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## Restored fishway in Cornwall opens habitat for trout

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CORNWALL >> Trout and other species will be able to move freely up and down Furnace Brook thanks to a newly restored fishway.

Members of the [Housatonic Valley Association](#), an organization dedicated to protecting land and waterways in and around Litchfield County, installed the new fishway on the tributary to the Housatonic River to help maintain a healthy habitat in the area. Furnace Brook was chosen because of its cold, clean water, which provides an important trout spawning habitat of about

1,000 feet upstream from the main river.

“Furnace Brook is an important thermal refuge,” said Michael Jastremski, HVA water protection director. “The fact that we have a stream like this where trout is able to live and swim is a good indicator that the stream is healthy.”

Prior to the installation, the habitat was fragmented due to falling rock and debris, which created a dam-like environment, making it difficult for the fish to move freely. A fragmented habitat causes a lack of diversity among the fish as they are unable to move freely.

“They are unable to get away, to move to more appropriate conditions,” Jastremski said. “The populations are a lot less resilient.”

A crew worked for the better part of an afternoon lifting and lowering 450-pound aluminum units into a 120-foot long concrete box culvert, where workers secured the pieces under the bridge carrying Route 4 across the brook.

An original fishway at the same site was installed in the 1990s, but it was made of old wooden baffles and as the steep, violent stream carried boulders, the old fishway deteriorated over the years, Jastremski said.

“We expect this solution to be more resilient to flooding,” he said.

Jastremski said the [new Alaskan Steeppass units](#) were installed inside the existing fishway, creating an extremely durable baffling system that will maintain velocities that fish can handle as they move upstream. The restored fi

The HVA obtained funding in 2012 from the Natural Resource Damages Fund to repair the fishway and restore passage through the culvert, according to a release from the organization. HVA worked with the

engineering firm Princeton Hydro LLC, along with its partners, to develop a design for the restoration project. This was completed last winter, and the necessary permits were obtained this summer, according to the HVA release.

With the design completed and permits in hand, HVA retained River Logic Solutions as construction contractor.

Partners for the project included the adjacent landowner, the Inland Fisheries Division of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Housatonic Fly Fishermen's Association, according to the release.

“During the fall migration this year, I expect to see a significant number of trout getting through the culvert to spawn upstream for the first time in more than 20 years,” Jastremski said.

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