Mud Creek, also known as Fenton Brook, is a tributary of Conewango Creek, located in western Cattaraugus County. This 11-mile long stream has been managed as a wild trout fishery since stocking was removed in 2002, based on a high abundance of wild brown trout. The stream is managed with a year-round open season, including catch and release – artificial lures only from 10/16-3/31. Public fishing access to this stream is limited to non-posted, private lands. In 2018, as part of region-wide trout population monitoring, the stream was sampled by electrofishing at one 600-foot site, located 0.5 miles downstream of the village of Leon. This site had been sampled previously in 1992, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2012, 2013, 2016 and 2017. In 2013-2018 surveys, trout population abundance was estimated from two electrofishing passes; while in previous years we used one-pass CROTS methodology.

In 2018, we captured 85 yearling and older (adult) wild brown trout, ranging in length from 4.4-18.8 inches and averaging 8.9 inches (Figure 1). The abundance of adult wild brown trout in 2018 was 746 fish/mile (±17) (Figure 2). The 31 young-of-year (YOY) brown trout captured in the first electrofishing pass expanded to 272 fish/mile. Adult trout habitat was of good quality consisting of limited boulder cover, undercut banks and one deep pool. The habitat in our site appears to be representative of the middle four miles of this stream.

The abundance of adult wild brown trout in 2018 at our sampling site was significantly higher (P<0.05) than we observed in 2013 and 2017, but due to wide confidence limits in 2016, was not significantly different than that year (Figure 2). With the exception of the
2016 estimate, the adult brown trout abundance at this site has remained surprisingly stable over the nine sampling years. A limited population of wild rainbow trout exists in Mud Creek, primarily upstream from our sampling site (they were captured at this site only in 2002, 2003 and 2007). The origin of these fish is unknown, but un-permitted transfer by anglers is suspected. Based this year’s sampling, Mud Creek should continue to provide quality angling for those wishing to pursue wild brown trout and the occasional wild rainbow trout in a small stream setting. No changes in regulations are recommended at this time and the stream should continue to be managed as a wild trout fishery.