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## **Ash Creek focus of wild trout genetic diversity research at UWSP**

The brook trout is the only native stream-dwelling trout species in Wisconsin. Brian Sloss, assistant unit leader for the U.S. Geological Service Wisconsin Cooperative Fishery Research Program at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP), is studying the genetic impact of Wisconsin's wild trout stocking program.

Sloss' research is supported by an \$85,722 grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This is the second year of a two-year grant from the DNR.

"Our goal is to provide an in-depth understanding of the genetic diversity in Class One brook trout streams, such as Ash Creek (Richland Co.), located in the southwest driftless area of Wisconsin," said Sloss. "This research's primary focus is to examine the potential and realized genetic impacts within Wisconsin's wild trout stocking program." Wisconsin's trout streams are designated class one, two and three according to their ability to sustain themselves and their subsequent stocking requirements. Class one trout waters are the highest quality trout waters in the state and contain naturally sustained trout populations that require no stocking of hatchery trout. DNR fisheries co-project managers working with Sloss are Ed Emmons and Matt Mitro.

According to Sloss, genetic diversity is critical for a viable wild trout population to sustain itself. Sloss helped develop and currently co-directs the College of Natural Resource's (CNR) molecular conservation genetics laboratory. The laboratory is where Sloss and his colleagues conduct molecular ecology research related to conservation genetics and the use of molecular genetic techniques to aid fisheries and wildlife management issues in Wisconsin. Upon completion of this grant in 2006 he hopes to provide an in-depth understanding of the genetic diversity in class one brook trout streams in southwest Wisconsin.

"In the end our study will hopefully lead to the long-term health and viability of Ash Creek's brook trout population and the subsequent long-term viability and success of Wisconsin's current wild brook trout population and supplementation program," said Sloss.

In addition to his trout research, Sloss also is actively researching walleye, lake sturgeon, lake whitefish, paddlefish and badgers. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and his master's at Western Illinois University. He earned his Ph.D. in zoology at Southern Illinois University.