

2027-28 Wildlife Regulations Review and Amendment Process:

Process Update

VIRGINIA DWR

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Michael Lipford
Wildlife Division

2027-28 Wildlife Regulation Milestones

Oct 5 - Nov 18, 2026	**Public Input Period (45 days)**
Oct 21 & 22, 2026	**Committee & Board Meeting – update on input period metrics**
Jan 13 & 14, 2027	**Committee & Board Meeting – summary of scoping period feedback**
Nov 2026 - Feb 2027	**Species Committee Regulation Recommendation Development**
Mar 17 & 18, 2027	**Committee & Board Meeting – Proposal-stage Recommendations**
Apr - May 2027	**Regulation Amendment Proposal Public Comment Period**
May 26 & 27, 2027	**Committee & Board Meetings – Final Recommendations and Adoption**
August 1, 2027	**Effective date for regulation amendments adopted by the Board**

Public Input Period

Three ways to provide input:

1. Online - https://dwr.virginia.gov/regulations/2026-2027-wildlife-regulations-public-input-period/
2. Email - RegComments@dwr.virginia.gov
3. Mail – Policy Manager/Regulatory Coordinator, 7870 Villa Park Drive, Suite 400, Henrico, VA 23228

Submissions received to date:

1. Online – 1,368
2. Email – 3
3. Mail – 1

Staff are currently compiling and reviewing input received and will convene species regulation committee meetings following closure of the input period


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Questions?


Use of Tracking Collars
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4VAC15-40-310 (new) Tracking collars for coyote, bear and deer hunting with dogs

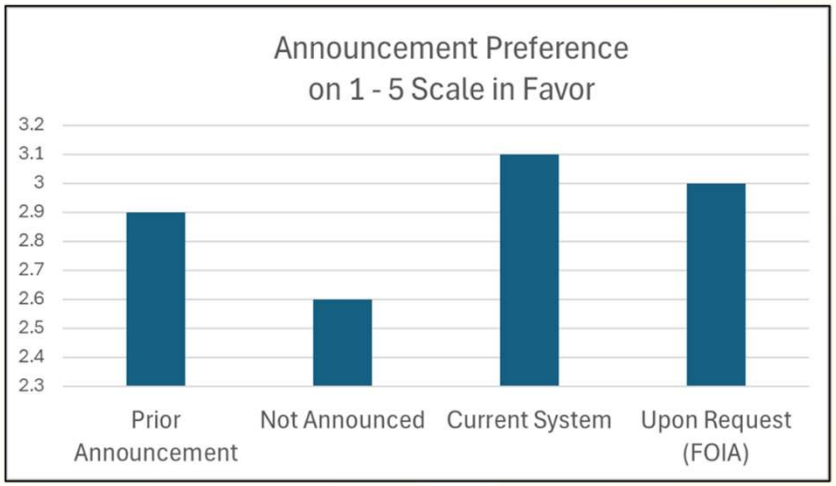
A. East of the Blue Ridge Mountains, except in the counties or portions of counties (including cities and towns within) where deer hunting with dogs is prohibited pursuant to 4VAC15-90-260, subsection A, any dog not under physical restraint that is being used to hunt coyote, bear or deer shall have a fully functional Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking device affixed to it.

B. Tracking is required from the casting of the dog until recovery. Tracking may be suspended where signal is lost but shall resume when signal is reacquired.

Next Steps

- If proposed for public comment, DWR will publish it online (DWR and Regulatory Town Hall), in newspapers, and through social media for 30-day period.
- Staff will synthesize comments and provide an update at the January 2027 Committee meeting.
- Committee recommends final action at January 2027 meeting.

History – Stocked Trout Stocking Information



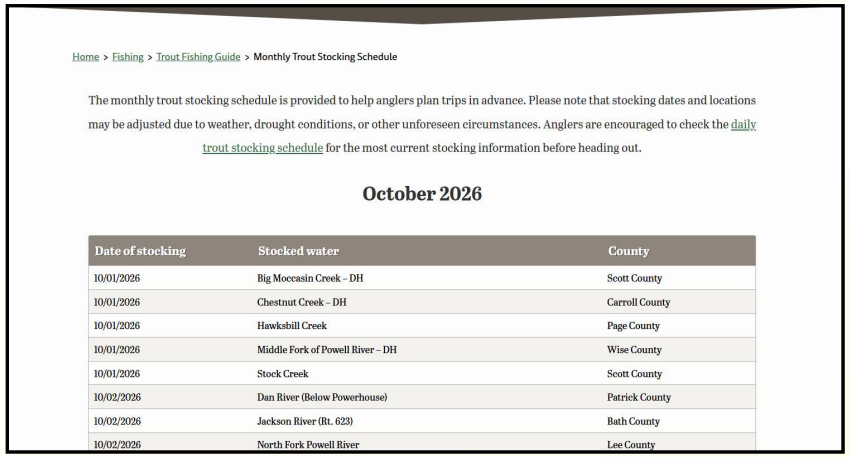
Historically – Info released by 4 pm on the day of stocking

FOIA used regularly beginning in 2024 – promotion on social media

Anglers split on preferred method/frequency

Stocked trout plan adopted in August 26 – Release info third Friday of the month prior

History – Stocked Trout Stocking Information



Home > Fishing > Trout Fishing Guide > Monthly Trout Stocking Schedule

The monthly trout stocking schedule is provided to help anglers plan trips in advance. Please note that stocking dates and locations may be adjusted due to weather, drought conditions, or other unforeseen circumstances. Anglers are encouraged to check the daily trout stocking schedule for the most current stocking information before heading out.

October 2026

Date of stocking	Stocked water	County
10/01/2026	Big Moccasin Creek – DH	Scott County
10/01/2026	Chestnut Creek – DH	Carroll County
10/01/2026	Hawksbill Creek	Page County
10/01/2026	Middle Fork of Powell River – DH	Wise County
10/01/2026	Stock Creek	Scott County
10/02/2026	Dan River (Below Powerhouse)	Patrick County
10/02/2026	Jackson River (Rt. 623)	Bath County
10/02/2026	North Fork Powell River	Lee County

Historically – Info released by 4 pm on the day of stocking

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Potential Options





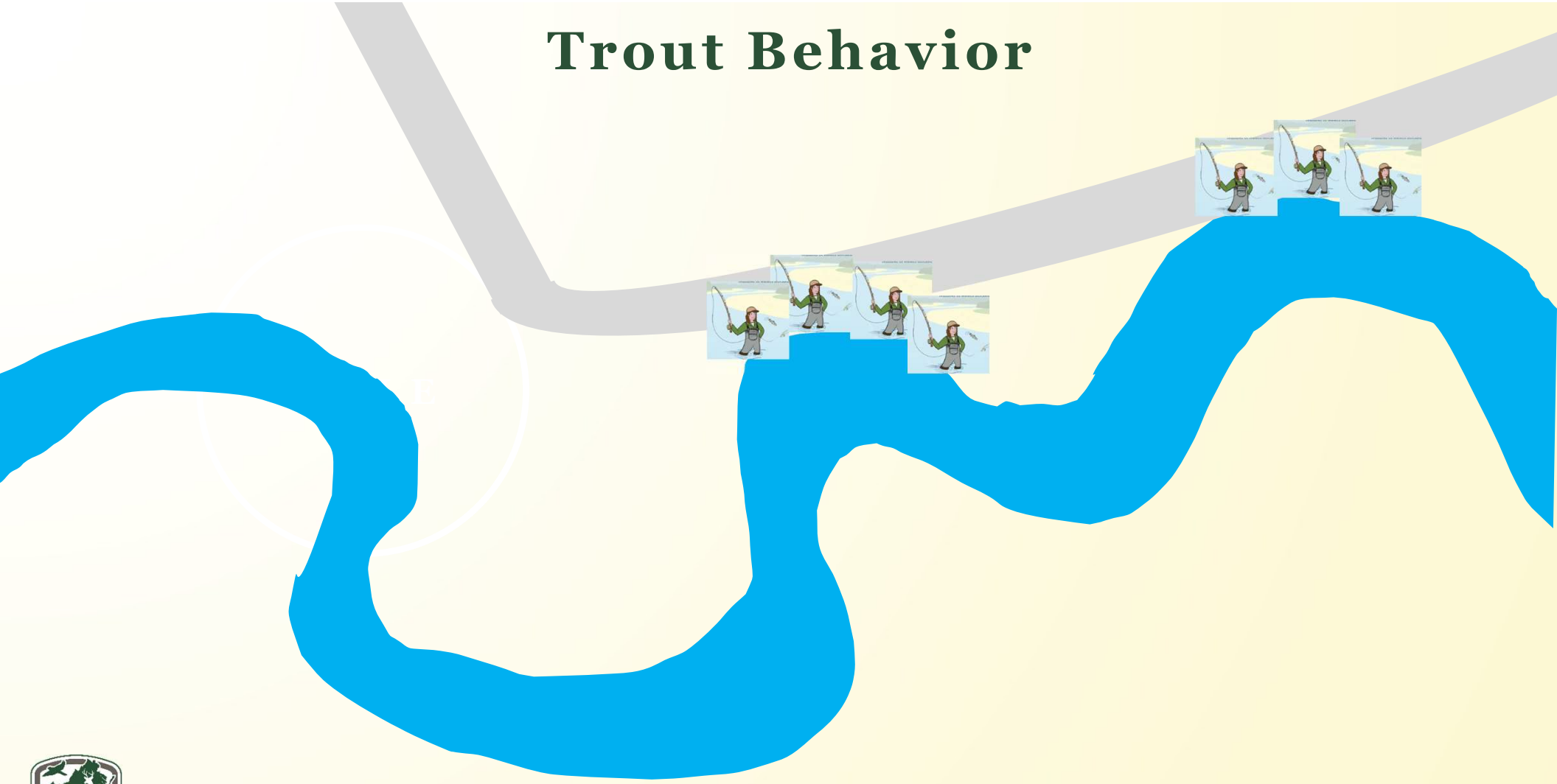
FOIA Exemption

2 day closure after stocking

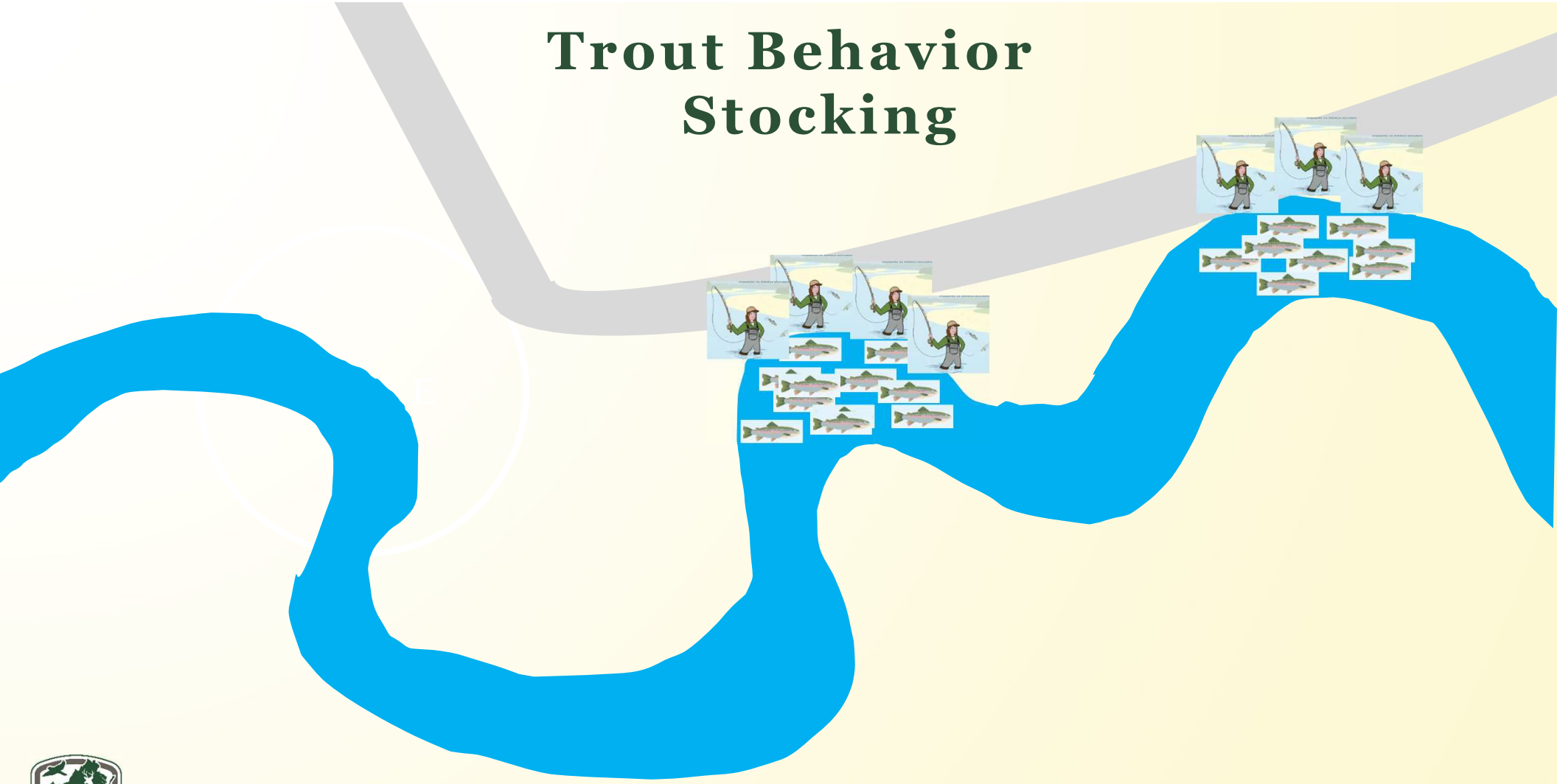
Day/week closures

Expand delayed harvest

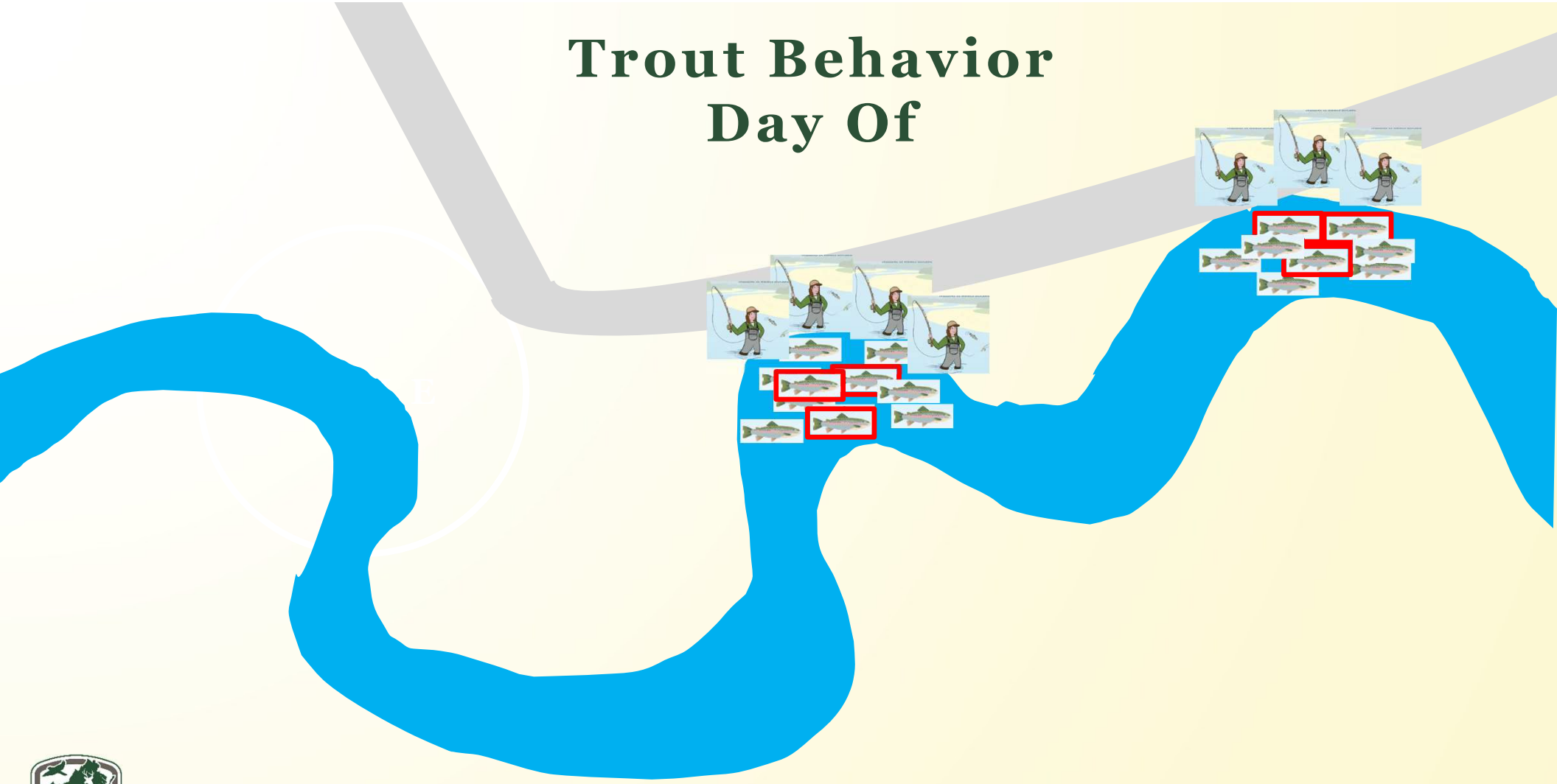
Trout Behavior



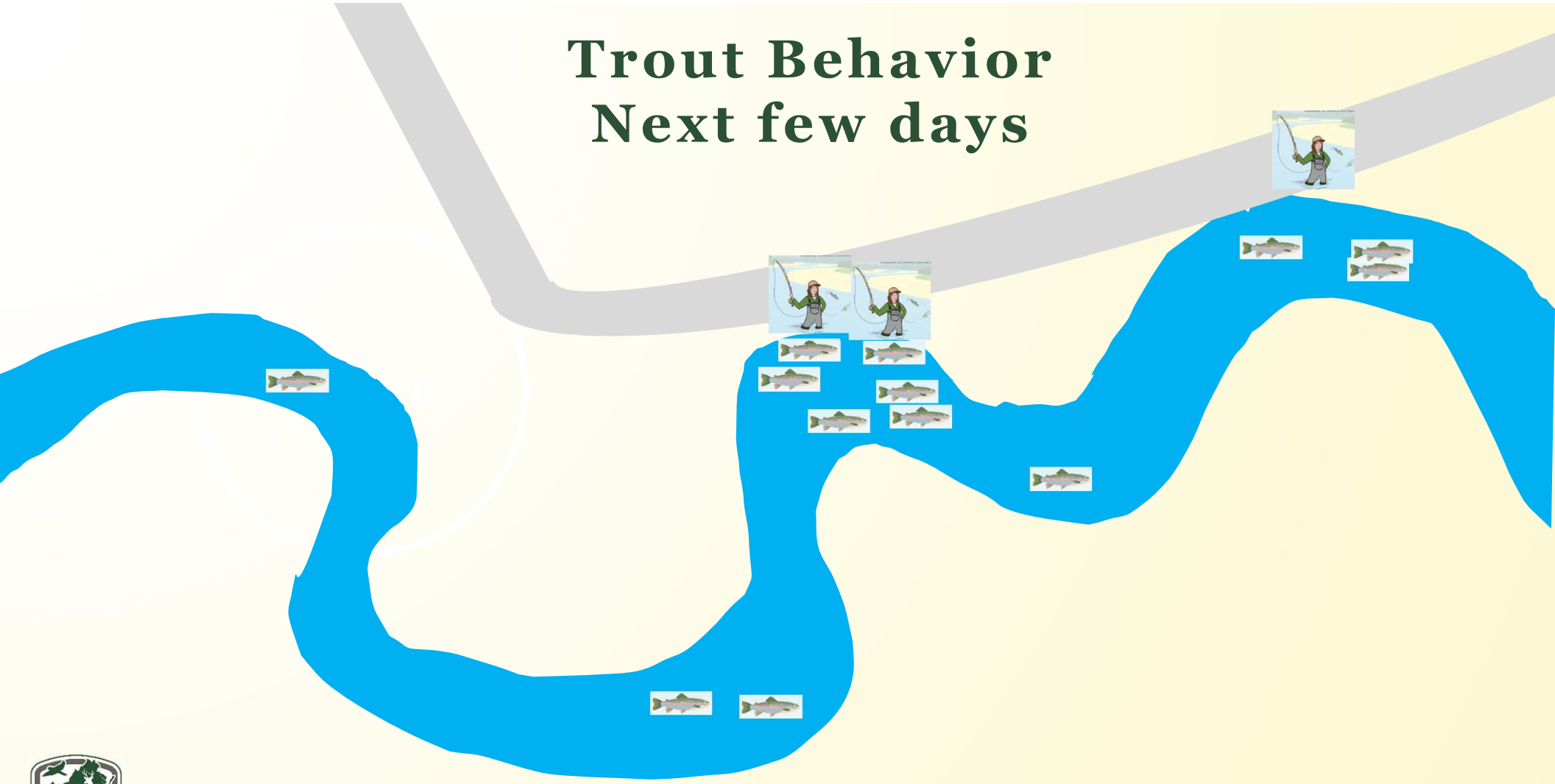
Trout Behavior
Stocking



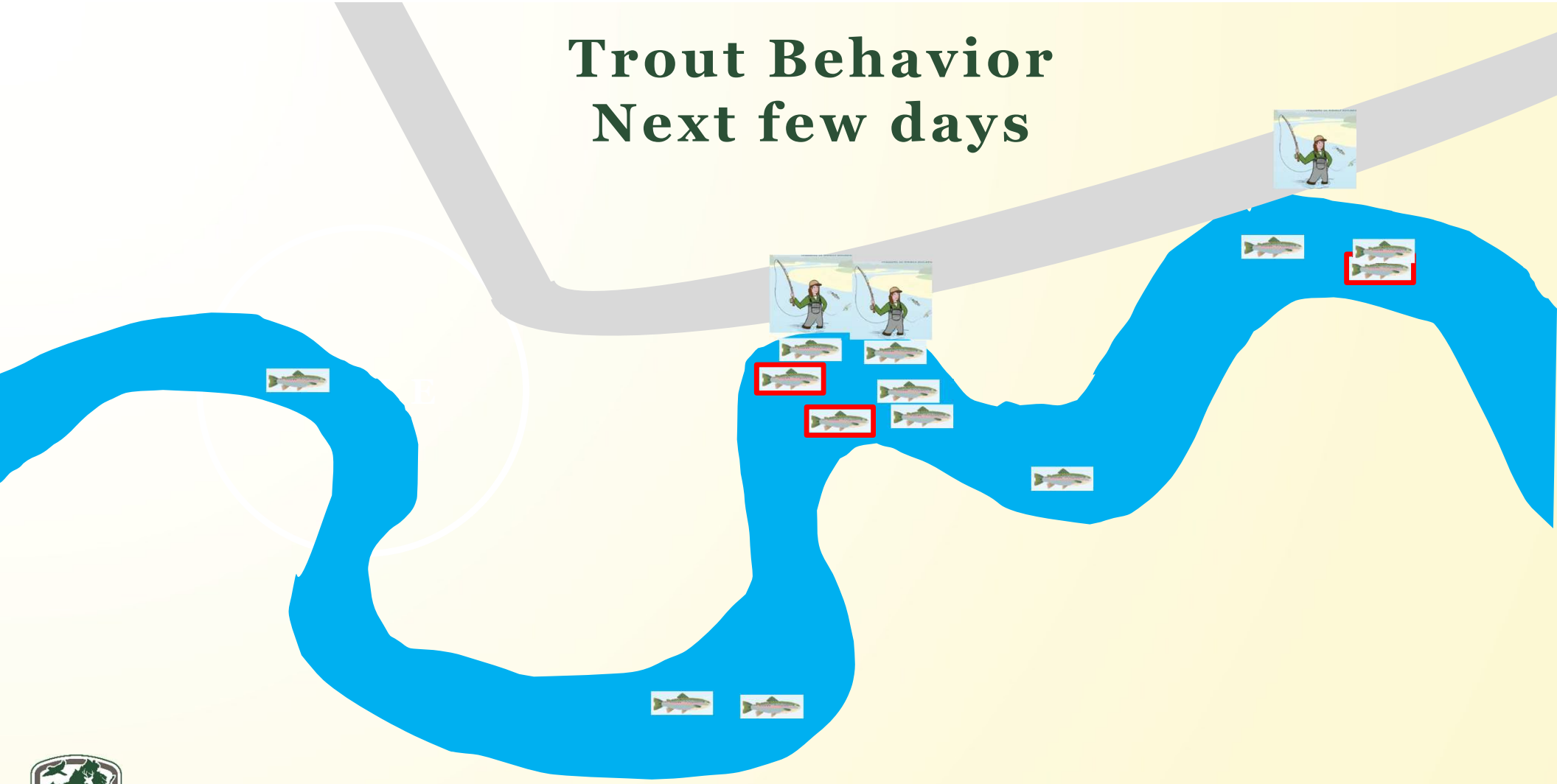
Trout Behavior
Day Of



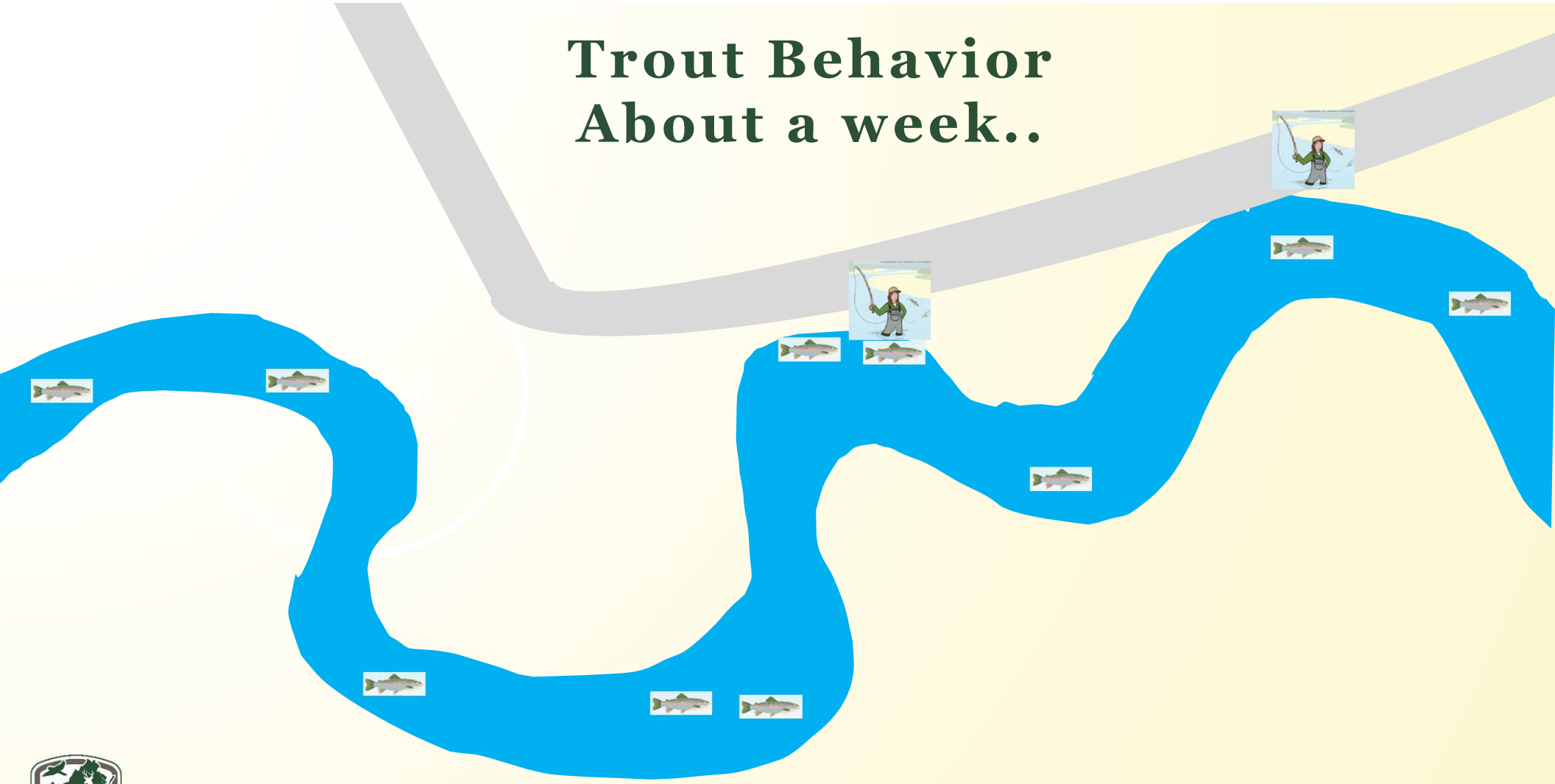
Trout Behavior
Next few days



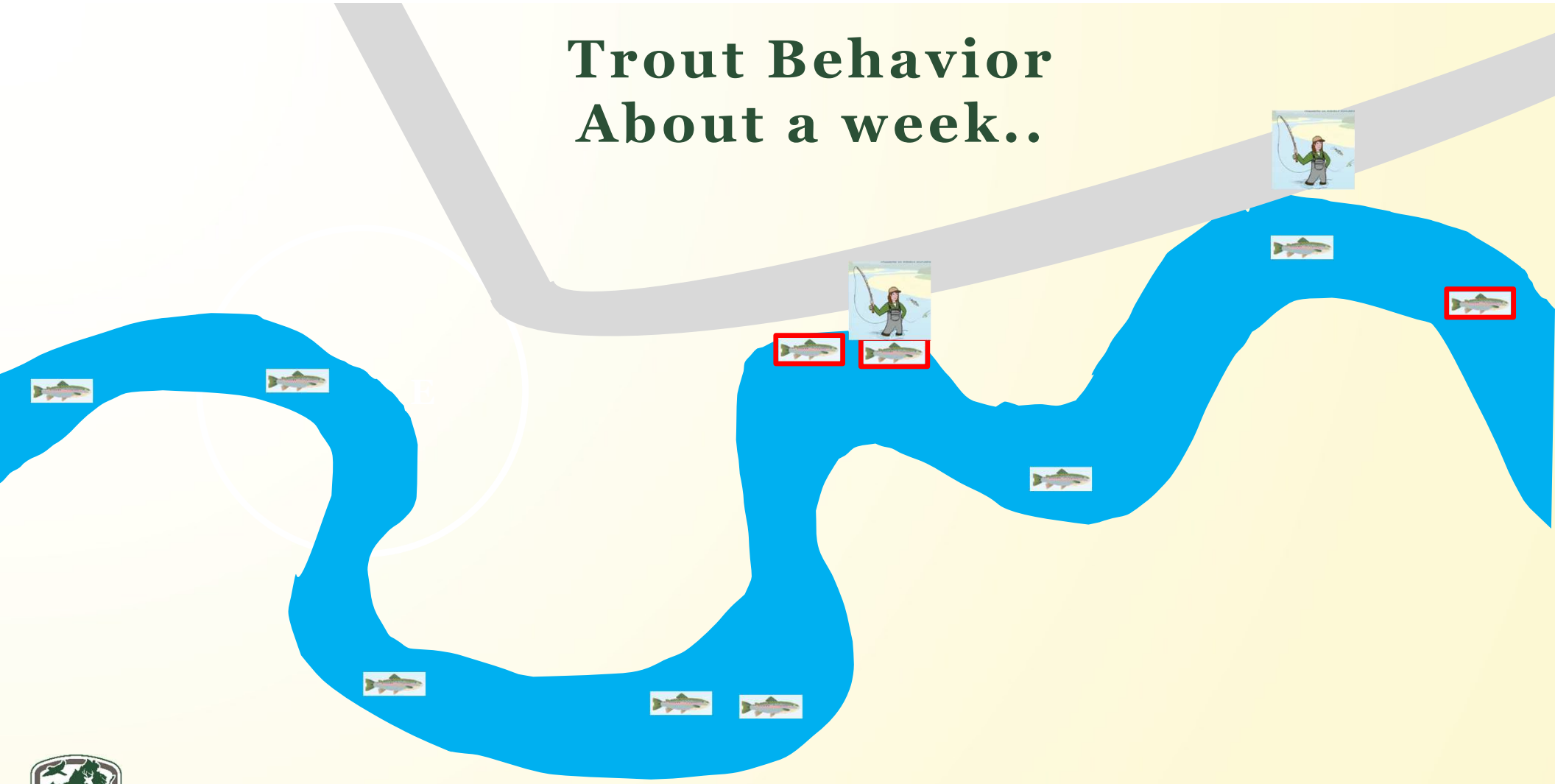
Trout Behavior
Next few days



Trout Behavior
About a week..



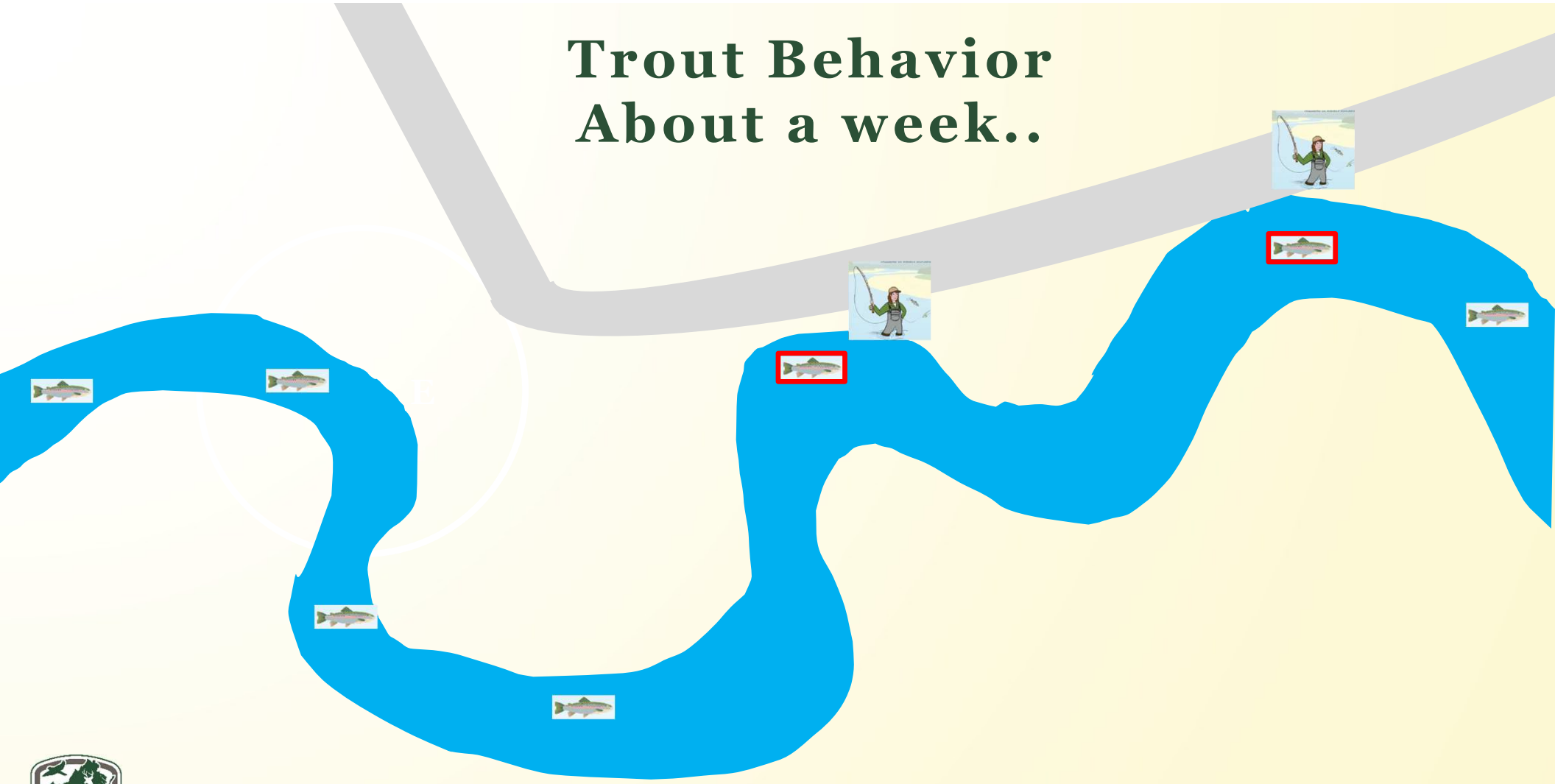
Trout Behavior
About a week..



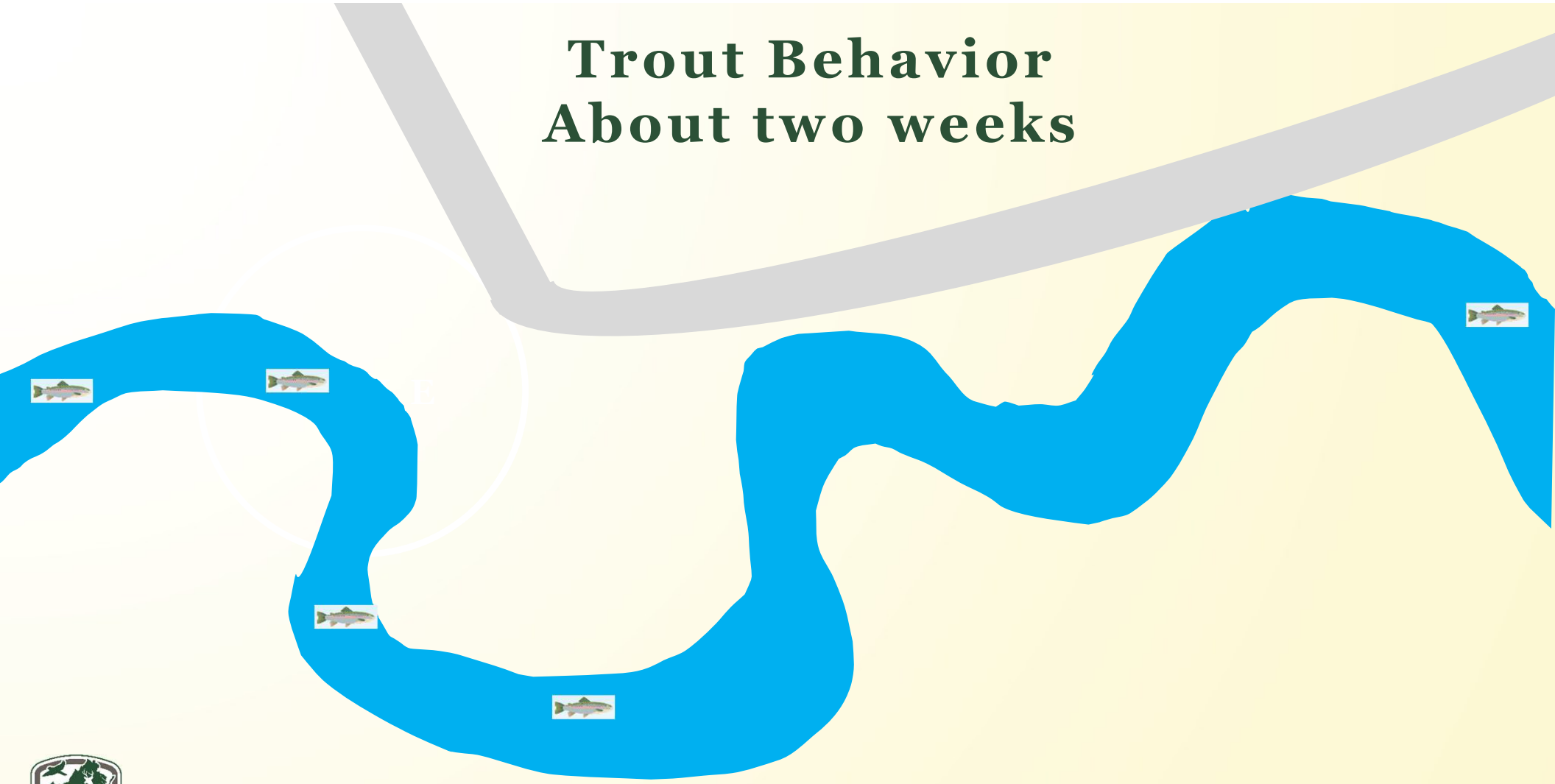
Trout Behavior
About a week..



Trout Behavior
About a week..



Trout Behavior
About two weeks



Background – Virginia - FOIA



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How trout fishers in Virginia are using FOIA to beat the competition

The Department of Wildlife Resources receives approximately 700 public records requests related to stocking every year.

by Andrew Kerley
September 11, 2026

A state employee stocks trout into a stream near Paint Bank in Craig County. Photo courtesy of Meghan Marchetti/Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.

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Virginia has extended deer season in some places, but many hunters are reluctant to take advantage of the

Title 2.2, Subtitle II. Administration of State Government Part B. Transaction of Public Business Chapter 37. Virginia Freedom of Information Act

Broad scope, narrow exceptions

Fisheries exemption § 2.2-3705.6. (Effective until July 1, 2028) Exclusions to application of chapter; proprietary records and trade secrets.

5. Fisheries data that would permit identification of any person or vessel, except when required by court order as specified in § 28.2-204.



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FOIA Exemption

Required legislative action – Beyond DWR authority

Additional exemption would need to be added

General assembly – Winter of each year, implement any changes following fall



Post-Stocking Closure

Modify 4VAC15-330-10. Season; general open season

Close for 2 days after stocking

Require electronic posting, signage marking for enforcement – 400 miles of stream - 20 signs – 3 stocking events – 24000 signs/changes

Encourage fish spreading/Lose accessibility

Unpopular with “day of” crowd - ~70% of anglers



Daily/Weekly Closure

Modify 4VAC15-330-10. Season; general open season

Close specific weeks or days to allow stocking

Encourage fish spreading/Lose accessibility

Lose recreational opportunity – Total season 257 days

Close 2 days/week – 183 days – 28% reduction

Close 10 weeks over season – 187 days – 26% reduction

Signage updates – 400 miles stocked



Expand Delayed Harvest

Modify 4VAC15-330-150 to expand water bodies

Stocked three times per year, then no harvest allowed until temperatures warm

Preferred water – 24.6%

Costs – Trout Program



$3.1 Million Total Cost

FY26 Sales – 55,875 - $1.28 million @$23, $1.57 million @$28

Fee Fishing Areas – 22,337 - $176K @ $8, $290K @$13

Sportsman's – 63,092 – Not included, but provide privileges

If only trout – break even is $56



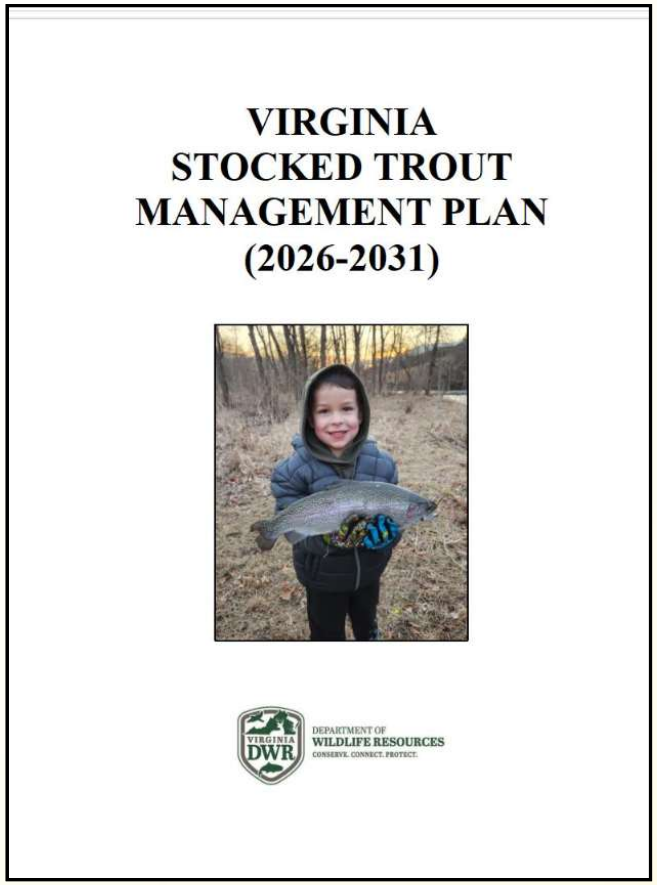
Cost savings employed:

Centralized gas/repair/maintenance fund

Strategic vacancies

Deferred maintenance

Cuts to fish feed → fewer fish → less travel



Calendar

Legislation – Yearly

Fishing regulations – Next aquatic regulation cycle begins January 2028 – Adoption for January 1st 2029

Consider changes in light of 2 seasons of recent reductions, license increase, and funding shifts