

# TIC Release Day



## Planning Guide

# Introduction

You have spent the past few months hatching and raising brook trout as part of the NJ Trout in the Classroom Program. You have cared for the eggs, taking time each day to remove the dead eggs so that the viable eggs stayed healthy. You watched them hatch. You monitored the alevin, again removing any that didn't make it. You released your healthy young fry into the bigger tank and fed them. You monitored the water chemistry in the tank and worked hard to keep it at its best for brook trout. And now, its time to release them into a bigger ecosystem than your tank - its time to let them go.

Even though you are now taking the fry out of the classroom, you can still make this a teachable moment for your students. Some teachers may decide to schedule an interpretive program with an agency, some may develop a field day for their students on their own, and some teachers may not have the opportunity to get their students out to the release site. You may make a family day out of your release day. You may decide to release your fish by yourself or ask your TU TIC Coordinator for assistance. And that's okay. Whichever is the case, you can still make your last days with your brook trout a memorable one for your students.

This guide will help you in the process of creating the best Release Day for you and your students after all the hard work you have done during these past months. It is important to remember that this program *isn't* about raising fish, its about the lessons learned along the way. So whether you have no fish or three hundred fish, it doesn't matter. What did you and your students learn about trout and their coldwater habitats? That's what is important.

Thank you for being a part of TIC and working as hard as you do all year for these trout.



Jessica Griglak  
NJ State TIC Coordinator



# Things Needed

Whether you are making your release part of a field trip to an agency, having your own field day with your students, releasing them on your own or asking for help from your TU TIC Coordinator, there are a few pieces of equipment that are necessary to get your fish from the classroom to the stream.

You will need:

- ☐ Buckets or hard-sided picnic coolers to carry your fish and water in
- ☐ Water from your tank to fill the buckets
- ☐ Aerator for each bucket to give the fry the oxygen they need
- ☐ Ice in sealed baggies to keep the water cold
- ☐ Nets to help catch the fry
- ☐ Small cups if you will be letting your students release a fish
- ☐ Shoes, waders or hip boots that can get wet
- ☐ Release permit which must be with you when you release the fish

The buckets you use should be hard-sided in order to support the weight of water and fry. You can use spackle buckets or hard-sided lunch coolers as a means of transportation - just make sure the sides are sturdy.

Make sure you use the cold water from your tank in your transportation. Putting them in warmer water may shock the fish. And you are going to need to keep them cold. Never put ice directly in the buckets unless you are absolutely positive that it came from well water. Never use ice packs designed to keep your lunch cold unless they are in a sealed plastic bag. If they leaked, it would not be good for the fry.

Aerators can be bought at a local bait or sporting good store that sells fishing gear. They range in price from \$8-\$15. They can also be bought with the buckets if you need carrying pails.

The nets you used all year long in the tank will help you catch the fry for the release. Once you get streamside you won't need the nets, unless you are giving each student a cup with a fry to release.

You may or may not need shoes that can get wet. it is always a good idea to check your release site out ahead of time.

When you registered for TIC, you filled in a stocking permit application. These were sent to landowners for signature and then to the biologists for processing. Permits are processed in late winter and new teachers will receive them mid-late March. The permit is valid from April to June 15. Your permit is good for multiple years, so make sure you hold onto it at the end of the TIC season. You need to carry your release permit with you when you are streamside with your fish. If someone else is releasing your fish, make sure they have your permit.

## **Cool idea from a TIC student at Mater Dei Prep:**

He suggested that we use pint sized plastic containers to freeze the treated water we use for water changes or even the tank water itself! Big ice cubes, wrap in bubble wrap, add to water in cooler (I use an old one), add fish, deliver well-chilled to river. No chlorine, no warming water...

# Start Planning

Your first step in planning a Release Day experience for you and your students is to decide what kind of a day you want or can do with your class. Experiences may include:

- ☐ A release at an approved stream on your way to an educational program run by an agency.
- ☐ A release at an approved stream where you develop a program for your students to do on site.
- ☐ A release on a weekend where you invite students' families to join you in your lessons.
- ☐ A release where only the teacher makes it out to the stream.
- ☐ A release where the teacher asks Trout Unlimited to release their fish for them.

When determining what kind of a Release Day your kids will experience, think about how it will enhance what they have learned through the TIC program during the year. Think about what your students will do and learn during your experience.

## Release Day - Streamside Tips

You already chose your release site which are all open, public spaces. There may or may not be restrooms on site, so make sure your students go just before leaving the school.

It is always a good idea to check the site out ahead of time. It may be a bit of a walk to the stream so its always a good idea to know where you and your studnets will be going. There may also be some other challenges, like a downed tree or a steep bank, so its always better to know beforehand what you will experience.

If you can get to the release site before your students, you should try to do so. Since these are public access areas, you may run into fishermen at the release location. Explain to the fishermen that a school bus of kids will soon be arriving to release their trout into the river. The fishermen will most likely move to another area.

You may also want to clean up any litter that is laying around before the students arrive, especially alcohol containers and/or broken glass. You may want to have a rake handy to make it faster to gather the litter. Also, make sure you have gloves and garbage bags with you to place the litter in. You can also make this an activity with your students. Teach them that clean water ways are important for trout, animals and people, too!

Most public access areas are carry in, carry out so make sure you have garbage bags, especially if you are eating on site.

Assign one person to take photographs of the day. This is a memorable experience for you and your students. You can share the photographs with your students' families so that they can experience the day with their children.



# **Release Day - Planning a Trip to an Agency**

If you plan on going to a facility run by an agency, you will now need to determine when they start accepting program requests, how much it costs, if buses are available and what the costs associated with transportation will be. You should also find out from the facility what the recommended adult to student ratio is and make sure you have enough adult chaperones for your trip. Schedule a date.

If your school has a trip planning packet, make sure you get that as well as the standardized parents' letter if applicable. You are going to need permission from the superintendent. Clear it with the principal, making sure you stress the educational value of the trip and how it ties in with the curriculum.

Confirm your visit to a facility if you are visiting one. Begin integrating instructions and activities into your class to prepare your students for their experience. Talk about what they will do and what your expectations of them will be for the day. Talk about safety and bus rules. Establish small groups with adult chaperones.

Send your parental letters home, making sure you highlight the educational value of the trip. Include a description of the site your students will be visiting and what they will be doing. Include a list of any special items the students may need that day, such as special clothes, boots, shoes that can get wet, bag lunches, money for a gift shop if applicable, etc. Your letter should also include the cost per student and the date that the money is due by. A place for parents to fill in emergency contact information is important. Also, if your trip is returning or leaving earlier or later than the regular school day, include a drop off and pick up time. Keep good records of what you receive for each student in your group. Plan activities for students who do not go on the trip. Ask for parent chaperones if you still need some extra adult supervision. Make sure the office knows which students are with you, which are absent, which are staying at school. All adults should know the students they are chaperoning and everyone should have your cell phone number in case of an emergency.

Where can you go? Here are two that are frequented by TIC teachers:

Forest Resource Education Center - Jackson, NJ -  
[http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/forest/njfs\\_frep.html](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/forest/njfs_frep.html)

Pequest Trout Hatchery - Oxford, NJ - <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/pequest.htm>

Invite the press and your Trout Unlimited TIC Coordinator to join you for the day!

# Release Day - Planning Your Own Event with Students

If you plan on creating your own streamside event, you will now need to determine how much it costs, if buses are available and what the costs associated with transportation will be. You should also find out from the school what the recommended adult to student ratio is and make sure you have enough adult chaperones for your trip. Schedule a date.

If your school has a trip planning packet, make sure you get that as well as the standardized parents' letter if applicable. You are going to need permission from the superintendent. Clear it with the principal, making sure you stress the educational value of the trip and how it ties in with the curriculum.

Begin integrating instructions and activities into your class to prepare your students for their experience. Talk about what they will do and what your expectations of them will be for the day. Talk about safety and bus rules. Establish small groups with adult chaperones.

Send your parental letters home, making sure you highlight the educational value of the trip. Include a description of the site your students will be visiting and what they will be doing. Include a list of any special items the students may need that day, such as special clothes, boots, shoes that can get wet, bag lunches, money for a gift shop if applicable, etc. Your letter should also include the cost per student and the date that the money is due by. A place for parents to fill in emergency contact information is important. Also, if your trip is returning or leaving earlier or later than the regular school day, include a drop off and pick up time. Keep good records of what you receive for each student in your group. Plan activities for students who do not go on the trip. Ask for parent chaperones if you still need some extra adult supervision. Make sure the office knows which students are with you, which are absent, which are staying at school. All adults should know the students they are chaperoning and everyone should have your cell phone number in case of an emergency.

Some ideas on activities you can incorporate into the day include:

- Streamside picnic
- Stream clean up
- Water studies
- Aquatic insect studies
- Hike
- Take time for journal entries
- Streamside scavenger hunt
- Nature poetry or art
- Trout release scrapbook
- Station rotation - set up different activities that the students can rotate through
- Etc

Have your students release the fish when it is time. Its a unique experience that they are sure to remember!

Think about inviting local newspapers to come out and learn about the TIC program in your school. Its a great way of spreading the word! And just think - if you have photos of your students doing a stream clean up it may make someone think twice about dumping there! Also ask your TU TIC Coordinator to join you for the day.

## **Release Day - Planning A Community Event**

If you plan on creating your own streamside event, but can't get the kids there as a class trip, consider hosting a community event for your students and their parents. Here's where you can show off what your students have learned over the course of the school year by letting them run stations! Let them think of what they would like to teach and how they can best teach it. Let them work in groups. Schedule a date and time. Check with the landowner to make sure it is ok to host an event. The approved stocking sites are public areas, but it is always best to keep everyone informed of your intentions.

Begin integrating instructions and activities into your class to prepare your students for their experience. Talk about what they will do and what your expectations of them will be for the day. Talk about safety and establish small groups with adult chaperones.

Send your parental letters home, making sure you highlight the educational value of the trip. Include a description of the site your students will be visiting and what they will be doing. Include a list of any special items the students may need that day, such as special clothes, boots, shoes that can get wet, bag lunches, money for a gift shop if applicable, etc. A place for parents to fill in emergency contact information is important. Keep good records of what you receive for each student in your group. Ask for parent chaperones if you still need some extra adult supervision. All adults should know the students they are chaperoning and everyone should have your cell phone number in case of an emergency.

Start with a group welcome speech and then have your students release the fish as the parents watch. After releasing the fish, have the students go to their stations and prepare for their visitors. Encourage parents to visit every station to learn all about trout.

Don't forget to invite the press - what a great community message! Also ask your TU TIC Coordinator to join you for the day.

## **Release Day - Teacher Only**

Sometimes, we can't get our students streamside with us and have to release the fish on our own. That's okay too! But, if this is the case in your class, try and make a day for your students to enjoy as a culminating event for the program. They worked hard this past year and deserve to celebrate!

## **Release Day - Asking Trout Unlimited for Help**

Sometimes, we can't get our students streamside and we can't make it to the stream either. Feel free to ask your Trout Unlimited TIC Coordinator for help releasing the fish. Just make sure he/she has your permit when they go the stream (and make sure you get it back!). But again, host a culminating event in your classroom as a celebration of the TIC year.

The great thing about TIC is its flexibility. Do what works, but make sure your students benefit as well!