



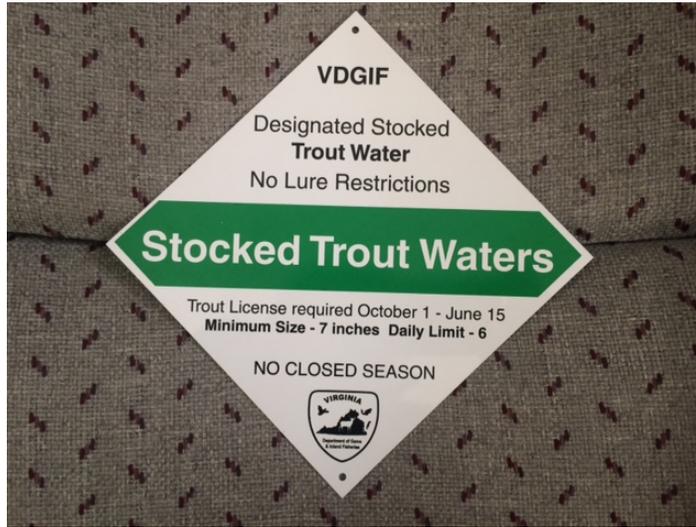
## 2016 Smith River Trout Fishery

The Smith River in Henry County is one of the state's most unique fisheries. The cold water released from Philpott Dam provides miles of quality trout water and offers excellent fishing opportunities throughout the year. Approximately 31 miles from Philpott Dam downstream to State Route 636 (Mitchell Bridge) are managed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) as brown trout special regulation waters. Brown trout from 10 to 24 inches are protected and must be released. Anglers fishing this section should be aware that water levels rise and flows increase as water is released from Philpott Dam. Information about the daily generation schedule for Philpott Dam can be obtained by calling (276) 629-2432. The following regulation sign is posted throughout this 31 mile section of the Smith River.



Within the 31 mile special regulation section, there are two areas designated as stocked trout waters. These put-and-take stocked trout areas provide opportunities for anglers to catch rainbow and brook trout. The first area starts at Philpott Dam and continues downstream approximately 3.3 miles to the confluence with Town Creek. This area is classified by VDGIF as a "Category B Stocked Trout Water", and is stocked with rainbow trout 5 times from October 1<sup>st</sup> through June 15<sup>th</sup>. The second stocked trout area is classified as "Category A Stocked Trout Waters". It begins in North Bassett and continues downstream approximately 9.5 miles to below Fieldale. It is stocked with rainbow trout 8 times from October 1<sup>st</sup> through June 15<sup>th</sup>. Both stocked trout areas

require a stocked trout license in addition to a state freshwater fishing license. Designated stocked trout areas of the Smith River display signs like the one below.



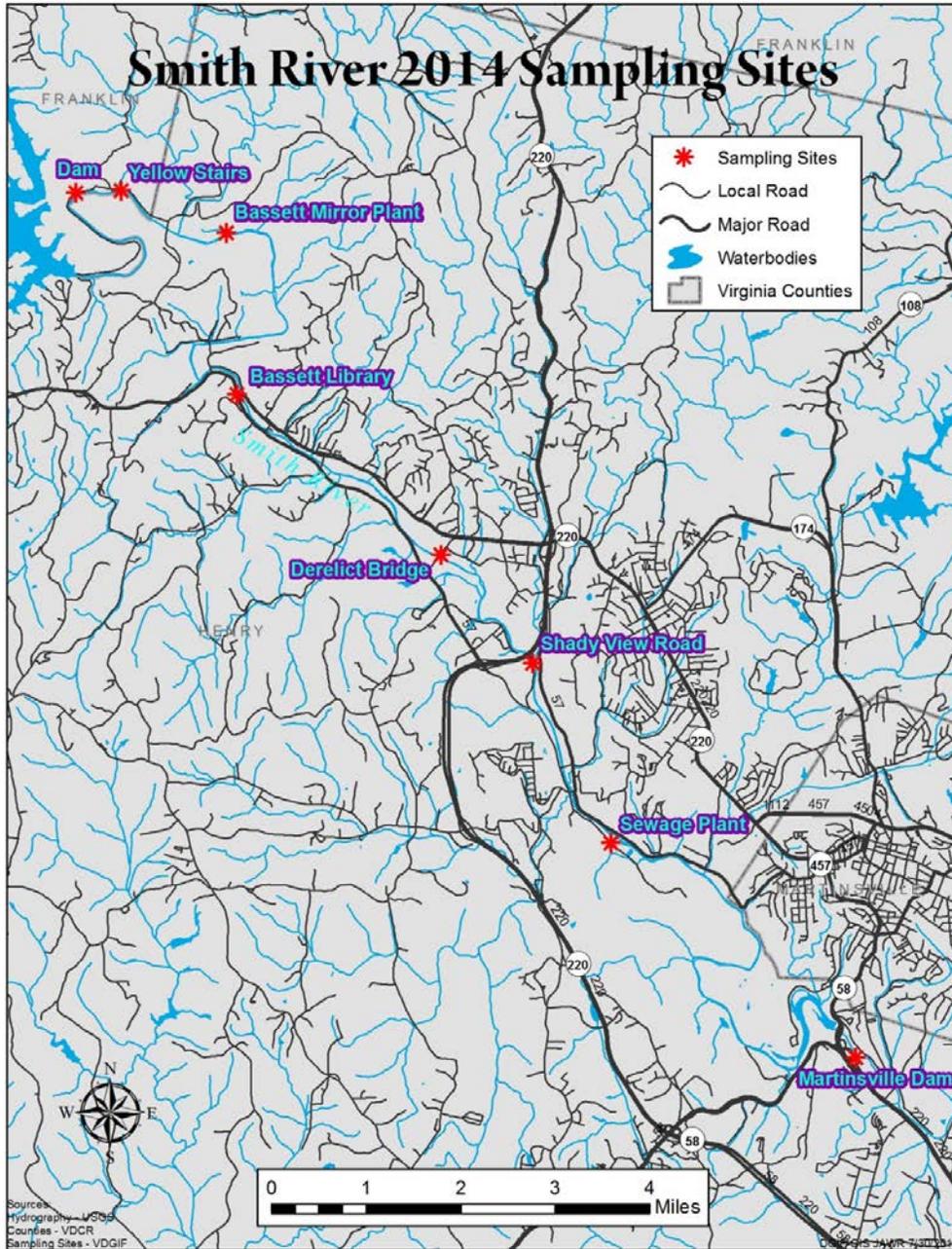
Downstream of the special regulation section, anglers can expect to catch smallmouth bass, rock bass, and sunfish as the Smith makes its way into North Carolina.



This report summarizes the results of fish population sampling performed by the VDGIF in 2015. The Department, in conjunction with the Smith River chapter of Trout Unlimited, collects fish population data annually to assess the health and status of the brown trout fishery. Routine population monitoring has been conducted since the mid 1990's. The report is divided into two sections reflecting two separate sections off the Smith River, Philpott Dam to Martinsville Dam and Martinsville Dam to Mitchell Bridge.

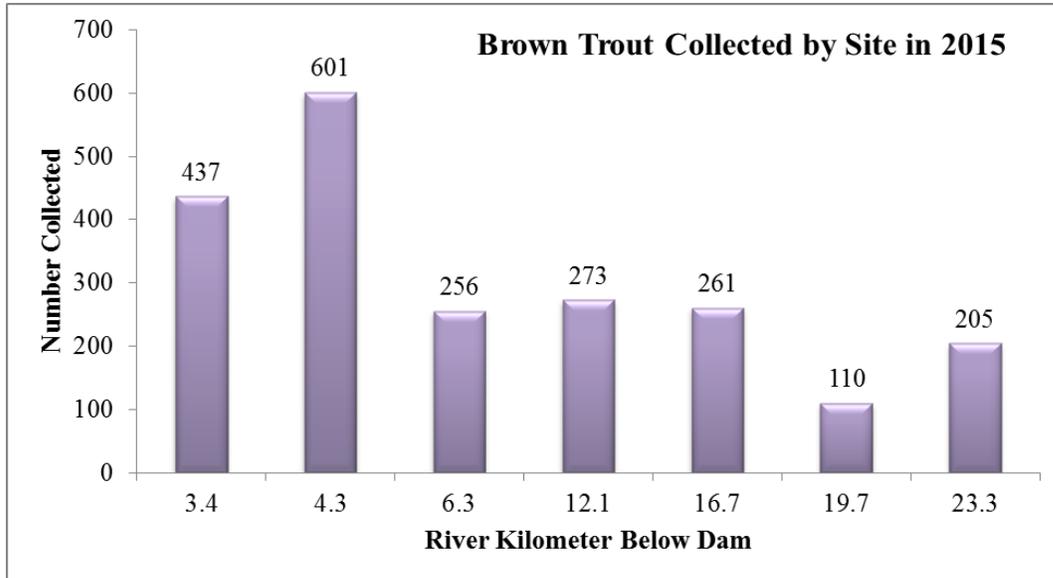
## Philpott Dam to Martinsville Dam

Fish population sampling between Philpott Dam and Martinsville Dam, a distance of approximately 19 miles, is performed with 2 barge electro-fishing units and a crew of approximately 20-25 people. Seven sites are sampled throughout this reach. The following map shows the seven sampling locations used in 2014 and 2015. The sampling locations are located at these distances below Philpott Dam; 3.4, 4.3, 6.3, 12.1, 16.7, 19.7, and 23.3 kilometers respectfully.

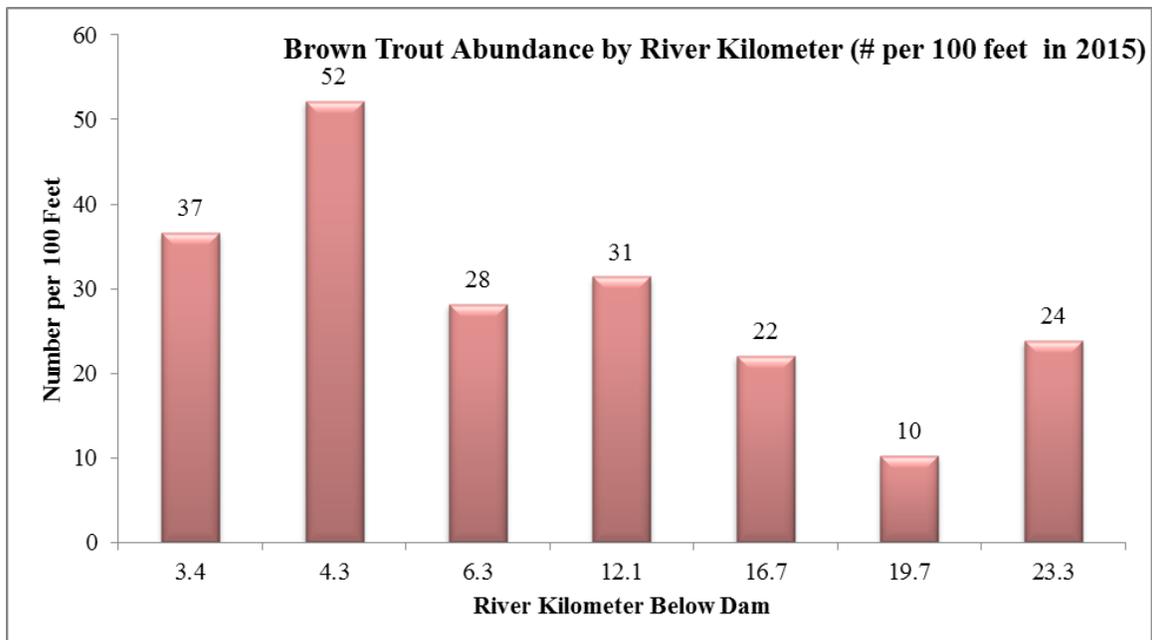


A total of 2,793 individual fish were collected and identified representing 19 different species. Several darter, minnow, and sucker species were collected that are native to the

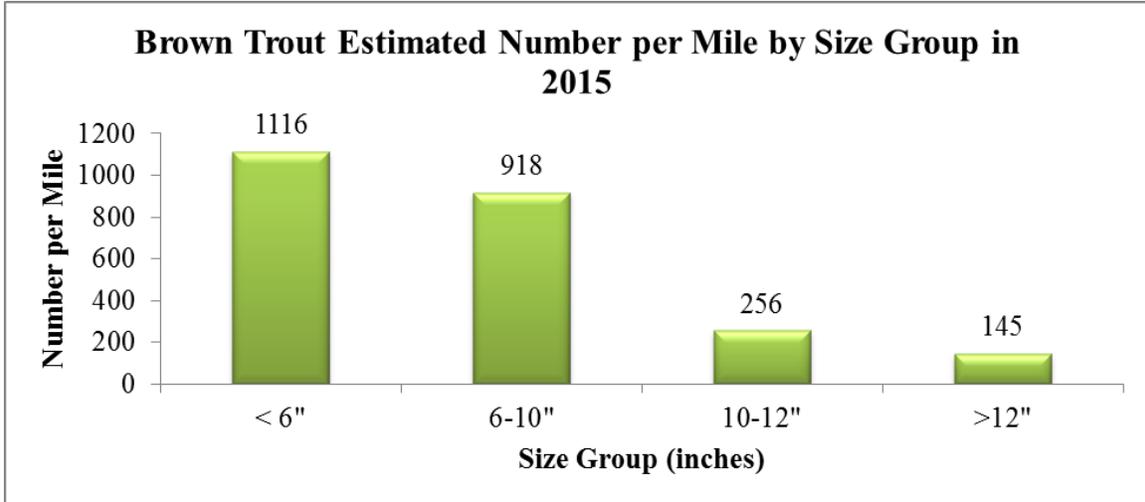
Smith River. The most abundant species collected was brown trout (n=2,143). Brown trout have comprised between 34-78% of all fish collections in the last decade. The following chart shows the number of brown trout collected by river kilometer below Philpott Dam.



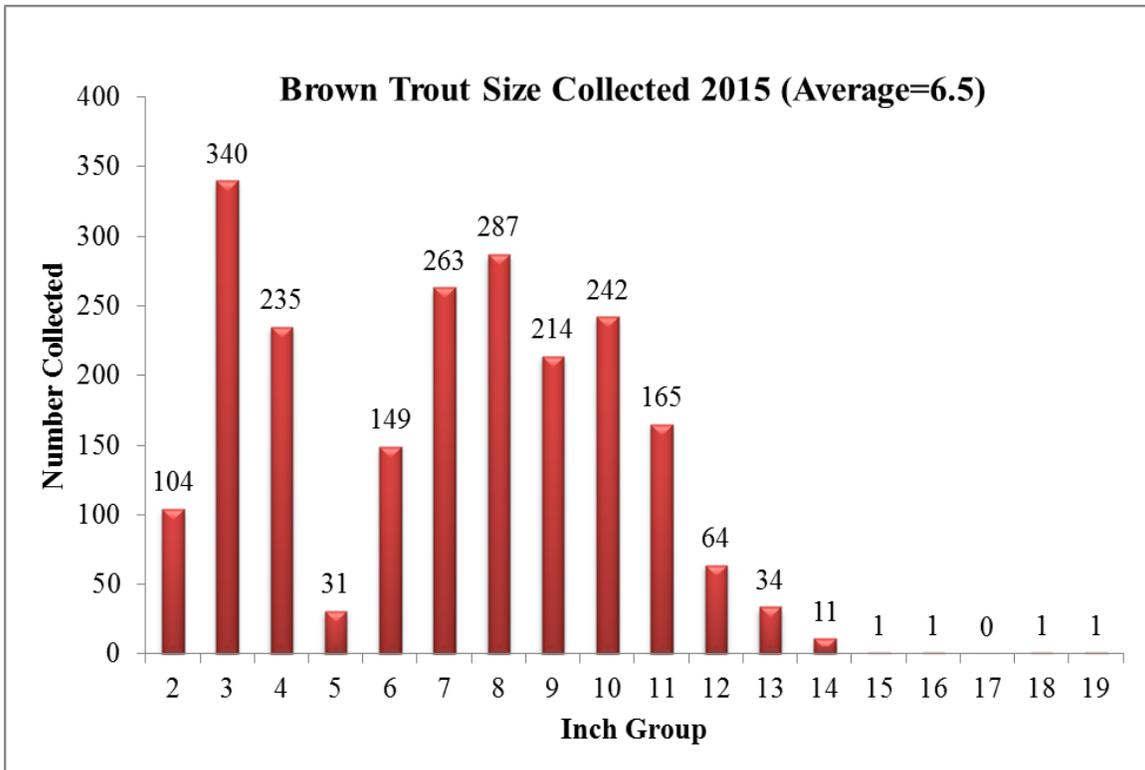
Brown trout abundance is highest in the sections directly below Philpott Dam and decreases as distance increases below the dam. This has been the typical pattern seen in previous years. To compare numbers between sites, brown trout abundance is quantified by examining the number of trout in 100 linear feet. The average number of brown trout collected in 100 feet was 29. The following chart shows the abundance of brown trout per 100 feet at each sampling site by river kilometer below Philpott Dam for 2015.



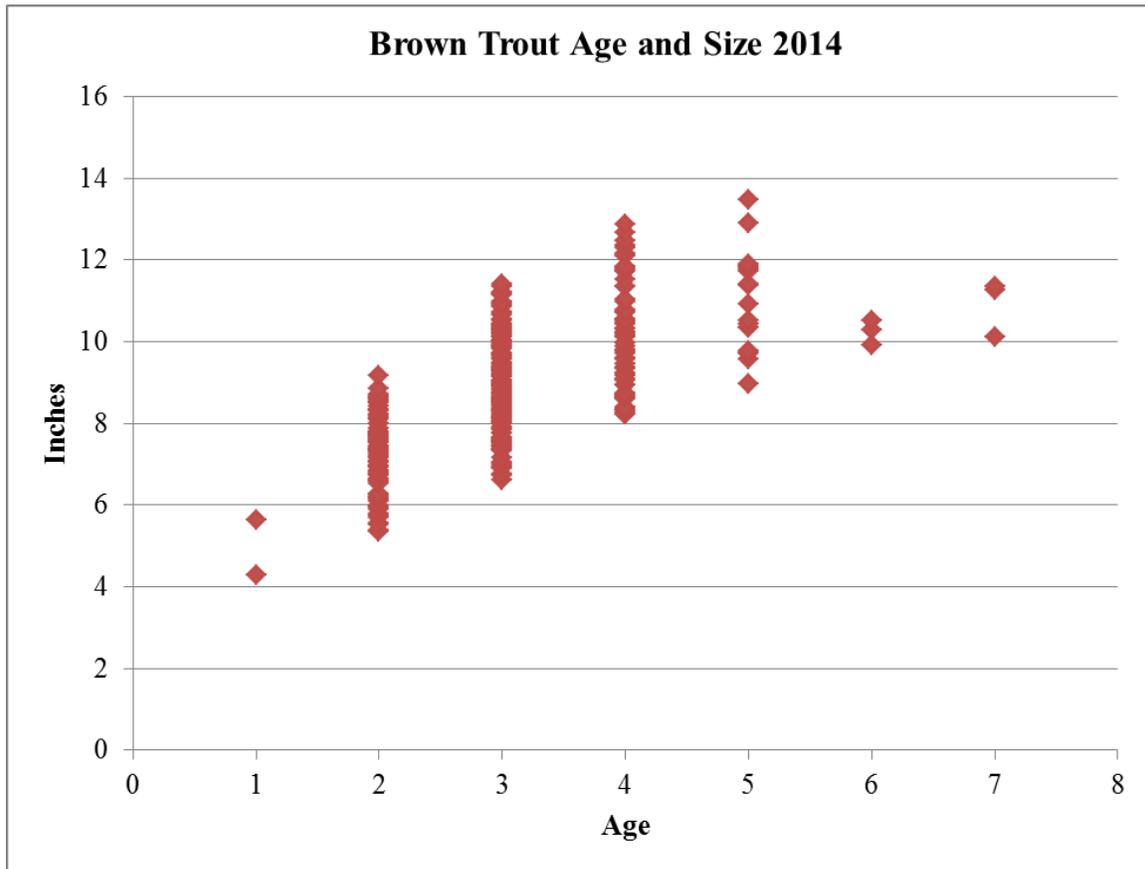
Based on the 2015 collections it is estimated that the trout population consists of approximately 44,000 fish with approximately 2,400 brown trout per mile on average, depending on the sampling location. The chart below shows the breakdown of those fish by size group per mile.



The size of brown trout collected ranged from 2-19 inches but the average was 6.5 inches. Anglers fishing this section of the Smith River can expect to catch trout in the 6-11 inch range but few fish above eleven inches. The following chart shows the number of brown trout collected by inch group in 2015.



Brown trout grow to different sizes depending on where they are located and the amount of food available for them. Growth of brown trout in the Smith River is evaluated by measuring the total length of a trout and comparing to its age throughout the river. In 2014 trout between age 1 and age 7 were collected with sizes ranging from 4-14 inches. The majority of the trout collected were between ages 2-5. Age 2-5 year old trout ranged between 5-13 inches as seen in the graph below.



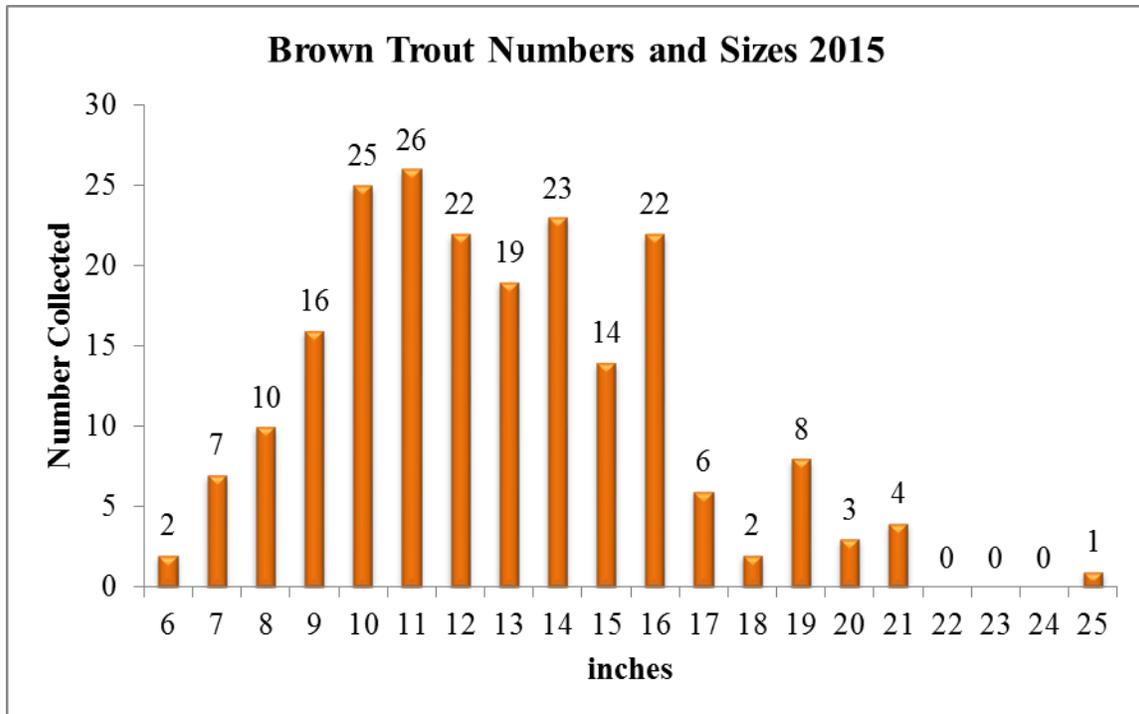
Martinsville Dam to Mitchell Bridge

The Smith River below Martinsville Dam is different from the river above the dam. First and most noticeable is water temperature. Water temperature coming out of Philpott Dam is cold because it comes from the lower parts of the reservoir. As the water flow away from the dam it warms up. By the time it reaches Martinsville Dam about 19 miles downstream the water has warmed significantly. In the summer months, the water temperatures below Martinsville Dam are border-line for supporting trout. As the water temperature increases, the fish species shifts from trout to a warm/cool water species composition such as smallmouth bass, rock bass and sunfish. The trout section below Martinsville Dam is approximately 11 miles in length with few access points and deep pools with step banks. To sample the fisheries in this section a raft electro-fishing unit is

employed, pictured below. This system uses two people to collect fish for timed sampling intervals. The collected fish are identified, measured and released.



Eight different fish species were collected in samples below Martinsville Dam in 2015. Water clarity was poor making collections difficult. Several sport fish including rock bass, redbreast and redear sunfish, rainbow and brook trout, largemouth and smallmouth bass were collected. Brown trout were the most abundant, with a total of 210 collected. Brown trout abundance decreased traveling downstream away from Martinsville Dam. On average, 57 brown trout were collected in one hour of sampling. The brown trout population below Martinsville Dam is fewer in number than the population above Martinsville Dam however, average size increases. Brown trout sizes below Martinsville Dam ranged between 6-25 inches and averaged 12 inches. Growth of brown trout in this section will be studied in 2016 or 2017 to compare with grow of brown trout in sections above Martinsville Dam. The following chart shows the size distribution of brown trout collected below Martinsville Dam.



Very little natural reproduction of brown trout has been identified in the Smith River below Martinsville Dam. Most of the brown trout in this section are from above the dam, having been washed down, relocated from sites in the upper Smith River or stocked by the Department. The Department has relocated about 3,000 brown trout from sampling sites below Philpott Dam where trout densities are high to locations below Martinsville Dam where densities are low. In 2015, approximated 5,500 brown trout were also stocked to enhance the trout population. This section provides great diversity in fish species and good sizes of brown trout. Plans for 2016 are to stock 8,000 brown trout fingerlings and relocated 1,000 adults from high density directly below Philpott Dam.

The Smith River provides great trout fishing all year and has much to offer all anglers. Success of the fishery involves anglers following regulations (size and creel limits), conservation officers enforcing fishing laws and biologists working with shareholders, user groups and concerned citizens to formulate plans that benefits the fisheries and users of the aquatic resources. Anglers who would like to get involved in working to improve and enhance the Smith River trout fisheries are encouraged to contact the Smith River Trout Unlimited Chapter. Their web address is <http://smithrivertu.com/index.html> or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/SmithRiverTU> , check the page for links to river flow information and other helpful information.

For more information on the fishery, contact George Palmer by telephone (434) 525-7522 or by e-mail [george.palmer@dgif.virginia.gov](mailto:george.palmer@dgif.virginia.gov)