Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest
New Century Snapshot

Restored Elvoy Creek vibrant, flourishing

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Rhinelander and Park Falls, Wis. – "What goes 'round comes 'round," or so some people say about life. How does this apply to a northwoods stream? Take Elvoy Creek in northern Forest County, for example.

Hundreds of years ago it was a free flowing waterway. Fish, like Brook Trout, Mottled Sculpin, Brook Stickelback and other aquatic species, such as stonefly and caddisfly larvae flourished in its narrow cold, clear water, gravelly bottom, and the shady overhang of fallen trees.

Elvoy Creek before restoration (2003)
Then, during the late 19th- and early 20th-centuries, Elvoy Creek was pressed into service for transporting timber from the surrounding forest. Heavy wood and rock dams staunched the creek's flow in order to build up a head of water, and provide energy, for driving thousands of logs downstream. While the dams enabled millions of board feet of timber to reach the market, they also changed the creek's habitat complexity and ability to support aquatic life. Today, with generous help from dedicated citizens and partners, the Forest Service has restored Elvoy Creek to its natural condition. So, as you can see,

Elvoy Creek today
Elvoy Creek has come a long way! The once impounded pond is now a stable stream with a gravel and sand bottom. Remnants of a logging dam were removed by Forest Service personnel and equipment during the summer of 2003.

Over one thousand feet of stream channel has cut down through the century of accumulated sediment and muck to return to its original location. This sediment was allowed to accumulate in the plunge pool below the old dam structure and was removed utilizing the Forest's construction equipment.

Logs that sunk in the impoundment are now providing ideal habitat for trout and invertebrates in the revived stream channel. The "new" stream banks that formed in the old impounded area have stabilized and now are vegetated with many different types of grasses and sedges. The goals of this project were to restore the high quality aquatic habitat to this section of stream.

These goals have been achieved. This project could not have occurred without the help of many of the Forest Service's partners including: private landowners, Michigan Tech University, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

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