

Trout anglers are finding this spring's cool, rainy weather to their liking.

Anglers in southern and western Wisconsin in particular report having an outstanding start to the 2011 trout fishing season, say state fisheries management and stream monitoring officials.

"The cool spring has kept both stream-side and in-stream vegetation down, allowing good access to most streams," says Mike Miller, a stream ecologist who helps coordinate stream monitoring for the Department of Natural Resources and is an avid trout angler.

"Continued above average stream-flows have created more habitat for trout allowing for higher fish reproduction and greater trout densities. And there have been good hatches of mayflies and caddisflies throughout the early season as well," he says.

Heath Benike, senior fisheries biologist for Chippewa and Eau Claire counties, reports that trout fishing has been very good in western Wisconsin. "Streams are in good condition and no major flooding has occurred this spring," he says.

"With the cool spring trout were very active and water temps are lower than normal for this time of the year. This is good news for trout anglers, since trout are a coldwater fish they generally bite best when water temperatures are in the 55-65 degree range and most streams are in that temperature window at this time."

With a few weeks left before spring officially ends, Miller passes on these tips to help trout anglers maximize their time on the water:

- Fly patterns that imitate terrestrial insects such as ants, beetles, and crickets will become increasingly more effective as the fishing season progresses.
- Spinfishers anglers using small marabou jigs that imitate crayfish, or minnow imitations such as Rapalas are very effective baits.
- Brown trout avoid bright sunlight so fishing on overcast days, when rainfall has colored the water, or fishing at dawn or towards dusk can often increase angling success.
- Consider limiting your catch on heavily fished waters, pinching down barbs (particularly on treble hooks). Keep a pair of needle nose pliers or hemostats in your pocket and handle the fish gently with wet hands if you intend to release it.
- Holding the fish "belly-up" will cause it to stop struggling, making it easier to remove hooks and release the fish unharmed.