Test Water Designation

Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department

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STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 10 V.S.A. SECTION 4142

Deerfield River

Pursuant to the provisions of 10 V.S.A. § 4142, the Deerfield River, as described below is hereby designated as Test Waters from January 1, 2020 through Dec 31, 2025.

1. Findings

A. The Deerfield River in the Towns of Searsburg and Somerset is a 6th order stream with a drainage area 51 miles^2. The Deerfield River and associated tributaries such as the North and East Branch are largely altered due to several reservoirs that serve for hydro power production (Somerset, Searsburg, and Harriman). The mainstem Deerfield north of Searsburg Reservoir flows through lands largely owned by the US Forest Service and the power company (currently Great River Hydro). This reach of the Deerfield is unique in that it maintains natural stream conditions including stream flow and undeveloped surrounding lands.

B. Opportunities to catch large trout in streams within the area are limited due to man-made alterations, low productivity, and warm water temperatures.

C. The Deerfield River from the East Branch Trailhead bridge upstream 4 miles to the bridge on Somerset Rd. near jct. with Forest Rd. 71 is currently stocked with yearling brook trout and is managed under the general fishing regulations for rivers and streams. This reach meets the criteria for stocking as outlined in the 2018 Vermont Fish and Wildlife Trout Management Plan.

D. This four-mile reach from the East Branch Trailhead bridge to the bridge on Somerset Rd. near jct. with Forest Rd. 71 will be stocked with 800 two-year old brook trout in the spring of 2020 to establish a "trophy trout" fishery.

F. Trophy trout streams allow a daily bag limit of 2 trout in aggregate and are open from the second Saturday in April through October 31. To spread the catch of large stocked trout among anglers and to maintain consistency with Trophy Trout regulations in streams, a daily creel limit of 2 trout in aggregate for the four-mile reach from the East Branch Trailhead bridge to the bridge on Somerset Rd. near jct. with Forest Rd. 71 from the second Saturday in April through October 31 is proposed. This Test Water designation will provide the Fish and Wildlife Department time to obtain the necessary information to determine the success of this management strategy and develop an appropriate long-term regulation proposal.

2. Statutory Determination

A. Pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4142, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Commissioner may, for the purpose of securing data relative to the propagation of fish, designate as test waters streams and ponds within the state.

B. The Commissioner has determined that the designated Test Water is critical to the conservation and propagation of the species in those waters. (See Findings 1.A.-F.)

3. Conditions of the Test Waters

During the above specified period, fishing in the Deerfield River "Trophy Trout Reach" shall be in accordance with the following:

A. From the second Saturday in April through October 31: Deerfield River in Searsburg and Somerset- From the downstream edge of the East Branch Trailhead bridge upstream 4 miles to the downstream edge of the bridge on Somerset Rd. near jct. with Forest Rd. 71. The daily creel limit for trout is 2 in aggregate.

Authorized by: _____ **Date:** 10/3/19

Louis Porter, Commissioner