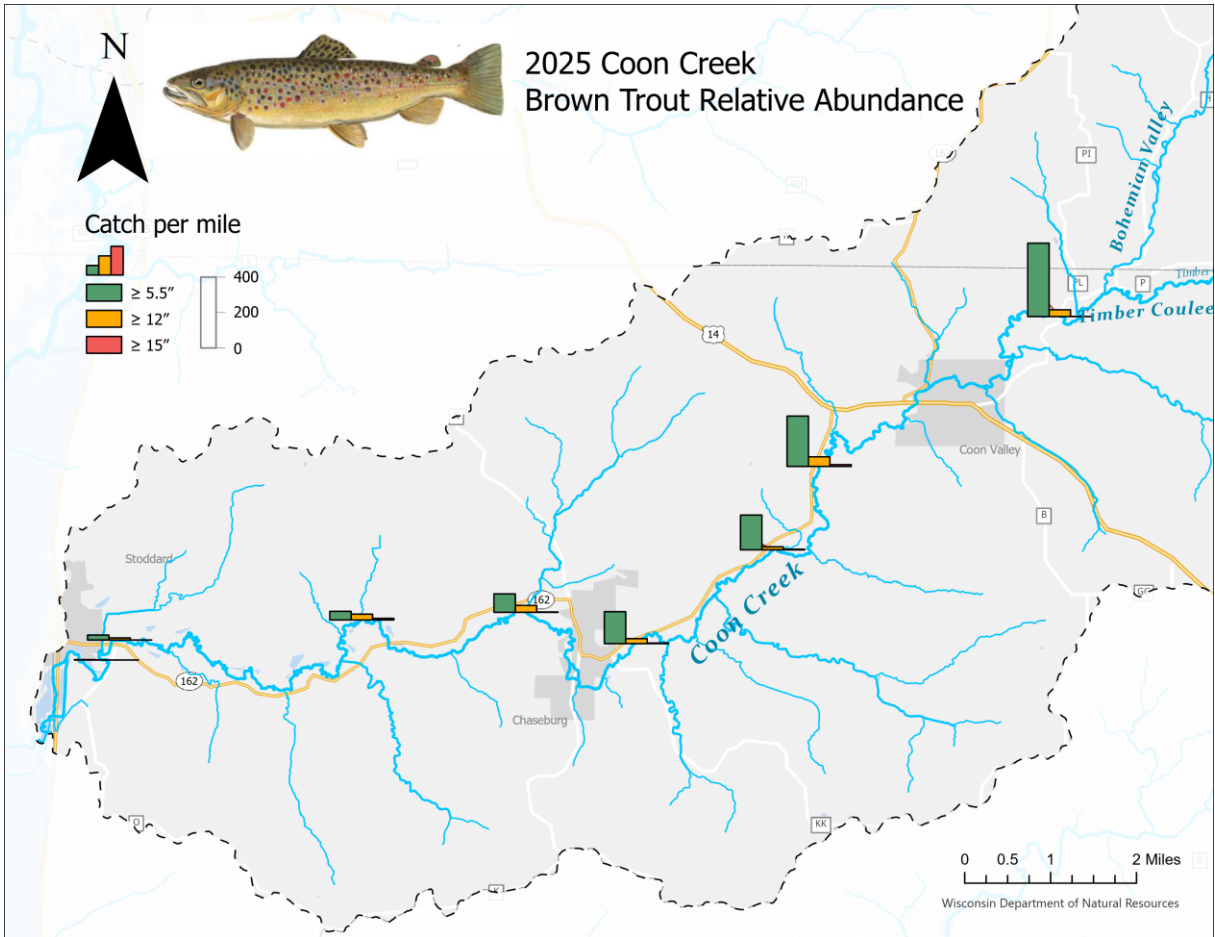
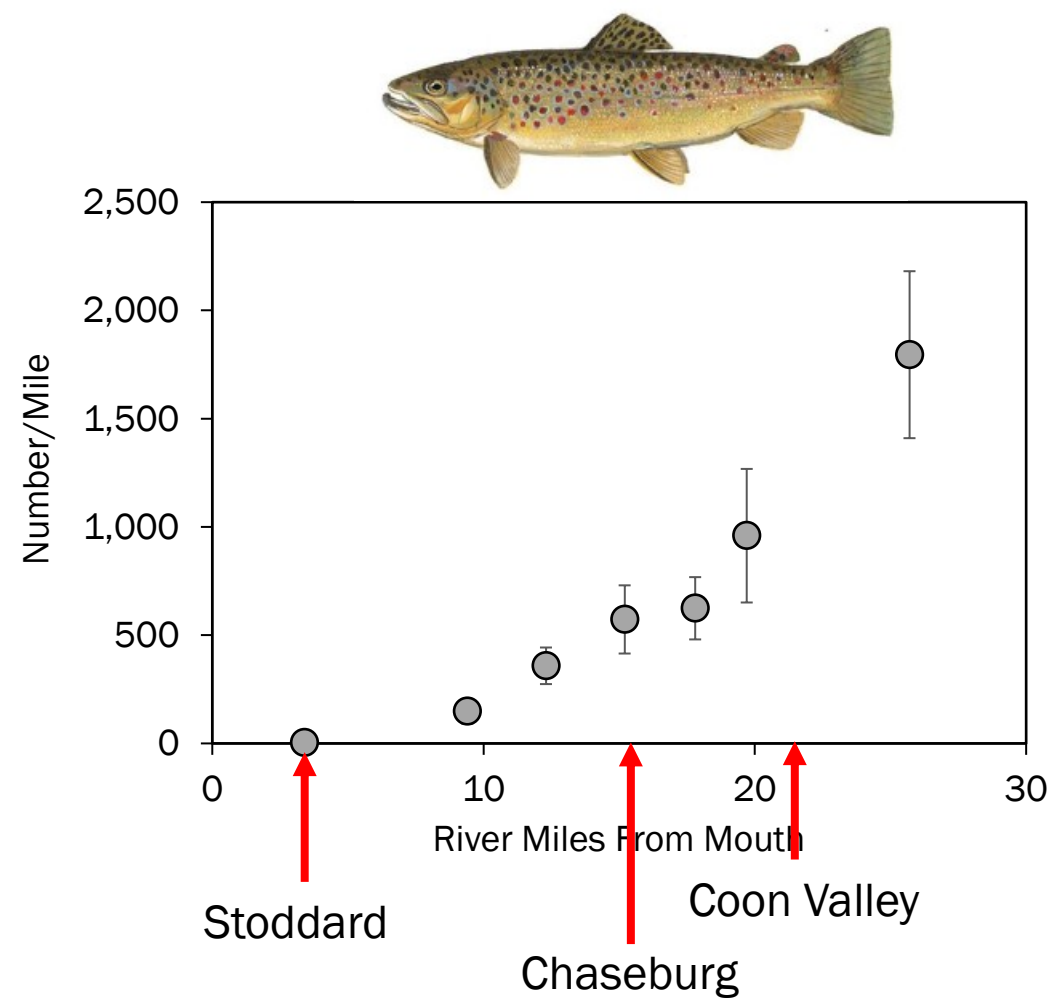
2025 Brown Trout
Electrofishing Catch/Mile



Catch/Mile

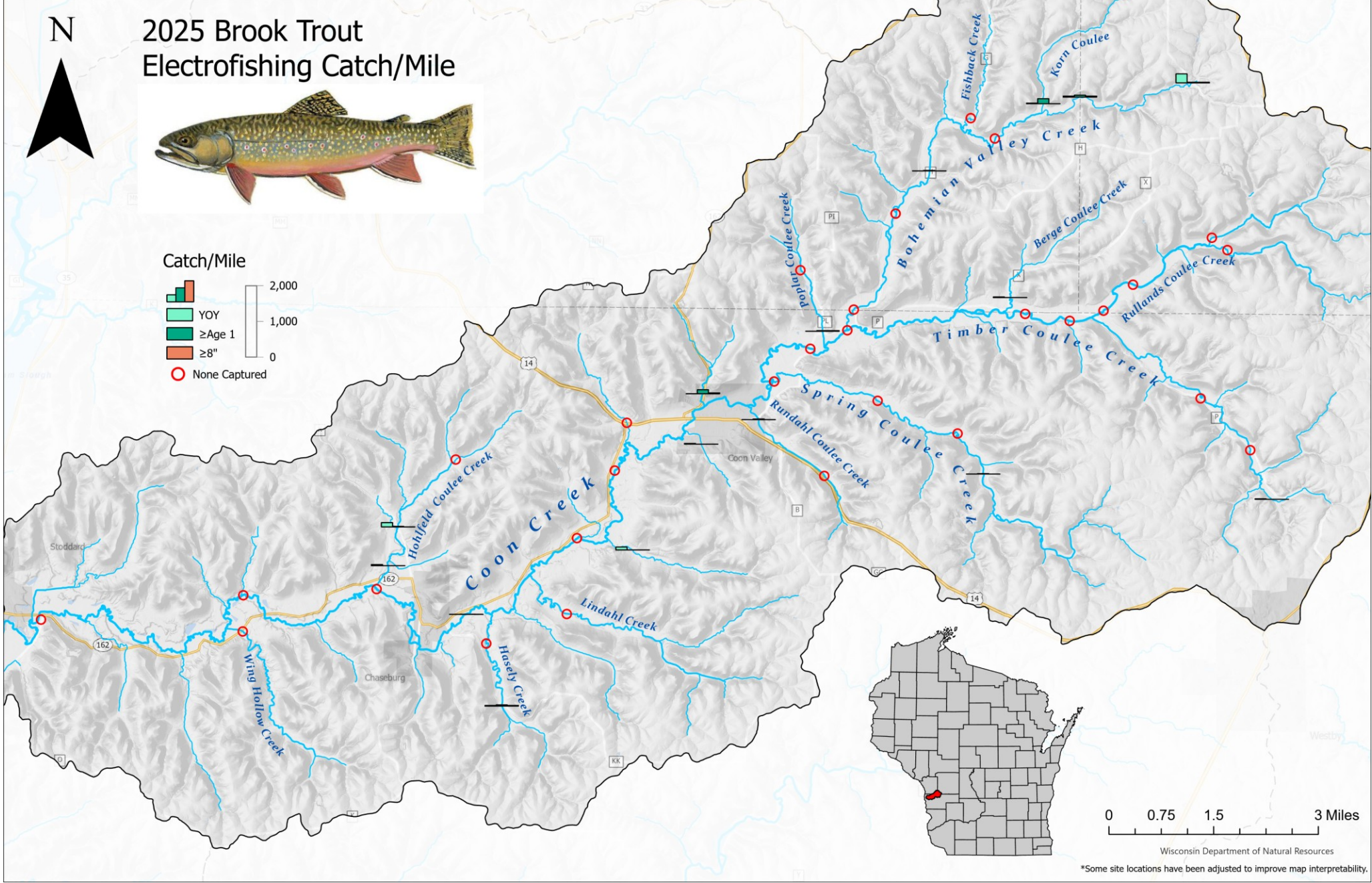


Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
*Some site locations have been adjusted to improve map interpretability.

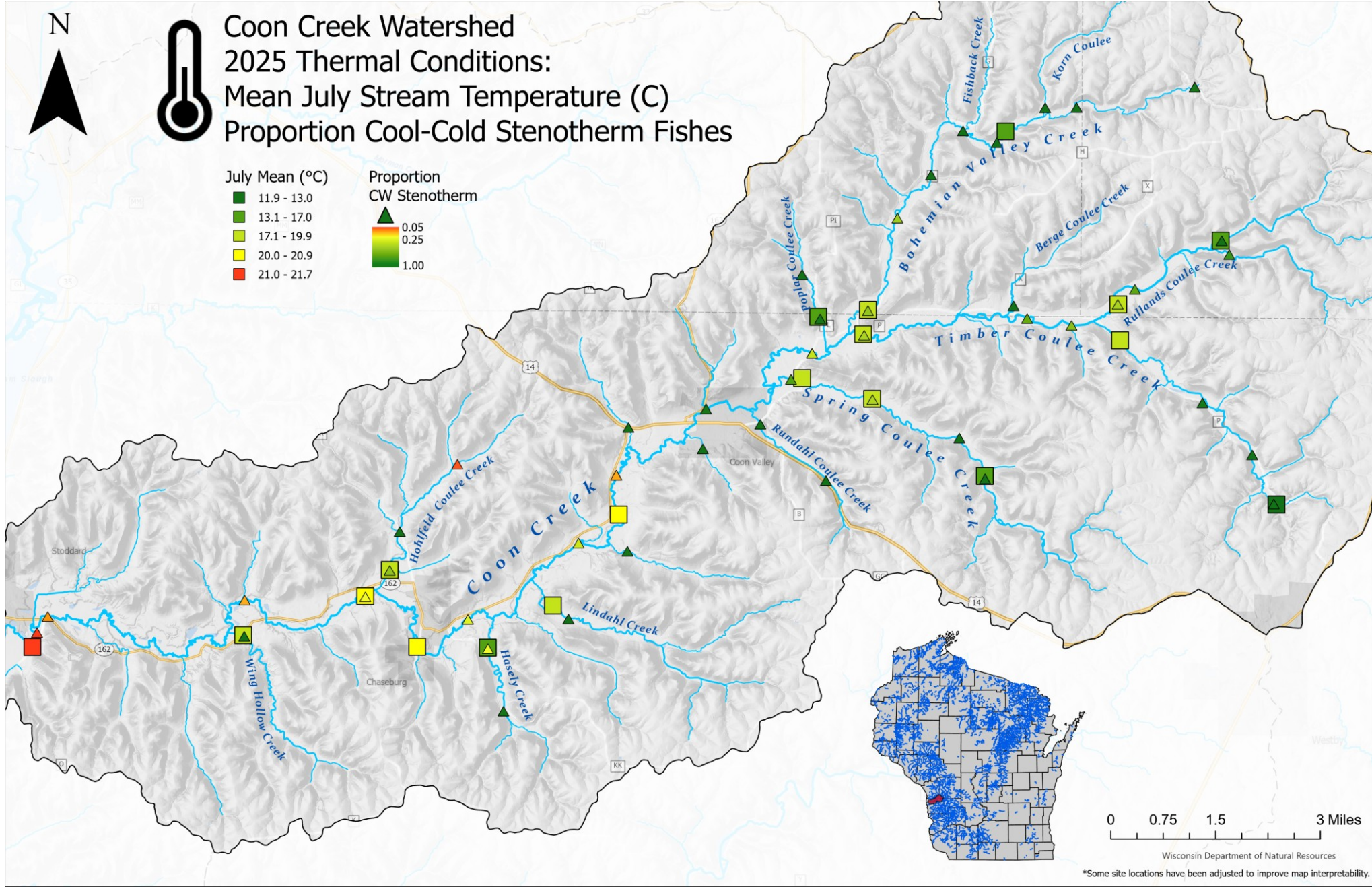




2025



2025



Conclusions

- Conservation success story
 - Brown Trout populations are excellent
 - Brook Trout are uncommon and relegated to headwaters
 - Thermal conditions solid in upper watershed, OK to marginal in lower
- Ongoing challenges
 - Climate Change
 - Land use practices
 - Brook Trout
 - Habitat improvement/protection
 - Angler access



Next Step..

Evaluation of trout population trends and fisheries management in the West Fork Kickapoo River Watershed



Kirk Olson, Kevin Mael, and Kristina Pechacek
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Bureau of Fisheries Management
La Crosse, WI
2021

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Evaluation Of Trout Population Trends And Fisheries
Management In The Bear Creek Watershed, Vernon
And Monroe Counties, WI



Kirk Olson
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Bureau of Fisheries Management
La Crosse, WI
May 2022

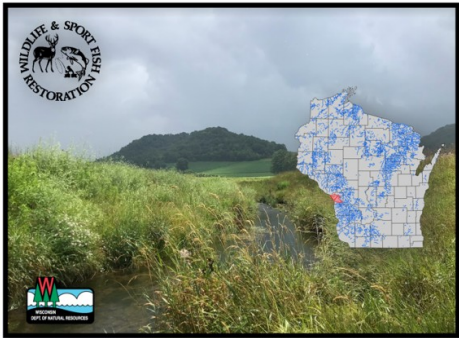
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Trout Population Trends and Management in
Southern Crawford County



Photo Credit: Kirk Olson

Kirk Olson
Wisconsin DNR
Bureau of Fisheries Management
La Crosse, WI
March, 2023

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Trout Population Trends and Fisheries
Management in the Lower La Crosse River and
Halfway Creek Watersheds



Bostwick Coulee Creek; Photo Credit: WDNR/Kirk Olson

Kirk Olson
Wisconsin DNR
Bureau of Fisheries Management
La Crosse, WI
11/01/2024



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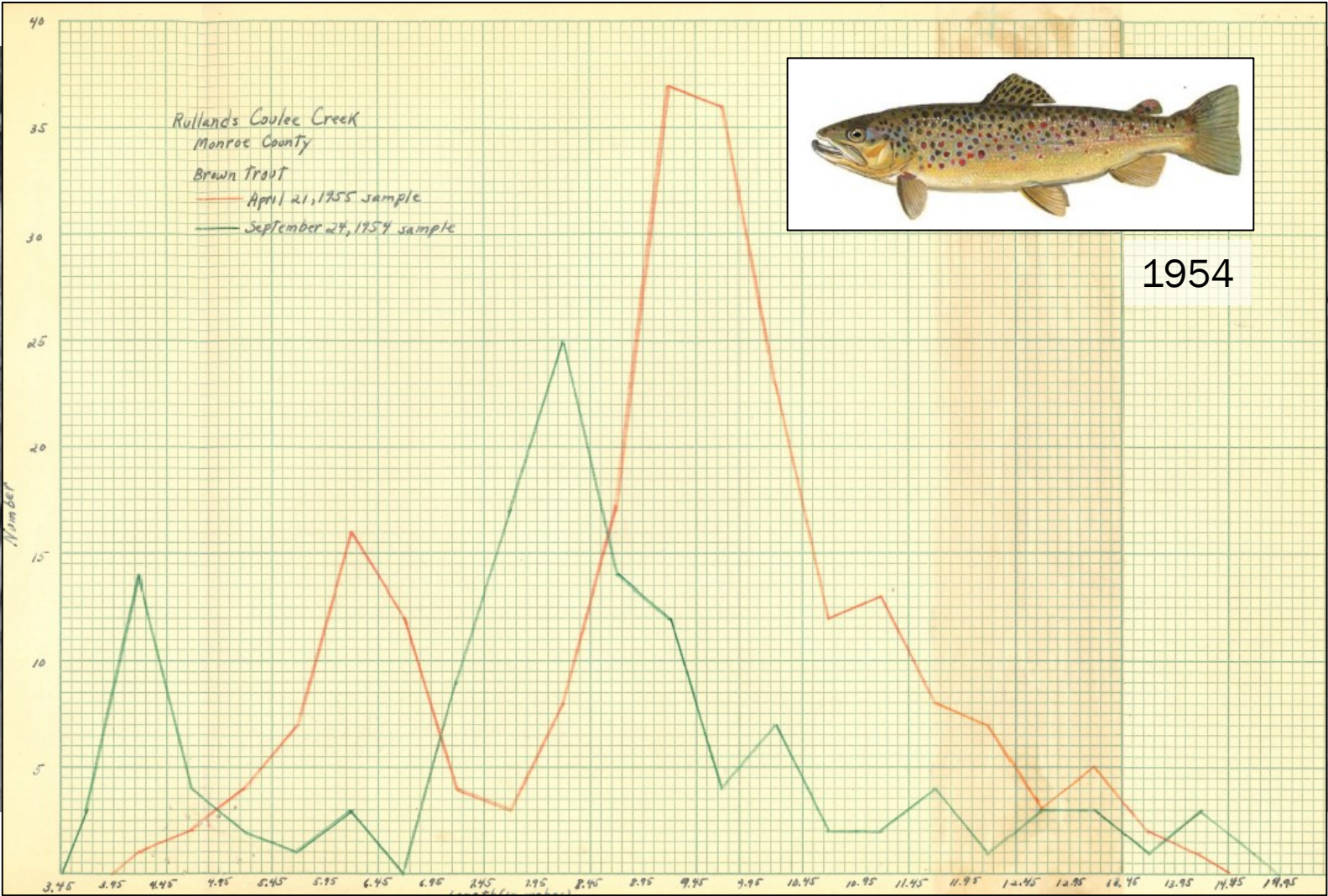
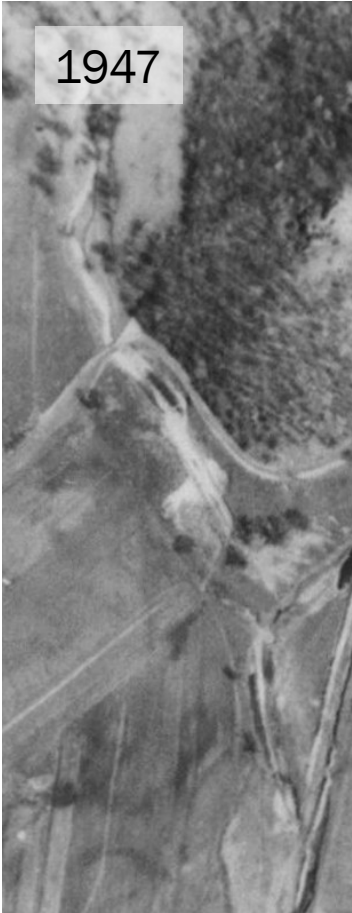


Hart (2008)





Results: Trends



Challenges

