



Regional Resource Stewardship Council
Discussion Questions and Advice
April 2013

Currently, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Fish Hatcheries provide trout at TVA projects in Tennessee and Georgia. There is a need for a sustainable business model to fund these trout hatcheries. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources have shared their perspectives on funding with the Council. The following are questions related to the issue of sustainable funding, about which TVA seeks the Council's advice.

- 1. The construction of TVA dams and associated impoundments have had environmental impacts; but have also provided natural resource and economic benefits through reservoir release improvement modifications. What additional levels of support should ratepayers have to pay for programs that go beyond simply improving the environment for recreational and economic gain (e.g., fish stocking)?**
 - Ratepayers should not be involved in this unless it benefits every ratepayer.
 - Ratepayers have been picking up the amount from TVA no longer receiving federal appropriated funding since 1999.
 - It is important to consider what are mitigation or the economic development requirements for this industry in relation to the building of the dam systems.
 - TVA's obligation for good stewardship for the resources and stocking non-native populations of trout seems to go above and beyond those obligations. Not sure that this benefits more than just a small group and the budget constraints of today may not justify the expenses. Need to evaluate the priorities of what should be paid for.
 - Consider a model for educating the ratepayers on this issue, so that they may have the option of paying a little bit more to fund this endeavor. Maybe consider a broader Resource Stewardship fund similar to the Green Power funding.
 - The ultimate solution is going to have to come from those using the resource. The ratepayers are funding the congressionally mandated requirements for TVA stewardship of the resources. TVA should not be doing things they do not have to do and should only pay for what they are required by law.
 - Anglers that come to fish for trout may not be ratepayers, so there is a need to consider additional options to pay for this activity.
 - TVA needs to keep the Council briefed over the next three years with status of the currently committed spending, along with additional data regarding who is counting on this resource and how many actually support the continued funding by TVA and ultimately the ratepayer.
 - There is a clear need to continue considering additional avenues for funding this activity other than the ratepayers.

2. If the Council believes such stocked fisheries are essential and assuming that the traditional model for funding these sport-fishing hatcheries is no longer viable due to federal and state budget constraints, what advice and/or recommendations can the Council offer to the interested parties on a new financial model for sustaining these stocking programs?

- Need to consider ratepayers and non-ratepayer avenues for funding, such as a Trout-fishing Stamp good for fishing any TVA fishing stocked stream. Offer donation options online as well.
- There are other groups that benefit from the trout fishery: bait and tackle, fuel, food, etc. Need to identify other beneficiaries of the trout fishing industry and look at ways to get them to support the funding as well. Bringing all stakeholders to the table to have a dialogue would benefit the decision making process for funding.
- Have a tailored way to charge (a coordinated effort towards education and outreach of the issues and needs for funding and how it may be tailored to individual states) and then also offer another mechanism for donations and support.
- The State's should have the option to administrate the funding (TVA license fee category added to their current categories of funding).
- TVA receives funding for recreation leases or rental fees. TVA could consider whether some of the money received for recreation purposes might be utilized towards this project.
- TVA should identify and advertise what they are currently doing to enhance the sport fishing opportunities in the valley for the native and other species.
- Consider a "matched or partnered funding" concept so TVA or states do not have to provide the full amount for their obligations.
- The states may need to be the vehicle for the funding and providing the resource with the additional support/funding. TVA needs to consider if they would be able to take on this role of selling trout stamps.

3. What role should TVA, and other natural resource agencies, non-governmental organizations, user public, the states, local communities, and industry play in maintaining hatcheries to support sport fishing and ensuring a sustainable funding source is provided?

- TVA needs to consider the environmental impacts and not only the economic impacts. TVA's role in environmental stewardship needs to consider the mandated actions. We need some real data on the tail waters and how they are positively and negatively impacted by the trout fisheries over time. Maintaining "native" resources needs to be considered at a higher priority over the non-native stocking practices.
- It is fundamental for TVA to recognize the obligations of distinguishing sport fishing support over mitigation fisheries support.

- Local communities must be engaged by the MOA constructors as a part of pulling together the stakeholder group. Putting together opportunities for the public to voice input at public meetings.
- The user public contributes to local economies. A license is not worth a lot if there are only a few streams to fish from; it needs to cover a more broader geographic area. Non-native species are economic drivers.
- TVA should not feel like it is their fault if the trout are no longer here. However, TVA needs to support the endeavor by participation in the solution.
- Ratepayers' bills might have a way to donate; not necessarily for trout stocking, but for contributing to the "environmental package" of items to be covered.
 - Dissenting Viewpoint: Asking power distributors to add another line item for the additional funding should not be a part of the billing process for the ratepayers. It may not generate as much as one would hope, and there is a pressure for many items to be included with a bill.
- Consider charging people that are not local for the use of the resource.
- Consider investigating a corporate sponsorships such as bass pro shops. Working with groups such as this offers the opportunity to work with the industry beneficiaries to find a solution.
- Relationships at the local level need to be targeted for assistance in development of the model to absorb the costs (corporate industries or hobbyists, make them aware of the problem or benefits and let them take the ownership of assisting with the resolution).
- Trout Unlimited might be a great organization to get "plugged in".
- Local merchants might give customers an option to donate an additional dollar to help fund a strategy for a corporate sponsorship.
- Enlist a well known entity to assist with distribution of an educational package on the issue.
- Research other models that might be helpful.
- Alabama has had great success with the concept of a trail (bass, river, golf, etc.). Look at the potential for a trout fishing trail development and tie all the economically vested entities together with the trail's success. May need to be increased focus on the safety of the waterways due to the barge traffic and other user groups sharing the waters.
- The groups related with the trails often work with local government and state tourism entities in development and success of the trail development.
- Need to consider other avenues and look for opportunities to have some portion of the ratepayers voluntarily support the activity with donations.
- Recruit the 155 power distributors to educate the ratepayers on this issue.

4. What recommendations does the Council have as to the appropriate membership composition of the Hatchery Stakeholder Working Group envisioned by the Interagency MOA?

- The Federally Recognized Tribes need to be on the stakeholder team. It is mandated by law; if TVA spends federal dollars or does something on federal land, then the tribes must be consulted with. This is usually done during the NEPA process.
- The local state representative where the stocking will take place
- The states impacted and the appropriate resources agencies
- Sportsmen associations such as Trout Unlimited
- Retail fishing and manufacturing supply outlets
- Outfitters and guides
- Those with roles supporting water quality and natural resources.
- Local Chamber of Commerce offices in the areas represented, as they have connections with the local businesses.
- Fishermen (local)
- State Tourism officials
- Communities (local) to meet public involvement input needs
- Marina Groups
- Fuel Sales Representatives
- Local Power Company and Consumer Advocates representation
- Public input might capture some of these representatives, since you cannot have a group with an overwhelming number of people to discuss a topic. It needs to be conducted as economically as possible.
- Need to be certain that the federal agencies involved are bringing the necessary scientific personnel to advise the committee on the data.